

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
2014 Hunting Prospects

To give hunters the best information available on the prospects for a successful hunting season, district biologists for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Program have consulted their local sources and contributed their 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. These recommendations are based on past hunter success, weather, fire, and changing ownership policies. The professional observations are rolled into district predictions, aka prospects, for what this year's hunting seasons may bring.

The prospects also feature the inclusion of detailed information on accessing private lands, as well as forest ownership information. Major timber company landowners have varied approaches to allowing hunters access to their properties. These unique conditions are highlighted under the appropriate district.

We encourage hunters to spend some time reviewing the information for every district, not just those that are your traditional hunting areas. Washington has an incredible diversity of habitats and game populations. You can explore these pages for insights into new locations and new species to hunt. It is your best source for planning your 2014-15 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. Finally, get yourself ready by studying [“How to Prepare for the Hunting Season.”](#) We wish you a productive and enjoyable 2014-15 hunting season!

Don’t forget to upload your photos to our [Photo Upload Site](#). You may even choose to submit your photos to the annual photo competition for the 2015 hunting pamphlet cover. The competition began three years ago and has been a great success. The theme for the 2015 Hunting Regulations pamphlet will be Women: Hunting Through the Generations. We know that the world of hunting is full of mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives. Passing down hunting knowledge through the generations is something that brings families closer and turns hunting experiences into cherished memories. Capture a photo of your family experience and upload it at [“2015 Big Game Regulations Pamphlet Contest”](#). Your photo may adorn 650,000 pamphlets next year!

2014



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

DISTRICT 1 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties

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DISTRICT 1 HUNTING PROSPECTS

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DISTRICT 1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 1, in the northeastern corner of Washington, is comprised of seven game management units (GMUs): 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.

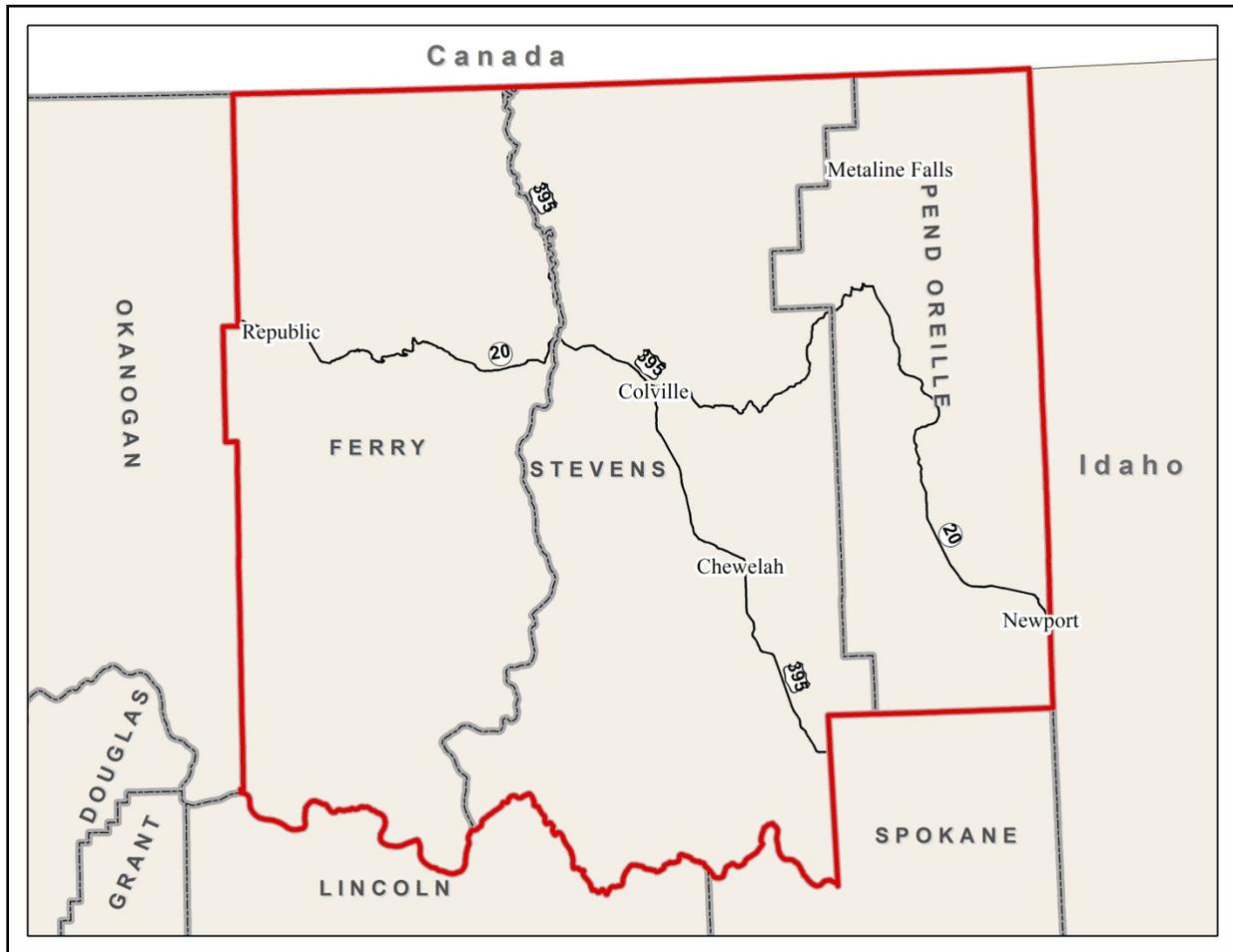


FIGURE 1. DISTRICT 1 IN NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON INCLUDES FERRY, STEVENS, & PEND OREILLE COUNTIES.

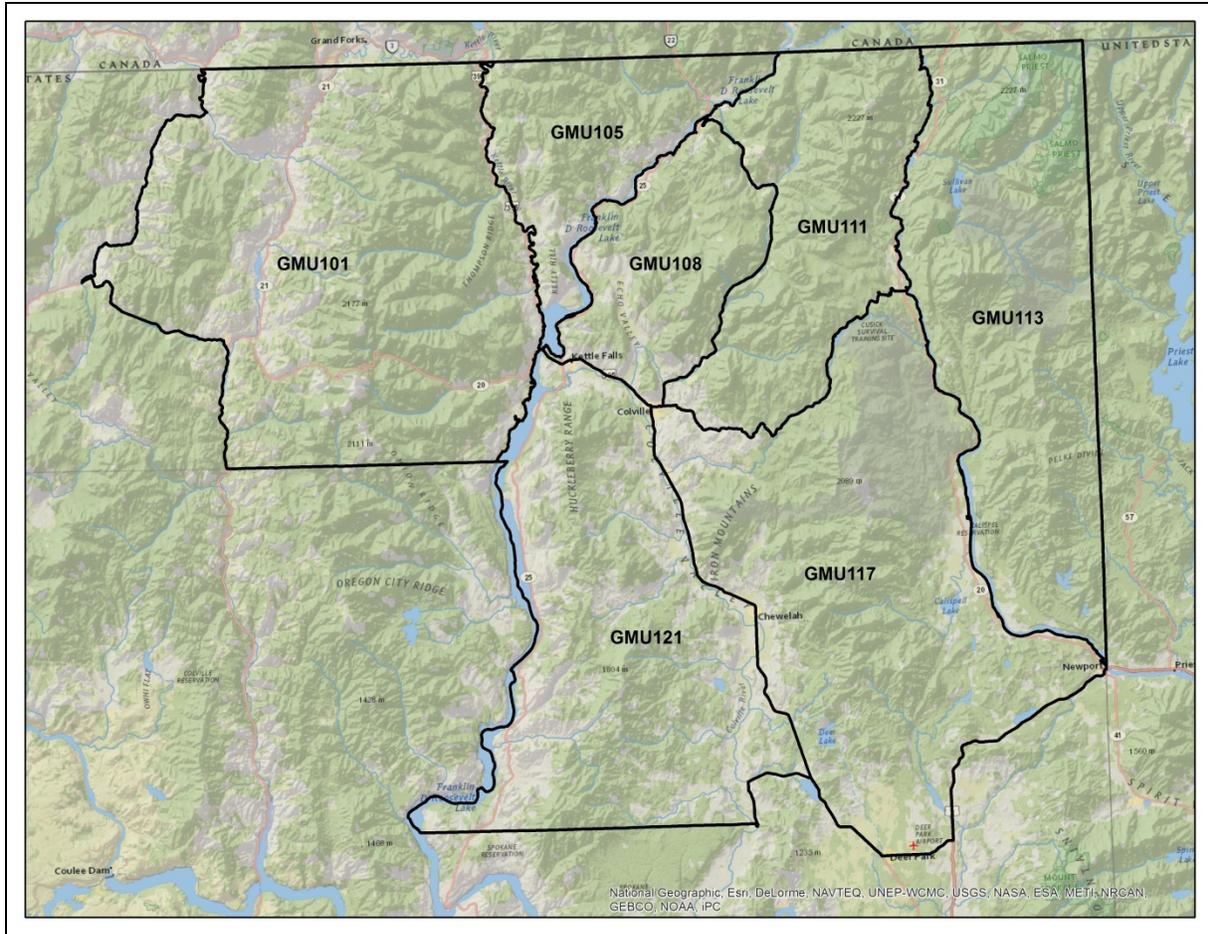


FIGURE 2. GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS (GMUS) WITHIN DISTRICT 1.

Elevations vary 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 is extensive within District 1, covering about two thirds or 68 percent of the district’s landscape. Agricultural land, range land, and water features cover most of the balance.

Over one third (37 percent) of the land mass in District 1 is public land, mostly national forest, but also state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Additional public lands include federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and a few other government agencies. Most of the lands outside of Indian reservations are open to public hunting. There are large timber company lands open to public hunting, although not necessarily open to private motorized vehicles.

District 1 is well-known for its white-tailed deer, moose, and turkey hunting opportunities. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, forest grouse, and cougar.

Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and days per kill for most game species in District 1 during the 2013 general hunting season and how those estimates compare to the 2012 season and the 5-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends or permit statistics, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

TABLE 1. HARVEST AND DAYS PER KILL FOR MOST GAME SPECIES FOUND IN DISTRICT 1 DURING THE 2012 AND 2013 HUNTING SEASONS. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE AND A COMPARISON OF 2013 ESTIMATES TO 2012 ESTIMATES AND THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE.

Species	Harvest					Days/Kill				
	5-yr avg.	2012	2013	% change (5yr)	% change (2012)	5-yr avg.	2012	2013	% change (5yr)	% change (2012)
Elk	228	224	229	0%	+2%	88.7	83.4	88.9	0%	7%
Deer	4774	4745	4971	+4%	+5%	21.3	19.1	19.0	-11%	-1%
Bear	276	339	182	-34%	-46%	79.2	58.8	115.2	45%	96%
Cougar	19	24	34	+79%	+42%	Not available		***	***	
Ducks	8283	10555	11535	+39%	+9%	0.5	0.5	0.5	0%	0%
Geese	1979	1957	2992	+51%	+53%	1.3	1.5	1.1	-15%	-27%
Turkey	1908	1665	1659	-13%	0%	10	10	10	0%	0%
Forest Grouse	19534	10508	12532	-36%	19%	2.9	2.1	2.2	-24%	5%
Mourning Dove	82	178	47	-43%	-74%	0.8	0.4	2.6	225%	550%
Quail	896	1527	861	-4%	-44%	1.4	0.8	1.2	-14%	50%
Pheasant	953	1180	682	-28%	-42%	1.8	0.9	2.7	50%	200%
Rabbits	335	366	187	-44%	-49%	7.9	5.0	11.5	46%	130%

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

All elk that occur in District 1 are Rocky Mountain elk. There are 10 identified elk herds in Washington, and elk in District 1 are part of the Selkirk Elk Herd. The quality of elk hunting opportunities in District 1 vary from poor to fair depending on the GMU, but in general, opportunities are marginal. Elk are widely scattered in small groups throughout the densely forested region of northeastern Washington. As a consequence, elk in northeastern Washington are difficult to both survey and harvest. Population data are limited, but there is currently no clear indication that bull to cow ratios or opportunities for quality hunting are declining. The best elk hunting opportunities occur in GMUs associated with the Pend Oreille Sub-herd area which include 113 (Selkirk), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 111 (Aladdin). Elk hunter numbers in the Colville District have increased over the last several years. In recent years, WDFW provided increased opportunity or season timing to improve equity among the three hunting method groups. Hunter participation and harvest is now well dispersed across the Colville District through all three hunting methods.

In Washington, elk are managed at the Population Management Unit (PMU) level, while harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. 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 are summarized at that level as well. The management objective for elk in the Colville District is being met with a sustained annual harvest of a viable and productive elk population with desirable population characteristics. While there are unreliable post-season survey data on bull to cow ratios, the prime bull (6 point +) percentage in the 2013 bull harvest was 24% which is indicative of desirable population characteristics for elk productivity and quality bull hunting opportunities.

Currently, WDFW does not make formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor elk populations in District 1. Harvest levels have been relatively low for the northern Selkirk Herd compared with other regions of Washington State. Consequently, devoting substantial resources to surveying bull to cow ratios has not been a high priority. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per 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 hope to begin monitoring populations using formal sampling designs in the future.

Increasing hunter harvest, winter and spring surveys, and anecdotal information indicate that elk populations are higher than they have ever been in northeastern Washington. High calf ratios as observed in spring composition surveys support the general observation of a growing elk population. 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 at wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/game/.

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” This is not always an easy question to answer because it depends on what hunting method 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.

Some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature bull. Although large mature bulls do exist in District 1, they are not very abundant and we usually advise hunters to apply for special permit opportunities in District 3 (Blue Mountains) if they are searching for a better opportunity to harvest a large mature bull.

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 1. 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 1 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are the 3-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 as GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of elk harvested over the past 3 years during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 108 (Douglas) and 113 (Selkirk) has been 9 and 23 elk, respectively. Just looking at total harvest suggests a much higher density of elk in GMU 113 compared to GMU 108. However, when harvest is expressed as elk harvested per square mile, we come up with an estimate of 0.03 in both GMUs, which suggests elk densities are probably more similar between the two GMUs than total harvest indicates.

Each GMU was ranked for elk harvested/mi² (bulls and cows), hunters/mi², and hunter success rates for the general season only. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum (lower rank sums are better). 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 all GMUs in the early season, but only 5 GMUs are open for any bull during late archery seasons. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs.

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. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A 3-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE. AS A GENERALIZATION, THE LOWER THE RANK SUM, THE BETTER THE OVERALL ELK HUNTING OPPORTUNITY IS WITHIN A GMU.

MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi²)	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	2	.002	4	104	.09	1	2%	4	9
105	296	6	.02	3	153	.52	3	4%	2	8
108	289	9	.03	2	159	.55	4	5%	1	7
111	455	10	.02	3	322	.71	5	3%	3	11
113	736	23	.03	2	711	.97	7	3%	3	12
117	954	35	.04	1	825	.86	6	4%	2	9
121	796	17	.02	3	368	.46	2	4%	2	7

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101*	1,103	7	.01	3	60	.05	1	11%	1	5
105	296	5	.02	2	63	.21	3	8%	3	8
108	289	4	.01	3	43	.15	2	9%	2	7
111	455	9	.02	2	104	.23	4	9%	2	8
113	736	19	.03	1	274	.37	5	7%	4	10
117	954	30	.03	1	384	.40	6	8%	3	10
121	796	10	.01	3	122	.15	2	8%	3	8
MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	0	0	2	29	.03	1	1%	6	9
105	296	4	.01	1	50	.17	4	8%	1	6
108	289	2	.01	1	29	.10	3	5%	4	8
111	455	4	.01	1	83	.18	5	5%	4	10
113	736	9	.01	1	220	.30	6	4%	5	12
117	954	12	.01	1	175	.18	5	7%	2	8
121	796	4	.01	1	62	.08	2	6%	3	6

* GMUs bolded in the archery section are open during early and late archery seasons, all GMUs allow for antlerless harvest in the early archery season.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Elk populations typically do not fluctuate dramatically from year to year, but periodic severe winters can trigger substantial die-offs. The 2013-14 winter was moderate and consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2012 and 2013 seasons. That said, 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.

HOW TO FIND ELK

When hunting elk in District 1, 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. Elk within District 1 are scattered in small groups and often stay on the move throughout the year. With a lot of scouting to “pattern” these groups it is possible to increase your chances of harvesting an elk. Many if not most hunters spend great amounts of their time focusing on forest clear-cuts, which makes a lot of sense because elk often forage in clear-cuts and are highly visible when they do. However, there are many elk (especially bulls) that do not frequent clear-cuts 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 clear-cuts 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 higher elevation stands that provide cover and are adjacent to open hillsides and/or clear-cuts. During early seasons when it is warm, these areas often include 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. Any snow cover generally enhances the elk hunters ability to find elk tracks. Hunting right after a fresh snow usually presents a particularly good advantage in tracking down an individual or group of elk, hot on the trail so to speak. Lastly, hunters should not let a locked gate in an otherwise open area (provided that non-motorized access is allowed) keep them from going in and searching 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 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.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

In northeastern Washington, white-tailed deer are the most abundant deer species. Mule deer are locally common, especially in the higher elevations and throughout Ferry County, but their overall numbers are low compared to white-tailed deer on a district scale. Deer hunting opportunities in District 1 vary from fair to excellent, depending on the GMU. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 1 generally occur in GMUs 101 (Sherman) and 121 (Huckleberry). All GMUs within the District offer good opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer.

The white-tailed deer harvest management objective is to provide antlered and antlerless hunting opportunity for all hunting methods whenever feasible. The buck escapement goal is to maintain a ratio of at least 15 bucks per 100 does in the post-hunting season population and allow populations to increase by reducing the amount of antlerless hunting opportunity, while still attempting to maintain some opportunity for all user groups.

Management goals for mule deer are to provide conservative hunting opportunity, maintain a range of 15 to 19 bucks per 100 does in the post-hunting season population, and allow population levels to increase by managing antlerless hunting opportunity.

Surveys for deer in District 1 are conducted before the hunting season. Pre-season ratios come from ground surveys conducted during August (for buck to doe ratio) and September (for fawn to doe ratio). These ground-based surveys provide an estimate of fawn production for the year and buck ratios prior to hunting season (Figure 3).

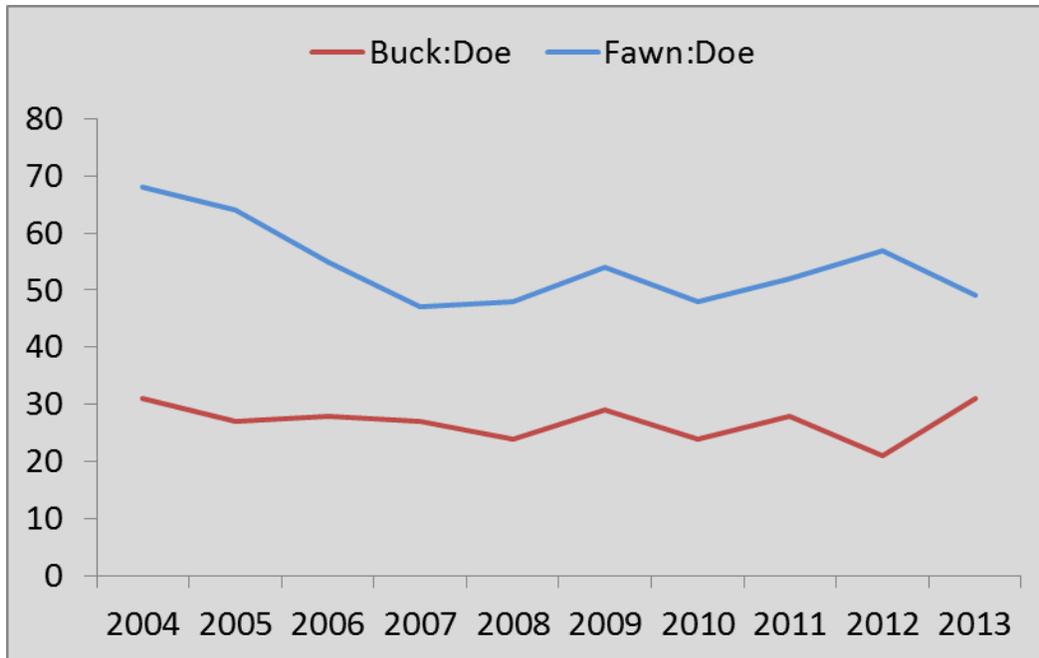


FIGURE 3. PRE-SEASON WHITE-TAILED DEER RATIOS FROM GROUND SURVEYS WITHIN DISTRICT 1. RATIOS ARE EXPRESSED AS BUCKS OR FAWNS PER 100 DOES.

All available harvest and survey data indicate white-tailed deer populations appear to be slightly increasing in all GMUs associated with District 1. Mule deer populations appear to be stable or slightly decreasing. For more detailed information related to the status of 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](#).

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” This is not always an easy question to answer because it depends on what hunting method 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 1. 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 relatively 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 3-year averages for each statistic. Mule deer and white-tailed deer are combined for this table, but it is a reasonable assumption that in GMUs other than 101, most of the deer harvested are white-tails. 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.

Each GMU was ranked for deer harvested/mi², hunters/mi², and hunter success rates. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. 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. GMUs 117 and 121 have a 4-pt. minimum harvest restriction for white-tailed deer during most general seasons.
2. Mule deer have a 3-pt minimum harvest restriction during all general seasons except early archery in GMU 101.
3. Only GMUs 101,105 and 108 are open for any white-tailed deer during the late archery season and GMUs 121 and 117 offer a very short late archery season for 4-point minimum buck or antlerless white-tailed deer.

One of the best opportunities for Youth, Senior, and Disabled modern firearm hunters to take a white-tailed deer is on the first Thursday through Sunday after the October season opener (always on Saturday). For this year, these dates are October 16-19, 2014. During these 4 days these hunters can take either an antlerless white-tailed deer or a legal buck.

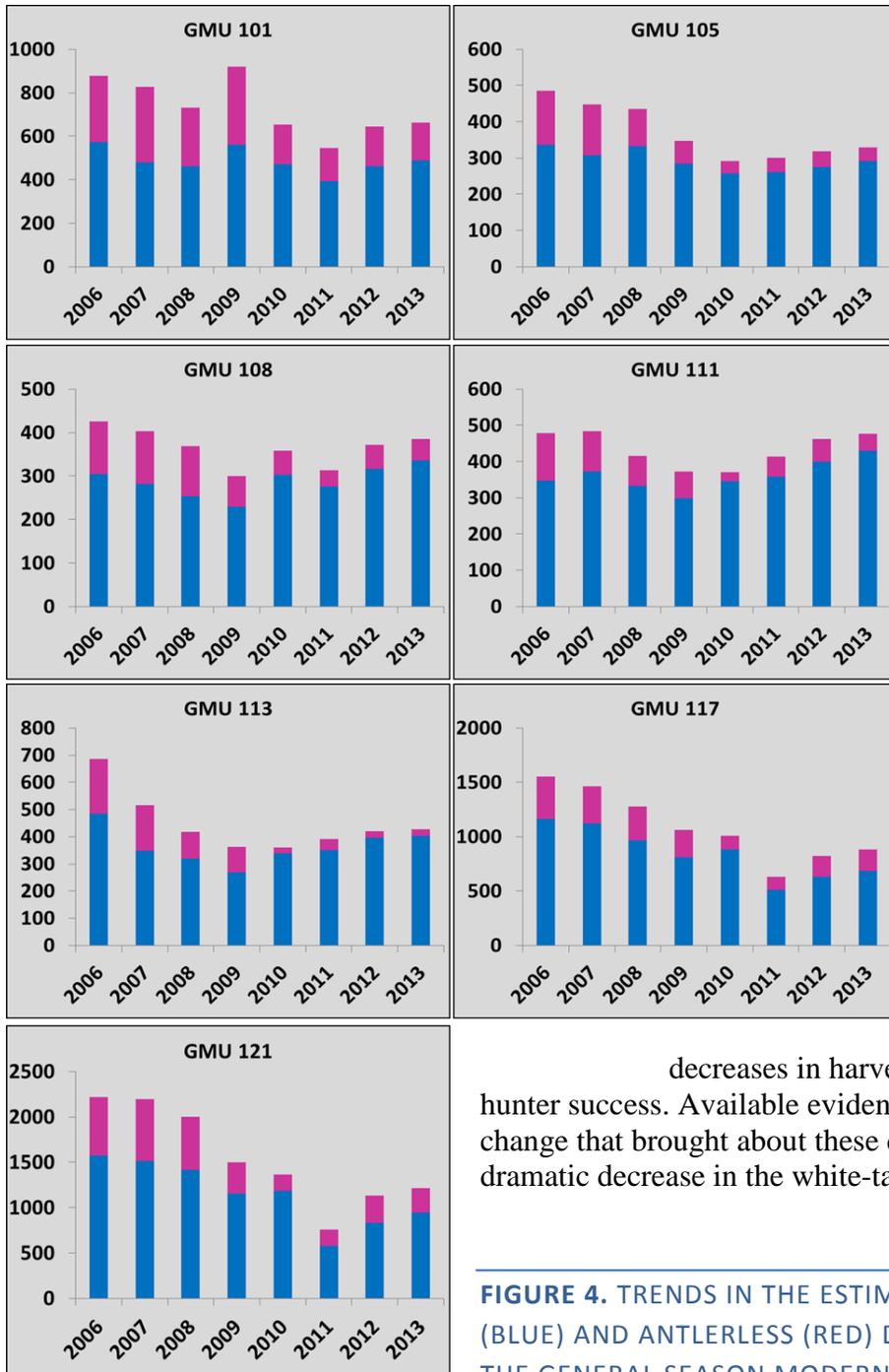
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MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	591	.54	6	2825	2.56	2	21%	5	13
105	296	295	1.0	3	1031	3.48	5	29%	2	10
108	289	335	1.16	2	1046	3.62	6	32%	1	9
111	455	443	.97	4	1515	3.33	4	29%	2	10
113	736	340	.46	7	1640	2.23	1	21%	5	13
117	954	651	.68	5	2994	3.14	3	22%	4	12
121	796	977	1.23	1	3515	4.42	7	28%	3	11

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	237	.21	1	806	.73	7	29%	2	10
105	296	26	.09	4	130	.44	4	20%	5	13
108	289	42	.15	2	108	.37	3	39%	1	6
111	455	6	.01	6	55	.12	1	11%	6	13
113	736	12	.02	5	115	.16	2	10%	7	14
117	954	137	.14	3	577	.60	6	24%	4	13
121	796	111	.14	3	444	.56	5	25%	3	11
MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	49	.04	2	192	.17	6	26%	1	9
105	296	6	.02	3	29	.10	4	21%	3	10
108	289	5	.02	3	24	.08	3	22%	2	8
111	455	10	.02	3	49	.11	5	20%	4	12
113	736	69	.09	1	337	.46	7	21%	3	11
117	954	5	.01	4	59	.06	1	7%	6	11
121	796	10	.01	4	54	.07	2	18%	5	11

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Harvest has been gradually increasing in District 1 over the past two years and we expect this trend to continue. Fall surveys for the past two years also have yielded slightly higher buck to doe and fawn to doe ratios. Recent moderate winters have likely contributed to increased over-winter survival of deer in District 1. While hunter check stations alongside state highways are



not mandatory stops, we experienced an increase in deer checked in 2013, and this could also be an indication of increasing hunter success.

A good predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent trends in harvest and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill. Figures 4 and 5 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 1. Keep in mind, that as of 2011, a 4-pt minimum restriction was imposed for white-tailed deer in GMUs 117 and 121 which led to

decreases in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Available evidence points to this regulation change that brought about these decreases and not a dramatic decrease in the white-tailed deer population.

FIGURE 4. TRENDS IN THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BUCKS (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS (RED) DEER HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL SEASON MODERN FIREARM,

MUZZLELOADER, AND ARCHERY DEER SEASONS COMBINED IN EACH GMU FROM 2006 – 2013. HARVEST TOTALS DO NOT INCLUDE TRIBAL HARVEST OR SPECIAL PERMIT HARVEST.

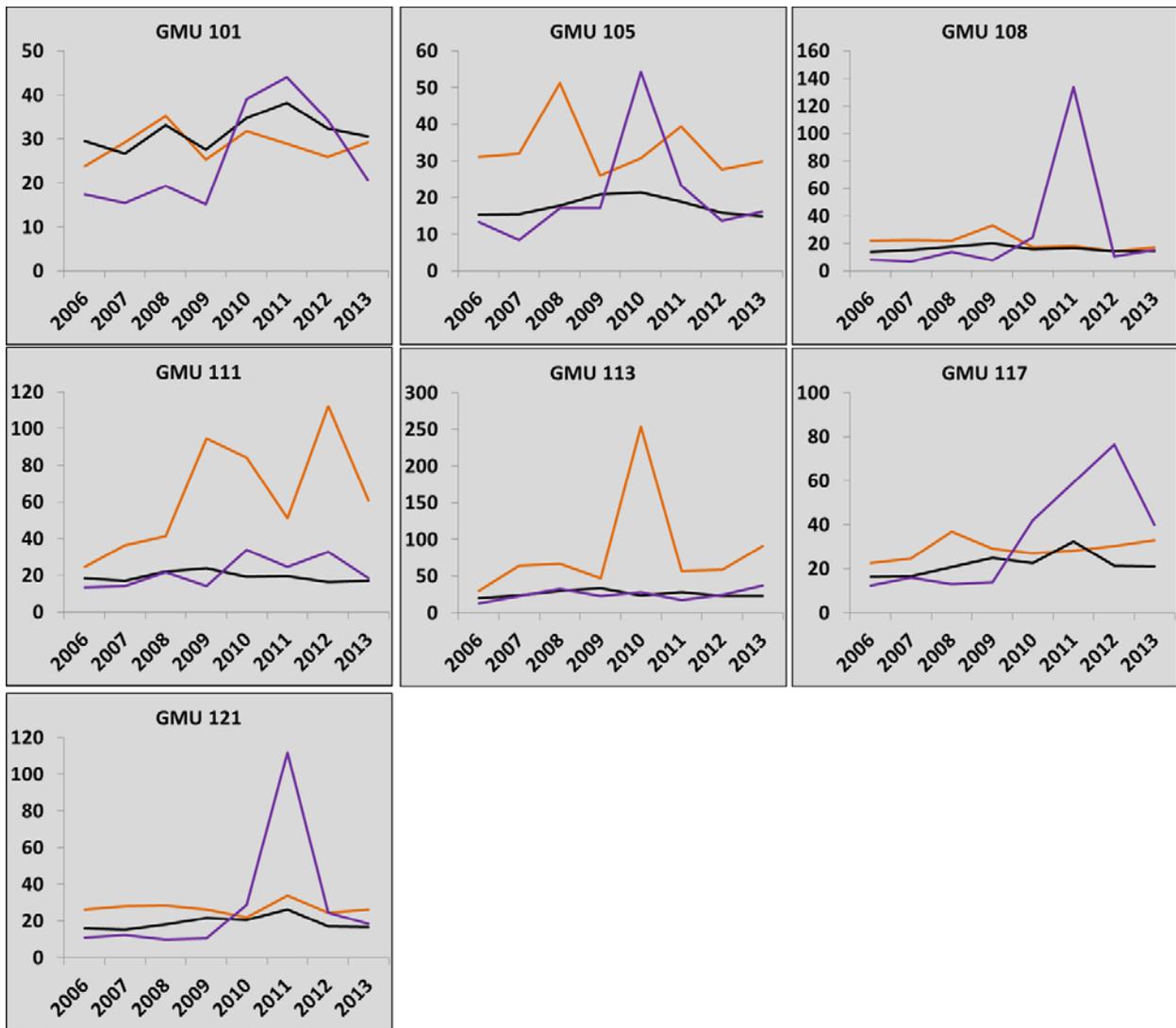


FIGURE 5. TREND IN DAYS PER KILL FOR ARCHERY (PURPLE), MUZZLELOADER (ORANGE), AND MODERN FIREARM (BLACK) DURING THE GENERAL SEASON FOR DEER IN EACH GMU WITHIN DISTRICT 1.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT WHITE-TAILS

As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a white-tailed deer in District 1 is scouting. White-tails occur throughout the District and occur in nearly every habitat type that is present. 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.

Many hunters you see will be hunting in or adjacent to agricultural fields or recent forest timber harvest areas 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 more open areas at night and at dawn and dusk, especially once they have been disturbed by human presence. Therefore, it is advantageous for hunters to seek out areas a short to moderate distance away from these openings which provide more cover because often times, 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.

The traditional approaches to hunting white-tails generally include the following: Still-hunting, which is where the hunter is moving, but very slowly through a “patch” of habitat, stopping frequently to scan or glass with binoculars the vegetative cover ahead. The hunter looks for parts of a deer, like legs, an antler, or a portion of the body or head, as opposed to the whole deer which is usually not visible through the vegetation. Stand hunting is another technique. This method involves the hunter patiently sitting (rather than standing) in a treestand or on a stump, against a tree trunk, on a ridge rock, etc. in high deer use areas (highly traveled trails, habitat edges, bottlenecks, and funnels, etc.) until the deer show up. A third deer hunting approach is conducting drives. This technique involves at least 2 hunters, but ordinarily even larger groups to maximize its effectiveness. Here the hunters divide into “drivers” and “blockers”. The blockers position themselves in an organized spacing often downwind of a manageably sized patch of deer bedding habitat (thick woods, forested swamp, or heavy brush field). The drivers then slowly hike through the habitat patch alerting the deer and hopefully “pushing” them to the blockers. Sometimes it’s a good idea to post one blocker at the front of the habitat patch behind the drivers in the event that any deer double back to evade the drivers. Although each of these approaches is highly effective, there is another technique that is not as well-known or used as much as it could 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 here as well, especially in the days leading up to the rut (deer breeding season) in mid-November. A quick Google search on this topic will yield plenty of evidence to illustrate the effectiveness of this technique when conditions are right.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT MULE DEER

Mule deer occur in 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. As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a mule deer in District 1 is scouting. The classical western method of hunting mule deer is sometimes called glass & stalk. Here the hunter uses good optics, binoculars and spotting scope, to scan from ridge tops and other vantage points to find the mule deer, pick out suitable bucks, and then stalk them to within shooting distance. Ordinarily the stalk entails a strategic hike and cautious sneak action. Much of District 1 does not offer the open country required for this method of hunting, but in some places, it does, and the effect can be deadly.

DEER AREAS

There are three Deer Areas in District 1. These include Republic (Area 1030), Parker Lake (Area 1031), and the Highway 395 Corridor (Area 1035). These Deer Areas are described in the Big Game Pamphlet in the section on Area Descriptions. They each offer deer hunting by special permit only that go beyond the general season opportunities. Note that the Parker Lake Area (1031) is only open for hunting by special permit.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

There are no notable hunting changes for the 2014 general hunting season.

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The goals for black bear management in Washington are to: 1) preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage black bear and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations; 2) minimize threats to public safety from black bears, while at the same time maintaining a sustainable and viable bear population; 3) manage black bear for a variety of recreational, educational and aesthetic purposes including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, wildlife viewing, and photography; and 4) manage populations statewide for a sustained yield. For management purposes, the state is divided into 9 black bear management units (BBMUs). Harvest levels vary between BBMU depending on local population dynamics and environmental conditions.

District 1 consists of GMUs that are part of the Northeastern BBMU, which is one of nine BBMUs defined by WDFW. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for the Northeastern 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 1.

Black bears occur throughout District 1, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a bear likely occur in GMUs 101 (Sherman), 117 (49 Degrees North) and 121 (Huckleberry).

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Although there are hunters that specifically target black bears, we suspect that most bears are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest and hunter success can vary quite a bit from one year to the next. Since 2004, hunter success in District 1 GMUs has varied from 4% to 18%. Hunter success is likely higher, however, for those hunters that specifically hunt bears versus those that buy a bear tag just in case they see one while they are deer or elk hunting.

Overall, annual bear harvest during the general bear season in District 1 showed an increasing trend from 2004 to 2007 before it declined sharply during the 2008 season. Harvest continued to fluctuate up and down, but in 2013 it sharply declined again (Figure 6).

At the GMU level, most black bears will likely be harvested in GMUs 101 (Sherman), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry). Harvest numbers during the 2013 season compared to long-term (10-year) and short-term (5-year) averages suggests that the bear harvest has been decreasing in District 1 (Figure 7).

With only one year of decreasing bear harvest, it is hard to say if this is a temporary trend or a long-term trend. Gauging from the number of observed bears and bear complaints within the District, we expect bear harvest to be higher this year than last year and closer to the 5-year average.

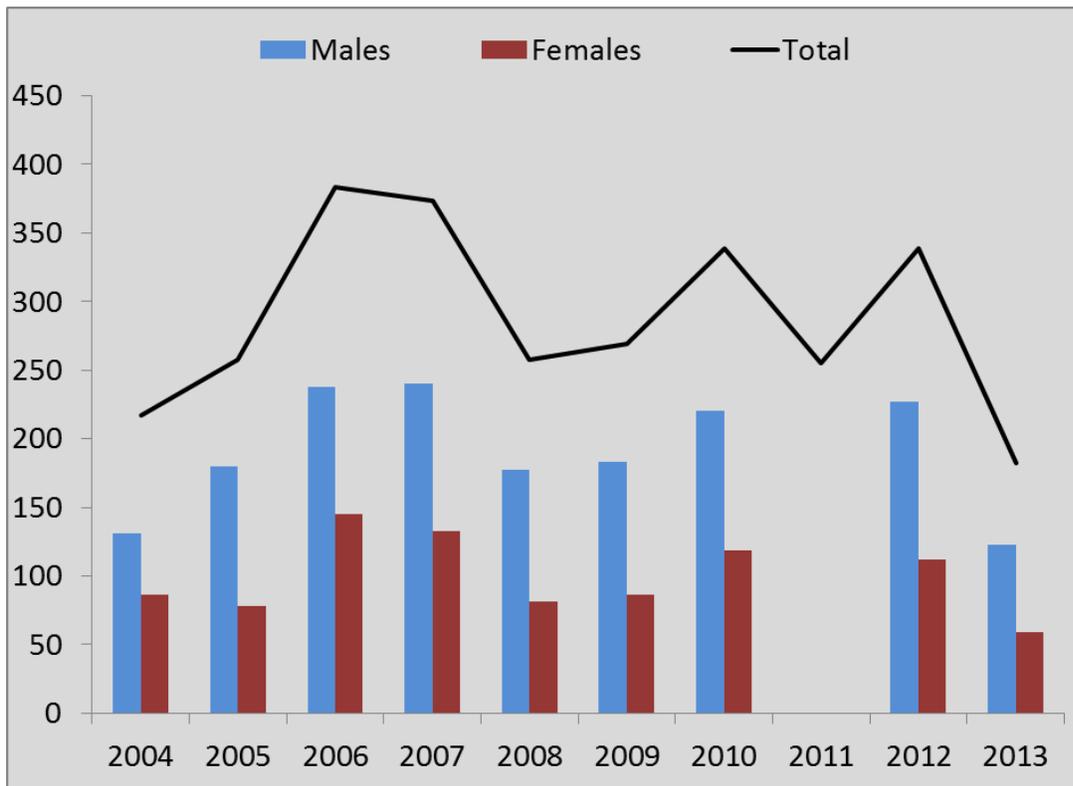


FIGURE 6. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 1, 2004–2013. HARVEST ESTIMATES DO NOT INCLUDE BEARS HARVESTED DURING SPRING PERMIT SEASONS OR BEARS THAT WERE REMOVED BECAUSE THEY WERE CAUSING DAMAGE TO PRIVATE PROPERTY. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

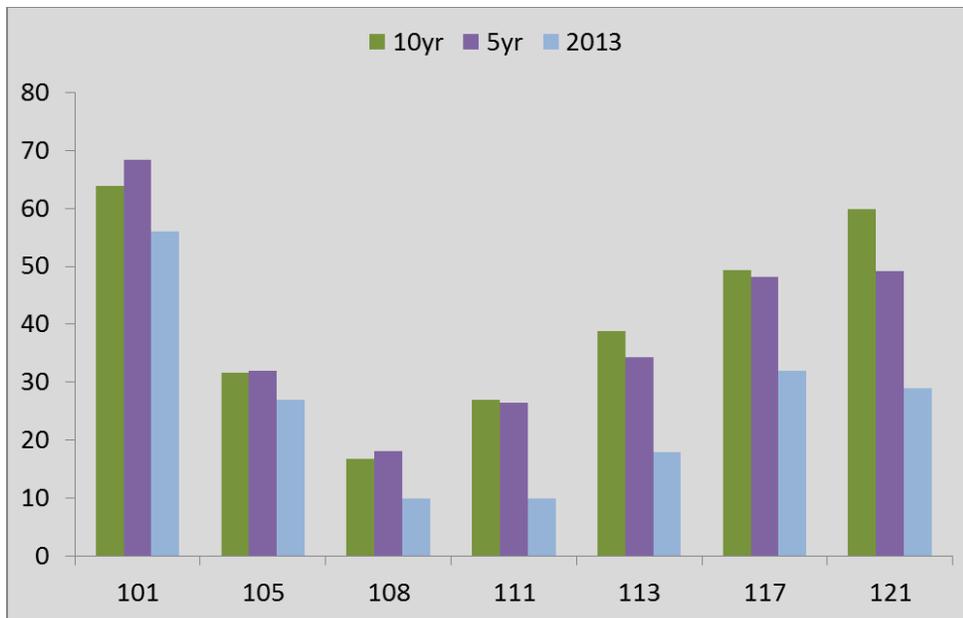


FIGURE 7. THE NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU DURING THE 2013 GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 1. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE 10-YEAR AND 5-YEAR AVERAGE FOR TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU.

HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR

Scouting is an extremely important factor that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 1. Although black bears are fairly common and occur in some areas at 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. In the early fall, hunters should focus their efforts at higher elevations and in open terrain (e.g. open hillsides). Huckleberries ripen throughout the summer, but in the early fall the most berries remaining are typically at higher elevations. A good huckleberry patch yielding lots of fruit would be a good place to hunt.

Bears can also be located in recent timber harvests that contain a large number of berry-producing shrubs including huckleberries, serviceberries, snowberries, soapberries, and thimbleberries. During the fall, hunters need to find openings 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 area often. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching these areas, they stand a reasonable chance of harvesting that bear. Patience is the key.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2014 season.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars occur throughout District 1, but densities likely vary among GMUs. Cougar populations in District 1 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 hunting implement restriction, 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 desire to hunt cougar after December 31, you need to first confirm that the cougar season is open in the area you intend to hunt. Harvest guidelines for each Hunt Area located in District 1 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 2013 HARVEST LEVELS FOR THE 6 COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 1.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	2013-2014 Harvest
101	7-9	5
105	2	2
108, 111	5-6	6
113	4-6	5
117	6-8	12
121	5-6	4

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Cougar harvest in District 1 has been increasing since 2009 (Figure 9). The average age at harvest has been variable for both males and females, but is typically 3 years or younger (Figure 10).

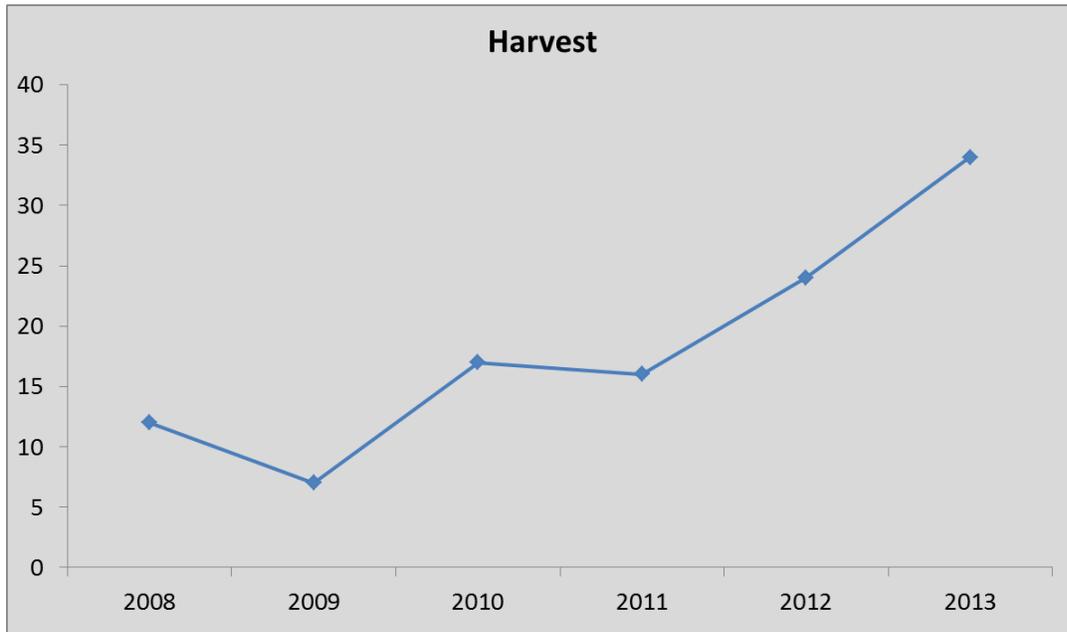


FIGURE 9. GENERAL SEASON COUGAR HARVEST IN DISTRICT 1, 2008-2013.

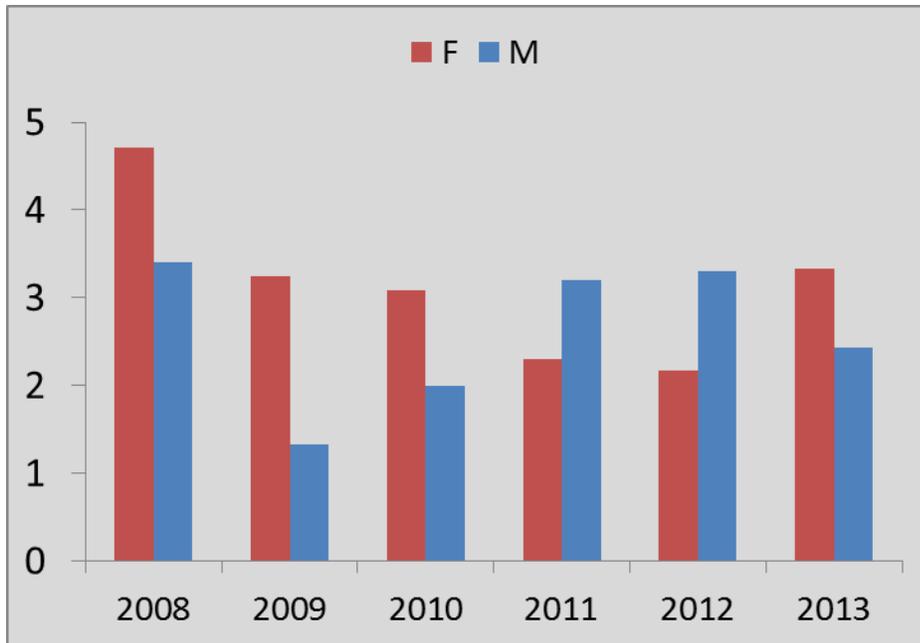


FIGURE 10. AVERAGE AGE OF THE FEMALE (RED BARS) AND MALE (BLUE BARS) COUGAR HARVEST DURING THE GENERAL SEASON IN DISTRICT 1, 2008-2013.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2014 season.

FOREST GROUSE

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

There are three species of grouse that occur in District 1-- ruffed grouse, dusky (blue) grouse, and spruce grouse. Ruffed grouse are the most abundant and occur at lower elevations and valley bottoms. Spruce grouse are usually located in lodgepole pine, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce stands. In District 1, these habitats are prevalent within Kettle and Selkirk Mountain Ranges. Dusky 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 forest grouse populations in District 1. 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 1, grouse populations appear to have declined since 2009 as CPUE has slowly declined from 0.55 birds per hunter day to approximately 0.45 birds per hunter day during the 2013 season (Figure 11).

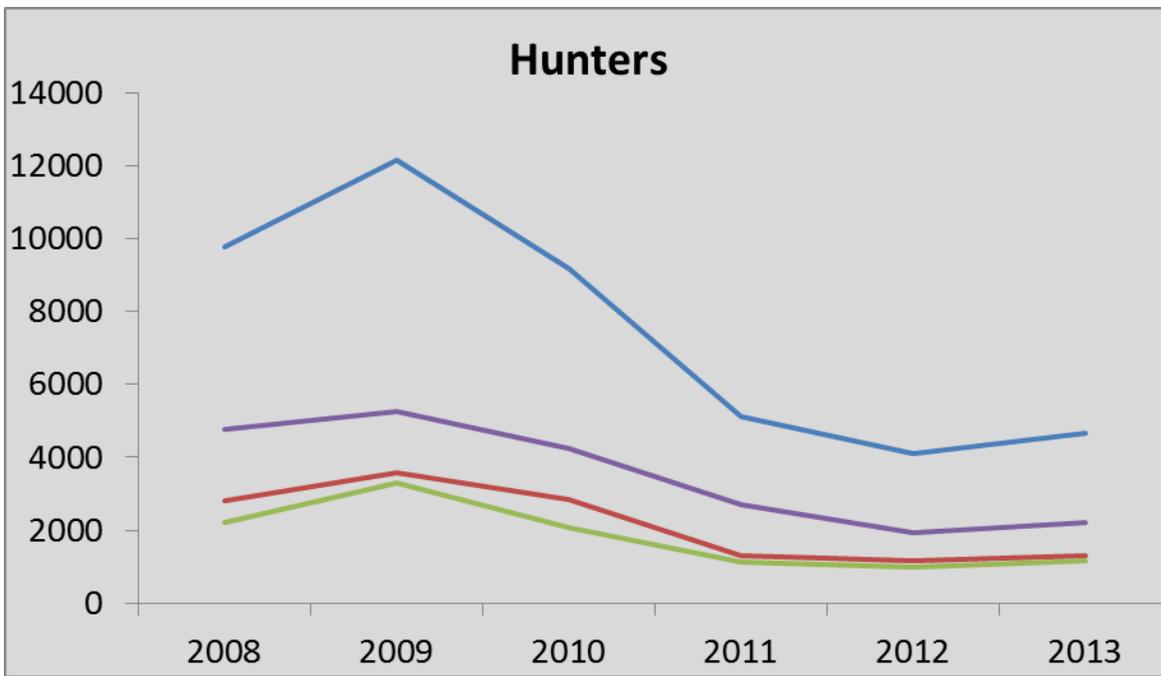
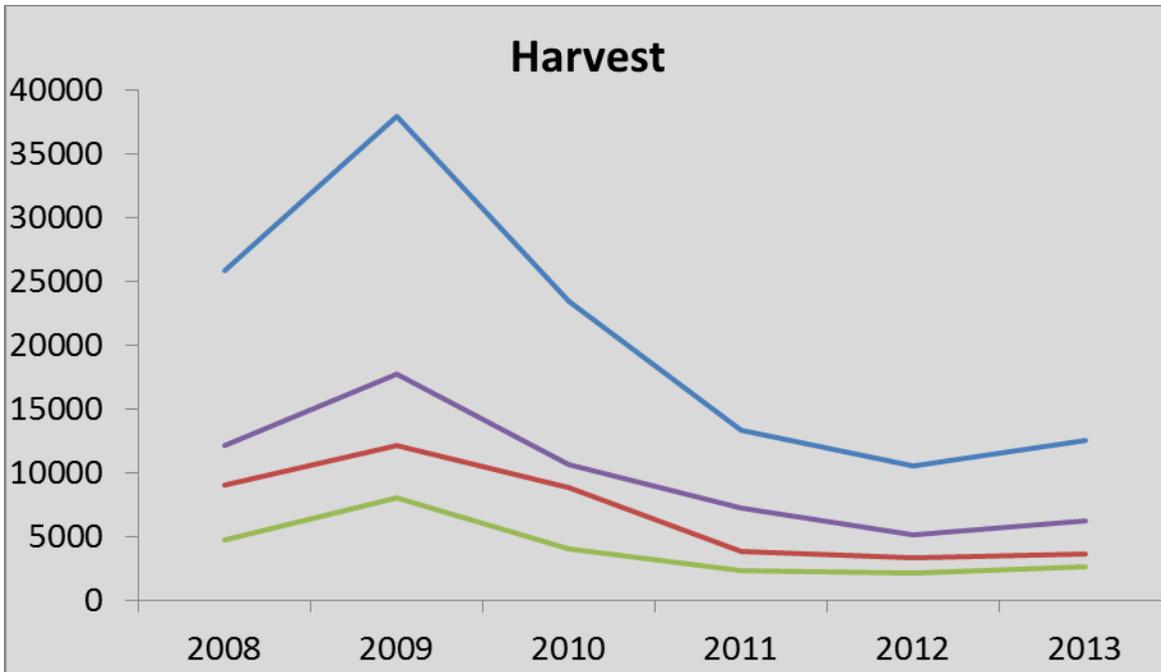
HARVEST TRENDS AND 2013 PROSPECTS

The total number of grouse harvested in District 1 has gradually been declining since 2009. On the other hand, so have hunter numbers, especially over the past few years.

Regardless of where they hunt, hunters could expect to bag somewhere between 0.4 and 0.5 grouse per day hunted.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt grouse in District 1 is by walking little used forest 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 much vehicular traffic. Consequently, hunters should target roads behind locked gates and roads that have been decommissioned by the respective landowner. Some forest grouse hunters use trained bird dogs, a team system that can be extremely effective. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's grouse species please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage or [click here](#).



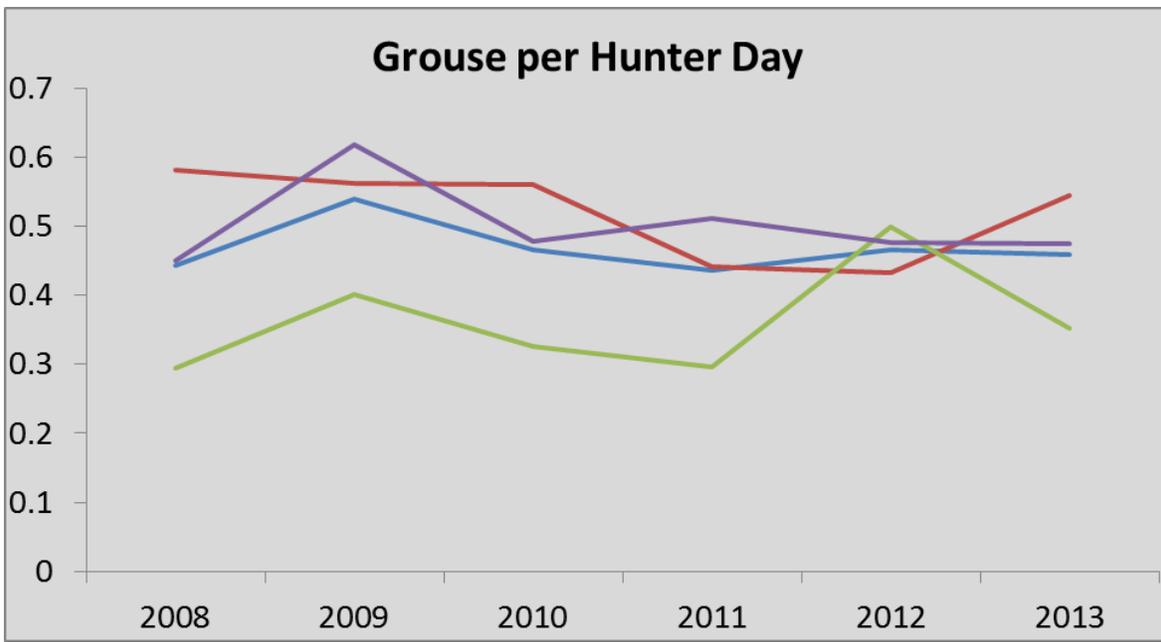
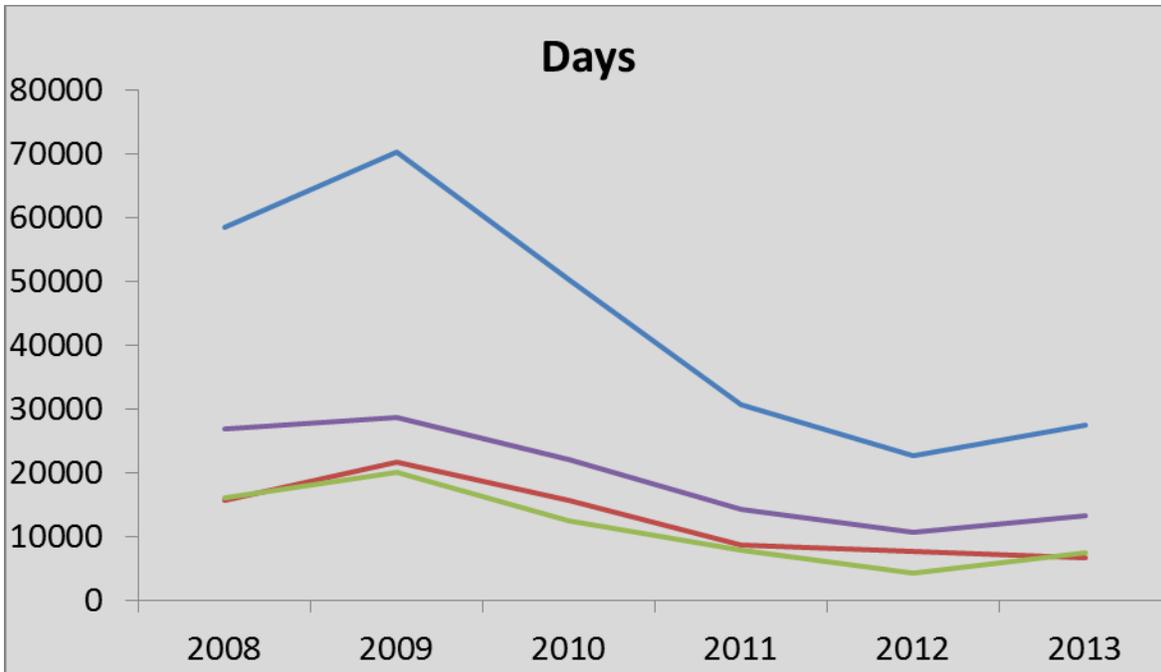


FIGURE 11. TRENDS IN TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, HUNTER DAYS, AND FOREST GROUSE PER HUNTER DAY DURING GROUSE SEASONS IN FERRY COUNTY (RED), STEVENS COUNTY (PURPLE), PEND OREILLE COUNTY (GREEN) AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 1 (BLUE), 2008–2013.

PHEASANTS

There is only a small, range-limited population of wild pheasants in District 1. Consequently, most pheasant hunting opportunity within District 1 is associated with the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement and 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, thousands of pheasants are released at 33 sites and one of those sites (Sherman Creek) occurs in District 1. The Sherman Creek Release Site is located in Ferry County on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (Figure 12).

To protect other wildlife species including waterfowl and raptors, nontoxic shot is now required for all upland bird, dove, and band-tailed pigeon hunting on all pheasant release sites statewide. If you hunt any of these release sites, you may use only approved nontoxic shot (either in shotshells or as loose shot for muzzleloading). Possession of lead shot is also regulated on some wildlife areas. See Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons [pamphlet](#) for more information. To learn more about the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement and Release Program [click here](#).

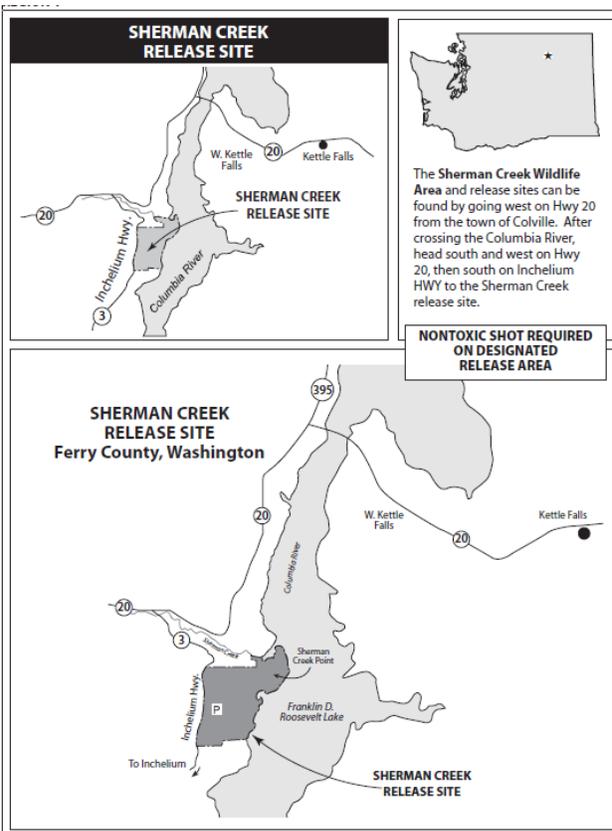


FIGURE 12. MAP OF THE SHERMAN CREEK PHEASANT RELEASE SITE IN FERRY COUNTY.

TURKEYS

The turkeys found in District 1 are Merriam's Wild Turkeys. Merriam's turkeys flourished here after being established in 1961 but then slowly declined. Since a large transplant from South Dakota in 1988-89, this population has steadily expanded its range and density.



FIGURE 13. FALL (RED), SPRING (GREEN), AND TOTAL (BLUE) ESTIMATED TURKEY HARVEST FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 1, 2008 – 2013. DATA FROM 2011 DO NOT HAVE SEPARATE HARVEST ESTIMATES FOR FALL AND SPRING SEASONS.



FIGURE 14. TOTAL NUMBER OF TURKEY HUNTERS (SPRING + FALL) FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 1, 2008 – 2013.

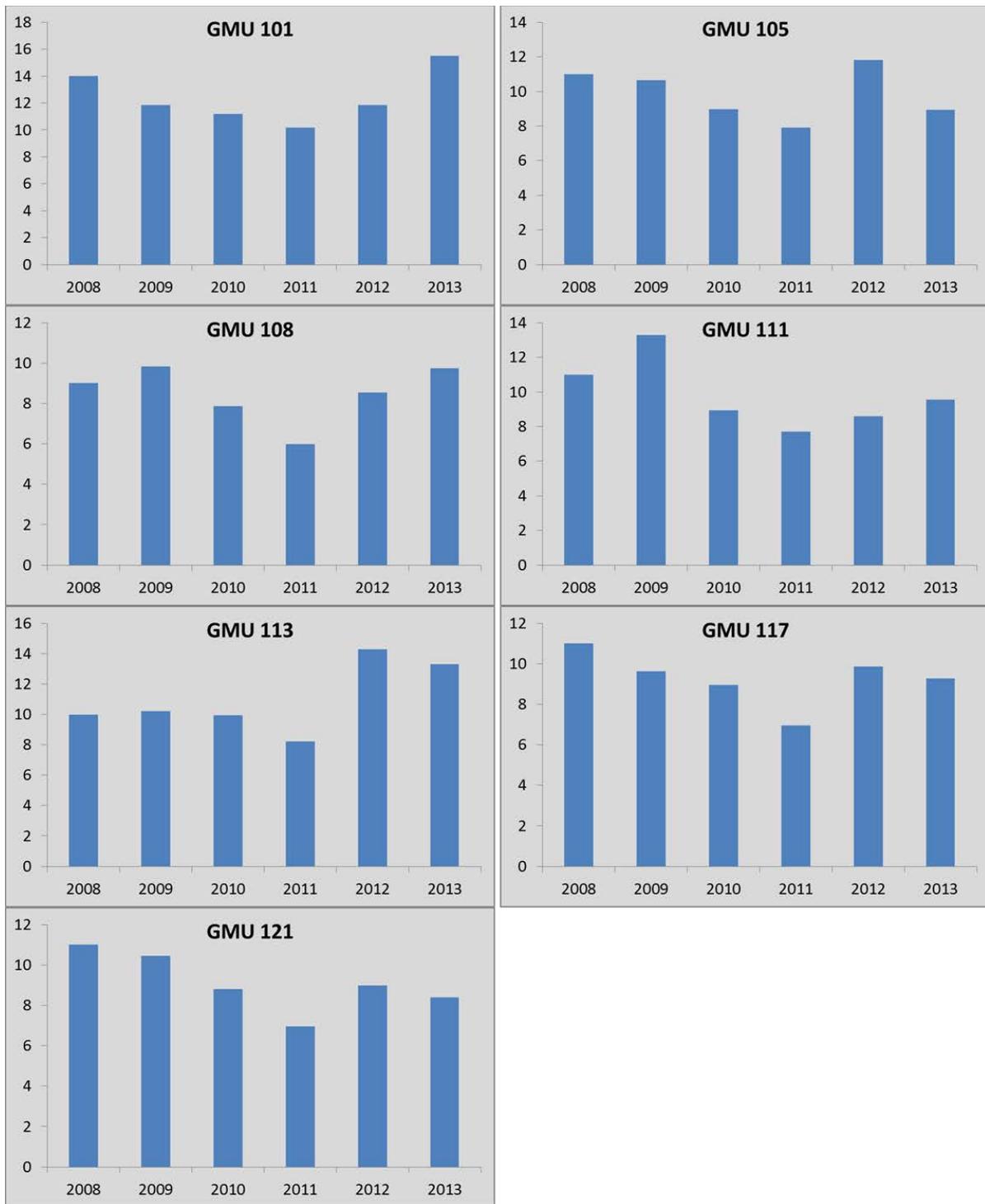


FIGURE 15. TURKEY HUNTER DAYS PER HARVEST FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 1, 2008 – 2013.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT TURKEYS IN THE SPRING

Increasing daylight between late winter and early spring triggers the beginning of breeding season, although unusually prolonged cold, wet, or warm weather may delay or advance it. Gobbling and strutting start well before mating while turkeys are still on their winter range, usually in late March or early April. There are normally two peaks of gobbling—the first when males are calling females not yet nesting, and the second, a few weeks later, when most hens are incubating eggs. Finding these gobbling toms, and moving close enough to call them in without “bumping” (flushing) them is the challenge and excitement to traditional spring turkey hunting.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT TURKEYS IN THE FALL

During fall and winter, the wild turkey’s priorities are food and roosting areas. In the fall, food remains critical for growth of poults (juvenile turkeys) and for adults adding fat reserves, so forest edges that offer seeds, nuts and fruits as well as some green vegetation are sought out. At this time of year, turkeys are at their highest population and widest distribution within northeastern Washington including District 1. Then as autumn wears on and snowfall comes, the turkeys gradually constrict their range to lower elevations. Where agriculture predominates, a mosaic of short grass fields or cropland and forest is generally the best place to find turkeys.

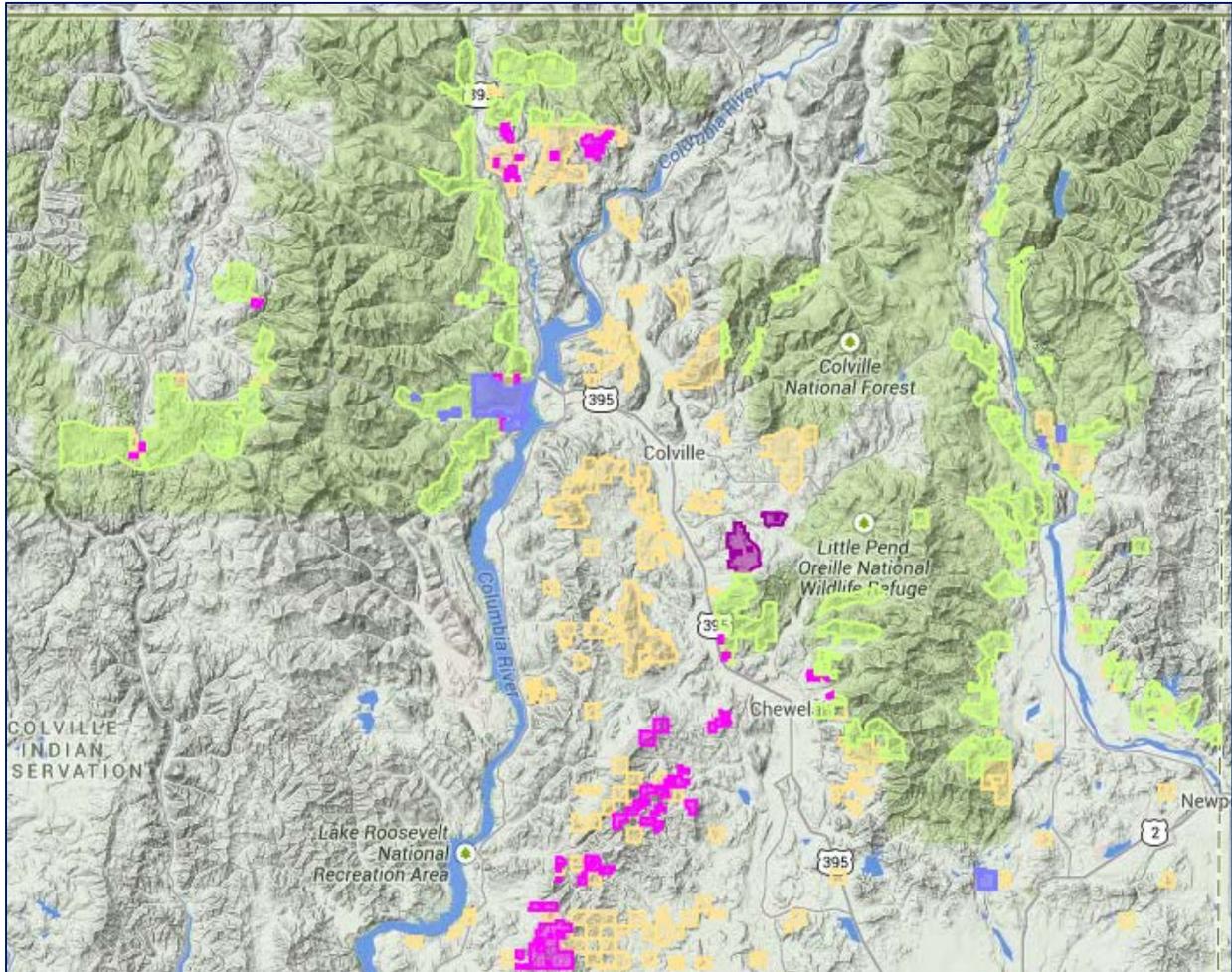


FIGURE 16. MAP DEPICTING PUBLIC LANDS THAT ARE GOOD FOR TURKEY HUNTING. THIS MAP IS PRODUCED BY MAP METRICS AND CAN BE FOUND [HERE](#).

WATERFOWL

COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 1. Common dabbling ducks include mallard, gadwall, American wigeon, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Diving ducks are also present including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, redheads, goldeneyes, and mergansers. Nesting wood ducks can be located in the Pend Oreille, Colville, and Kettle River Valleys and can provide a unique hunting opportunity early in the season. Mallards are the most abundant duck species in Washington and constitute the majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically \geq 50%). They are a commonly harvested duck in District 1 as well.

Canada geese are the only wild goose commonly found within District One. They are abundant in the Pend Oreille, Colville, and Kettle River Valleys, especially in the widest valley bottom areas where there is extensive farmland cultivation.

BEST HUNTING AREAS

PEND OREILLE RIVER

The “upper” Pend Oreille River from Newport downstream to Usk probably offers the best general waterfowl hunting opportunity within northeastern Washington. Outside of the east shoreline alongside the Kalispell Indian Reservation most of the river itself is open for hunting along with a number of islands. In most instances a boat is required, either as a hunting blind in itself or for access to islands and sandbars which are open to hunting. There are also Pend Oreille Public Utility District lands as well as U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service refuge lands (the “Cusick” Unit) open to public hunting. These parcels are located near the mouths of Tacoma and Trimble Creeks into the Pend Oreille River.

Dabbling Ducks: -Moderate numbers during migration, mostly gadwall, wigeon, teal, mallards, and some pintails.

Diving Ducks; Moderate numbers with highest densities during peak migration periods.

Geese: Canada geese occur in greatest abundance in this part of District 1.

LAKE ROOSEVELT

Lake Roosevelt up to the 1310 feet elevation contour is mostly federally owned and managed by the National Park Service. Much of the lake shore also borders the Colville and Spokane Indian Reservations, however, and in these areas the tribes manage the shoreline area. As such, where you can legally hunt is somewhat complicated. A telephone call to the National Park Service for clarification would be prudent before hunting. The NPS Office at Kettle Falls, WA can be reached at 509-738-6266.

Dabbling Ducks: Low to moderate numbers during migration, mostly wigeon and mallards.
Diving Ducks: Relatively few but higher densities during peak migration periods.
Geese: Canada geese have a scattered distribution in this hundred mile long reservoir, and can occur in high numbers during peak migration.

COLVILLE AND KETTLE VALLEYS

Almost all of the valley bottoms are private lands, so obtaining written permission for hunting access is essential. Ducks are most common where there are slow, meandering streams, sloughs, and/or farm ponds. Geese are most common in the agricultural areas.

Dabbling Ducks: Low to moderate numbers during migration, mostly mallards.
Diving Ducks: Relatively few, but higher densities during peak migration periods, especially on the Colville River.
Geese: Canada geese are fairly evenly distributed in the Colville Valley. When heavy snowfall covers fields late in the season, however, they tend to migrate south to warmer, snow-free areas.

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. See [“Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

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 1, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate generally include hay fields and winter wheat (or other cereal grain crop) fields. Because of this, most goose hunting opportunities occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting.

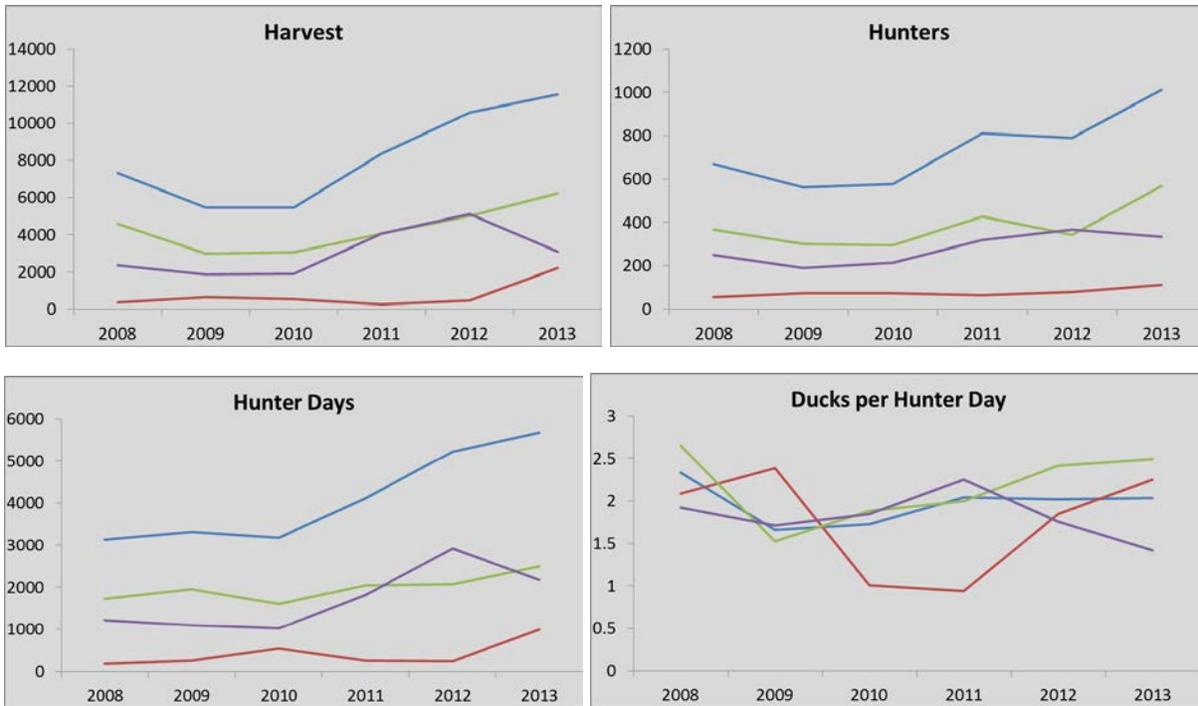


FIGURE 17. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF DUCK HUNTERS, HUNTER DAYS, TOTAL DUCKS HARVESTED, AND DUCKS HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY IN FERRY COUNTY (RED), STEVENS COUNTY (PURPLE), PEND OREILLE COUNTY (GREEN), AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 1 (BLUE), 2008 – 2013.

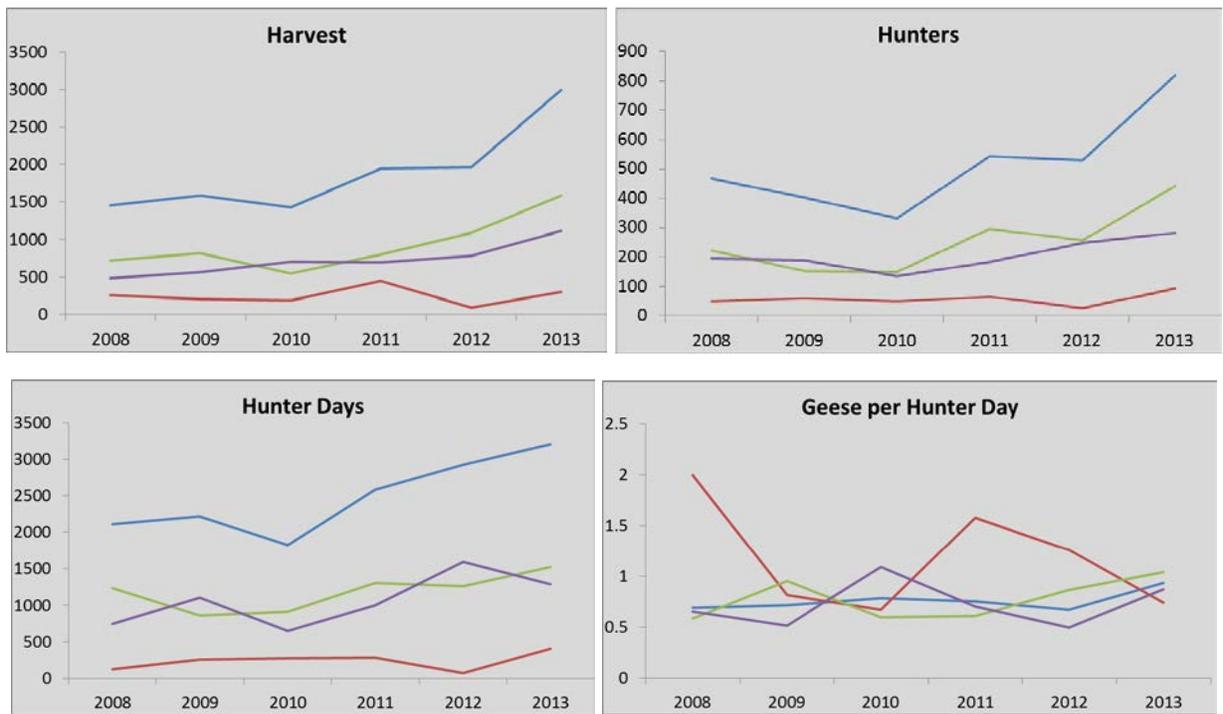


FIGURE 18. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF GOOSE HUNTERS, HUNTER DAYS, TOTAL GEESSE HARVESTED, AND GEESSE HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY IN FERRY COUNTY (RED), STEVENS COUNTY (PURPLE), PEND OREILLE COUNTY (GREEN), AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 1 (BLUE), 2008 – 2013.

OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species that occur in District 1 but are not covered in detail include valley quail, Hungarian (gray) partridge, snowshoe hare, bobcat, and coyote. Additional migratory game birds include mourning dove, Wilson’s (common) snipe, and American coot.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Over a third (approximately 37 percent) of the land mass in District 1 is public, mostly national forest, but also state DNR and WDFW, federal BLM, USFWS, and a few other government agencies. Most of these lands outside of Indian reservations are open to public hunting. The public lands tend to be at higher elevations with steep terrain, a shorter growing season, no row crop agriculture, and in general have a lower density of game animals, especially deer and turkey. GMUs with the most public land include 101 (Sherman), 111 (Aladdin), 113 (Selkirk) and 117 (49 Degrees North).

For more information related to the location of WDFW Wildlife Areas, see Figure 17 and visit the WDFW's hunting access website at 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.

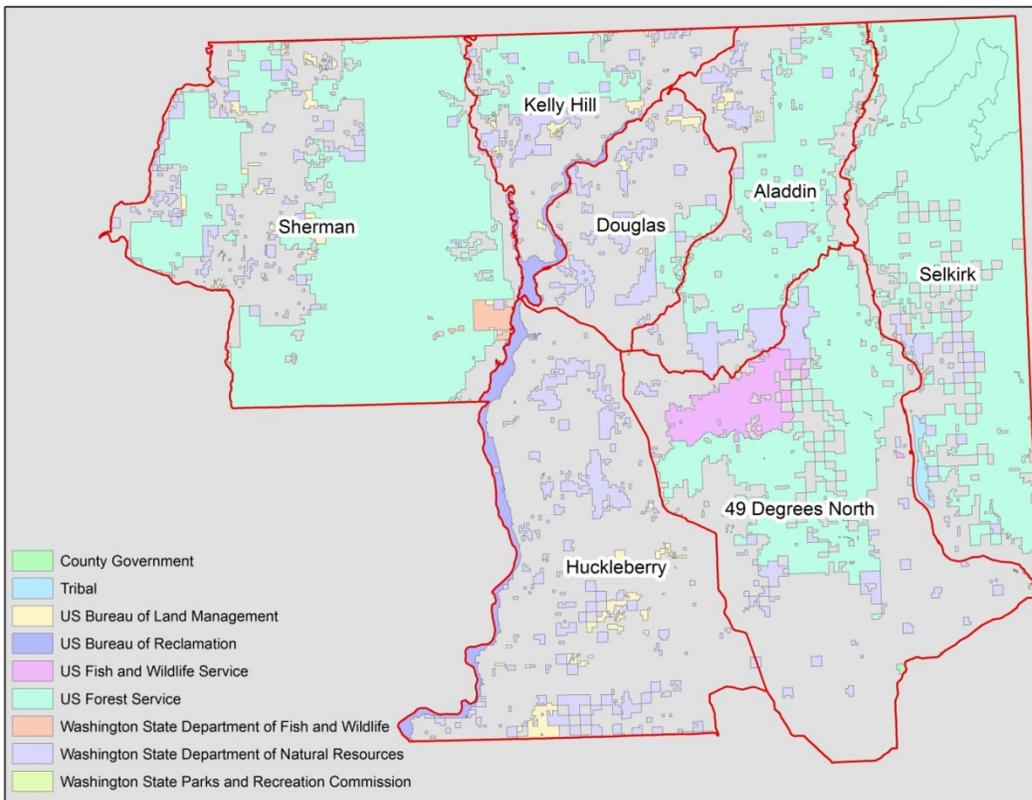


FIGURE 19. MAP DEPICTING THE LOCATION OF PUBLIC LANDS WITHIN EACH GMU COMPRISING DISTRICT 1.

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

GENERAL INFORMATION

A lot of hunting opportunities, especially for big-game and forest grouse, occur on private industrial forestlands. Timber companies that own large tracts of land and are the most well-known include Hancock, Stimson, and Inland Empire Paper. Hunters should be aware that there are a number of other smaller timber companies that have operations in District 1, 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 typically 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**
- ✓ **Do not Damage Trees**
- ✓ **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.

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 the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Hence, timber lands may be closed during archery and muzzleloader seasons which typically begin earlier in the autumn when there is a greater risk of forest fire. Hunters are urged to respect the landowners by adhering to any access restrictions they have in place.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

Some landowners have hotlines and/or web sites where hunters can find information about public access. Important to realize, however, is that these companies do not have staff dedicated to answering hunter questions. Therefore, hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW Region 1 office in Spokane (509-892-1001) if there are questions related to public access on private industrial forest lands.

PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS 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.

There are several private landowners in District 1 who are enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program. Specific information, including property locations can be found on WDFW's Hunter Access website located at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/ or by [clicking here](#). Below is a summary, by GMU, of cooperators and acres currently enrolled in the Private

Lands Access Program. The Feel Free to Hunt Program acres listed are those lands in the Cooperative Road Management Program with private timber companies.

GMU	Hunting Only by Written Permission		Feel Free to Hunt		Hunt by Reservation	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
101 (Sherman)	3	720	1	2,702	1	361
105 (Kelly Hill)			1	240		
108 (Douglas)	2	360	1	800	1	298
111 (Aladdin)			3	6,660	2	515
113 (Selkirk)	2	890	3	51,117		
117 (49 Degrees North)	3	896	4	72,266	1	913
121 (Huckleberry)	2	6,968			1	331

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 1 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

A good 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.

Stevens County tax parcels can be searched using the assessor's website at <http://propertysearch.trueautomation.com/PropertyAccess/?cid=0>.

Ferry County tax parcels can be searched using Mapsifter by clicking [here](#).

Pend Oreille tax parcels can be searched using the assessor's website at <http://216.229.170.172/PropertyAccess/PropertySearch.aspx?cid=0>. You will need the address of the property to use this search tool.

WDFWs 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](#).

Colville Area Maps

There are a variety of maps showing trails, camping locations, public lands, and popular landmarks available for download on the Colville Chamber of Commerce [website](#).

Other On-line Resources

[Ferry County hunting page](#)

[Colville Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Ferry County Chamber of Commerce](#)

[North Pend Oreille Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge](#)

[Colville National Forest](#)

[LC Sportsmaps, Inc](#)

2014

Michael Atamian, District Wildlife Biologist
Carrie Lowe, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 2 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Spokane, Lincoln, & Whitman Counties

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DISTRICT 2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 2 is located in eastern Washington, bordering Idaho, and covers Lincoln, Whitman, and Spokane Counties. Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 2 include 124-Mount Spokane, 127-Mica Peak, 130-Cheney, 133-Roosevelt, 136-Harrington, 139-Steptoe, & 142-Almota (Figure 1). The majority of the district is in private ownership so hunters are highly encouraged to secure access prior to the hunting season or applying for special permits.

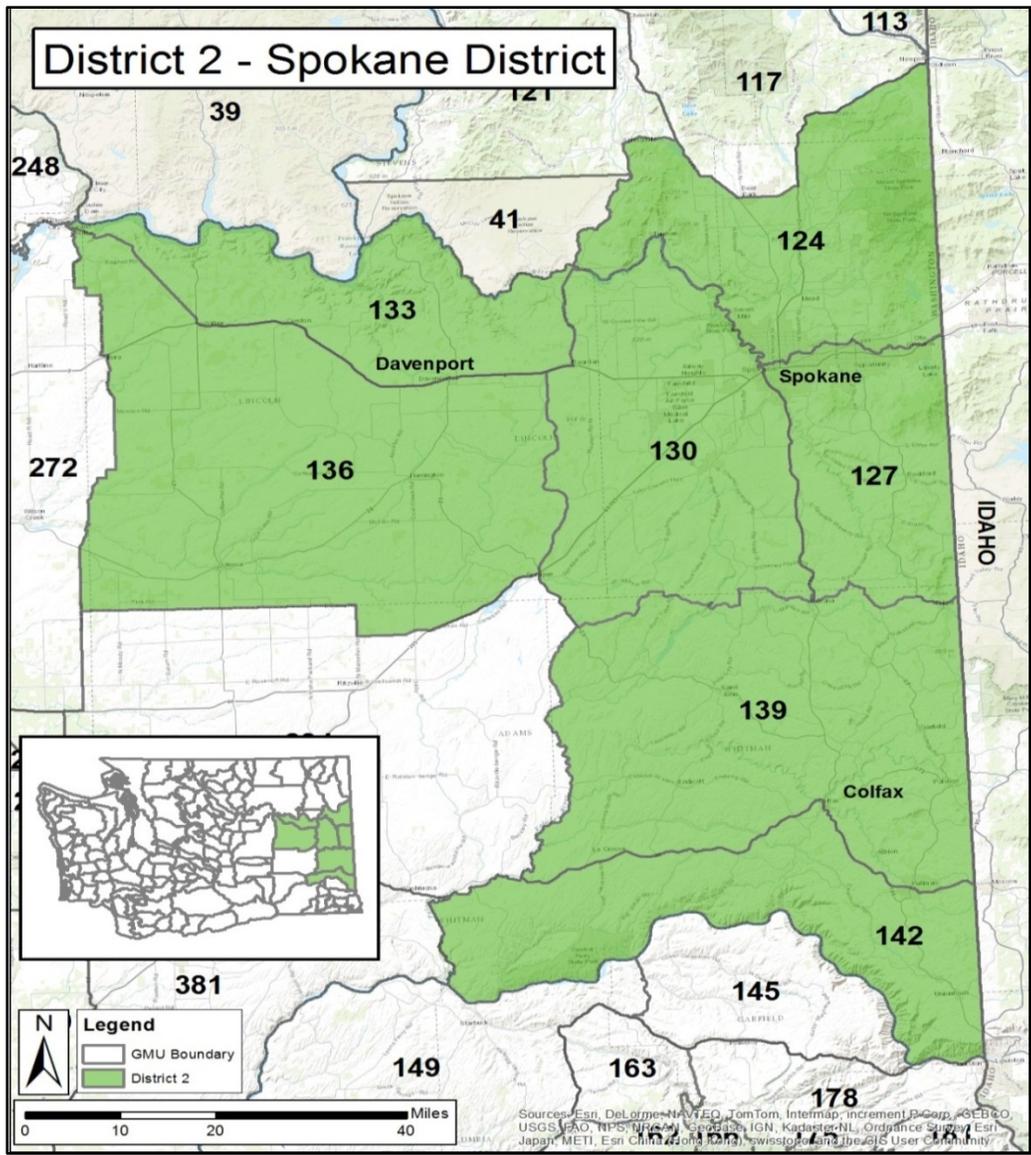


FIGURE 1. GENERAL LOCATION AND GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS (GMU) FOR WDFW DISTRICT 2.

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, grasslands, and extensive agricultural lands. 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.

District 2 is most well-known for its deer hunting opportunities: white-tailed deer in the Spokane and the Palouse agricultural lands; and mule deer in the Channeled Scablands and breaks of the Snake River. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including pheasant and elk if hunters have secured access to private lands, and moose and bighorn sheep if hunters are selected for these special permit hunts.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The Selkirk herd originated in Pend Oreille County and has expanded its range over the last 40 years to include GMUs 124-142. Elk in District 2 are considered to be the Spokane sub-herd of the Selkirk herd. Elk habitat in District 2 continues to be lost to urban sprawl and agricultural conversion. General hunts in all GMUs are “any elk.” The goal of this harvest strategy is to maintain the population at its current level (roughly 1000-1500 elk) to limit agricultural damage and conflict within urban areas. Given the majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, managing this population without landowner acceptance and cooperation is impossible.

Opportunistic surveys, harvest data (Figures 7-9), sightings, and damage complaints are generally used in place of formal estimates to indicate population trends in most of District 2. The exception is GMU 130 (Cheney), where the majority of the District’s elk harvest (25-50%) occurs. This unit includes Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, and has been regularly surveyed for herd composition for the last 10 years. Our herd composition objective is to maintain a ratio of 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows pre-hunt and/or 12 to 20 bulls per 100 cows post-hunt. The 2013 pre-hunt aerial survey in GMU 130 found the bull:cow ratio to be at the low end of this management objective. Calf production was a little higher than the previous year, with a calf:cow ratio of 50:100. Harvest data for District 2 over the last 10 years indicates a stable to slightly increasing population trend. For more detail on the status of elk in Washington, take a look at WDFW’s Game Status and Trend Report by [clicking here](#).

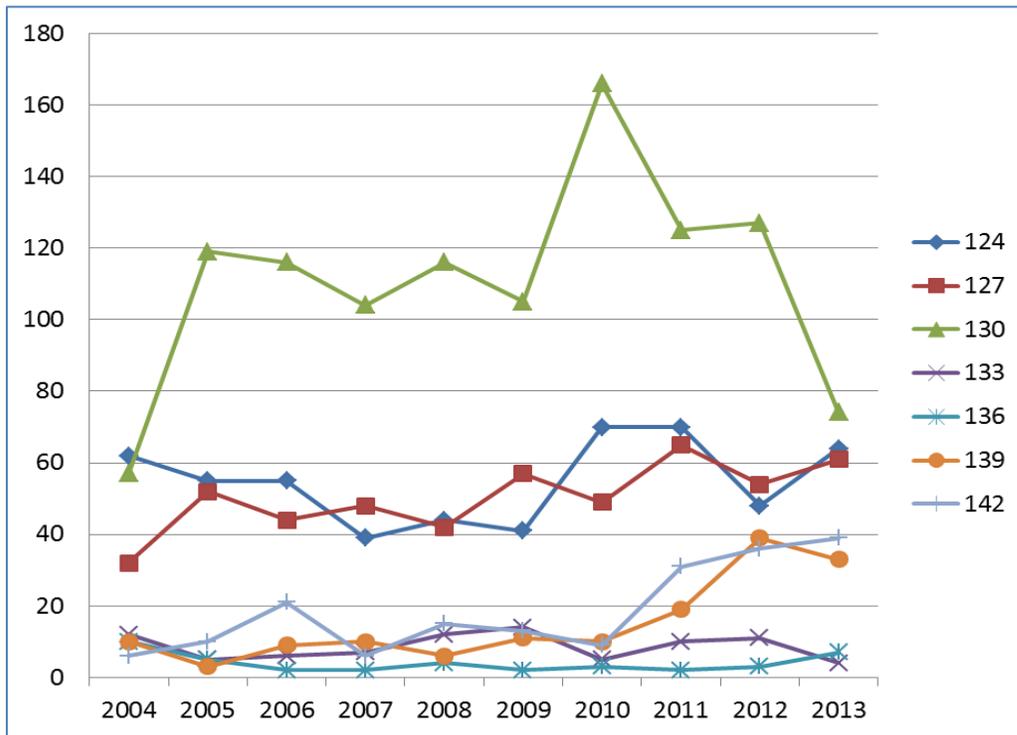


FIGURE 7. ELK GENERAL SEASON TOTAL HARVEST IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

The highest proportion of the elk harvest consistently occurs in GMUs 124, 127, and 130 (Figure 7). However, elk appear to be expanding into new areas and harvest in GMUs 139 and 142 has been on the rise. 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. General hunt participants on private lands in GMU 130 have the highest success (Figure 9), probably benefitting from animals moving on and off Turnbull NWR during the season. With 40% of the hunters in District 2, GMU 124 (Mt Spokane) sustains the greatest hunting pressure. As a result, hunter success is fairly low there (Figure 9), although the unit typically does produce one of the highest number of mature bulls (6⁺ points) in the harvest (Figures 8). Private timber companies, especially Inland Empire Paper, offer ample public access in this unit with a paid permit. See [Inland Empire Paper Company - Recreational Use](#) for their rules and regulations.

For more detailed harvest information, visit:

District 2 - 2012 Game Harvest Statistics:

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

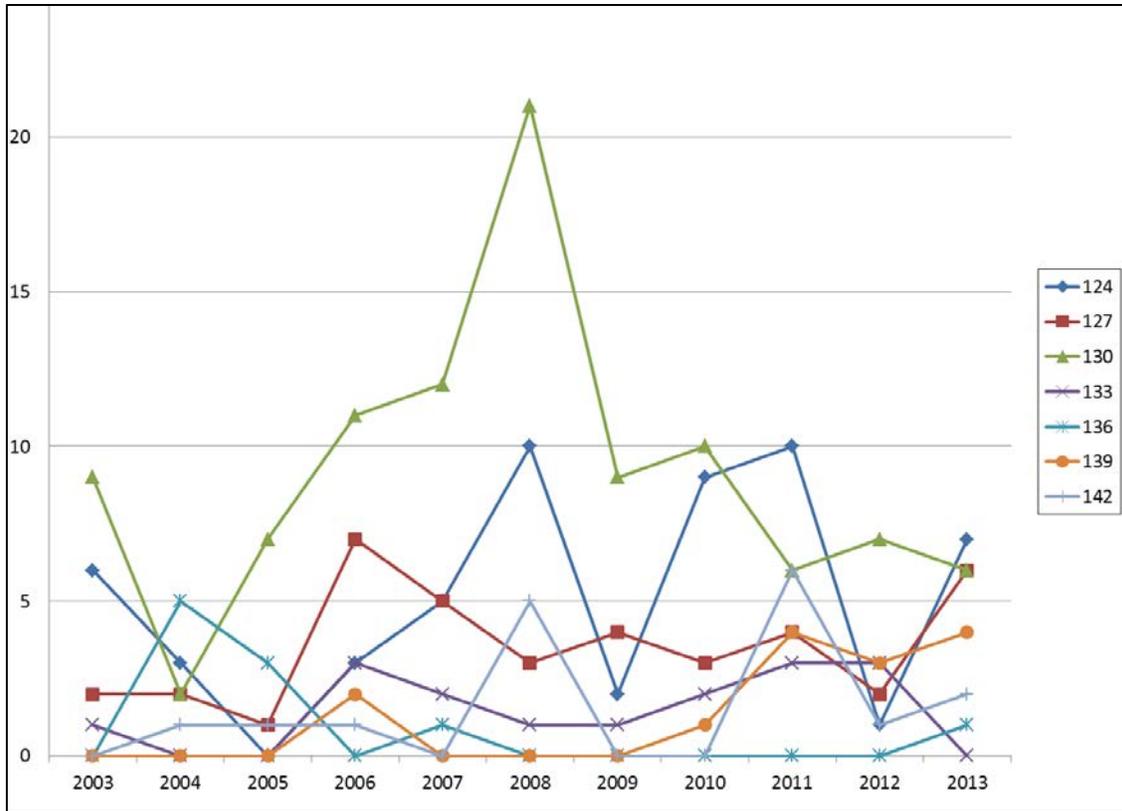


FIGURE 8. NUMBER OF MATURE BULLS (6+ POINTS) HARVESTED BY GMU IN DISTRICT 2.

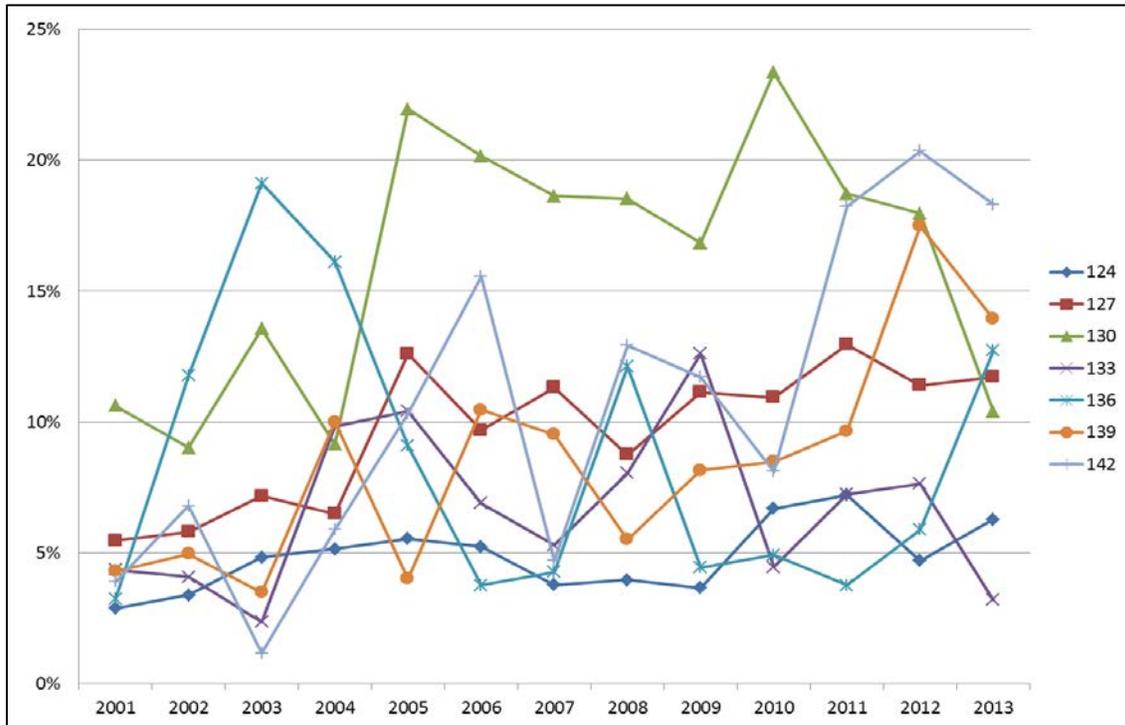


FIGURE 9. ELK GENERAL SEASON HUNTER SUCCESS IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

ELK AREAS

Elk Area 1015 is located within Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Turnbull special permit hunts were created in 2010 to address damage to aspen stands on the Refuge and to address complaints from landowners in the area. These are walk-in hunts in specified portions of the Refuge. For 2014, one bull permit and 62 antlerless permits will again be allocated across several hunts, including each weapon type, Master Hunter only, and Hunter with Disabilities. Turnbull hunters averaged nearly 50% success for antlerless hunts until 2013, when success dropped to 16%. The bull permit has had 100% success each year. For those who missed the permit application deadline, the Turnbull permit hunts should be offered again next year. For more information about TNWR, visit [Home - Turnbull - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#). To address winter property damage in the area, there are also several late-season raffle permits and WDFW special permits offered on Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA) properties around Turnbull. See the “Private Lands Program” section for more information on acreage enrolled and [CPWMA website](#) for details on their hunt management.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

There are no notable changes for 2014 elk hunting in District 2. Across all GMUs, elk hunter success has averaged 10% over the last 10 years, and hunters have spent an average of 48 days hunting per kill. These numbers vary widely by area, as hunter success depends heavily on the work the hunter is willing to put in to obtain access to private property. There are many landowners enrolled in WDFW's private land hunting access programs, so opportunities exist for elk hunters who seek them out. For locations of these properties, visit the [GoHunt](#) website.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 has both white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). White-tailed deer are found predominantly in the north and east portions of the district, in the forest/agricultural interface and along riparian corridors. Mule deer are predominantly found in the west and south of the district, in the shrub steppe, scablands, and farm lands.

Deer population levels are closely tied to severe winters, droughts, and land-use practices. The primary management objective for white-tailed and mule deer in District 2 is to keep the herds stable to slightly increasing and within landowner tolerance. Given the majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, managing this population without landowner cooperation is impossible. Additional management objectives include maintaining herds at 15-19 bucks to 100 does in the post season population.

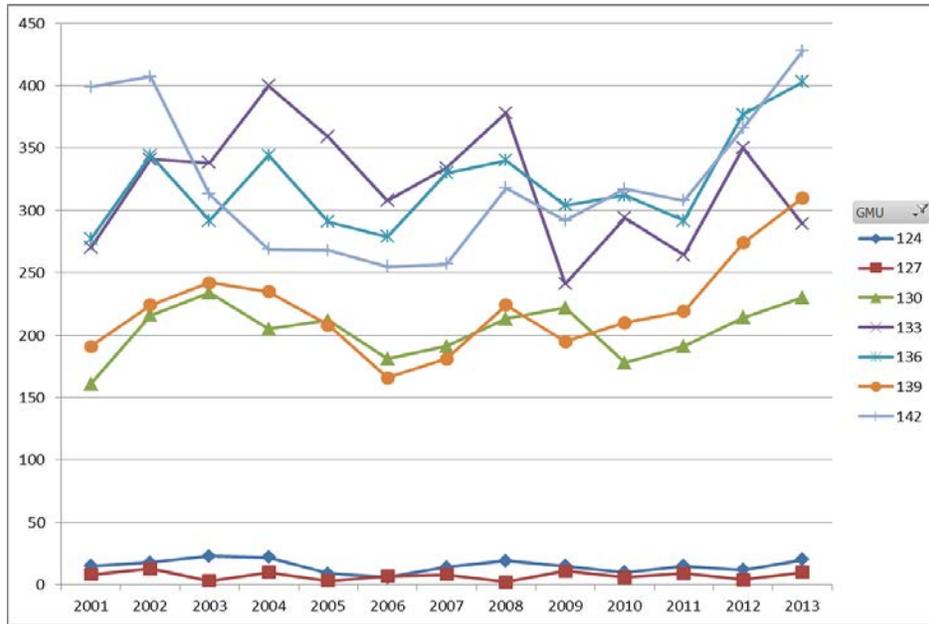


FIGURE 2. MULE DEER GENERAL SEASON BUCK HARVEST IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 2. Instead trends in harvest (Figures 2 & 3), hunter success (Figure 4), days per kill (Figure 5), and pre-season sex and age ratios (Figure 6), are used as surrogates to a formal index or estimate. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using this data to monitor trends in population size and we are currently evaluating new approaches to monitoring white-tailed and mule deer populations.

Harvest of mule deer has remained relatively stable in the district over the past 13 years with an increasing trend over the past four years (Figure 2). White-tailed harvest appears stable overall in the district (Figure 3). The steep decline in 2006 is associated with the implementation of a permit only late season in GMUs 127-142. While harvest has remained relatively stable over the past 13 years, hunter success has increased from an average of 30% in 2001 to an average of 35% in 2013 (Figure 4). Over the same time period, hunter effort (Days/kill) has declined from 13.5 days/kill on average in 2001 to 11 days in 2013 (Figure 5). Pre-season fawn to 100 doe ratios for both species have been in the 50 to 70 range over the past 8 years (Figure 6). Overall harvest data and pre-season ratios taken together indicate white-tailed and mule deer populations appear to be stable to slightly increasing in all GMUs in District 2. For more detailed information related to the status of 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 here](#).

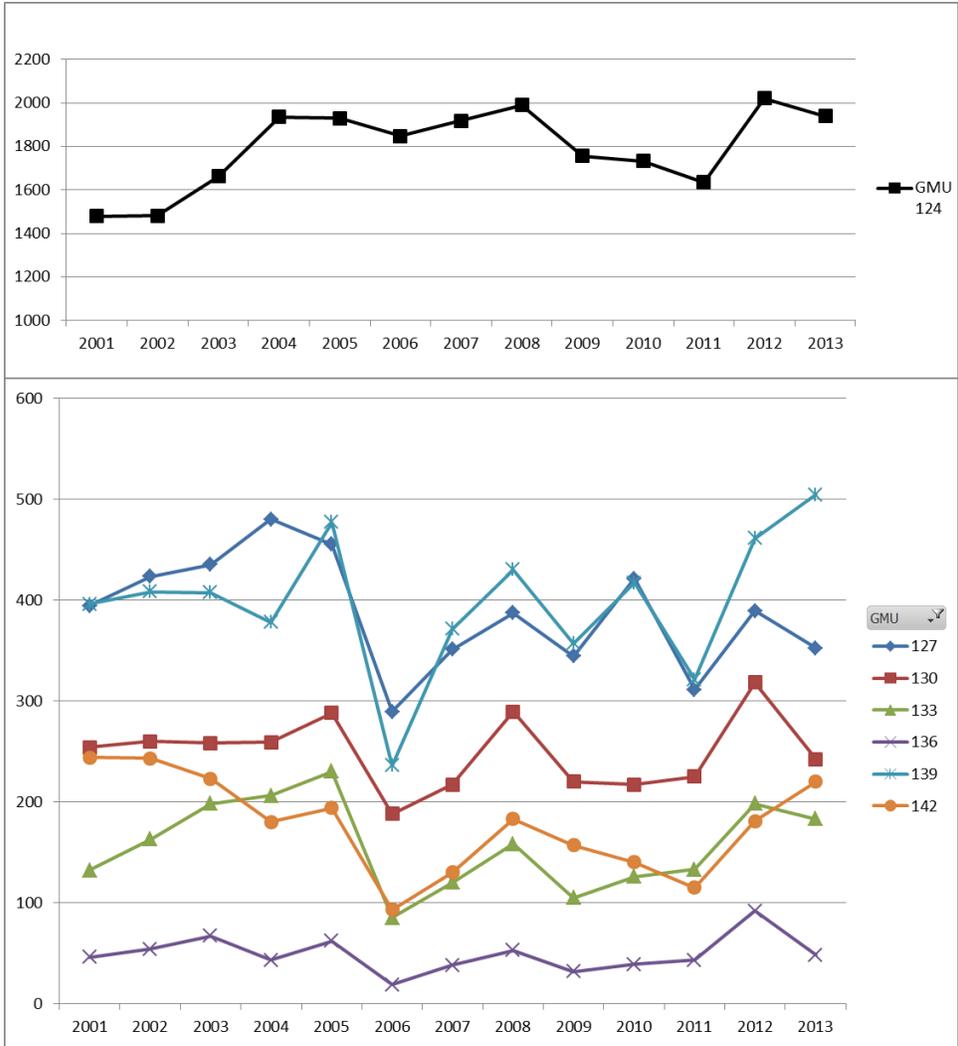


FIGURE 3. WHITE-TAILED DEER GENERAL SEASON BUCK HARVEST IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

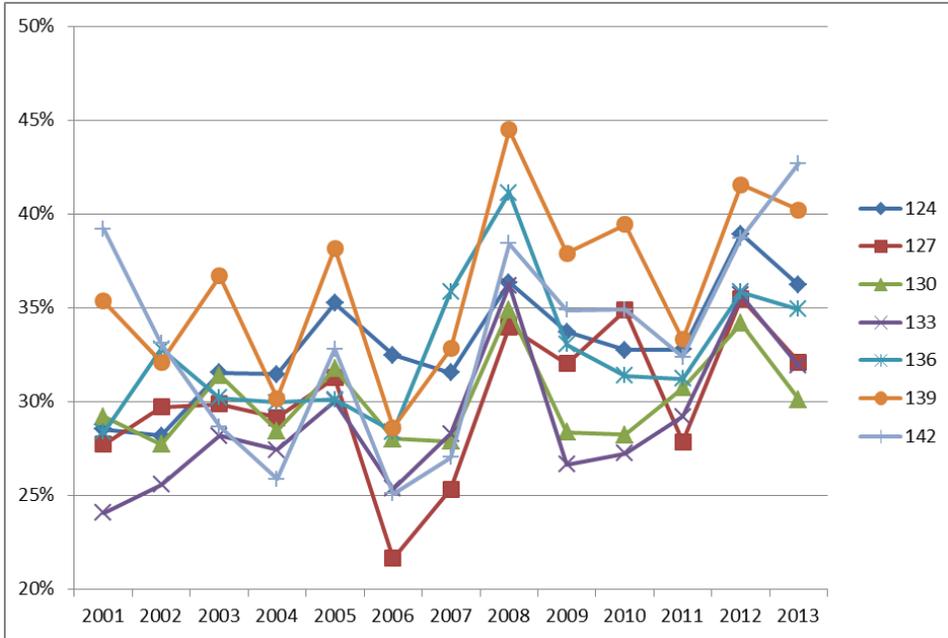


FIGURE 4. DEER GENERAL SEASON HUNTER SUCCESS IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

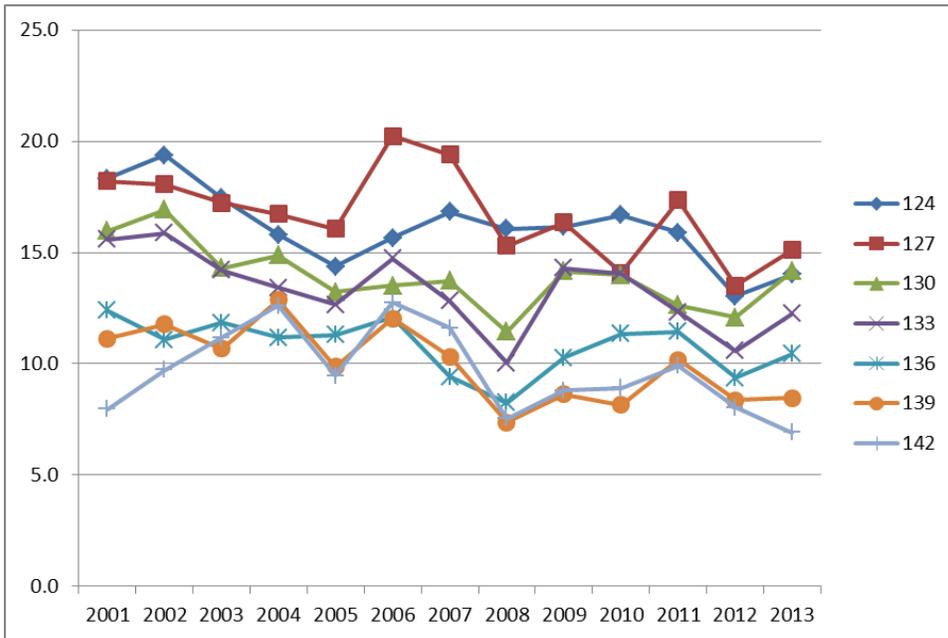


FIGURE 5. DEER GENERAL SEASON DAYS/KILL IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

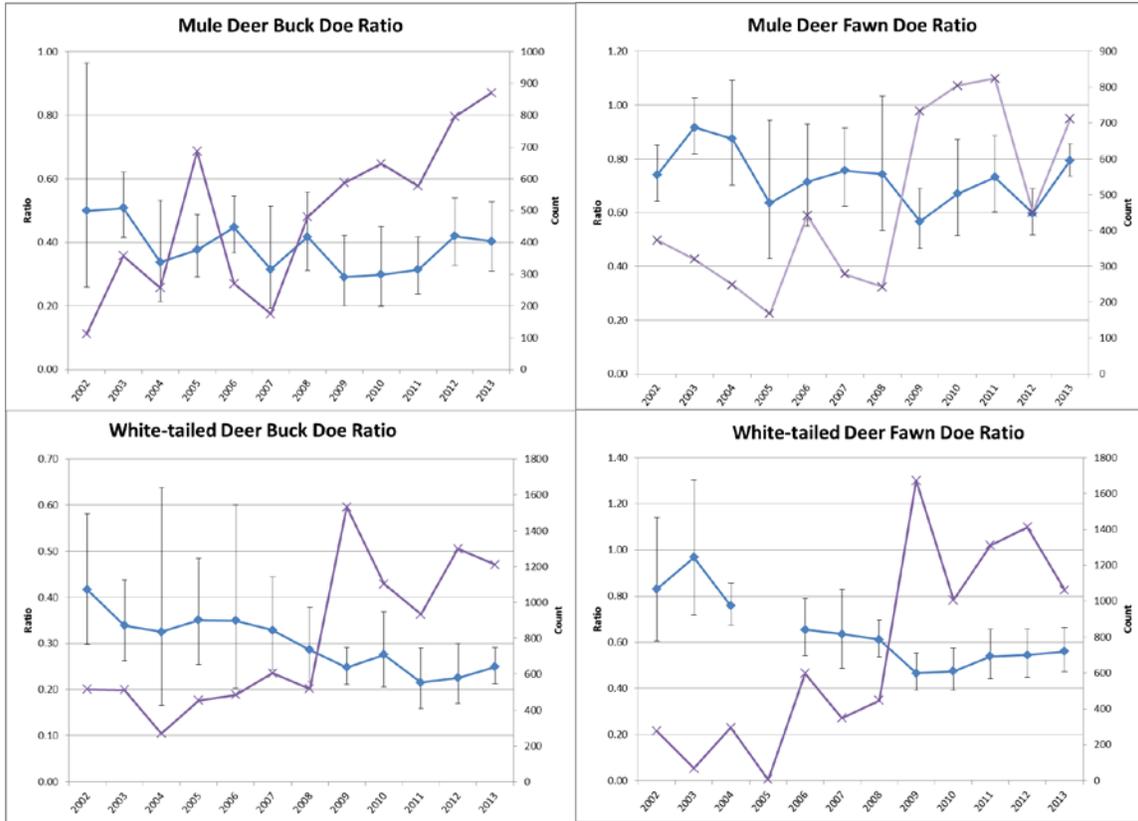


FIGURE 6. DISTRICT 2 PRE-SEASON BUCK TO DOE (AUGUST) AND FAWN TO DOE (SEPTEMBER) RATIOS (BLUE LINES WITH 90%CI) AND TOTAL COUNT (PURPLE LINES) BY SPECIES.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

White-tailed and mule deer hunting opportunities in District 2 vary from marginal to excellent, depending on the GMU and if private land access has been secured. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 133, 136, & 142 on private property (Figure 2). The best opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 124, 127, & 139 on private property (Figure 3). For archery hunters, GMU 124 & 127 provide the best terrain, whereas the terrain in GMUs 136-142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm.

High mule deer fawn production in 2013 (Figure 6) and good spring precipitation should combine to produce good survival and recruitment this year. White-tailed deer herds appear to have fully recovered from the hard winters of 2008 and 2009. Average white-tailed deer fawn production in 2013 (Figure 6) and the mild winter should result in good survival and recruitment. The persistent hunter (district average is 13 days per kill) should have ample opportunity to harvest a legal buck.

There is a 3pt minimum regulation in GMUs 127-142 for white-tailed deer and the late white-tailed deer season in GMUs 127-142 is by permit only (Palouse Hunt) as of 2006. Hunter success is on average higher for the Palouse Hunt (56%), with 5+ point bucks making up, on average, a greater percentage of the kill (37%) when compared to the general season 2001 to 2006 average of 24% and the 27% averaged since 2006. There are currently 750 permits offered for the Palouse Hunt.

Mule and white-tailed deer populations overlap in District 2, so please make sure to identify the species before harvesting an animal, since regulations can differ between species with in a GMU. The bulk of District 2 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 this district. We have enrolled many new cooperators in our hunter access program in southeast Washington; see the “Private Lands Program” section below and note that the locations are mapped on the [GoHunt](#) website.

For more District 2 2013 harvest information visit:

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

DEER AREAS

There are suburban/rural areas in District 2 where deer congregate and have the potential to cause landscape/property and agricultural damage. To help address this issue, extended general season opportunities have been created for youth, senior, & disabled hunters to harvest antlerless deer that occur in these areas. Additionally, 975 2nd tags, half of the district’s 2nd tag (doe only) opportunities, are focused in these areas. The remaining 975 2nd tags are primarily offered in the rural GMUs 133-142 to help address agricultural damage. WDFW deer area locations and boundaries are mapped on the [GoHunt](#) website.

BIGHORN SHEEP

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 is home to one herd of California bighorn sheep, found in GMU 133 north of Highway 2 in Lincoln County (see the [GoHunt](#) website for a map). These sheep can most often be seen in the Lincoln Cliffs just south of the town of Lincoln, and in the cliffs around Whitestone Rock approximately 7 miles downstream from Lincoln. Sheep are also observed occasionally in the cliffs above Sterling Valley between Lincoln and Whitestone.

WDFW has conducted regular aerial surveys to assess the status of the Lincoln Cliffs herd since 2002. We estimate population size based on the count of rams and ewes observed during flights. The population has remained relatively stable, with an increasing trend over the last four years (Figure 10). However, we are still at the low end of our goal of 90-100 animals. Habitat condition, disease threats, and limited harvest will continue to be factors in the management of this population. For more details on the status of bighorn sheep in Washington, take a look at WDFW’s Game Status and Trend Report by [clicking here](#).

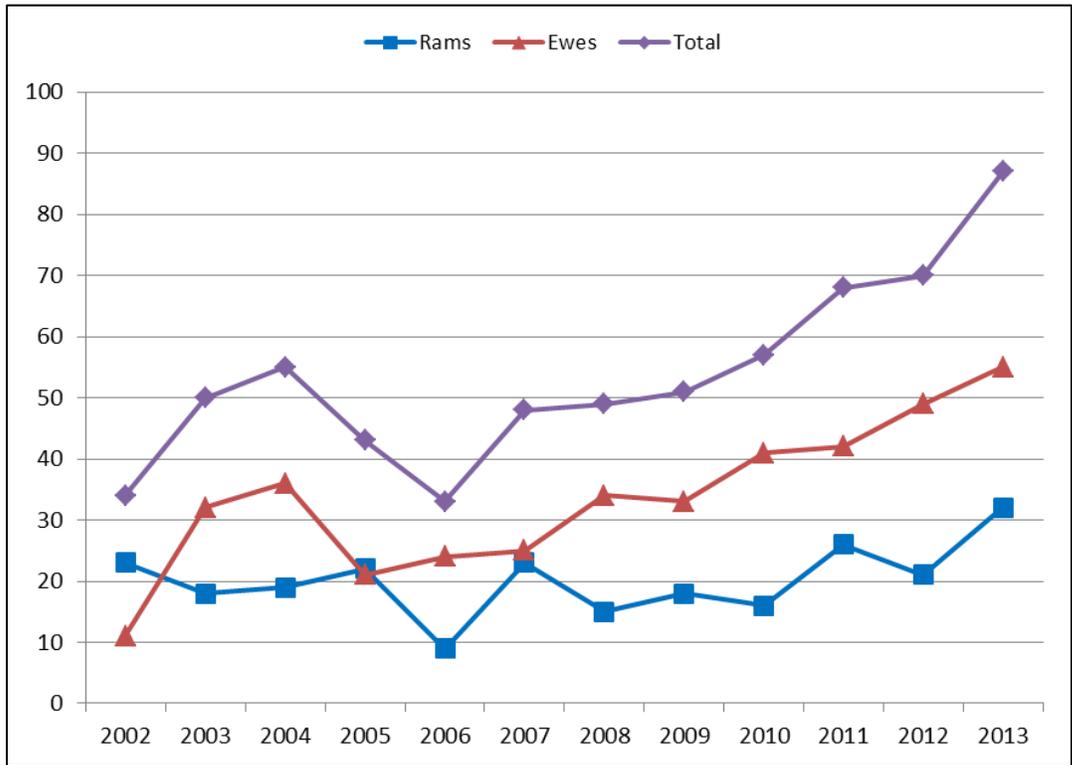


FIGURE 10. LINCOLN CLIFFS MINIMUM POPULATION ESTIMATE BY SEX FOR 2002-2013. ESTIMATED AS THE MAXIMUM COUNT FROM HELICOPTER SURVEYS CONDUCTED EACH YEAR.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Bighorn sheep hunting in Washington requires a special permit. For the Lincoln Cliffs herd, one ram permit has been issued each year since 1997, when the first was offered. For 2014 this has been increased to two permits. The average number of applicants for this hunt over the last five years is 1,471 and hunter success has remained at 100%. The area is mostly private property and permittees will need to obtain permission to access these properties for their hunt.

MOOSE

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Moose in northeast Washington are Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*). Moose were not believed to be common or widely distributed in the Rocky Mountain States in the 1800's, and it was not until 1908 when explorer George Shiras III found a fairly large population in Yellowstone National Park that this mountain race was described. Shiras moose were only rarely noted in Washington until the late 1950's when distribution began to expand into eastern Pend Oreille County. Moose have dramatically increased in numbers and distribution in the last couple of decades and now are relatively common throughout northeast Washington.

Statewide moose management goals are to: 1) Preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage moose and their habitats to ensure healthy productive populations; 2) Manage for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes; and, 3) Manage statewide moose populations for a sustained yield. The proximity of an expanding moose population near the Spokane metropolitan area adds the challenge of balancing population objectives with the community's tolerance of moose.

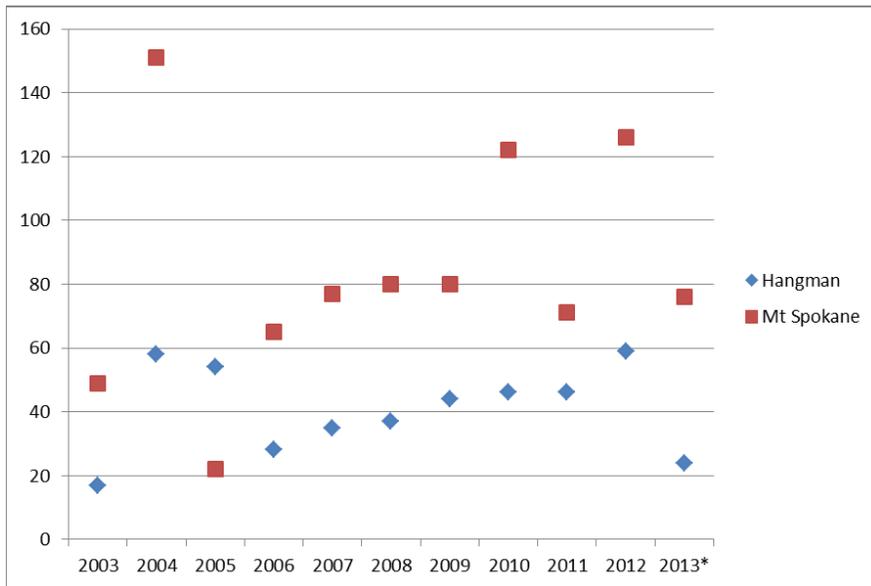


FIGURE 11. MT SPOKANE (MT. SPOKANE NORTH AND SOUTH COMBINED FOR 2012-2013) AND HANGMAN UNITS OBSERVED MOOSE DURING DECEMBER/JANUARY AERIAL SURVEYS FROM 2003-2013.

Currently, WDFW uses a combination of aerial surveys and harvest metrics to monitor and manage moose populations in District 2. From 2002 to 2012 annual aerial surveys have been flown during winter (December-January) by district biologists covering a sub-portion of each hunt unit. General trends in observed moose during aerial survey flights (Figure 11) indicate a stable to growing population in each area. However, there is large variability in the observed count between years, much of which is likely due to movement of moose back and forth across state lines (all hunt units border Idaho). The low count in 2013 is due to a survey methodology change. Though fewer moose are being seen in individual units using the new survey methodology, it allows for a greater proportion of northeast Washington to be covered.

Calf to 100 cow ratios in the hunt units (Figure 12) have been fairly stable year to year and have averaged 50 for Hangman and 47 for Mt. Spokane for the past 10 years, also indicating a stable to growing population. The low calf to 100 cow ratio in 2013 is again likely due to the new survey methodology and low number of moose observed, but will be closely watched over the next couple years, since calf to 100 cow ratios below 30 indicate potential population decline.

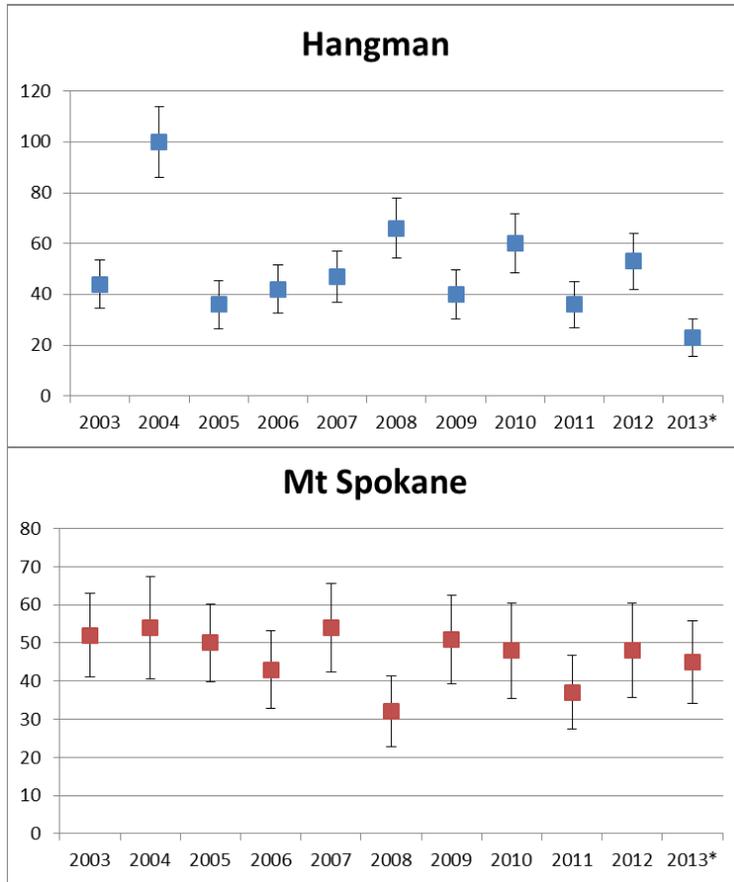


FIGURE 12. MOOSE CALVES TO 100 COW RATIOS FROM AERIAL SURVEY FROM 2003-2013 FOR MT. SPOKANE (MT. SPOKANE NORTH AND SOUTH COMBINED FOR 2012-2013) AND HANGMAN UNITS.

Harvest management emphasizes quality-hunting opportunities through a limited entry permit process. Prior to 2012 District 2 had two moose hunt units; Mt. Spokane and Hangman. In 2012 the Mt. Spokane unit was split into Mt. Spokane North and Mt. Spokane South units ([click here for maps](#)) to help distribute hunters more evenly across the area and increase hunter opportunity. However, the harvest data presented herein combines the two units to allow for easier comparison to previous years.

Hunter success rates for all units over the past 13 years have been consistently high (Figure 13), averaging 95% for Mt Spokane and 97% for Hangman. The drop in success in the Hangman unit in 2013 (2 of the 11 hunters that hunted their permits were unsuccessful) is of concern and will be monitored. Hunter effort (Days/Kill) declined from 2001 to 2006 and since has remained stable around 4 days per kill (Figure 13). Both of these harvest metrics overall indicate a stable to growing moose population in both of these areas. For more detailed information related to the status of moose 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 here](#).

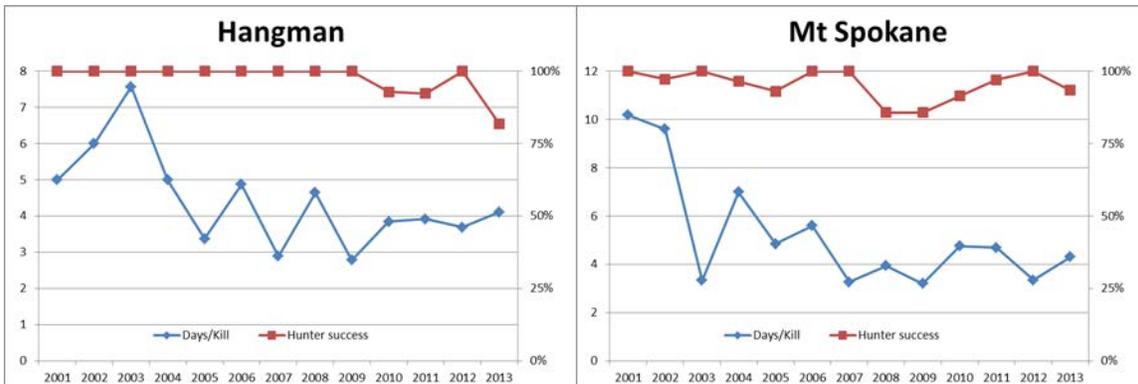


FIGURE 13. MOOSE HUNTER SUCCESS AND DAYS PER KILL FROM 2001-2013 FOR MT. SPOKANE (MT. SPOKANE NORTH AND SOUTH COMBINED FOR 2012-2013) AND HANGMAN UNITS.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Moose hunting in Washington is by special permit only, 62 permits (23 Any Moose and 39 Antlerless) are offered in District 2 at this time. The Any moose permits are a once in a lifetime hunt. Success rates for these hunts have been historically stable and high (Figure 13) and with most metrics indicating stable to increasing populations, success rates should continue to be high.

District 2 also has a Master Hunter Only Hunt Coordinated Damage Hunt (10 permits), however, the opportunity to hunt under this permit depends on problem moose occurring in a safe area to harvest. Over the course of this hunt’s existence (started in 2010), there have been only 3 moose harvested.

The largest moose have generally been killed later in the season but early season hunters have been successful as well, and that is the time most of the kills are made. Antler spread of harvested moose has averaged about 3 feet for all units over the past 13 years (Table 1). However, in most years moose in the 3.5 foot range are harvested and in both areas moose with a 50 inch or greater spread have been harvested. Another advantage to hunting early is that there will be no competition or interference from deer or elk modern firearm hunters.

TABLE 1. AVERAGE ANTLER SPREAD FOR HARVESTED MOOSE IN DISTRICT 2 BY HUNT UNIT.

Year	Hangman A			Mt. Spokane A			Mt. Spokane North A			Mt. Spokane South A		
	Harv	Avg	Max	Harv	Avg	Max	Harv	Avg	Max	Harv	Avg	Max
2001	4	42	51	12	32	49						
2002	5	37	45	9	31	40						
2003	4	40	49	9	32	53						
2004	4	33	43	9	35	47						
2005	5	35	43	9	36	40						
2006	4	34	39	9	31	35						
2007	5	32	42	9	39	44						
2008	6	33	41	11	32	41						
2009	7	37	47	11	36	50						
2010	7	43	50	12	39	46						
2011	6	39	44	9	32	42						
2012	7	36	52				8	36	45	7	35	46
2013	5	37	45				7	35	44	8	35	40
Total	69	37	52	109	34	53	15	36	45	15	35	46

Hunters should take note that moose are by nature a solitary animal and are scattered over very wide areas as individuals or in small groups. Early in the season moose are widespread and snow may or may not be available for tracking. This is a good time to learn the country and view clear-cuts, since roads are still open, and many hunters take moose in October. While they can be found at any elevation, they are most likely found between 3,000 to 5,000 feet. In the fall they are looking for deciduous browse, primarily willow brush in clear-cuts or burns that are 15 years old or older. Moose seek out the cooler, moister drainage basins and slopes. North slopes or east flowing drainage basins are generally preferred. Moose are still in the rut in early October and some hunters have been effective with calls. By November snow is common and locating moose tracks and seeing these dark animals with a snow background is much easier. However, by mid to late November there is usually enough snow to be concerned about having only limited access. Experience shows that moose seek out snow rather than avoid it in late fall and early winter. Actual elevation of where you might find moose varies, but on years without much snow we find them right around the top of the mountain. In years with a lot of snow, they move down to the foothill band around the mountain

Moose habitat in the district is largely located on private timber company lands, but smaller private ownerships can also harbor good moose concentrations. Inland Empire

Paper (IEP) is the largest of the timber companies in District 2. IEP does charge an access fee, however they are the only timber company that allows vehicular access, dependent on the area and time of year, see their [website](#) for details and maps. Permit holders should exercise caution and know where they and the moose they are targeting are at all times given the percentage of private land ownership, proximity to Idaho, and non-hunting lands (state & county parks, national wildlife refuge) within the moose hunting units.

WATERFOWL

At the statewide level District 2 is not known for its duck hunting and is not a large duck production area. However, local surveys indicate a better brood production this year than last, with the highest numbers of broods observed being Mallards and American Coots. Other more common waterfowl species in District 2 include Gadwall, Pie-Billed Grebe and Canada Goose. Based on breeding waterfowl surveys, overall duck numbers are increasing in the Channeled Scablands (Potholes) region of Eastern Washington (Figure 18). Canada Goose and American Coot counts show a similar trend. 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. For more information on waterfowl hunting, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/index.html> and [Waterfowl Hunting Areas In Region One](#).

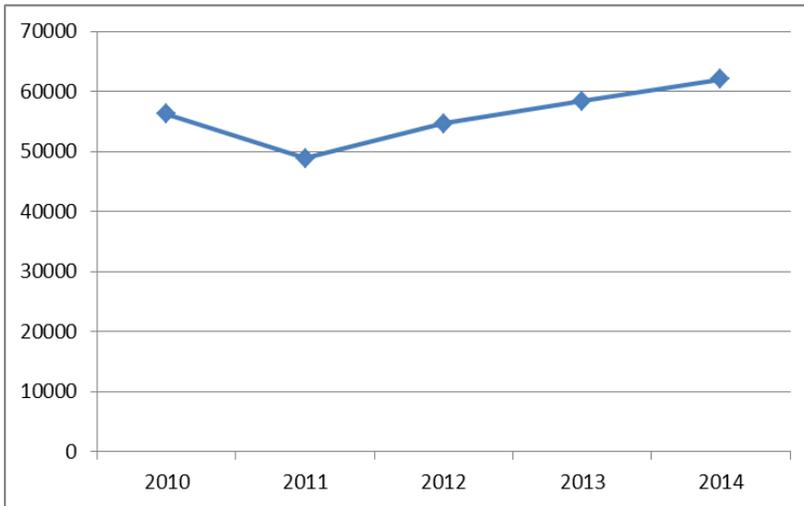


FIGURE 18. TOTAL DUCK ESTIMATES FOR THE POTHOLES REGION OF EASTERN WASHINGTON.

PHEASANT

Across the district, crow counts recorded on annual surveys were 7% lower this year than the previous 4 year average. However, counts on the Parvin and St. John routes were up relative to the previous 4 year average (Figure 14). Spring & summer weather was good and should lead to decent production and recruitment. Trends in harvest and hunter numbers, however, continue to decline (Figure 15, top), mirroring statewide trends. Days per hunter have remained fairly stable in the district, while harvest per hunter has declined (Figure 15, bottom). Overall, pheasant population in the district may see some recruitment in the short term, but is experiencing long term declines. This is a trend seen across the country and though the cause of the decline in pheasant populations in Washington is undefined, it likely results from several causes associated with current farming practices and habitat loss.

For more information on harvest statistics see the 2013 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Pheasant - Statewide and by County](#). For more information on pheasant status in Washington see the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

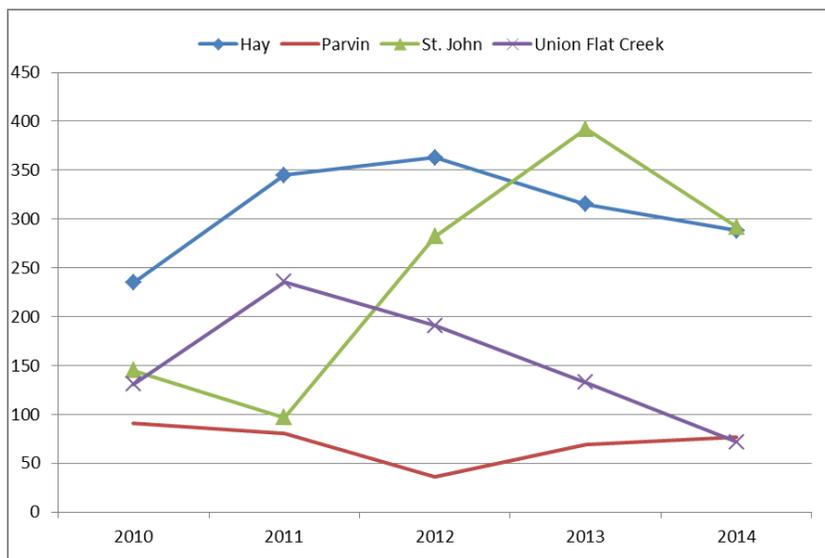


FIGURE 14. MAXIMUM COUNT FROM PHEASANT CROW ROUTES IN DISTRICT 2 FROM 2010-2014.

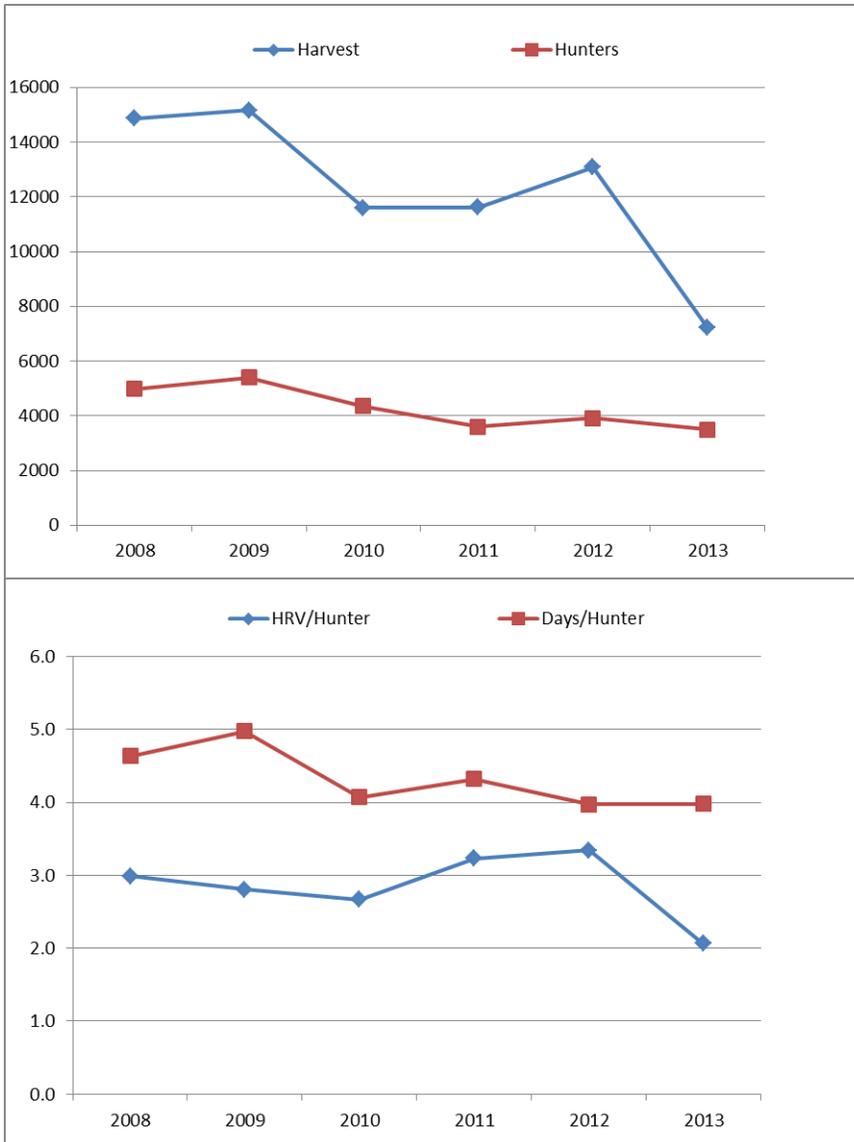


FIGURE 15. TOP GRAPH: PHEASANT HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013. BOTTOM GRAPH: PHEASANT HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013.

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 the “Private Lands Program” below for private land access program acres by GMU. We have enrolled many new cooperators in our hunter access programs in the last couple years 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 2013 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Pheasant - Statewide and by County](#).

CHUKAR & GRAY PARTRIDGE

Like quail, nest and brood success for chukars and partridge should be good with decent spring weather leading to good recruitment. 2012 was a bumper harvest, but harvest in 2013 is 42% below the 5 year average (Figure 16). Hunter numbers remain stable, but their effort (Days/Hunter) has declined (Figure 16).

Partridge broods of 10-12 chicks have been kicked regularly during field work in Lincoln County. Partridge are most common in Lincoln and Whitman counties and are most often seen in and adjacent to agricultural fields.

There are very few chukar in District 2, they are predominantly found along the breaks of the Snake River. Terrain is steep and rocky with limited public access from above. There is some access via [US Army Corps of Engineers along the Snake River from below, but not all of the Corps lands allow hunting](#).

For more information on gray partridge and chukar see the 2013 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Statewide and by County](#) and [the most recent Game Status and Trend Report](#).

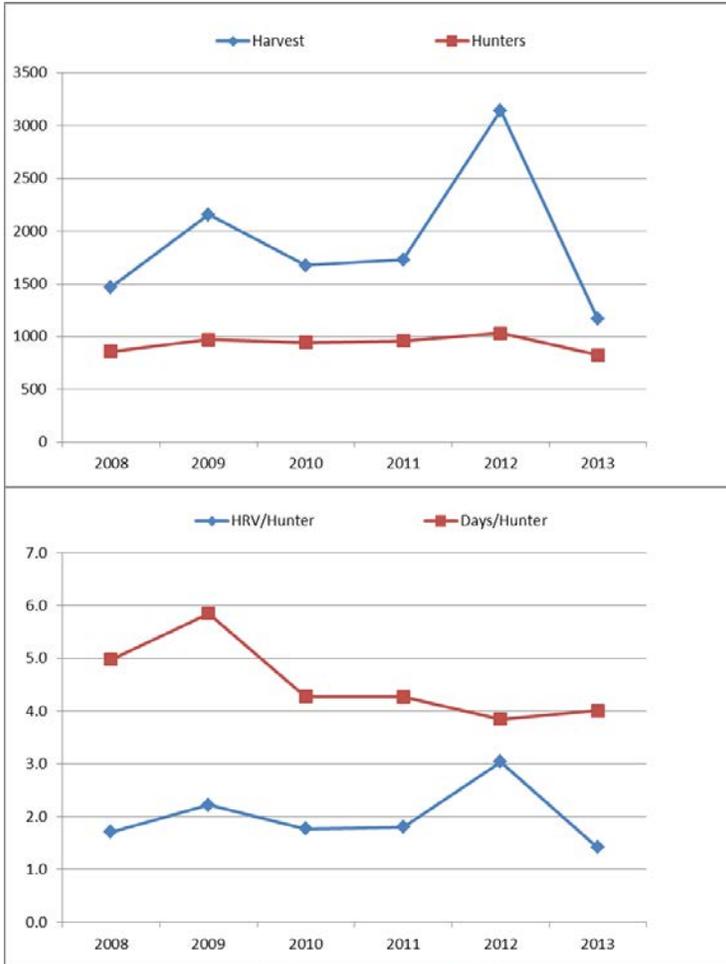


FIGURE 16. TOP GRAPH: CHUKAR & PARTRIDGE HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013. BOTTOM GRAPH: CHUKAR & PARTRIDGE HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013.

FOREST GROUSE

The mild winter and decent spring weather should combine to produce good nesting and brood success this year. Populations overall appear to be down in District 2, but it’s still possible to shoot one opportunistically in the forested portions of GMUs 124, 127, and 133. Harvest, hunter number, and hunter effort (Days/Hunter) are all down, but hunter success (harvest/hunter) is showing signs of a positive trend over the last three years (Figure 17).

For more information on forest grouse see the 2013 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Statewide and by County](#) and [the most recent Game Status and Trend Report](#).

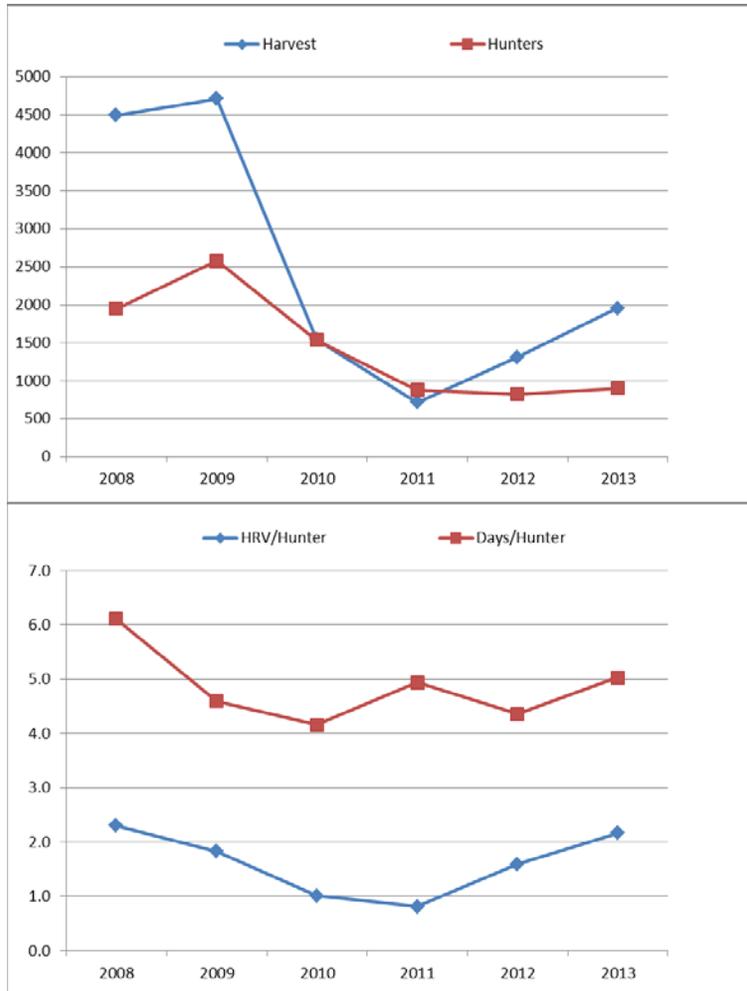


FIGURE 17. TOP GRAPH: FOREST GROUSE HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013. BOTTOM GRAPH: FOREST GROUSE HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013.

QUAIL

Quail populations appear to have recovered from the hard winters of 2008 and 2009. Prospects look good with decent spring weather this year for nests and broods. Good brood numbers were seen in south Spokane and Whitman County. There is a negative trend in hunter numbers and harvest. However, harvest and days per hunter have remained stable (Figure 16), indicating a relatively stable population. Access can be a problem, especially with most of the good quail habitat occurring in and around farmsteads and towns. For more information on harvest statistics see the 2013 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Quail - Statewide and by County](#). For more information on quail status in Washington see the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#)

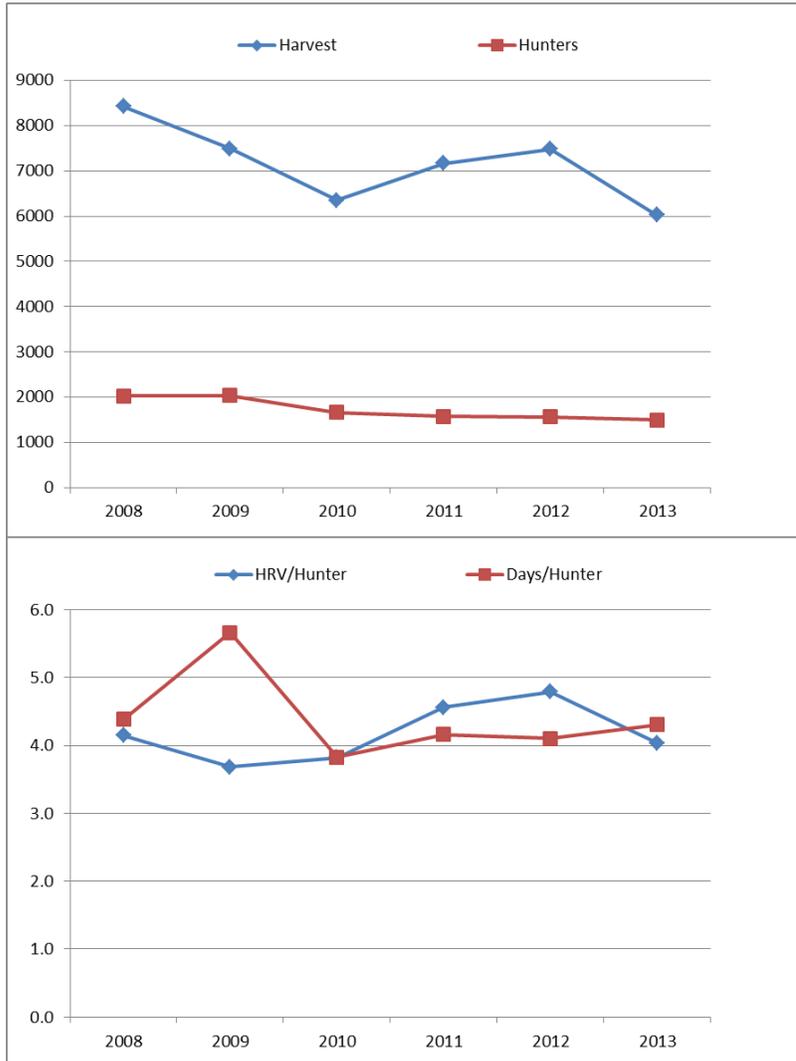


FIGURE 16. TOP GRAPH: QUAIL HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013. BOTTOM GRAPH: QUAIL HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013.

TURKEY

Opportunistic observations during field work, public reports, and damage claims all 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. Access during the spring hunt can be competitive, but access should be relatively easy to acquire in GMU 124 for the fall seasons.

For more information on turkey in Washington see the [2013 Turkey Game Harvest Statistics](#) and [the most recent Game Status and Trend Report](#).

DOVE

Doves in District 2 occur 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. Hunter harvest metrics indicate a relatively stable population (Figure 19), with harvest averaging ~2500 birds a year by ~300 hunters. Hunter effort (days/hunter) and harvest per hunter show some annual variation, but average 2.5 days per hunter and 8 doves per hunter (Figure 19). It is 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 on doves see the 2013 Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Statewide and by County](#) and [the most recent Game Status and Trend Report](#).

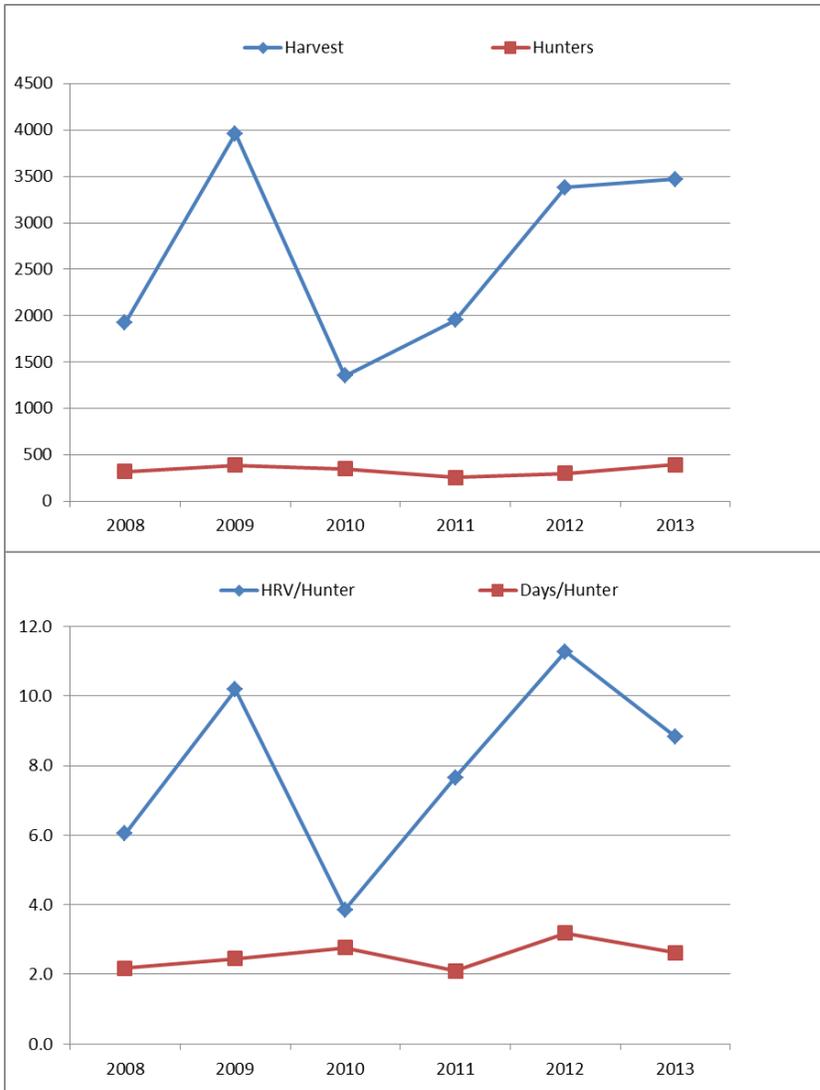


FIGURE 19. TOP GRAPH: FOREST GROUSE HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013. BOTTOM GRAPH: FOREST GROUSE HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2008-2013.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

The majority of the district is privately owned, however WDFW and BLM own ~60,000 acres in the center of Lincoln County and ~15,000 acres in northwest Whitman County. For more information on BLM property or to order maps, please visit the blm.gov website. For more information on WDFW lands please visit our wildlife area [webpage](#).

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](#).

The [US Army Corps of Engineers](#) also maintains lands associated with the Snake River that are open to the public for recreational purposes, not all are open to hunting so please research beforehand.

[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).

Riverside State Park and Mt Spokane State Park, along with all county parks in Spokane County are open to public access, but NOT to hunting.

There are several private 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](#)).

PRIVATE LANDS

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 five basic access agreement types: Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP), Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH), Hunt by Reservation (HBR), Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP), and Register to Hunt (RTH). Total accessible acreage in District 2 is 170,809 acres – 24,892 in Spokane County, 45,324 in Lincoln County, and 100,593 in Whitman County. A summary of these acres by GMU and program are in Table 2 below. The LHP in GMU 130 is managed by the Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA); access is only available through WDFW Special Permitting and CPWMA Raffle Permit Hunts (see WDFW Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations Pamphlet. More information on the other four access programs and where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's [GoHunt](#) site and at the [WDFW Private Lands Access web site](#).

TABLE 2. ACRES OF PRIVATE LAND ENROLLED IN WDFW ACCESS PROGRAMS BY GMU IN DISTRICT 2.

Game Management Unit (GMU)	Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP)		Feel Free To Hunt (FFTH)		Hunt By Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)		Register to Hunt (RTH)	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
124 Mt Spokane	2	298	2	9,228						
127 Mica Peak			1	3,130						
130 Cheney	1	6,246					1	5,990		
133 Roosevelt	18	20,788	1	612						
136 Harrington	12	16,658	7	7,266						
139 Steptoe	15	12,620	7	5,286	22	48,852			2	320
142 Almota	8	12,111	6	3,248	10	18,156				
TOTAL	56	68,721	24	28,770	32	67,008	1	5,990	2	320

2014

Paul Wik, District Wildlife Biologist
Corrie Thorne-Hadley, Private Lands Biologist
Jason Earl, Private Lands Biologist
Mark Vekasy, Assist. District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 3 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

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DISTRICT 3 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 3 is located in southeast Washington and consists of 13 Game Management Units (GMUs): 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 154 (Blue Creek), 157 (Watershed-closed except by permit), 162 (Dayton), 163 (Marengo), 166 (Tucannon), 169 (Wenaha), 172 (Mountain View), 175 (Lick Creek), 178 (Peola), 181 (Couse), and 186 (Grande Ronde). Administratively, District 3 includes Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin counties and is one of three Management Districts (1, 2, and 3) comprising WDFW's Region 1. The northern part of District 3 (north of Highway 12) includes the southeastern portion of the Palouse Prairie ecoregion, while the southern part of the District is situated in the Blue Mountains.

The landscape in District 3 is dominated by agricultural land in the prairie and foothill regions, with interspersed grassland areas and brushy "eyebrows" and draws. In the mountains, the most common habitat is characterized by second growth forests consisting primarily of Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, grand fir, and subalpine fir.

District 3 is most well-known for its elk hunting opportunities in the Blue Mountains and mule deer hunting opportunities in prairie GMUs. However, quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species including white-tailed deer, black bears, turkey, and pheasant. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and harvest-per-unit effort (HPUE) for most game species in District 3 during the 2013 hunting season, and how those estimates compare to the 2012 season and the 5-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

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TABLE 1. GENERAL SEASON HARVEST AND HPUE ESTIMATES FOR MOST GAME SPECIES FOUND IN DISTRICT 3 DURING THE 2012 AND 2013 HUNTING SEASONS. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE AND A COMPARISON OF 2013 ESTIMATES TO 2012 ESTIMATES AND THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE. HPUE IS EXPRESSED AS #HUNTER DAYS/HARVEST FOR ELK, DEER, AND BEAR, AND AS #HARVESTED/HUNTER DAY FOR ALL OTHER SPECIES. NH = NO HUNTERS.

Species	Harvest					HPUE				
	5-yr avg.	2012	2013	% change (5yr)	% change (2012)	5-yr avg.	2012	2013	% change (5yr)	% change (2012)
Elk	186	186	188	1%	1%	99	93	91	-7%	-2%
Elk (Gen+Permit)	386	442	386	0%	-13%	116	119	111	-4%	-7%
Deer	2,358	2,694	2,995	27%	11%	18	17	16	-11%	-6%
Bear	102	112	108	6%	-4%	108	87	95	-12%	9%
Cougar	13	19	19	46%	0%	Not estimated			**	**
Wild Turkey	714	824	638	-11%	-23%	0.10	0.11	0.09	-14%	-16%
Canada Goose	3,484	3,125	3,067	-12%	-2%	1.05	1.11	0.95	-9%	-14%
Chukar Partridge	2,003	1,699	1,014	-49%	-40%	0.79	0.79	0.79	0%	0%
Cottontail Rabbit	274	377	219	-20%	-42%	0.28	0.48	0.30	7%	-37%
Duck	22,226	28,953	21,776	-2%	-25%	2.40	2.57	2.41	0%	-6%
Forest Grouse	3,319	1,904	1,771	-5%	-7%	0.33	0.38	0.40	24%	7%
Gray Partridge	1,575	1,441	504	-68%	-65%	0.64	0.79	0.47	-27%	-41%
Mourning Dove	2,132	2,717	1,818	-15%	-33%	2.83	3.22	2.56	-10%	-20%
Pheasant	12,954	9,792	7,157	-27%	-45%	0.71	0.74	0.59	-17%	-20%
Quail	7,510	6,783	3,516	-53%	-48%	0.95	1.01	0.78	-18%	-23%
Snowshoe Hare	29	60	66	128%	10%	0.30	0.43	0.60	98%	38%

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

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 3 is comprised of PMU 13 (GMU 145, 149, 154, 157, 162, 163, 166, 169, 172, 175, 178, 181, and 186).

Within District 3, only the GMUs within the forested portion of the District are managed for elk population stability or growth (GMUs 154, 157, 162, 166, 169, 172, 175, and 186). GMUs 145, 149, 163, 178, and 181 are managed to ‘limit’ elk numbers, although some recreational opportunity is provided as determined through surveys. Minimizing elk depredation to agricultural crops occurs in all GMUs with private agricultural activities occurring within them. Additional management objectives include maintaining herds that have a minimum of 22 bulls:100 cows in the post-season population, with a range of 22 – 28 bulls:100 cows identified as the management target.

Biologists in District 3 conduct an annual helicopter population survey within the core elk areas to estimate the post-winter population size. In the spring of 2014, a population estimate of 5,774 (90% Confidence Interval of +/- 490) elk was generated. Surveys are also conducted along the state line of Oregon (and within Oregon); resulting in approximately 500-600 elk being counted that likely are not available for harvest in Washington during the fall. The 5-year average prior to 2014 is 5,097 elk, which is 13% lower than the 2014 estimate. The large increase in 2014 is likely a result of increased calf production in 2013 and winter migration patterns between Oregon and Washington.

Calf ratios increased in 2013-2014 to an estimated 34.7:100 cows (90% CI +/- 1.2), the second highest recorded level since aerial surveys were implanted in 1991. This increase in calf production should directly relate to a higher number of spikes available for harvest in the fall of 2014. Bull ratios also rose over the past year and will result in an increased number of branched-bull permits in years to come.

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?

Most general season hunters in the Blue Mountains have been hunting here for many years, with the exception of the Branched-bull tag holders and archery hunters in GMU 175. New hunters to

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this area will have to consider a number of options; such as weapon type, private land access versus public land, difficulty of hunt desired (wilderness versus highly roaded landscapes), and as archery hunters, whether the availability of antlerless opportunity is important.

Throughout District 3, the harvest of branched-bulls is regulated through the permit system. All GMUs in District 3, except 186, are managed for Quality. The drawing of these tags can be difficult and many hunters invest years of applying before successfully obtaining a permit. New hunters to the District are advised to contact the district biologists prior to applying for a hunt to better understand individual GMU limitations. Once a permit is obtained, district biologists are happy to provide information on where to hunt within the GMU that fits the hunter's needs.

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH GMU:

GMU 145: This is a private land unit managed for zero elk. Very few elk reside in this unit and are very difficult to find.

GMU149: This large GMU is predominantly private land that is managed to minimize elk numbers because of conflicts with agricultural activities. A relatively large number of bulls inhabit the southwest corner of the GMU and do cross back and forth between Oregon and Washington. Most harvest occurs in the area of the Boise Cascade poplar farm. It is highly recommended that access is obtained to this property prior to applying for hunts. See footnote in the pamphlet for contact information. An additional herd of elk exists in the northern portion of the unit on the breaks of the Snake River. This is a very difficult herd to hunt without access to numerous landowners, as the elk are highly mobile in this area and can be difficult to locate.

GMU 154: This GMU is 99% private land, but does include numerous landowners in the Department's access program. The elk are heavily hunted in this GMU due to conflicts with agricultural activities. Access has historically been available to branched-bull tag holders as well as general season hunters.

GMU 157: This GMU is 99% public land, but closed to the public to any entry other than special permit holders. The Mill Creek Watershed is the source of drinking water for the City of Walla Walla and access is highly regulated and enforced.

GMU 162: The Dayton GMU is a mix of private and public lands and supports approximately 1,000 elk. This unit has the highest density of general season hunters in District 3. Access to the northern portion of the GMU can be difficult as it is predominantly private. The southern portion of the unit is predominantly USFS and lands owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Both of these lands are open to the public with motorized vehicle restrictions scattered throughout.

GMU 163: This GMU is not managed for elk and only occasionally supports huntable numbers of elk. The GMU is predominantly private land.

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GMU 166: This GMU has had the highest success rate for general season hunters recently, but also has one of the higher densities of hunters. The unit is predominantly USFS and WDFW owned lands. A portion of the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness extends into this GMU and offers backcountry hunting opportunities.

GMU 169: Most of this GMU is located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. Numerous road access points occur along the edge of this GMU, but a majority of the unit requires backpacking or stock to access. Elk densities have remained low in this unit for the past 20 years and do not show indications of improving. This can be a physically challenging unit to hunt.

GMU 172: Elk numbers have risen in this GMU recently and can offer good general season opportunity, depending upon access. Approximately 60% of this GMU is private and access can be challenging. The USFS lands within this GMU are physically challenging to hunt. WDFW has been acquiring land within this GMU recently (4-0 Wildlife Area), but deer and elk hunting there is managed by permit only access.

GMU 175: This GMU is predominantly public land owned by WDFW, USFS, and Washington DNR. Access is good throughout the unit. This is the only unit that archery hunters can harvest antlerless elk without a permit in the Blue Mountains, resulting in very high density of hunters during archery season.

GMU 178: This private land unit is managed to minimize elk numbers due to conflict with agricultural activities. Access can be challenging to obtain. Elk numbers are highly variable in the unit and do not offer reliable recreational opportunity during the general season without knowledge of landowners and herd behavior.

GMU 181: This private land unit is managed to minimize elk numbers due to conflict with agricultural activities. Access can be challenging to obtain. Elk numbers are highly variable in the unit and do not offer reliable recreational opportunity during the general season without knowledge of landowners and herd behavior.

GMU 186: This unit is split equally between private and public lands, with very limited private land access available. This GMU is predominantly winter range for elk in Oregon, although approximately 100 elk reside in the unit throughout the year. The individual elk may reside on private land throughout the season where access is not available, although some years have proven highly successful for the few hunters that know the unit.

The information provided in Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how District 3 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are from the 2013 harvest reports. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of elk harvested and hunters per square mile.

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Each GMU was ranked from 1 to 11 for elk harvested/mi² (bulls only for modern firearm and cows included with bulls for archery), hunters/mi², and hunter success rates. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum. 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 one public land GMU (175) and on private lands throughout multiple GMUs. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs. 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. GMUS ARE GENERALLY LIMITED TO SPIKE BULL HARVEST, BUT SOME MAY HAVE ANTLERLESS OPPORTUNITY AS WELL (SEE HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS). DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON 2013 HARVEST REPORTS.

MODERN FIREARM											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
149	1409	5	0.00	8	66	0.05	1	7.6%	1	3	13
154	216	17	0.08	4	283	1.31	5	6.0%	4	3	16
162	210	33	0.16	2	833	3.97	10	4.0%	7	2	21
166	131	27	0.21	1	417	3.18	8	6.5%	3	1	13
169	161	8	0.05	5	232	1.44	6	3.4%	10	1	22
172	108	17	0.16	2	234	2.17	7	7.3%	2	2	13
175	158	20	0.13	3	543	3.44	9	3.7%	8	1	22
178	275	5	0.02	6	107	0.39	4	4.7%	6	3	19
181	262	2	0.01	7	57	0.22	2	3.5%	9	3	21
186	53	1	0.02	6	18	0.34	3	5.6%	5	2	16

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ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
149	1409	0	0.00	6	8	0.01	2	0.0%	6	3	17
154	216	7	0.03	3	135	0.63	8	5.0%	3	3	17
162	210	4	0.02	4	164	0.78	9	2.4%	5	2	20
166	131	0	0.00	6	49	0.37	6	0.0%	6	1	19
169	161	1	0.01	5	41	0.25	5	2.4%	5	1	16
172	108	7	0.06	2	46	0.43	7	7.0%	2	2	13
175	158	24	0.15	1	265	1.68	10	9.0%	1	1	13
178	275	2	0.01	5	49	0.18	4	4.0%	4	3	16
181	262	1	0.00	6	21	0.08	3	5.0%	3	3	15
186	53	0	0.00	6	0	0.00	1	0.0%	6	2	9
MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
172	108	1	0.01	NA	43	0.40	NA	2.30%	NA	2	NA

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

It is typically uncommon for elk populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 3 where severe winter weather conditions do not occur. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to most years. In 2013, calf numbers did increase and should result in a noticeable increase in the number of spikes on the landscape during 2014. 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, 2013 was a hot and dry summer in eastern Washington, which produced very warm and dry conditions during the archery 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. Figure 2 provides trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and is intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where they want to hunt in District 3.

HOW TO FIND ELK

When hunting elk in District 3, 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 open ridge tops where they can glass animals from a considerable distance. During the general season, past research on bulls has indicated that a majority of the elk will move to north aspect, mid-slope timbered hillsides within one day of the opener. With only 9 days to hunt the general season, there is a lot of pressure the first few days of the season. Pressure definitely declines as the season progresses and may allow the elk to return to normal behaviors if they are not close to major roads.

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, on public land, hunters should not let a locked gate 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.

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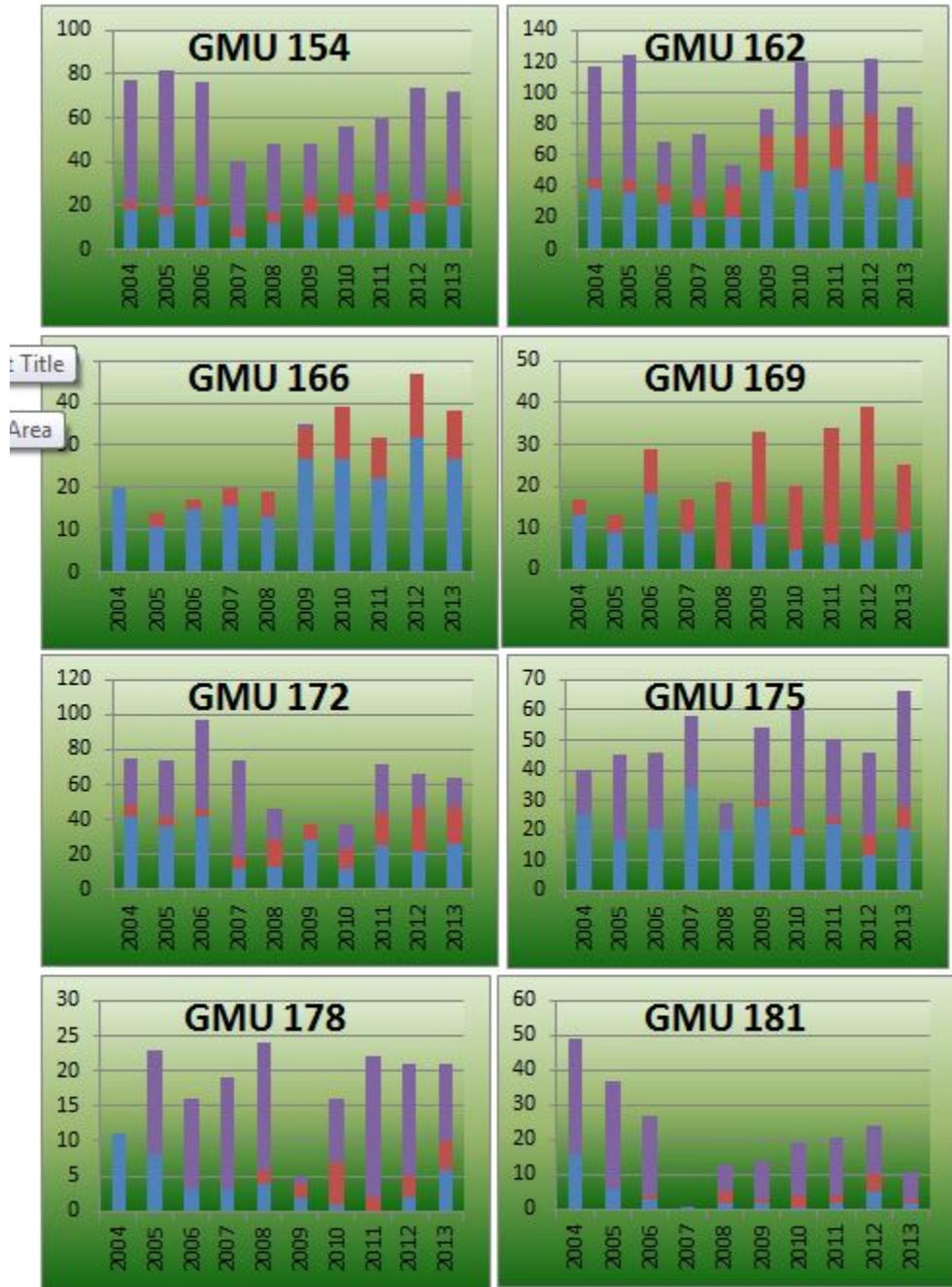


Figure 2. Trends in total number of yearling bulls (blue), branched bulls (red), and antlerless (purple) elk harvested during general and permit seasons combined, 2004 – 2013. Harvest does not include tribal harvest.

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ELK AREAS

There are six Elk Areas that occur in District 3: Elk Area 1010 (Dayton private lands), Elk Area 1008 and 1009 (Wenaha Wilderness), Elk Area 1013 (Mountain View Private), Elk Area 1040 (4-0 Wildlife Area) and Elk Area 1016 (Dayton USFS).

Elk Area 1010 is used to focus antlerless and branched-bull elk hunting on private land in the Dayton Unit. In the past, branched-bull tag holders focused on public lands where access was guaranteed, but also increased pressure on that segment of the population. This Elk Area is also used to focus antlerless harvest on the private lands where depredation complaints have historically been high, but limits antlerless harvest on public lands where higher elk densities are desired. Elk Area 1016 is used to provide controlled antlerless elk hunting opportunity on public lands, excluding the Rainwater Wildlife Area (CTUIR).

The intent of Elk Areas 1008 and 1009 was to distribute the hunting pressure within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. In the past, most permit hunters focused in the western corner of the unit where the road density was highest. By spreading out the hunting pressure, additional hunting opportunity was created.

Elk Areas 1040 and 1013 are used to manage hunters within GMU 172. Elk Area 1013 limits antlerless hunting to private lands where damage can occur on agricultural areas, while maximizing elk numbers and recruitment on public lands. Elk Area 1040 is the newly acquired 4-0 Wildlife Area, which is managed for quality hunting opportunity as part of the sale agreement from the previous landowner. All deer and elk hunting on this wildlife area will be managed for quality opportunity, whereas all other species may be hunted by general seasons as listed in the pamphlet.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. New Elk Area 1040 (4-0 Wildlife Area) is closed to general season deer and elk hunting. Elk hunting will only be allowed through the permit system on these lands.
2. Antlerless elk opportunity was increased in GMU 181 due to increasing herd size and depredation complaints.
3. Watershed bull permits were decreased from 45 to 35 as elk counts have declined for a number of years.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Both mule deer and white-tailed deer occur throughout District 3. Deer hunting opportunities in District 3 vary from marginal to quite good, depending on the GMU. The GMUs with highest success (GMUs 145, 149, 178, 181) also have the highest amount of private land and access can be limited. GMUs where access to public land is highest (GMUs 166, 169, 175) have the lowest success, probably due to a combination of high hunter numbers and lower quality deer habitat. While overall harvest is one indicator of GMU hunting quality, harvest/unit effort (HPUE) and harvest/unit area (HPUA) equalize GMUs based on hunter numbers, number of days hunting, and GMU size. However, both HPUE and HPUA can be misleading, as HPUE is complicated by private land access limitations and HPUA is complicated by the amount of habitat in the GMU that actually supports deer. In general, HPUE seems to be a better indicator of hunting success. Hunter success and HPUE of either white-tailed or mule deer in District 3 is highest in GMUs 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 178 (Peola), and 181 (Couse), while total general season harvest is highest in GMUs 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 154 (Blue Creek), and 162 (Dayton).

In Washington, both mule deer and white-tailed deer 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 and survey data is summarized at that level as well. District 3 contains all of PMU 16 (GMU 145, 149, 154, 178, and 181) and PMU 17 (GMUs 157, 162, 163, 166, 169, 172, 175, and 186). All PMUs in District 3 are managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing deer herds while also minimizing negative deer-human interactions. The WDFW Game Management Plan for 2009-2015 (WDFW 2008) has a desired status for post-hunt buck:doe ratios of 15-19 bucks:100 does for PMU 16 and 20-24 bucks:100 does for PMU 17. The lower desired ratios for PMU 16 mainly reflect a more liberal harvest of deer in agricultural units that likely have both higher quality forage due to availability of crops and higher levels of deer damage issues than PMU 17.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 3. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and HPUE (harvest/hunter day) 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 have recently been conducting aerial sightability surveys to monitor deer populations that are independent of harvest data.

All available harvest data indicates deer populations appear to be stable or slightly increasing in both PMUs associated with District 3, and only GMU 175 has shown a consistent declining trend in HPUE. For more detailed information related to the status of mule deer and white-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](#).

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” 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 3. 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 total number of deer harvested over the past 5 years during the general season in GMUs 149 (Prescott) and 154 (Blue Creek) has been 646 and 316 deer, respectively. Just looking at total harvest suggests deer densities are much higher in GMU 149 than 154. However, when harvest is expressed as deer harvested/mi², we come up with an estimate of 0.62 in GMU 149 and 1.61 in GMU 154, which suggests deer densities are probably much higher in GMU 154 than they are in GMU 149. This is further complicated by the amount of actual deer habitat in each GMU. For example, GMU 149 is the largest GMU, but is comprised primarily of tilled croplands, and deer are concentrated in CRP fields and along the breaks of the Snake River, so densities are probably higher than the harvest/mi² indicates.

Each GMU was ranked from 1 to 12 (except for ties) for deer harvested/mi², hunters/mi², hunter success rates, and public land access. Then, the four ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed by GMU number, not by rank. Comparisons are straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs. Differences that are present and should be considered are:

- 1 Some private land GMUs have extensive acreage in WDFW Access programs, such as Feel Free to Hunt, Hunt by Written Permission, Hunt by Registration, or Hunt by Reservation, and may offer similar access to some GMUs with public land. See the Access section of this document for private land acreage available for public hunting in each GMU.

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- 2 Some private land GMUs have extensive acreage in tilled croplands, and actual suitable hunting area may be much smaller, leading to higher than expected hunter densities.

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TABLE 3. RANK SUM ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES A QUICK AND GENERAL COMPARISON OF HOW TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, HUNTER SUCCESS RATES, AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC LAND COMPARE AMONG GMUS DURING GENERAL MODERN, 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 ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
145	355	263	0.740	3	608	1.71	4	43%	1	3	11
149	1409	520	0.369	10	1459	1.04	1	36%	3	3	17
154	216	254	1.175	2	932	4.31	11	27%	6	3	22
162	210	343	1.634	1	1606	7.65	12	21%	7	2	22
163	149	90	0.605	6	337	2.26	8	27%	6	3	23
166	131	84	0.641	5	528	4.03	10	16%	8	1	24
169	161	27	0.169	12	221	1.37	2	13%	9	1	24
172	108	61	0.565	7	218	2.01	7	28%	5	2	21
175	158	45	0.285	11	361	2.29	9	13%	9	1	30
178	275	192	0.699	4	500	1.82	6	38%	2	3	15
181	262	142	0.544	8	374	1.43	3	38%	2	3	16
186	53	28	0.536	9	92	1.74	5	31%	4	2	20

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ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
145	355	8	0.020	10	42	0.12	3	25%	5	3	21
149	1409	30	0.022	9	106	0.08	1	27%	3	3	16
154	216	56	0.261	1	215	1.00	10	26%	4	3	18
162	210	31	0.147	2	216	1.03	11	14%	8	2	23
163	149	21	0.143	3	123	0.82	9	18%	6	3	21
166	131	14	0.110	5	95	0.72	7	16%	7	1	20
169	161	1	0.006	12	24	0.15	4	5%	12	1	29
172	108	4	0.035	8	26	0.24	5	13%	9	2	24
175	158	7	0.044	7	115	0.73	8	6%	11	1	16
178	275	34	0.124	4	119	0.43	6	29%	2	3	13
181	262	14	0.053	6	40	0.15	4	34%	1	3	13
186	53	1	0.015	11	6	0.11	2	12%	10	2	15

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MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
145	355	21	0.060	3	46	0.13	4	36%	2	3	12
149	1409	80	0.056	4	218	0.15	3	36%	2	3	12
154	216	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
162	210	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
163	149	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
166	131	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
169	161	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
172	108	10	0.089	2	41	0.38	2	24%	4	2	10
175	158	3	0.020	6	23	0.15	3	13%	5	1	15
178	275	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
181	262	53	0.202	1	130	0.49	1	40%	1	3	6
186	53	2	0.030	5	6	0.12	5	33%	3	2	15

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

It is typically uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 3 where deer move out of the mountains in winter and weather conditions are generally mild and do not result in large winter die-offs. Periodic die-offs have occurred due to epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), a viral condition transmitted by biting midges, which mainly affects white-tailed deer. We have not had a severe outbreak since 2008. Mule deer populations have experienced long-term declines across much of the West with no definitive cause identified. Habitat loss is suspected to be one possible cause, particularly loss of winter range. The Conservation Reserve Program has probably helped maintain winter range in District 3, and mule deer populations outside of the mountains appear to be stable to increasing. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2013 season.

Hunter numbers have generally decreased over the last 13 years, but have remained fairly stable since 2006. Consequently, the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent

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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 3 and what they can expect to encounter with regard to hunter success and hunter numbers.

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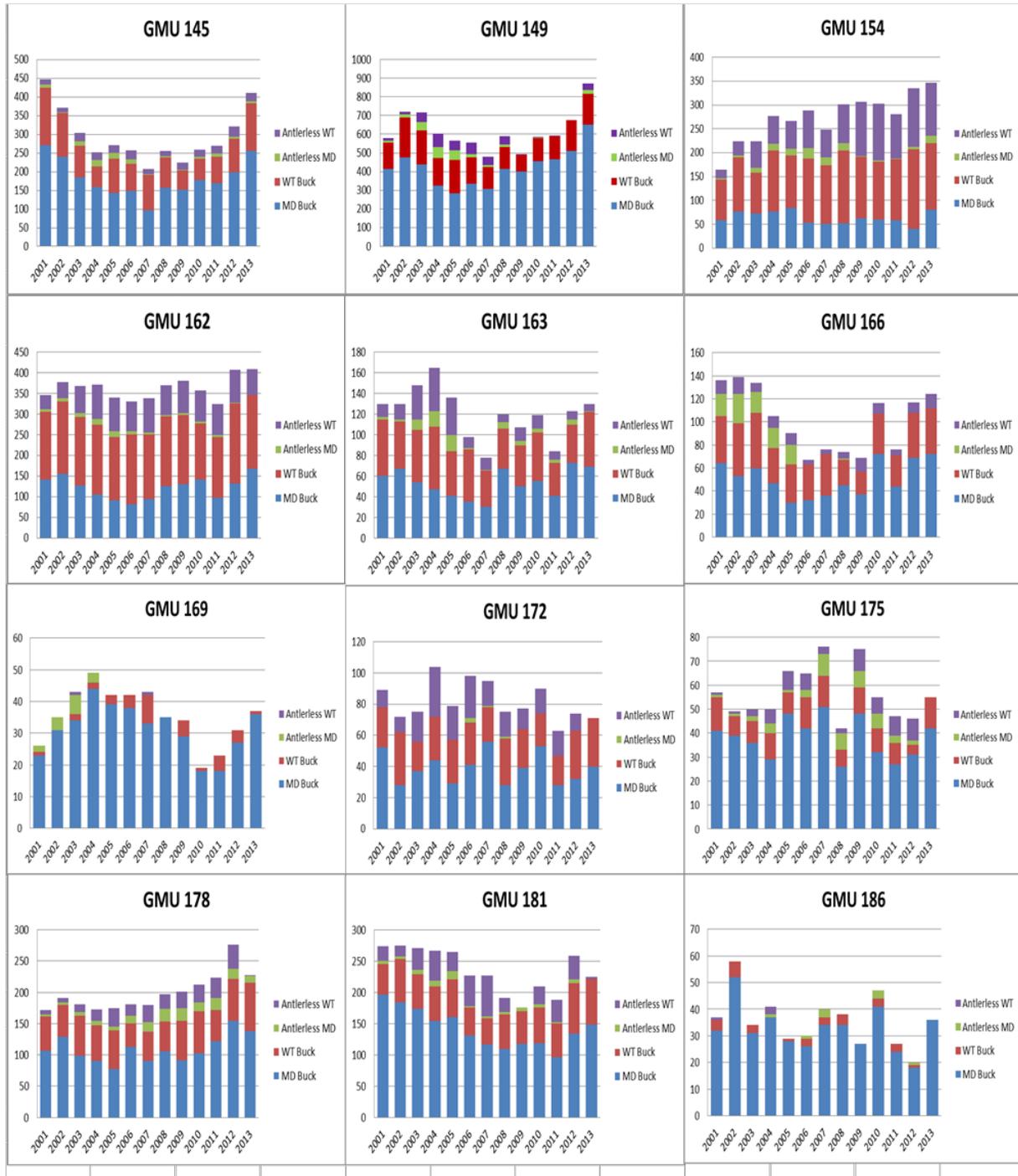


FIGURE 5. TRENDS IN TOTAL NUMBERS OF MULE DEER BUCKS (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS DEER (GREEN), AND WHITE-TAILED BUCKS (RED) AND ANTLERLESS DEER (PURPLE) DURING THE ALL GENERAL SEASONS COMBINED FROM 2001-2013. TOTALS DO NOT INCLUDE PERMIT HARVEST.

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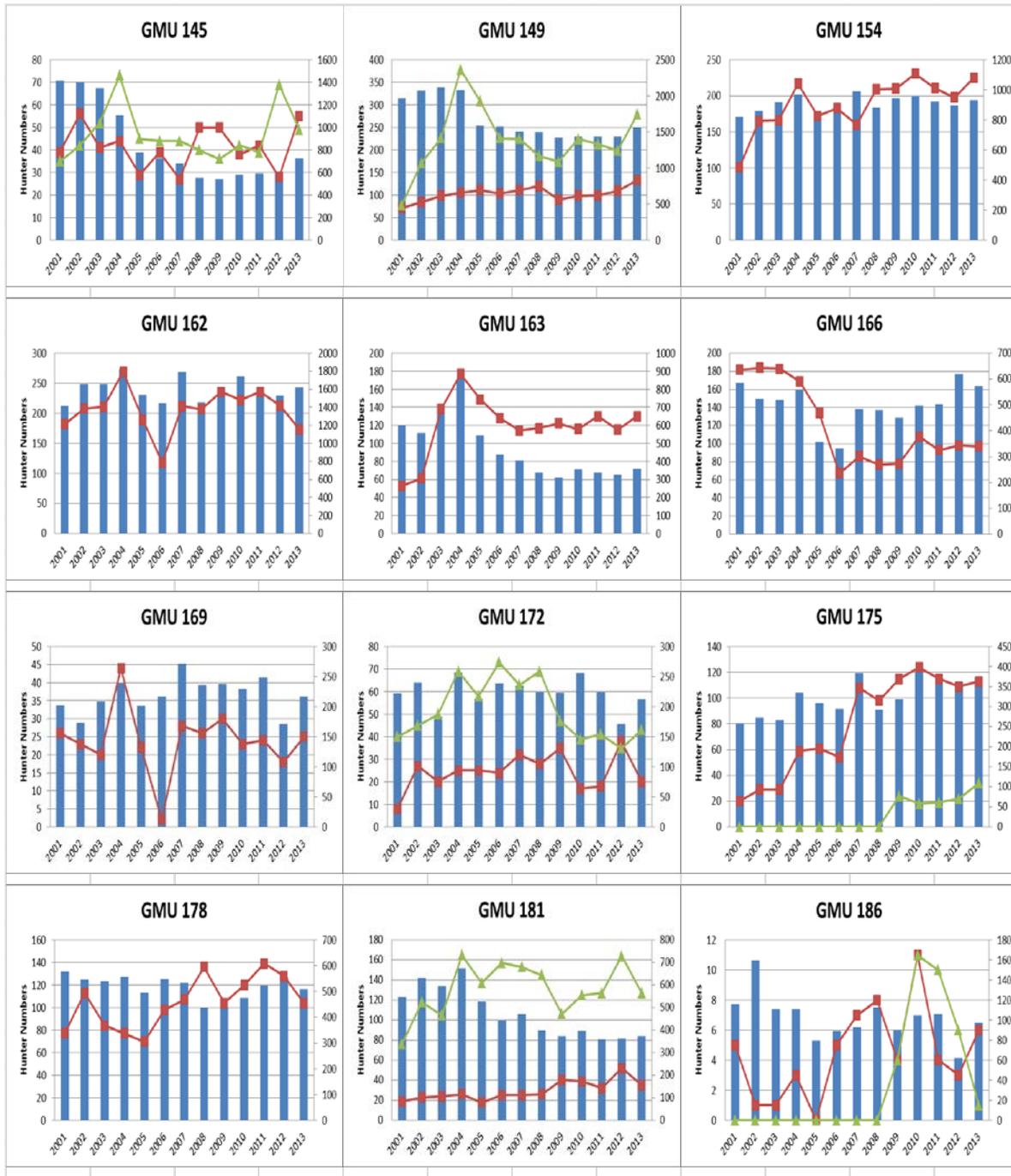


FIGURE 6. TRENDS IN HUNTER NUMBERS FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 3 FOR MODERN FIREARM (BLUE BARS, RIGHT AXIS), ARCHERY (RED SQUARES, LEFT AXIS), AND MUZZLELOADER (GREEN TRIANGLES, LEFT AXIS) GENERAL SEASONS FOR 2001-2013.

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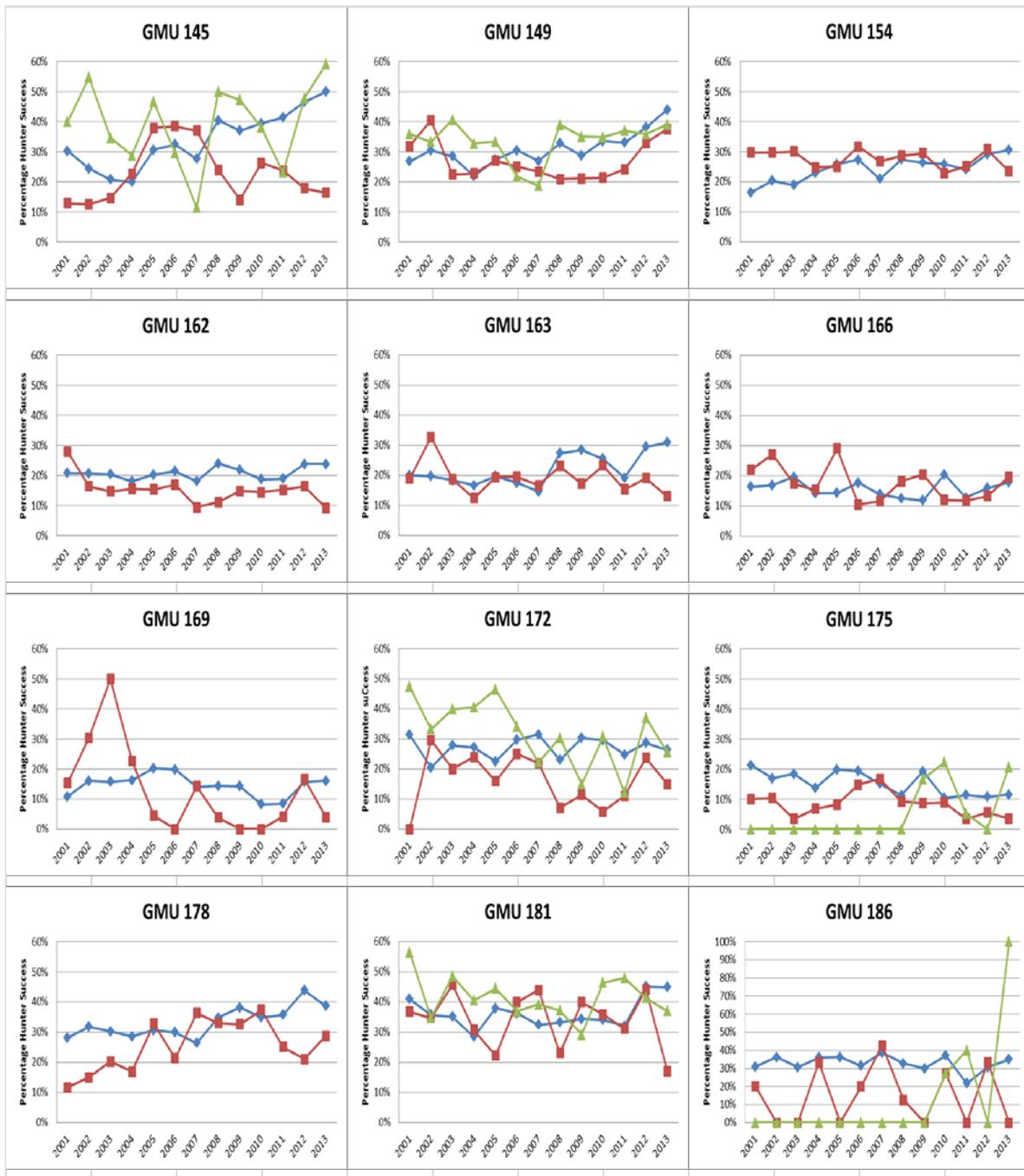


FIGURE 7. TRENDS IN PERCENTAGE HARVEST SUCCESS FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 3 FOR MODERN FIREARM (BLUE DIAMONDS), ARCHERY (RED SQUARES), AND MUZZLELOADER (GREEN TRIANGLES) GENERAL SEASONS FOR 2001-2013.

DEER AREAS

There are 5 Deer Areas in District 3 that were created for a number of different purposes. Deer Area 1010 is located within the private land area of GMU 162 and was created to help manage deer damage while limiting antlerless harvest on public land in the GMU. Deer Area 1008 and 1009 divide GMU 169 and help to manage deer by distributing harvest opportunity across the wilderness area. Deer Area 1021 is located in and around the town of Clarkston in GMU 178 and is used to help manage deer in and around this urban area. Deer Area 1040 is located in GMU 172 and consists of the newly purchased 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area. The boundaries of this area are still in flux as different phases of the acquisition are approved, and the designation helps to manage harvest on this unique property.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. New Deer Area 1040 (4-0 Wildlife Area) is closed to general season deer and elk hunting, open only by permit.
2. GMU 178 included in Senior/Disabled/Youth general rifle season area after mistakenly being omitted in 2013.
3. GMU 149 is open for 5 days longer during early archery season.
4. GMU 172 and 181 antlerless opportunities for late muzzleloader season reinstated.
5. New Deer Area 1040 buck permits for Modern (2), Archery (2), and Muzzleloader (2).

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears occur mainly in the foothills and forested areas of District 3, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a bear likely occur in GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton).

District 3 consists of GMUs that are part of the Blue Mountains Black Bear Management Unit 8 (BBMU 8), which is one of nine BBMUs defined by WDFW. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for the Blue Mtns 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 3.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 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 3 has averaged just 6% and has never been higher than 9%. 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, there has been no trend in annual bear harvest during the general bear season in District 3, with harvest generally fluctuating between 75 and 100 bears, excluding a few outliers. 2011 was a relatively poor year, with 66 bears harvested, but harvest rebounded during the 2012 and 2013 seasons (Figure 8). With annual fluctuations in hunter numbers, some index of harvest per unit effort is generally a better indicator of harvest trends. Figure 8 shows the number of hunter days per bear harvested, which also does not show any consistent trend.

At the GMU level, most bears will be harvested in GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton). Harvest numbers during the 2013 season compared to long-term (10-year) and short-term (5-year) averages were higher in both GMUs 154 and 162, but the yearly harvest does not show any identifiable trends, other than some depressed harvest in GMU 162 during the mid-2000s that has since recovered (Figure 9). Based on general long-term stability in District 3 bear harvest, hunters should expect similar harvest and success rates during the 2014 season.

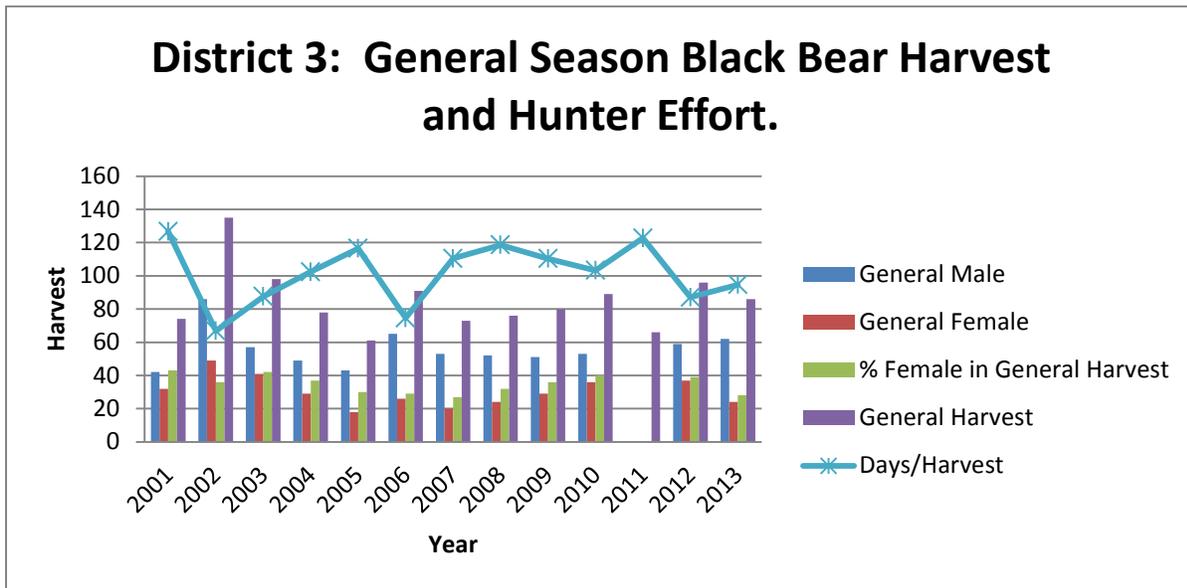


FIGURE 8. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON, AND AN INDEX OF HUNTER EFFORT (HUNTER DAYS/BEAR HARVESTED) IN DISTRICT 3, 2001–2013. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

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 3. Although black bears are extremely common and occur in some areas at very high densities, they are seen infrequently because they limit their time in the open to cooler times of day, and move into thick vegetation in draws and creek bottoms.

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 early in the day in more open terrain (e.g. south-facing slopes) 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 along riparian corridors that contain a large number of berry-producing shrubs including creeping blackberries and elderberries, or along north-facing slopes with salmonberries, huckleberries, and blackberries. Spring permit holders should look below snow-line on south-facing slopes that get early green-up of wild onions and other vegetation and near springs or wet areas with green aquatic vegetation. During the fall, hunters generally will find bears early in the day foraging across open slopes dissected by shrubby draws. Also, check riparian areas that may still have berries or rose hips, and hike through them to see if there is any

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bear sign. If you do find fresh sign, odds are there is a bear that is frequenting that area often. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching open areas in these riparian patches and corridors, they may get a chance to harvest that bear. Patience is the key.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2014 season.

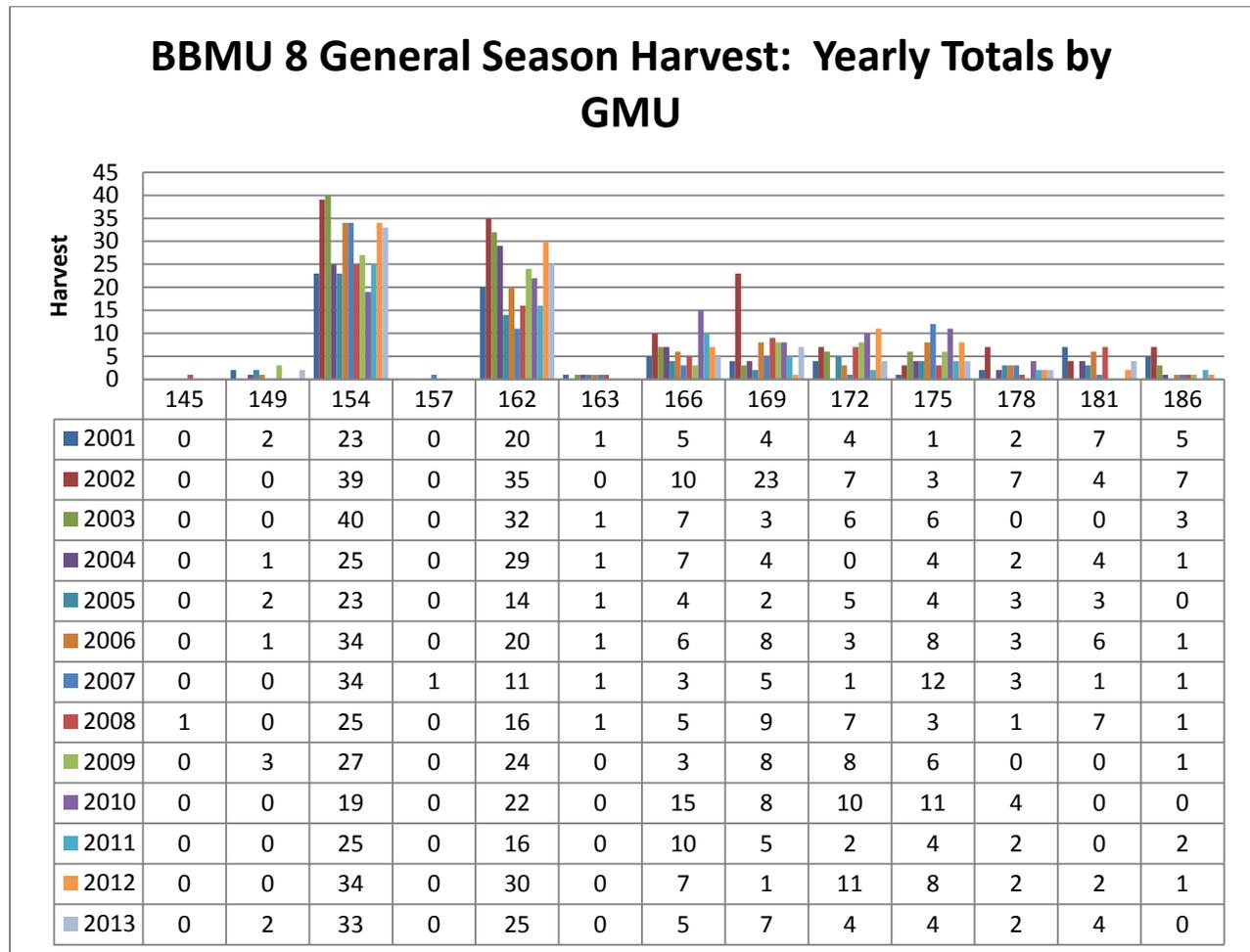


Figure 9. The number of bears harvested in each GMU during 2001-2013 general bear season in District 3.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars can occur throughout District 3, but densities likely vary among GMUs. Cougar populations in District 3 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 3 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 2013 HARVEST LEVELS FOR THE 3 COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 3.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	2013-2014 Harvest
145, 166, 175, 178	3-4	6
149, 154, 162, 163	4-6	10
169, 172, 181, 186	3-4	4

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Cougar harvest in District 3 has been variable over the years, with the average since 1990 of 16 cougars and a range between a low of 7 and a high of 33. However, in 16 out of the last 24 years, the range has been between 12 and 20 cougars harvested. Since 2001, the number of cougars harvested in District 3 has averaged 14 cougars, and sub-adults typically dominate the harvest. With the yearly variation, it is hard to predict future harvest, but cougar sightings in the District continue to be fairly common and there is no reason to suspect much change in the harvest.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2014 season.

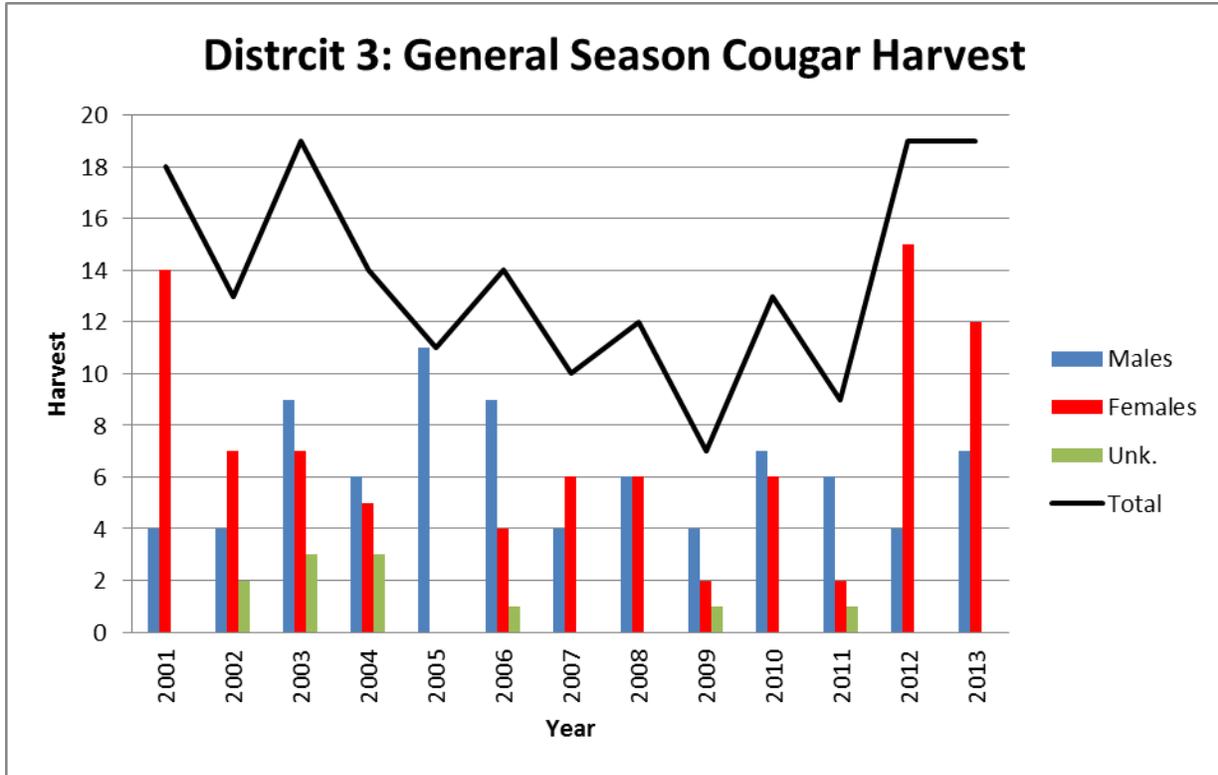


FIGURE 10. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF COUGARS HARVESTED IN DISTRICT 3, 2001–2013.

DUCKS

COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 3. Common dabbling ducks include mallard, northern pintail, American widgeon, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, canvasback, and common goldeneye are present along the reservoirs of the Snake and Columbia River and can occur in fairly large numbers. Nesting wood ducks can be located along the Snake River near Asotin and can provide a unique hunting opportunity early in the season.

Mallards are the most abundant duck species in Washington and constitute the vast majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically $\geq 50\%$). Mid-winter surveys in the South Columbia Basin segment of District 3 typically yield $>50\%$ of mallards in the dabbling duck count, with

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goldeneye and canvasback making up 80% of the diving ducks. When hunting, hunters should expect harvest opportunities to be dominated by mallard and American widgeon, although hunting by boat in the river reservoirs can yield good harvests of diving ducks.

MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY

There are very few ducks in District 3 during late-spring and early summer. Beginning in mid to late September, birds will begin migrating south from British Columbia, the Yukon, and 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 3 as resting and foraging areas and do not stay in the District for long periods of time. Consequently, the number of ducks located in District 3 most likely changes on a daily basis, but begins to decline precipitously when there are no more new migrants coming into the area from breeding grounds to the north.

CONCENTRATION AREAS

In general, concentration areas include the wetlands and rivers around McNary NWR and the Columbia and Snake 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. The agricultural areas around McNary NWR attract large numbers of foraging ducks and geese, but most of these lands are closed to hunting or leased by private hunting outfitters and access can be difficult or expensive.

POPULATION STATUS

The number of ducks that occur in District 3 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 3.3 million ducks which represented a 26% decline from the 2012 estimate of 4.46 million. In addition, the mallard estimates showed an even greater decline, from 506,000 in 2012 to 338,000 in 2013, a 33% decline. The 2014 breeding survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 3.5 million ducks, a 6% increase over 2013 values, but still well below the 2012 estimate. The mallard estimate recovered from 2013 lows to an estimate of 501,000 for 2014, a 48% increase and similar to the 2012 estimate (USFWS, Trends in Duck Breeding Populations, 1955-2014).

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

Even though estimates of breeding populations in Alaska were down in 2013, hunters still had many great hunting opportunities in District 3 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). 2014 breeding population estimates are up from 2013, and the 2014 season should offer good hunting prospects.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

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. See [“Let’s Go Waterfowling”](#) for more information on hunting ducks.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of US Army Corp of Engineer (USACE) Habitat Management Units along the Snake River in District 3 that offer good waterfowl hunting opportunities, and McNary National Wildlife Refuge Complex along the Columbia River offers some of the premier hunting opportunities in the District. Wildlife Areas in District 3 are primarily big game habitat and do not offer much waterfowl hunting opportunity, but hunters should visit WDFW waterfowl hunting page ([click here](#)) for more detailed information on related to their location, current waterfowl management activities, and common species.

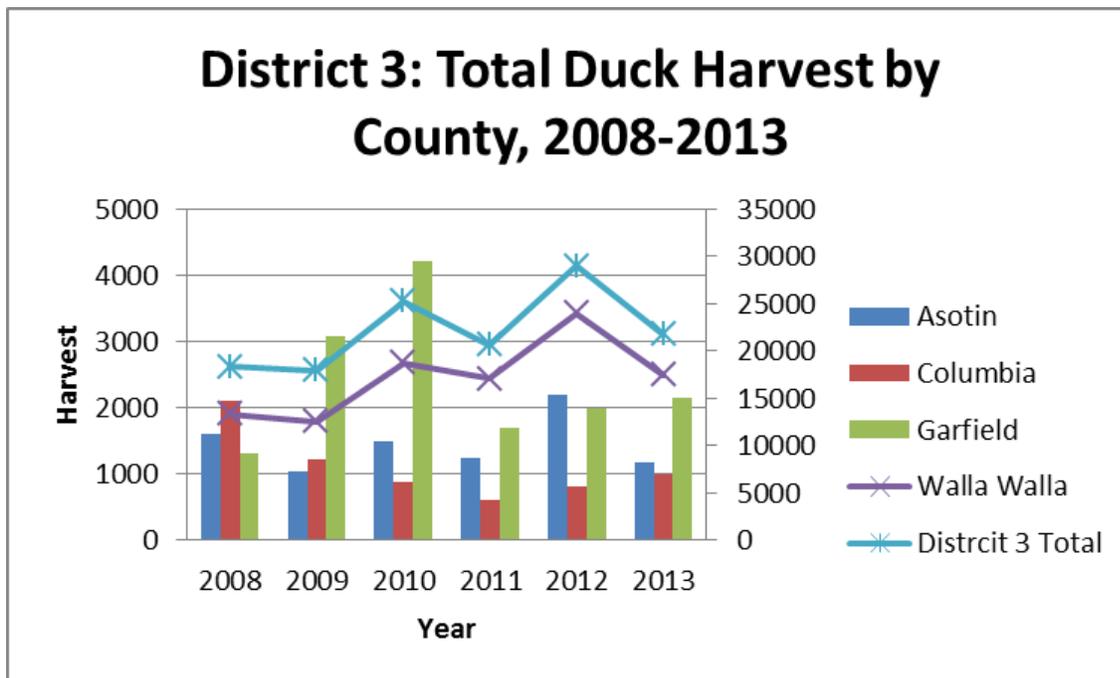


FIGURE 13A. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DUCKS HARVESTED (BLUE LINE, RIGHT AXIS), AND TOTALS BY COUNTY IN WALLA WALLA COUNTY (PURPLE LINE, RIGHT AXIS), AND ASOTIN, COLUMBIA, AND GARFIELD COUNTIES (BARS, LEFT AXIS), 2008–2013.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

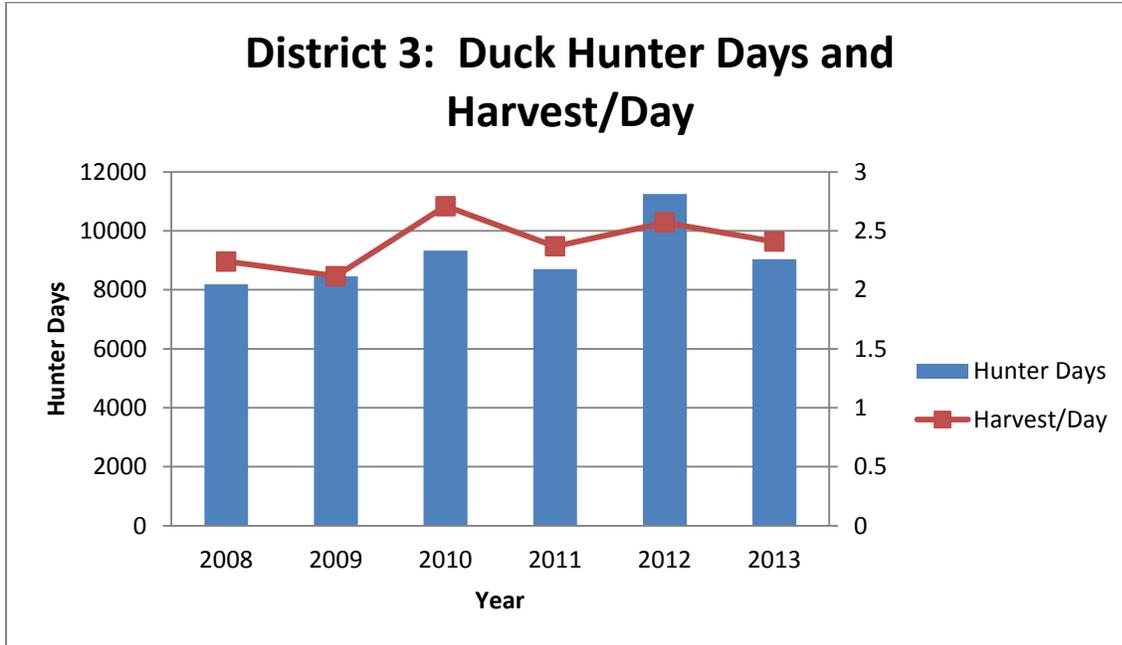


FIGURE 13B. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL DUCK HUNTER DAYS (LEFT AXIS), AND DUCKS HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY (RIGHT AXIS) IN DISTRICT 3, 2008–2013.

GEESE

COMMON SPECIES

Canada geese are the only goose species available for harvest in District 3 during the early September season, while Canada, Snow, Ross, and White-fronted geese may all be taken during the late season.

MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

The migration chronology of geese in District 3 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 as long as snow cover does not become excessive.

POPULATION STATUS

There are few geese that breed in District 3 so WDFW does not conduct breeding goose surveys in this part of the state. Urban populations can be problematic at time, but offer limited hunting opportunities.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

Goose hunting opportunities in District 3 are expected to be similar to trends observed during the last few seasons. Most goose harvest will occur in Walla Walla County during the late season, where twice as many geese are harvested each year compared to Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield Counties combined.

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 3, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate are dryland and irrigated agricultural fields relatively close to the Snake or Columbia Rivers. Because of this, goose hunting opportunities most often occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting. There are multiple guide services available for hunters willing to pay for access and experience.

SPECIAL REGULATIONS

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, as there are specific daily regulations. Pamphlets are available at any retailer that sells hunting licenses or they can be downloaded from WDFW's website ([click here](#)).

FOREST GROUSE

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

There are two species of grouse that occur in District 3-- ruffed grouse and blue grouse (dusky). Ruffed grouse are the most abundant and occur at lower elevations and valley bottoms. Blue grouse can be located in upper elevation grasslands and forests.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not conduct any standardized surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 3. 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 3, grouse populations appear to have increased in the past 2 years as CPUE has slowly increased from a 5-year average of 0.32 birds per hunter day to 0.40 birds per hunter day during the 2013 season.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

The total number of grouse harvested in District 3 declined significantly from 2009 when 5,147 grouse were estimated to be harvested to 1,771 in 2013. However, hunter numbers have declined as well, especially over the past few years. Regardless, hunters should expect to bag somewhere between 0.2 and 0.4 grouse per day hunted.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt grouse in District 3 is by walking roads and shooting them as they flush or after they roost in a nearby tree. Blue grouse tend to occur in higher densities in the higher elevations of the Blue Mountains, and can occasionally be found in high densities along grassy open ridges mixed with conifer forests. Ruffed grouse are closely associated with riparian areas throughout all elevations of the forested portions of the Blue Mountains. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's grouse species please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage or [click here](#).

PHEASANTS

Pheasant hunting opportunities in District 3 are associated with the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program. Each year, approximately 3,500 pheasants are released in Region 1, and most of these are destined for release sites in District 3. Nine sites are located throughout the District; 4 of those sites (Hollebeke HMU, Mill Creek HMU, Rice Bar HMU, and Willow Bar HMU) are owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2 sites (Asotin WMA and Wooten WMA) are WDFW-owned, and the remainder are on private lands enrolled in the Access program and are open to the public under the Feel Free to Hunt program. Releases take place for the youth season on most of the sites in late September, and the remaining releases happen sporadically throughout the pheasant hunting season.

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Pheasants are closely associated with agricultural and grassland habitats throughout the northern portion of the District. The best pheasant hunting is located in areas of permanent cover, usually associated with riparian or shrubby habitats.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not generate population estimates for pheasants currently. 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 3, pheasant CPUE appears to have remained relatively stable over the past 5 years. CPUE in 2013 was 0.7 birds harvested per hunter day, with the previous 5-year average being 0.70. Other WDFW information implies that populations have declined during the past couple of decades, but appear to have stabilized.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

The total number of pheasants harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. The spring and early summer of 2014 have been good conditions for nesting and brood rearing for pheasants. We would predict that pheasant numbers should be better in the fall of 2014 than the past 2-3 years.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt pheasants in District 3 is with the use of a bird dog. Pheasants are usually located in thicker cover and often require a dog to flush them if they do not run in front of the hunters. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's pheasant please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage or [click here](#).

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

Hunters should be aware that special regulations apply when hunting on eastern Washington pheasant release sites. Most notably, hunters are required to use non-toxic shot, and hunting is only allowed between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. To locate maps for the Mill Creek, Hollebeke, Rice Bar, and Willow Bar HMUs, and Asotin and Hartstock WMA Release Sites, and to learn more about the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program, [click here](#).

QUAIL

California quail are locally common in the lower elevation draws and drainages across the foothills of the Blue Mountains, and in suitable pockets of habitat across the prairie areas and breaks of the Grande Ronde and Snake Rivers. Mountain quail occur in District 3, but there are no sizable populations and sightings are uncommon. When they do occur, it is usually along the Asotin Creek drainage and tributaries that have abundant shrub cover, and hunters looking for California quail in this area should be careful to identify their target, as Mountain quail are protected in Eastern Washington.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not estimate population size for quail. 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 3, quail CPUE appears to have declined in 2013, likely due to weather during the nesting period. CPUE in 2013 was 0.77 birds harvested per hunter day, with the previous 5-year average being 0.95.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

The total number of quail harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. The spring and early summer of 2014 have been good conditions for nesting and brood rearing for quail. We would predict that quail numbers should be better in the fall of 2014 than the past 2-3 years.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt quail in District 3 is with the use of a bird dog. Quail are usually located in thicker cover and often require a dog to flush. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's quail please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage or [click here](#).

TURKEYS

Wild Turkeys of the Rio Grande subspecies have been introduced into SE WA and have become locally very common. Turkeys are found in the lower elevation draws and drainages across the foothills of the Blue Mountains, and in suitable pockets of habitat across the prairie areas and breaks of the Grande Ronde and Snake Rivers. Turkeys can be found in all GMUs, but tend to be concentrated along riparian areas in the lower elevations of the Blue Mountains, and often near farmsteads and towns.

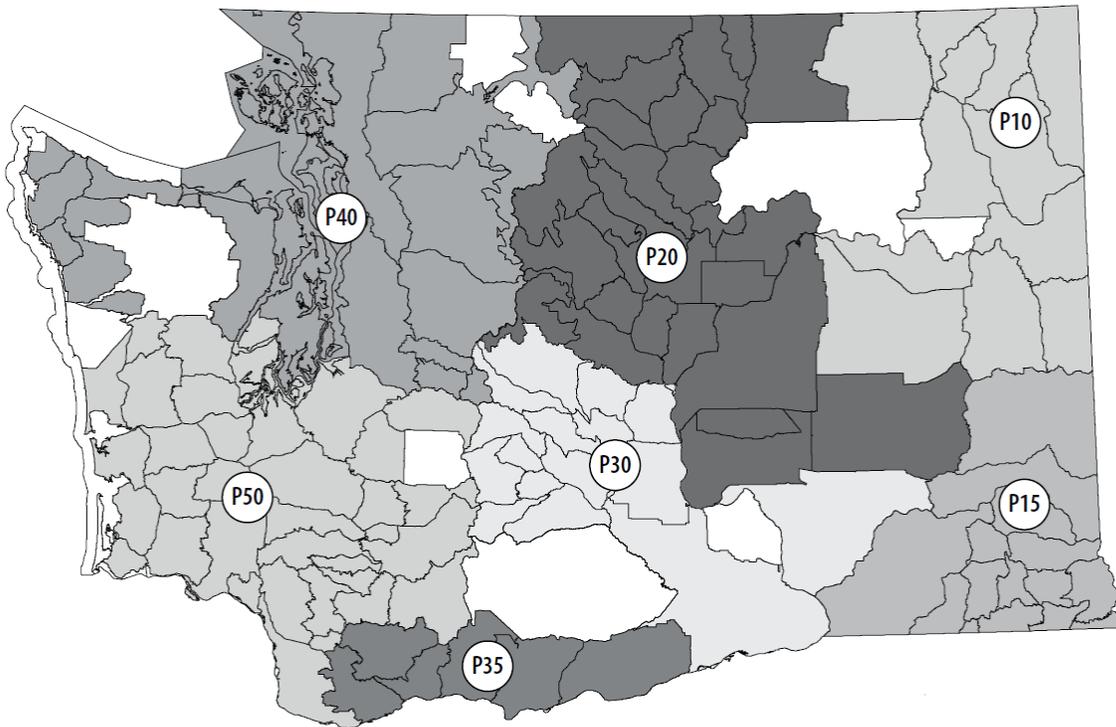


FIGURE 17. MAP DEPICTING WDFW'S SEVEN WILD TURKEY POPULATION MANAGEMENT UNITS.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not estimate population size for turkeys. 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 3, turkey CPUE appears to have declined in

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

2013, likely due to weather during the nesting period. CPUE in 2013 was 0.09 birds harvested per hunter day, with the previous 5-year average being 0.10.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

The total number of turkeys harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. Total harvest dropped from 824 turkeys in 2012 to 638 in 2013, which was also lower than the 5-year average of 714 birds. Based on long-term harvest trends, turkey populations in SE WA appear to have stabilized after years of increasing harvest, and future harvest is likely to be most impacted by Spring weather conditions on brood survival. The spring and early summer of 2014 have been good conditions for nesting and brood rearing for turkey. We would predict that turkey numbers should be better in the fall of 2014 than the past 2-3 years.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

Most turkey hunters target gobblers in the spring when males are displaying and readily come to box, slate, and mouth calls that mimic hen groups. Setting a blind or using camouflage clothing near meadows or small forest openings used as strutting grounds can be very effective and often only minimal calling is needed to bring turkeys within range. Identifying roost areas and setting up nearby can also be effective, but efficient calling will be needed to attract birds to move in your direction. "Gobble" calls should only be used infrequently, and hunters generally should not stalk or approach "gobble" calls as it may be another hunter. For other tips and tactics on safe and ethical turkey hunting, [click here](#).

GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton) have the highest turkey harvests. Highest densities are often found on private land in the lower foothill areas that have a mix of forest, grassland, and agricultural fields, and flocks can frequently be seen from roadways along the creek drainages in these areas. Some of these flocks have become nuisance birds, and landowners are often willing to grant permission to thin turkey numbers. Be respectful of private land and always ask for permission to hunt. Although densities are lower, good numbers of birds can be found on National Forest lands and local wildlife areas, including the Wooten Wildlife Area in GMU 166 (Tucannon), Asotin Creek Wildlife Area in GMU 175 (Lick Creek), and the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area in GMU 186 (Grande Ronde).

OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species and furbearers that occur in District 3, 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 mourning doves, snipe and coot.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

District 3 does offer considerable public land hunting opportunities. Public land opportunities within the District are comprised of US Forest Service (Umatilla National Forest), US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Natural Resources, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Bureau of Land Management, and WDFW.

GMUs with the greatest amount of public land include GMU 157 (Mill Creek Watershed, closed except by permit), GMU 162 (Dayton), GMU 166 (Tucannon), GMU 169 (Wenaha), GMU 172 (Mountain View), GMU 175 (Lick Creek), and GMU 181 (Couse), and GMU 186 (Grande Ronde).

For more information related to the location of WDFW Wildlife Areas, visit the WDFWs hunting access website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/ or by [clicking here](#).

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 public land in each GMU, and the following ratings reflect that assumption. Please refer to the “Private Land Access Program” section of this document to determine which GMUs have significant amounts of additional lands available for public hunting.

The following rating system was developed for District 3 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 public land available. Each GMU was given a rating of excellent, good, and poor with the level of access associated with each rating as follows:

- **Excellent**---A majority of the GMU is in public ownership.
- **Good**---There is a mix of public land within the GMU.
- **Poor**---Most of the GMU is privately owned

Information provided is a brief description of major ownership. Hunters are encouraged to contact the WDFW Region 1 office in Spokane (509-892-1001) if they have questions related to hunter access that have not been answered.

GMU 145 - Mayview

Access rating = Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although the US Army Corps of Engineers owns the shorelines of the Snake River. In many places, the USACE lands only extend a couple of hundred yards above the waterlines, but there are a few large Habitat Management Units that provide considerable recreational opportunity.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

GMU 149 – Prescott

Access rating = Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although the US Army Corps of Engineers owns the shorelines of the Snake River. In many places, the USACE lands only extend a couple of hundred yards above the waterlines, but there are a few large Habitat Management Units that provide considerable recreational opportunity.

GMU 154 – Blue Creek

Access Rating = Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although a number of large landowners participate in the Department’s private land access program. Hunters wishing to hunt in this GMU are highly encouraged to contact landowners long before their season opens to secure access. Hunters applying for special permits in this GMU are encouraged to secure access prior to applying.

GMU 157 – Mill Creek Watershed

Access rating = Not Available

Although this GMU is 99% public lands, access is restricted to special permit holders. The Mill Creek Watershed has regulated public access because it is the source of drinking water for the City of Walla Walla. Currently, there are elk and deer permit opportunities within this GMU.

GMU 162 - Dayton

Access rating = Good

Approximately half of this GMU is in public ownership, primarily USFS and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Private land access can be difficult to obtain within this GMU, although a few landowners participate in the Department’s private land access program.

GMU 163 - Marengo

Access rating = Poor

A majority of this GMU is in private ownership. This GMU has a large percentage of the lands developed for windpower. Some of the windpower companies allow hunting access if the hunters participate in an educational training, located at the Last Resort along the Tucannon River and Deadman Creek Outfitters along the Lower Deadman Rd near Central Ferry.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

GMU 166 - Tuccannon

Access rating = Excellent

A majority of this GMU is owned by WDFW and the USFS. Access is good throughout most of the unit, with a portion of the unit being located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness.

GMU 169 - Wenaha

Access rating = Excellent

This GMU is 100% public lands, with 95% of it being located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. This is a very rugged wilderness topographically and access can be physically challenging.

GMU 172 – Mountain View

Access rating = Good

Approximately 50% of this GMU is in public ownership. Access to the private lands can be difficult to obtain. This GMU also has the 4-0 Wildlife Area located within it, where deer and elk hunting is permitted by special draw only.

GMU 175 – Lick Creek

Access rating = Excellent

A majority of this GMU is in public ownership, administered by the USFS, WDFW, and DNR. Access is excellent and this GMU has the highest road density of any District 3 GMU's.

GMU 178 - Peola

Access rating = Poor

This GMU is predominantly private land, with the public land (DNR sections) often being land locked from public access. Landowners tend to allow significant access throughout the GMU and there are numerous landowners who participate in the Department's private lands access program.

GMU 181 - Couse

Access rating = Good

This GMU is mostly private land, but WDFW does own a considerable amount of land. See the Department's Wildlife Area webpage.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 3--Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

GMU 186 – Grande Ronde

Access rating = Good

Approximately half of this GMU is in public ownership. Access to the private land in this GMU has not been available to the public in recent years.

PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

There are a multitude of private landowners in District 3 who are enrolled in WDFW’s Private Lands Access Program. However, at the time of this writing, Cooperative Agreements with some of these landowners have not been finalized. Even though there are no indications landowners will not renew their Cooperative Agreements for the 2014 hunting season, we were hesitant to provide that information in this document. Hunters are encouraged to call the Region 1 office in Spokane (509-892-1001) 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/ or [click here](#) .

The following is a summary of anticipated private land acres available through the Departments Private Lands Access program in 2014.

District 3

GMU	Hunting Only BY Written Permission (HOBWP)		Feel Free To Hunt (FFTH)		Register To Hunt (RTH)		Hunt By Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
145 Mayview	8	7,750	10	6,911	1	1,837	1	1,060		
149 Prescott	8	28,580	21	44,434			2	3,423		
154 Blue Creek	4	3,869	16	13,063					1	7,280
162 Dayton	2	1,081	1	11,087						
163 Marengo	8	9,642	7	13,345						
172 Mountain View			1	554					1	8,746
175 Lick Creek	2	887								
178 Peola	8	11,417	4	1,591	1	2,602	2	1,071		
181 Couse	10	13,813	3	4,059	1	1,617				
186 Grande Ronde										
Total	50	77,039	63	95,044	3	6,056	5	5,554	2	16,026
Total Acres	199,718.94									

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 3 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.

Walla Walla County tax parcels can be searched using the county GIS site, 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 Walla Walla County GIS tool can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

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](#).

2014

Sara Gregory, District Wildlife Biologist
Ryan Stutzman, Private Lands Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 4 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Benton and Franklin Counties

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DISTRICT 4 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 4 is located in the south central part of the state in the Columbia Basin ecoregion. This is the driest part of Washington, with a near desert climate. Precipitation averages only 6 to 9 inches per year and is mostly received in the winter. Benton and Franklin Counties fall within District 4 which administratively is part of WDFW's Region 3. The following Game Management Units (GMU) are included in District 4: Rattlesnake Hills (372), Horse Heaven (373), Ringold (379), and Kahlotus (381).

This area is defined by some of Washington's major rivers. The Hanford Reach of the Columbia River runs through the middle of the District between Benton and Franklin Counties. This 50-mile stretch is one of the most scenic areas of the River in the state. To the east, the Snake River carves the boundary of Franklin County. The heart of District 4 is the confluence of the Yakima, Snake, and Walla Walla Rivers with the main stem of the Columbia River at the Tri-Cities (Pasco, Kennewick, Richland). Large populations of waterfowl congregate throughout the district for breeding, migrating and wintering. Upland, habitats are defined by the Columbia Plateau Ecoregion which was historically dominated by native shrub steppe. Since the 1800s, farmers and ranchers have been working the land around District 4. Intensive irrigated agriculture supporting many orchards and vineyards is a major land use in the Yakima River Valley, southern Benton County, and western Franklin County. Dryland wheat is also a major land use in southern Benton County, as well as eastern Franklin 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.

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. Many of these depressions have been filled with run-off from irrigation projects and provide additional wetlands that attract wildlife. This landscape provides a diversity of habitats favored by upland birds (chukar, pheasant, quail, dove) and big game (deer and elk).

Welcome to District 4 and Happy Hunting!

****NEW**** In an effort to promote public safety, WDFW has made some slight modifications to hunting access regulations along the Hanford Reach. Effective April 1, 2014, The Columbia River, all islands except privately owned, in the river, the Benton County shoreline below the high water mark, Central Hanford Department of Energy property, and any peninsula originating on the Benton County shoreline, between Vernita Bridge on Highway 24 downstream to the Richland city limits, are designated as a "CLOSED AREA" to hunting wild animals and wild birds. The only exception is waterfowl hunting, which is open below the high water mark

between the old Hanford townsite power line crossing (wooden towers) in Section 24, T 13 N, R 27 E, and the Richland city limits (Figure 1). These details are printed in the 2014 Big Game Regulations p. 82.



FIGURE 1. MAP DEPICTING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE REVISED HUNTING CLOSURE (IN RED) AT THE HANFORD REACH NATIONAL MONUMENT. IN SEASON, WATERFOWL HUNTING IS ALLOWED BETWEEN THE WOODEN TOWERS (YELLOW LINE) AND THE RICHLAND CITY LIMITS. THIS MAP CAN BE DOWNLOADED [HERE](#).

ELK

AN ELK HARVESTED IN GMU 372.

Opportunity for elk hunting is primarily limited in District 4 to lands surrounding the western and southern boundaries of the Hanford Reach National Monument (GMU 372). Surveys on the Hanford Monument in February 2014 yielded a total herd estimate of 1068 elk with 55 bulls and 30 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.

Each year during the general season 175-190 hunters pursue elk in District 4. Of those, 20-25 (usually modern firearm) are successful. Last year was very similar. There were 25 elk harvested, 19 of which were from GMU 372. Hunter success was about 15%. Hunts are geared toward addressing crop damage on surrounding wheat farms, vineyards, and orchards. While

most of the land around the Hanford Monument is private, 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. There are also limited opportunities for elk in Franklin County in the [Juniper Dunes Wilderness](#) and on the Windmill Ranch unit (See Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area map above and click [here](#)).

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. See the current hunting regulations for more information.

DEER

Most of District 4 is private, open country farmland. Eastern Franklin County is an important 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. The 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.



A BUCK HARVESTED IN FRANKLIN COUNTY (GMU 381)

In northern Benton County (GMU 372), spend some time scouting for deer in the Thornton and Rattlesnake units of the Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area (Figure 2). In southern Benton County there are small groups of deer available to hunters on land in the Horse Heaven Hills (GMU 373) managed by the BLM, scattered tracts of DNR and private property, and the USFWS’s Umatilla NWR. On the Umatilla NWR’s Whitcomb and Paterson Units (see Figure 4 above), Deer Areas 3071 and 3072 respectively, there are 40 special permits split every September between muzzleloader and archery hunters. In even numbered years, archery hunters have the opportunity to hunt antlerless deer during the first week of September and any buck during the second week of September and muzzleloader hunters are able to hunt antlerless deer for the rest of the month. During odd numbered years, the opportunity switches between weapon types. Muzzleloader hunters are able to hunt antlerless and buck deer in early September and archers hunt antlerless for the rest of the month. Please consult the current hunting regulations for more details.

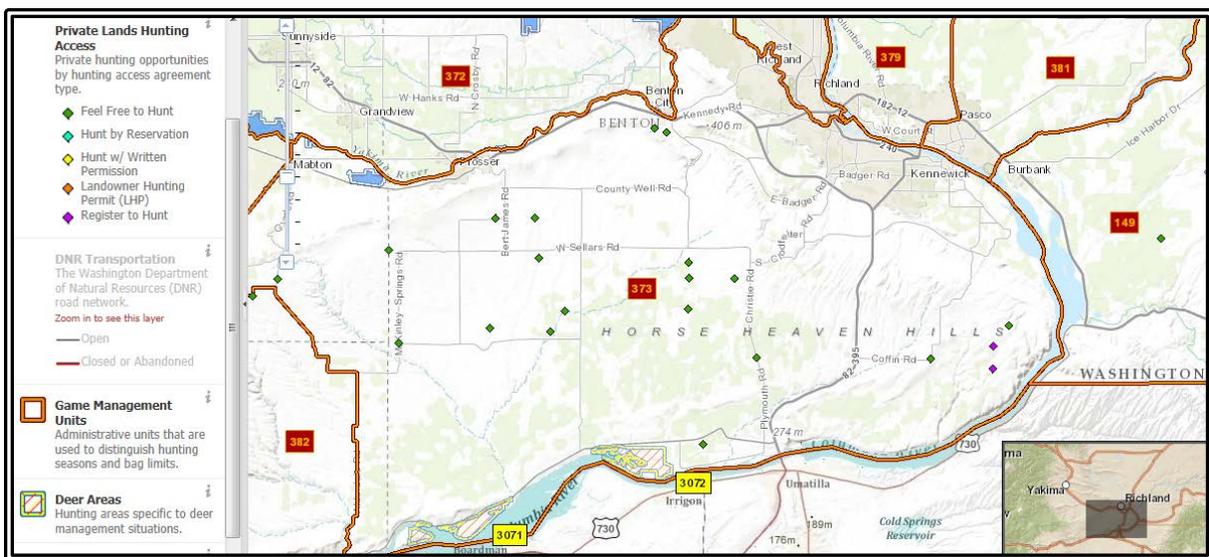


FIGURE 5. A DEPICTION OF THE PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS AND DEER AREAS 3071 AND 3072 IN GMU 373 FROM WDFW’S GOHUNT WEBSITE.

In 2013, the hunter success rate for deer in District 4 was 40%. This was higher than the 5-year average of 36%. Hunter success in surrounding districts was 27% last season. District 4 hunters enjoy a higher success rate primarily 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. *Don't be shy about knocking on doors and asking about access.*

As mentioned above, 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.*

Post season classification surveys in December 2013 yielded an estimated 15 bucks to 100 does (Figure 6). This value is on the low side compared to the 10-year average of 19 bucks to 100 does and may be attributable to the high hunter success mentioned above. Of these bucks, about 18% were classified as 3+ point (i.e. legal to harvest). Fawn numbers, on the other hand, were at 69 fawns per 100 does (Figure 6). This compares well to the 10-year average of 59 fawns per 100 does and indicates good production.

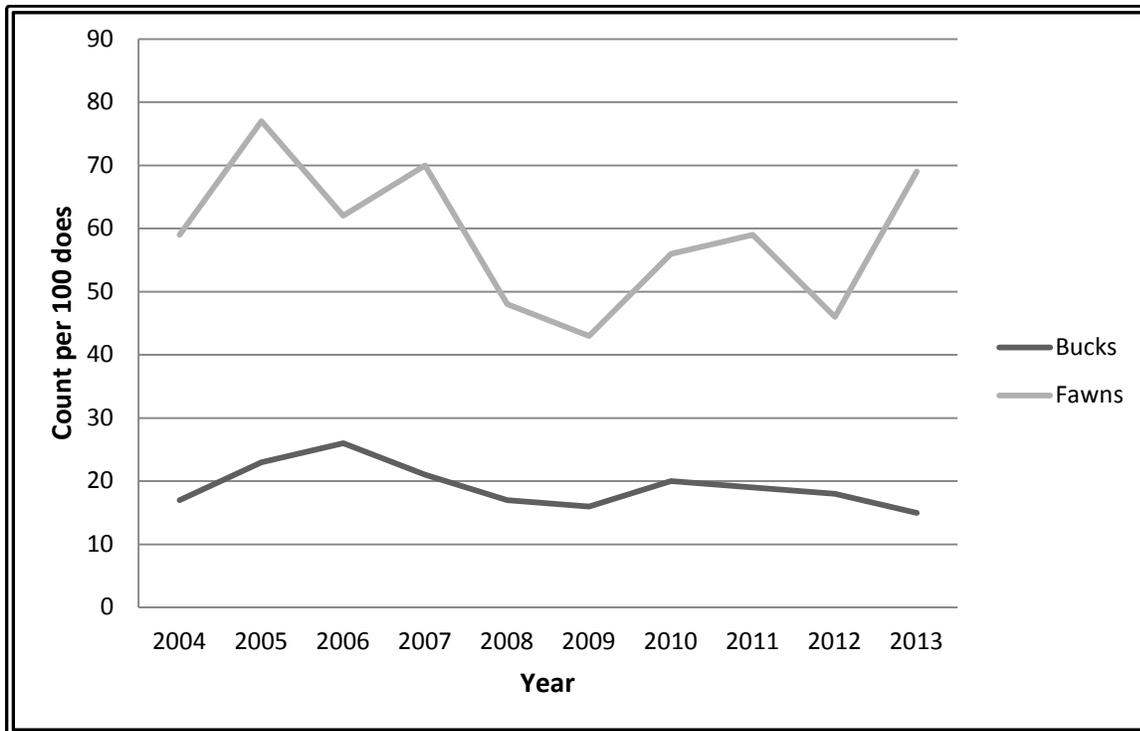


FIGURE 6. BUCK AND FAWN RATIOS IN DISTRICT 4, 2004-2013.

Most legal bucks will be harvested during the first few days of the modern firearm season. As in years past, later in November, a late muzzleloader general season will open in Franklin County providing good opportunity for hunters to harvest a buck or antlerless deer. Last year, 50% of the muzzleloader hunters in Franklin County were successful.

****NEW**** Youth hunters may now apply for 10 antlerless modern firearm permits in the Ringold Unit (GMU 379). This hunt, which will occur in mid-October has been added to address increasing damage concerns and promote opportunities for new hunters.

UPLAND BIRD

Overall, Benton and Franklin Counties offer upland bird hunters many opportunities. While there are many factors that determine hunter success, on average, harvest of most species has been steady or increasing over the last five years (Figure 7). Habitat is a key component influencing survival and reproduction of birds. At the Mesa Lake Unit of the WDFW Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area funding has been awarded for enhancing nesting opportunities for several species including pheasant, quail and doves. Over the next year, several acres will be planted with native shrubs and grasses as part of an ongoing effort to enhance wildlife habitat on WDFW lands.

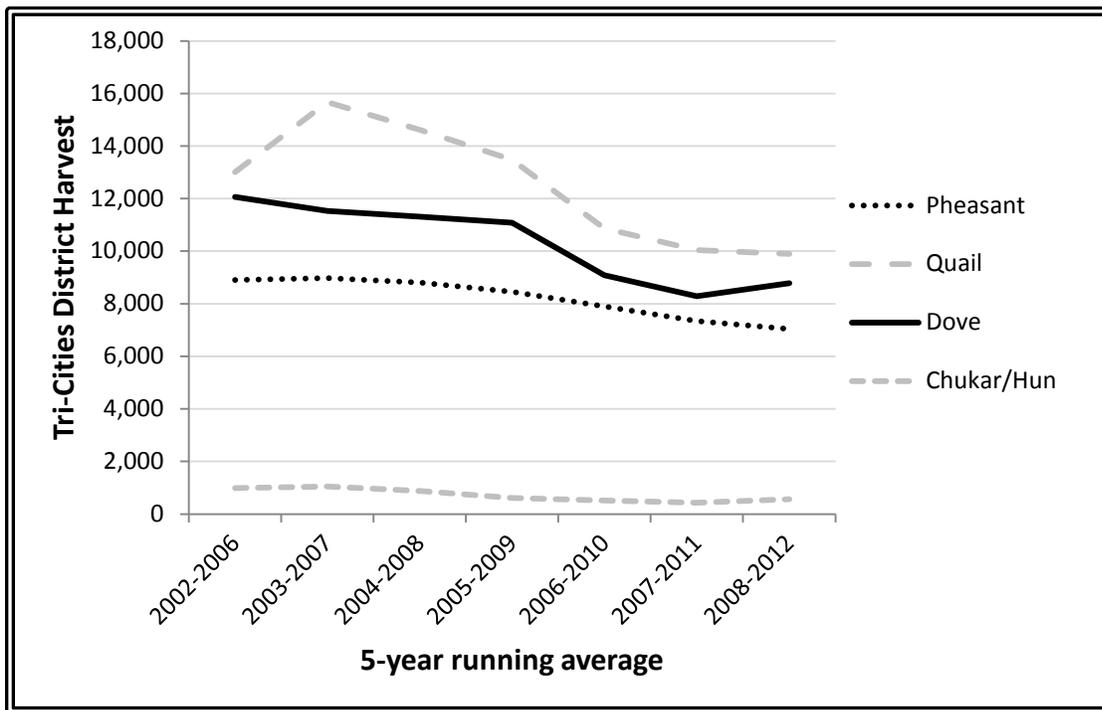


FIGURE 7. UPLAND BIRD HARVEST TRENDS BASED ON 5-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGES.

PHEASANT

In 2013, the number of pheasant hunters in District 4 increased by 12% (Figure 8). However, pheasant harvest decreased for the second year in a row. Hunters reported harvest of 5584 birds, down 13% from 2012. This is a trend observed in other areas of the state.

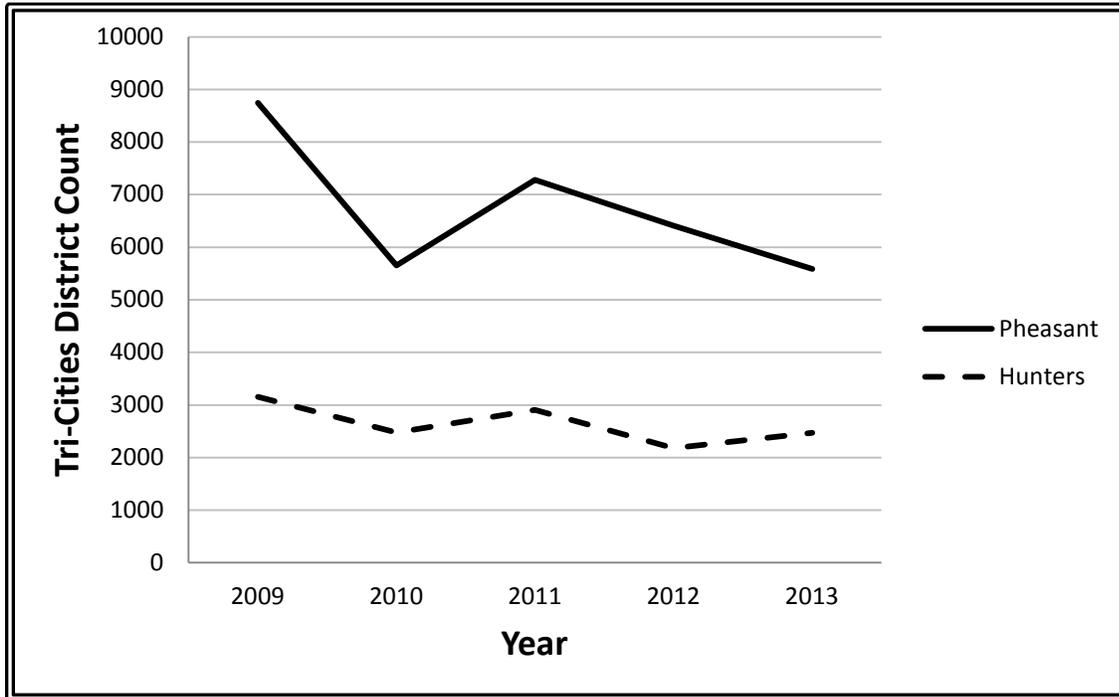


FIGURE 8. PHEASANTS HARVESTED AND PHEASANT HUNTERS IN DISTRICT 4, 2009-2013.

Each summer, biologists with the Yakama Nation conduct pheasant surveys. In 2013, birds were observed every three miles (Figure 9). This is equal to the running average since 1993 and the highest number of birds observed for the last three years.

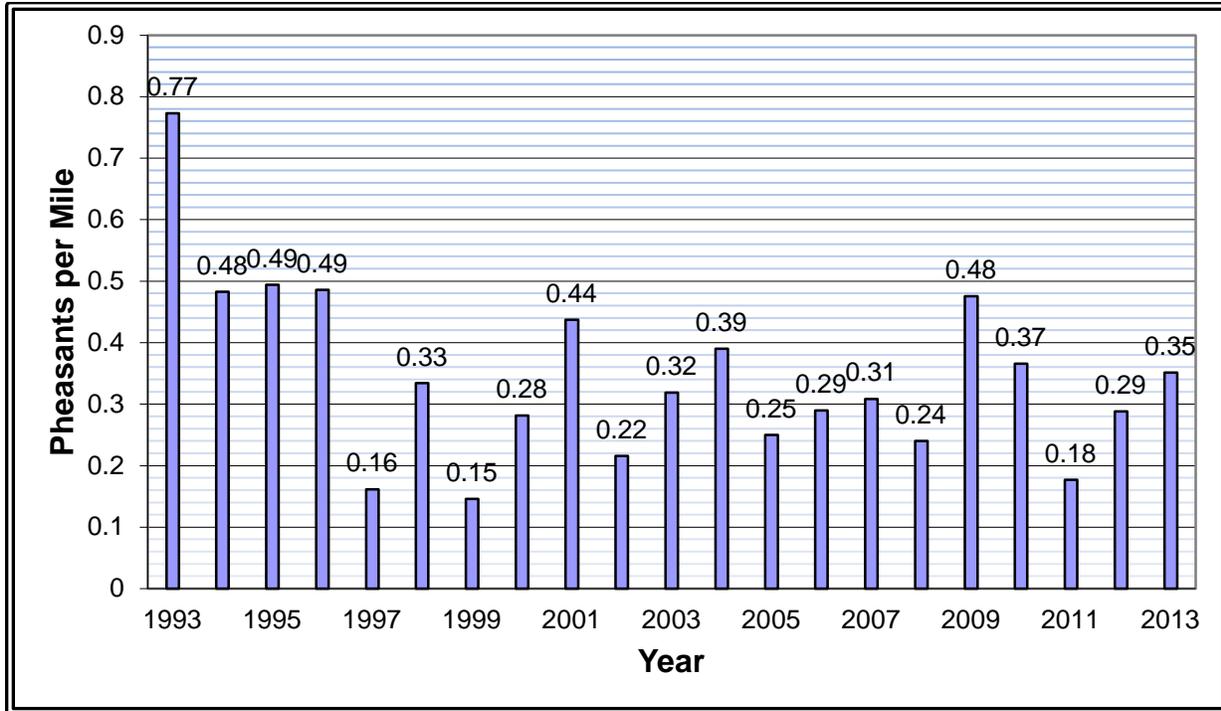


FIGURE 9. AVERAGE PHEASANTS PER MILE OBSERVED DURING BROOD COUNTS ON THE YAKAMA RESERVATION

This year’s growing season was preceded by a very mild and dry winter and early spring, followed by above average rainfall in May and June. Additionally, temperatures have remained warm, so there should be adequate cover and insects.

Hunters should focus efforts in dense weedy and grassy areas adjacent to wetlands, streams, and irrigation waterways. Birds may also be found around irrigated farmland. The 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. See map of the Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area above for the general locations of Windmill and Bailie. Driving directions to the Mesa Lake Unit can be found in Appendix A.

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

Going after birds planted as part of WDFW's [Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) is a great way to work dogs and get kids involved in hunting. Last year WDFW planted 1,240 pheasants in three locations: the Hope Valley Unit of the WDFW Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area and the Big Flat and Lost Island Habitat Management Units (HMU) held by the Army Corps of Engineers (Figures 10 and 11). For 2014, close to 1200 roosters will be released again at these same locations. Information for the Army Corps HMUs is available [here](#). Nontoxic shot is required at all release sites.



THREE ROOSTERS RELEASED AT THE HOPE VALLEY UNIT OF THE WDFW SUNNYSIDE SNAKE RIVER WILDLIFE AREA.

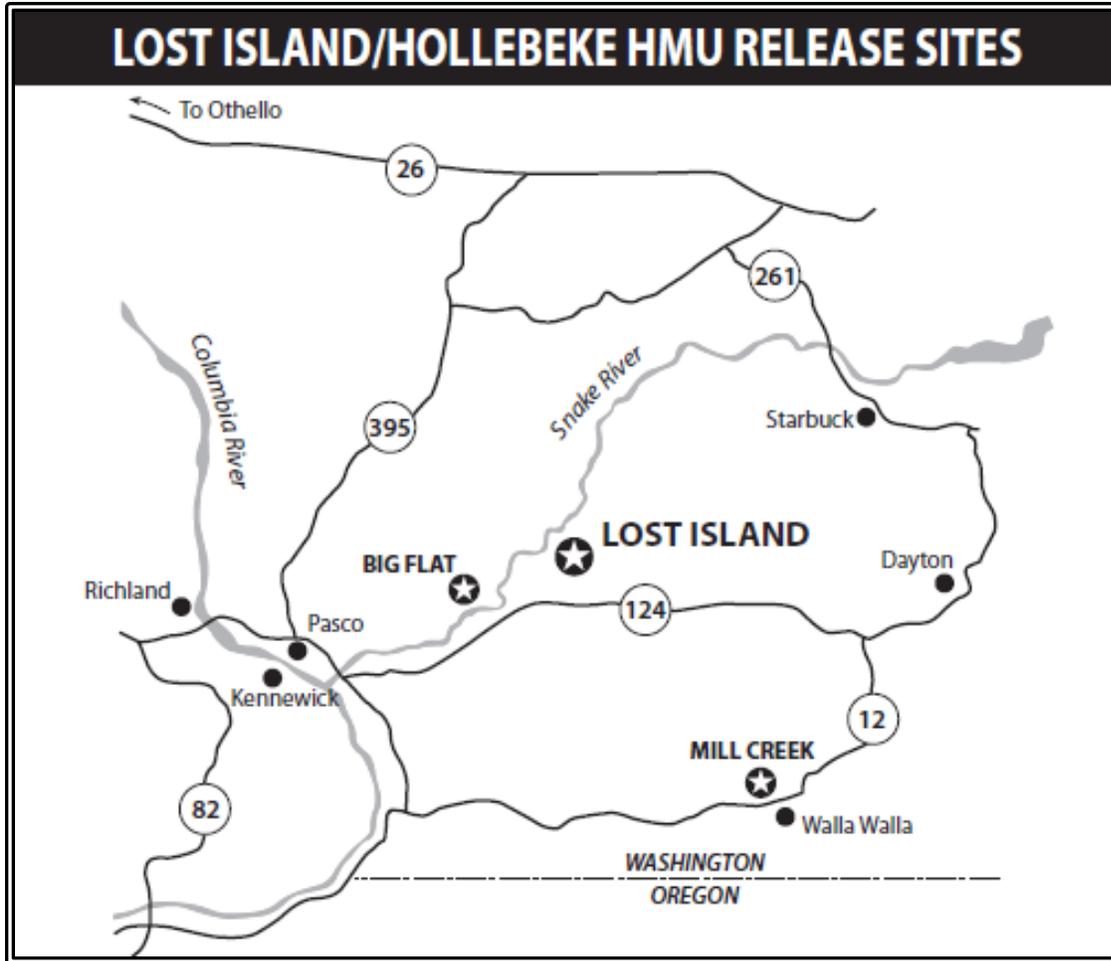


FIGURE 10. MAP DEPICTING GENERAL LOCATION OF BIG FLAT AND LOST ISLAND PHEASANT RELEASE SITES

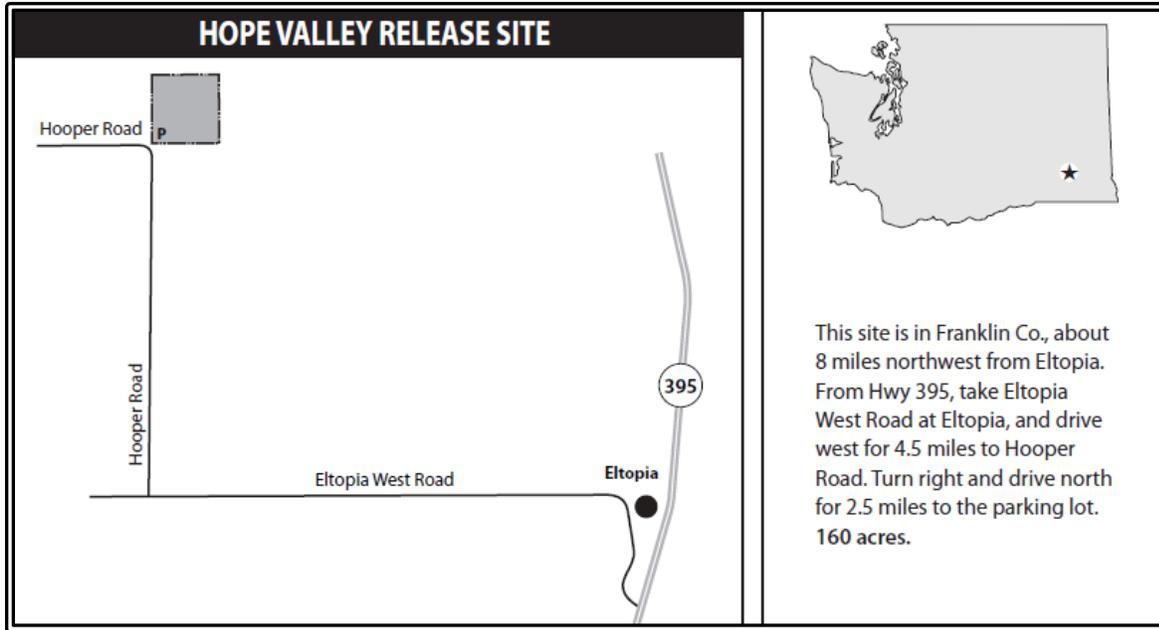


FIGURE 11. MAP DEPICTING LOCATION OF THE PHEASANT RELEASE SITE AT HOPE VALLEY.

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.

DOVE**ONE OF MANY DOVES BANDED IN FRANKLIN COUNTY**

There has been good success at our trapping/banding station. More than 2/3 of the birds captured are juveniles that were hatched this year indicating good production. In addition, 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.

WATERFOWL

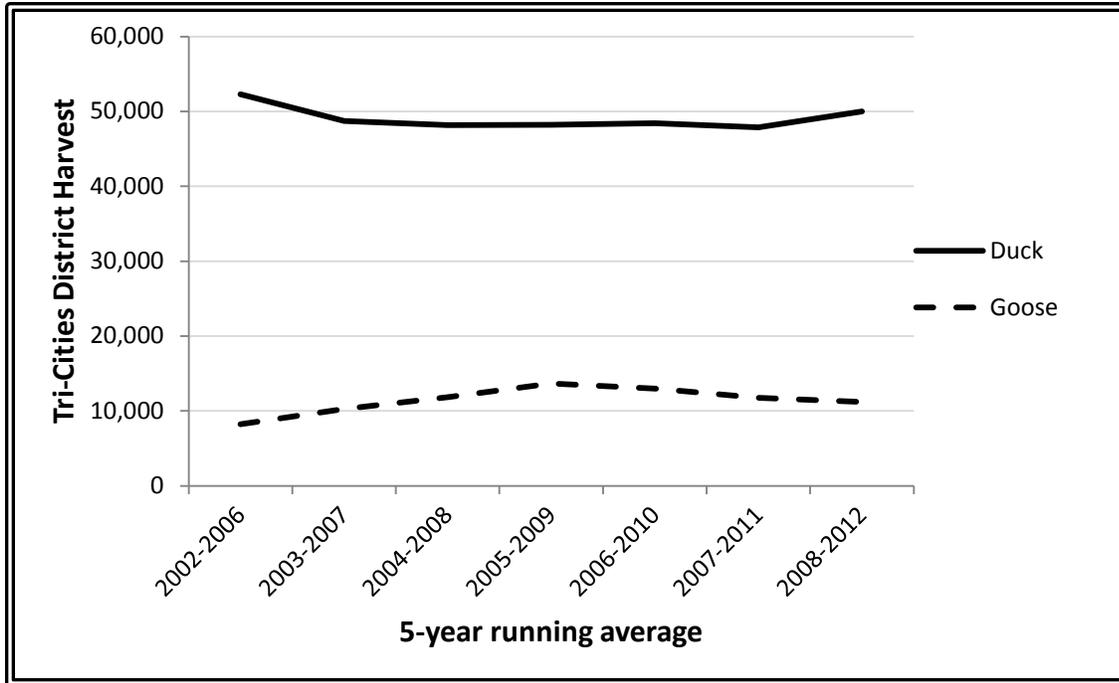


FIGURE 12. DISTRICT 4 WATERFOWL HARVEST TRENDS BASED ON 5-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGES.

As indicated in Figure 12 above, the 5 year running average of ducks in District 4 has been increasing while the goose harvest is down slightly. Pair counts for waterfowl in the irrigated portions of the Columbia Basin (Figure 13) yielded an estimate of 25,815 mallards. This is higher than the 6 year average of 20,796 and indicates good local production in the preceding year. There should 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. At that point, hunters will likely 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.

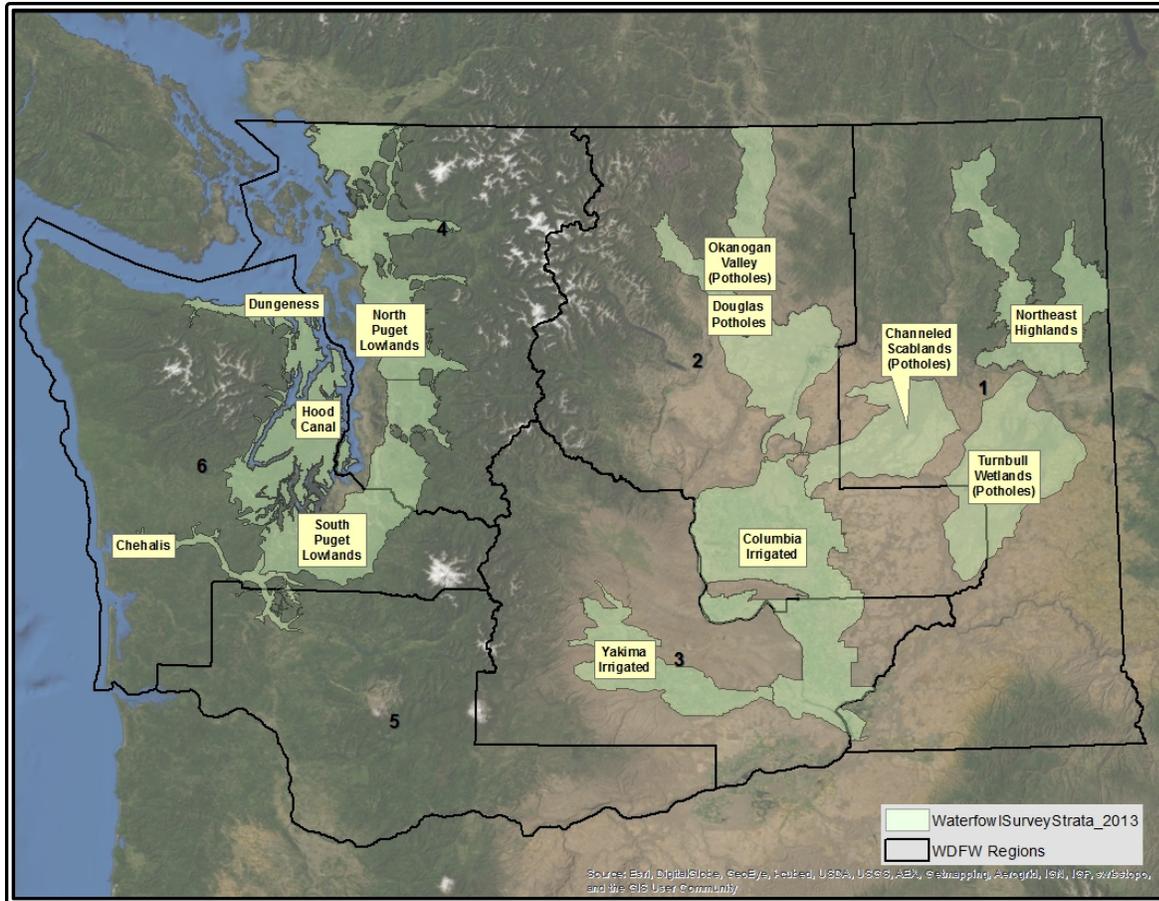


FIGURE 13. WATERFOWL PAIR COUNT SURVEY AREAS.

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*). Scootney 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 maps above*).



A MALLARD BROOD IN THE POTHOLE CANAL, FRANKLIN COUNTY.

During odd numbered years, Canada goose nests are surveyed on most of the islands in the Columbia River throughout District 4 to track local production. Last year, the number of Canada geese nests counted was up 10% over the previous survey in 2011. Therefore, there will again be an early goose season running for September 13-14, 2014. 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.*



GOOSE HARVEST IN THE TRI-CITIES.

Benton and Franklin County farmers are currently being contacted 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/>.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Hunting access in Benton and Franklin Counties is more limited than some other parts of the state, as much of the district is held in private ownership or by federal agencies that do not allow hunting. However, quality opportunities on both public and private land do exist and WDFW is always trying to expand hunting access.

The Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area (Figure 2) comprises most of the WDFW-owned land in the District and most parcels are open to hunting, but with specific restrictions at some units. For information go to: http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/.

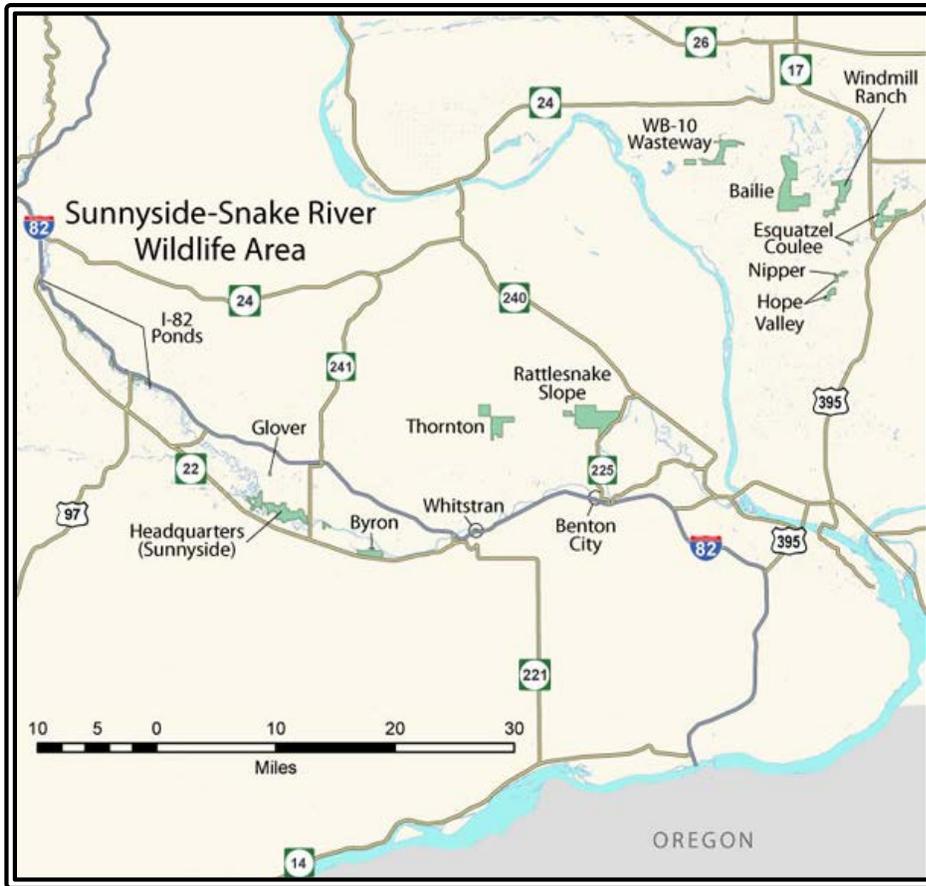


FIGURE 2. MAP OF THE SUNNYSIDE/SNAKE RIVER WILDLIFE AREA UNITS.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) allows hunting on a number of units that are part of the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex including a portion of the Hanford Reach National Monument and a portion of the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) (Figures 3 and 4 and [here](#)) and certain areas within the McNary NWR.

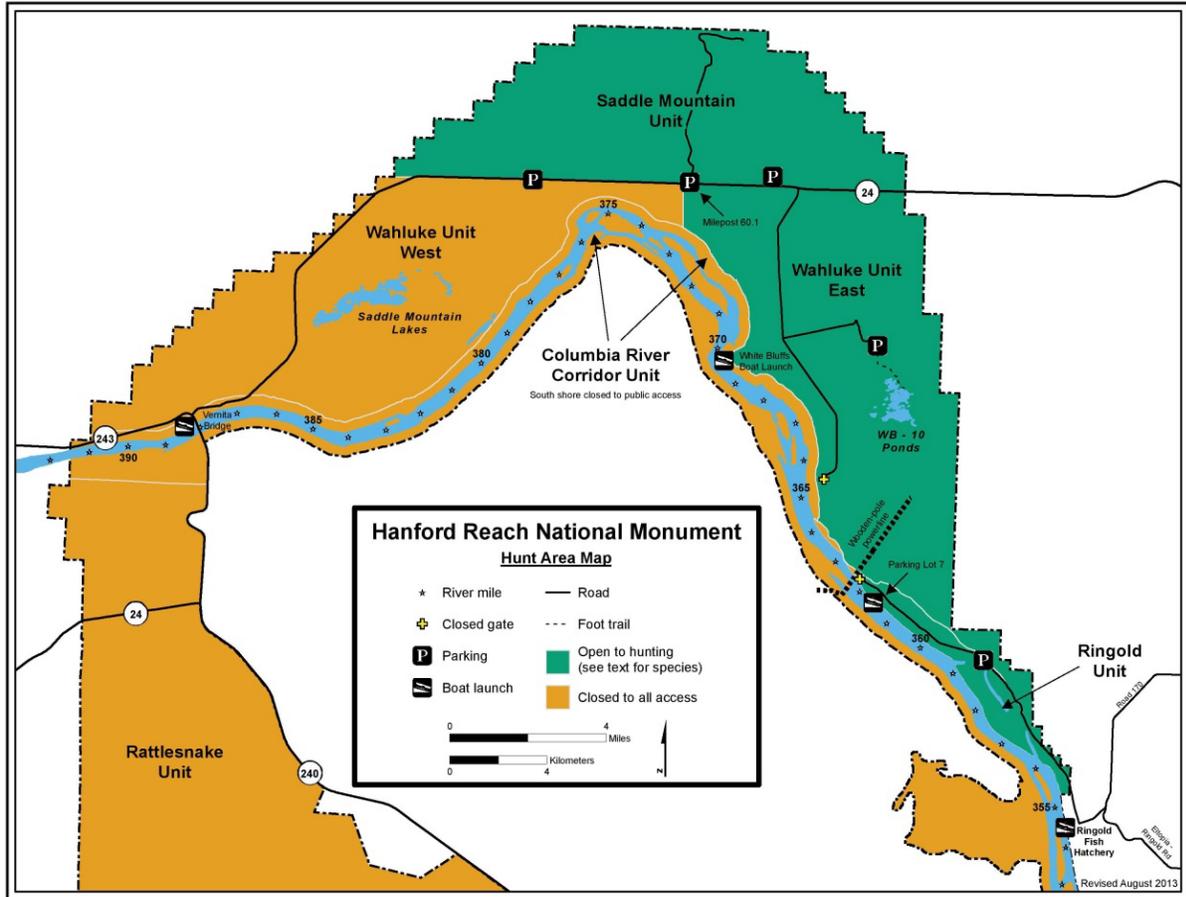


FIGURE 3. HANFORD REACH NATIONAL MONUMENT SHOWING AREAS WITH VARIOUS HUNTING ACCESS DESIGNATIONS.

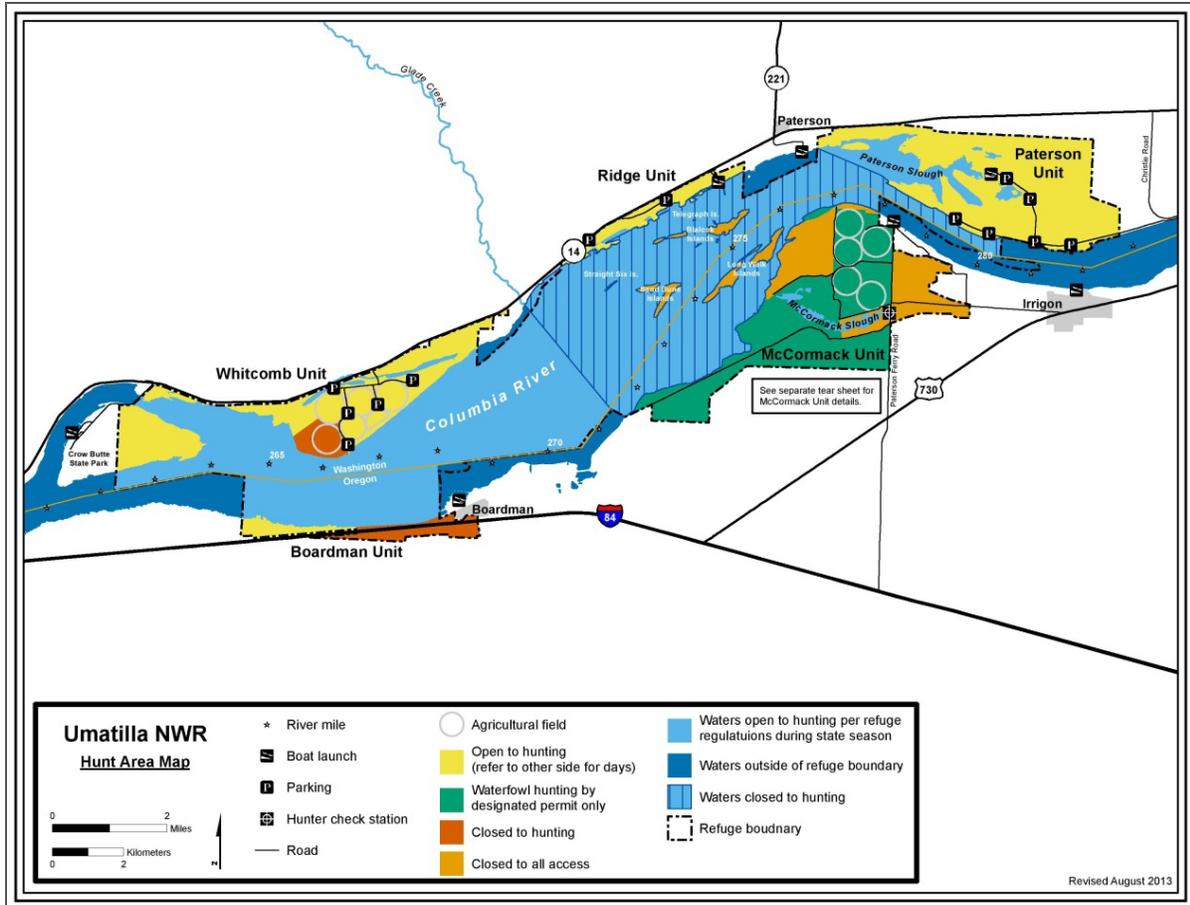


FIGURE 4. UMATILLA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SHOWING AREAS WITH VARIOUS HUNTING ACCESS DESIGNATIONS.

In addition to the WDFW and the USFWS, two agencies which are tasked with managing wildlife and hunting opportunities, various other public agencies own or manage land within Benton and Franklin Counties that may be open to hunting. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the [Army Corps of Engineers](#), and the Bureau of Reclamation are all federal agencies that allow hunting on portions of their land. Consult a public lands map or [GoHunt](#) for more information.

Washington’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also manages land that is open to hunting unless otherwise posted. Benton and Franklin Counties have a large amount of DNR acreage but it is often leased to private landowners. While leased land *may* still be open to hunting, hunters should always be aware that adjacent landowners are often managing DNR land as part of their business operations and should be respectful of property boundaries. Consult a public lands map or [GoHunt](#) for more information.

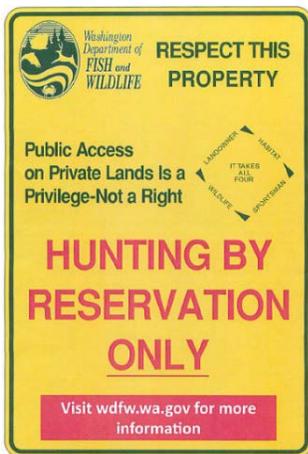
PRIVATE LANDS

General Information Hunters may be most familiar and comfortable with hunting on public land but WDFW also provides and maintains a Private Lands Access program that allows the public to hunt on land owned by cooperating private landowners. Often these landowners receive little to no compensation for their enrollment in the program and hunters should always respect their property and wishes. By being a responsible guest on these private lands, hunters can help insure that they remain open for years to come and will enhance WDFW’s mission to expand private lands access.

Information about private lands access sites including site-specific regulations, locations, season availability and contact information can be found [here](#) and at [GoHunt](#).

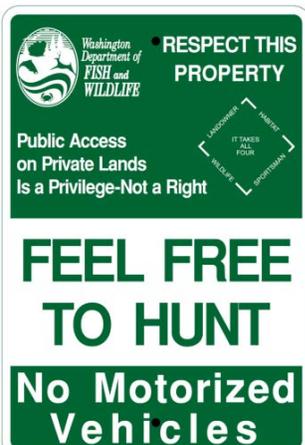
Four private lands programs exist and although each provides public, *walk-in only* access to private land, they function differently.

Hunt By Reservation



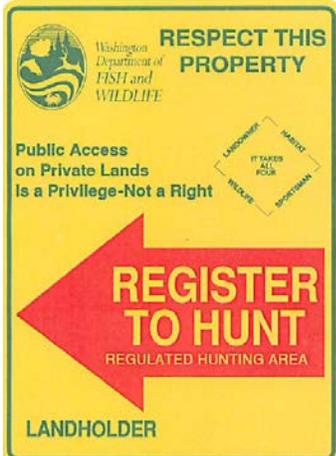
Hunt by reservation is the newest private lands access program in Washington and is coming to Benton and Franklin County this fall. The program requires hunters to register online at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/type/56/. Hunters are required to print out and carry a permit, and are provided a map of the property. Hunt by Reservation contracts in Benton and Franklin Counties are currently in development, but multiple opportunities are expected to be available for both big game and bird hunting. More information about using the reservation site can be found [here](#).

Feel Free To Hunt

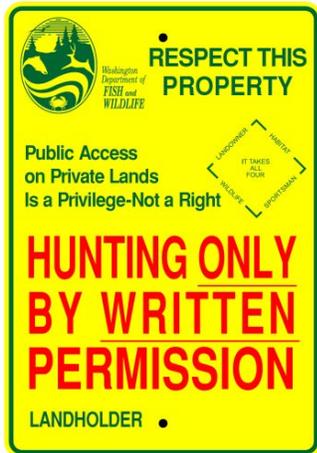


Feel Free to Hunt is the largest access program in District 4 with dozens of properties totaling around 100,000 acres. It allows hunters to access designated land at any time during established hunting season. Most District 4 Feel Free to Hunt property provides access for mule deer hunting with some potential for upland bird hunting as well.

Register to Hunt



District 4 has two Register to Hunt (RTH) sites totaling 11,700 acres, both in Benton County. Register to Hunt requires hunters to sign in at registration kiosks and carry a permit with them. District 4’s RTH sites primarily provide waterfowl and upland bird hunting opportunities.



Hunt By Written Permission

Hunt By Written Permission (HBWP) requires hunters to make contact with the landowner. Landowners then issue permits to hunters at their discretion and hunters are expected to carry this permit while they hunt. Landowner contact information can be found on the signs at the site. There are 7 HBWP properties totaling 20,000 acres within District 4 and can provide opportunities for both big game and bird hunting.

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

A good starting point for hunters looking for a place to hunt is the newly redesigned GoHunt website at <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/>. GoHunt is a valuable resource that provides hunters with information about public and private lands access points, GMU boundaries and harvest data, landscape features like roads and topography, and a great deal more.

DIRECTIONS TO MESA LAKE REGISTER TO HUNT AREAS**Access Site #1****DRIVING DIRECTIONS:**

In Franklin County, from HWY 395, take WA-17N toward Mesa/Moses Lake .4 miles, turn NW onto WA-17 .9 miles, turn W onto Pepiot Road .2 miles, turn slight right onto 1 Avenue S .1 mile, turn west on Sheffield Road .6 miles, turn west on gravel drive (Sunleaf) .5 miles to east parking lot.

PARKING/RESTROOM INFORMATION:

Gravel Parking Lot. No facilities.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Register to Hunt; 5 car limit during hunting seasons only. No overnight camping or open fires. See kiosk for further information/restrictions.

Access Site #2**DRIVING DIRECTIONS:**

In Franklin County, from HWY 395, take WA-17N toward Mesa/Moses Lake .4 miles, turn NW onto WA-17 .9 miles, turn W onto Pepiot Road .2 miles, turn slight right onto 1 Avenue S .1 mile, turn west on Sheffield Road 1.8 miles, turn south on Langford Road .8 miles, turn east on gravel .2 miles to west parking lot/crude boat launch.

PARKING/RESTROOM INFORMATION:

Gravel Parking Lot. No facilities.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Register to Hunt; 5 car limit during hunting seasons only. No overnight camping or open fires. See kiosk for further information/restrictions.

2014

R. Finger, District Wildlife Biologist
O. Duvuvuei, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 5 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Grant and Adams Counties

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DISTRICT 5 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Ephrata District offers a variety of hunting opportunities but is most recognized for waterfowl hunting throughout Grant and western Adams counties and mule deer hunting within the Desert Unit (GMU 290). 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; Figure 1). Other opportunities within the district include bobcat, cougar, chukar, gray partridge, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and both general season and permit opportunities for mule deer; elk are occasionally harvested but resident populations do not occur in this district.

Habitat in the Ephrata District is variable. Within the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project (CBIP), the landscape is mostly flat, but east-west running sand dunes occur within the Desert Unit, which includes both Winchester and Frenchmen Hills Wasteways. Important crops for wildlife within the CBIP include corn (grain, sweet, and silage), spring wheat, alfalfa, and orchards. Within the CBIP hunters can expect to find mule deer (e.g. Desert Unit – GMU 290), abundant waterfowl, and fair numbers of pheasant and quail. Waterfowl habitat predominately revolves around wetlands, wasteways, and reservoirs that were created by the CBIP.

Lands surrounding the CBIP include highly fragmented shrub-steppe, dryland wheat, coulees, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. In these areas, hunters can expect to find gray partridge, mule deer, and chukar in the steepest portions of the district (e.g. Sun Lakes and Quincy Lakes Units).

Dominant native plant species include big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), and spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*).

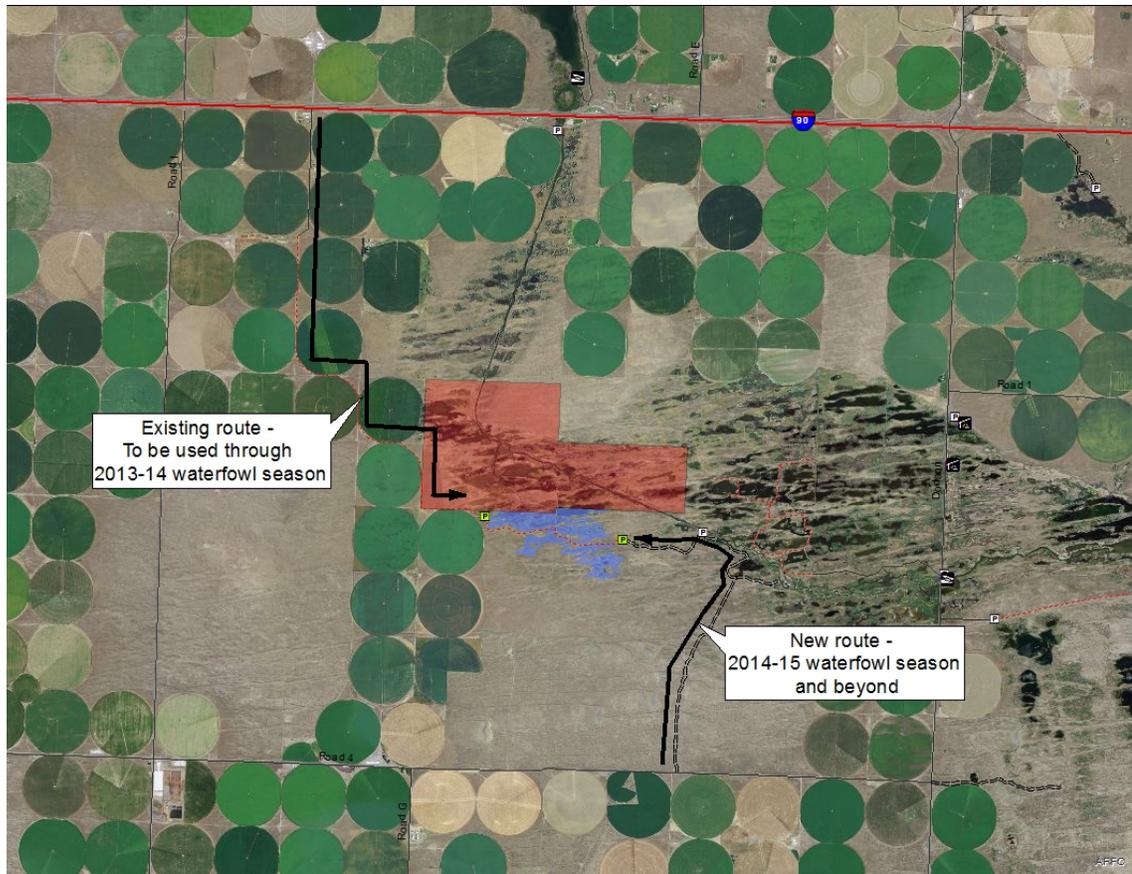
- 3) Middle Crab Creek habitat enhancement¹: emphasis is being placed on opportunities to improve waterfowl nesting habitat in the Gloyd Seeps Unit to supplement an increase in wetland acreage due to irrigation operations. Approximately 200 acres are currently in fallow condition to control weeds in preparation for seeding to perennial grassland during 2014.

Additionally, wetland enhancement projects are currently underway and anticipated to be completed by the end of October. Whether additional water from the [Supplemental Feed Route](#) will be available for the projects this season is currently not known.

- 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 response by smartweed (*Polygonum* spp.) in the area when tall emergents such as common reed (*Phragmites australis*) are removed. A small food plot (0.5 acre) of millet/smartweed was established along the western bank of the pond.
- 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. New restrictions have been developed for online reservation requirements from opening day through November. However, drop-ins are allowed after 9am if parking spaces are available. All hunting parties (reservation or drop-in) must register at the box located in the parking lot. Access has been changed for the 2014 season (see below).

¹ WDFW is seeking funding to enhance nesting cover throughout the Gloyd Seeps Unit of the CBWA. The area has been selected for enhancement work largely because of the Bureau of Reclamation's Supplemental Feed Project

(BOR 2007; <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ea/wash/potholes/index.html>), 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. The effort is also intended to stem the advance of invasive species and to reduce erosion to the existing ephemeral streambank.



NEW ACCESS ROUTE FOR WINCHESTER REGULATED ACCESS AREA

- 8) Common Reed control: many acres of common reed controlled 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: Fifteen acres of millet were planted for the 2014 season. Additionally, changes in water regime in this project have promoted other quality seed producing annuals such as smartweed, beggarsticks, and dock. These plants are an important component of waterfowl diet. The winter wheat planting from August 2013 was flooded out partially but some wheat remains.



MILLET PLANTING AT FRENCHMEN REGULATED ACCESS AREA – PHOTO TAKEN ON JULY 14.



MIXTURE OF PLANTED MILLET AND NATURALLY OCCURRING SMARTWEED, BEGGARS TICKS, AND DOCK.



WINTER WHEAT PLANTED IN 2013 AT FRENCHMEN REGULATED ACCESS AREA – PHOTO TAKEN ON JULY 14.

- 12) Buckshot Goose Field: this alfalfa field has an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) access pit blind. Contact Ephrata Regional Office for a key.

- 13) Artesian and Black Lakes: we are currently in the feasibility stage (engineering design, environmental compliance, and coordination and communication with partners such as Ducks Unlimited, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Ecology, and East Columbia Basin Irrigation District) of a wetland project for these historic lakebeds which no longer hold water. Once the feasibility stage is complete, we will be seeking funding for this project to develop over 100 acres of shallow wetland habitat for migrating waterfowl and hunting opportunity.

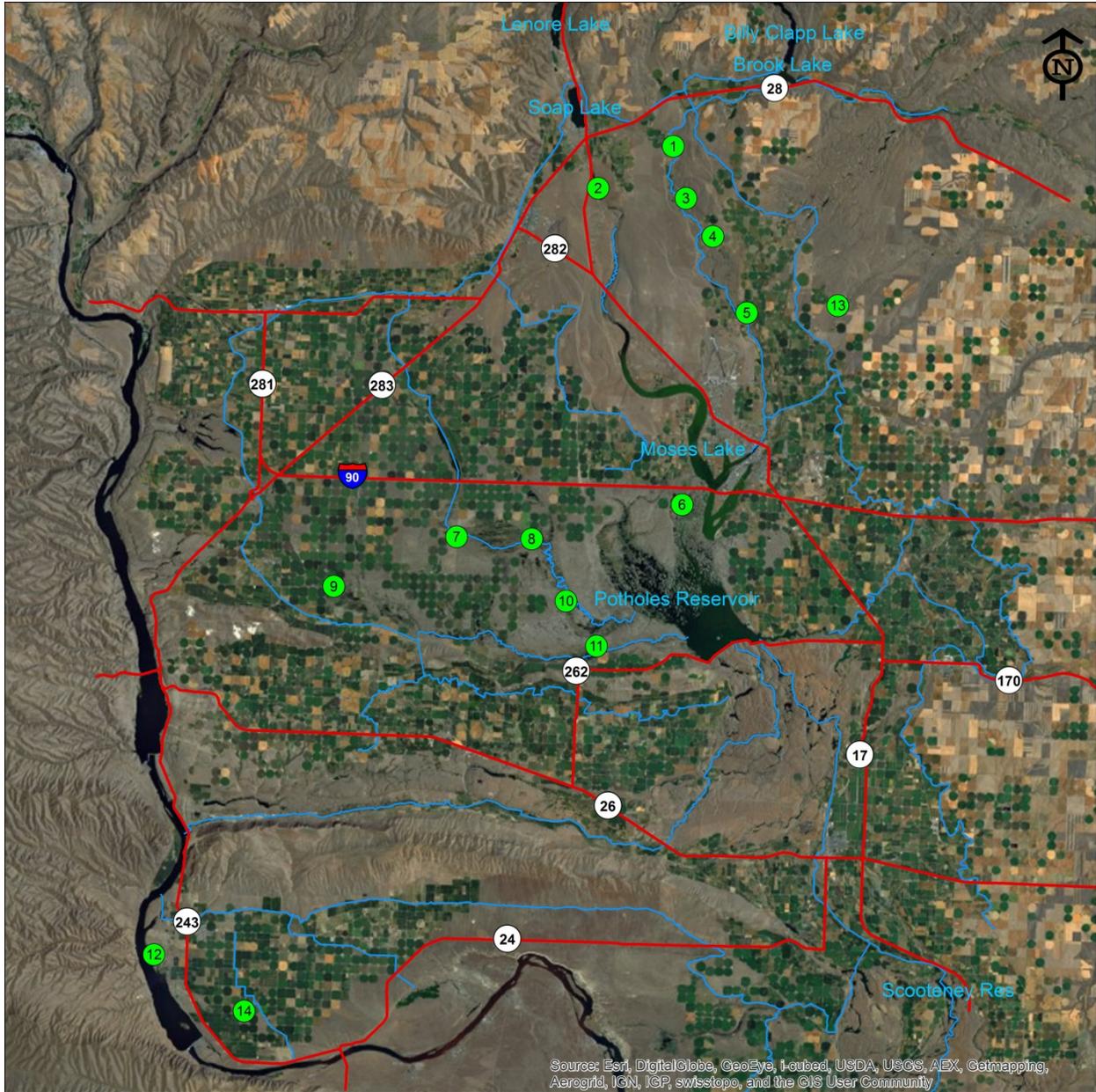


FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF WATERFOWL RELATED WORK IN EPHRATA DISTRICT. GREEN CIRCLES REPRESENT PROJECT AREAS.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, 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, GMU 278, and GMU 290. 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 the Ephrata District, hunters killed 7 elk last season, all of which were taken by modern firearm hunters. Hunters in GMU 284 harvested the most elk (6) 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 6 elk in 2013. This fluctuation in harvest is further evidence of the dynamic nature of elk migration from Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. One elk was harvested in GMU 278.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

If hunters wish to hunt elk in District 5 during the 2013 season, they are most likely to be successful in GMU 284. However, the majority of this GMU consists of agricultural and other private lands, so access may be difficult. It is challenging to predict elk harvest levels in GMU 284 during the 2014 season because WDFW does not conduct surveys to monitor population trends for this herd.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Mule deer are the most abundant big game species within District 5. Although white-tailed deer are observed on occasion and constitute a portion (<5%) of deer harvest each year they occur at very low densities in areas of marginal habitat and are not managed with the objective of increasing their distribution or population size. 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). With the exception of enrolling new lands into CRP, there are limited opportunities to enhance mule deer habitat in District 5 and nearly all management objectives are achieved through harvest regulations.

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 maximize hunter opportunity and minimize landowner complaints. Additional 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 ≥ 3 antler points on one side and only providing antlerless harvest during the general archery 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 $\geq 30:100$ and a post-hunt buck population where adult bucks (≥ 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.

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

With the exception of the Desert (GMU 290) and Wahluke Unit (GMU 278), mule deer in the Ephrata District are largely migratory. Historically, radio-marked mule deer exhibited movements from neighboring GMUs into the Ephrata District (Figure 3). 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.

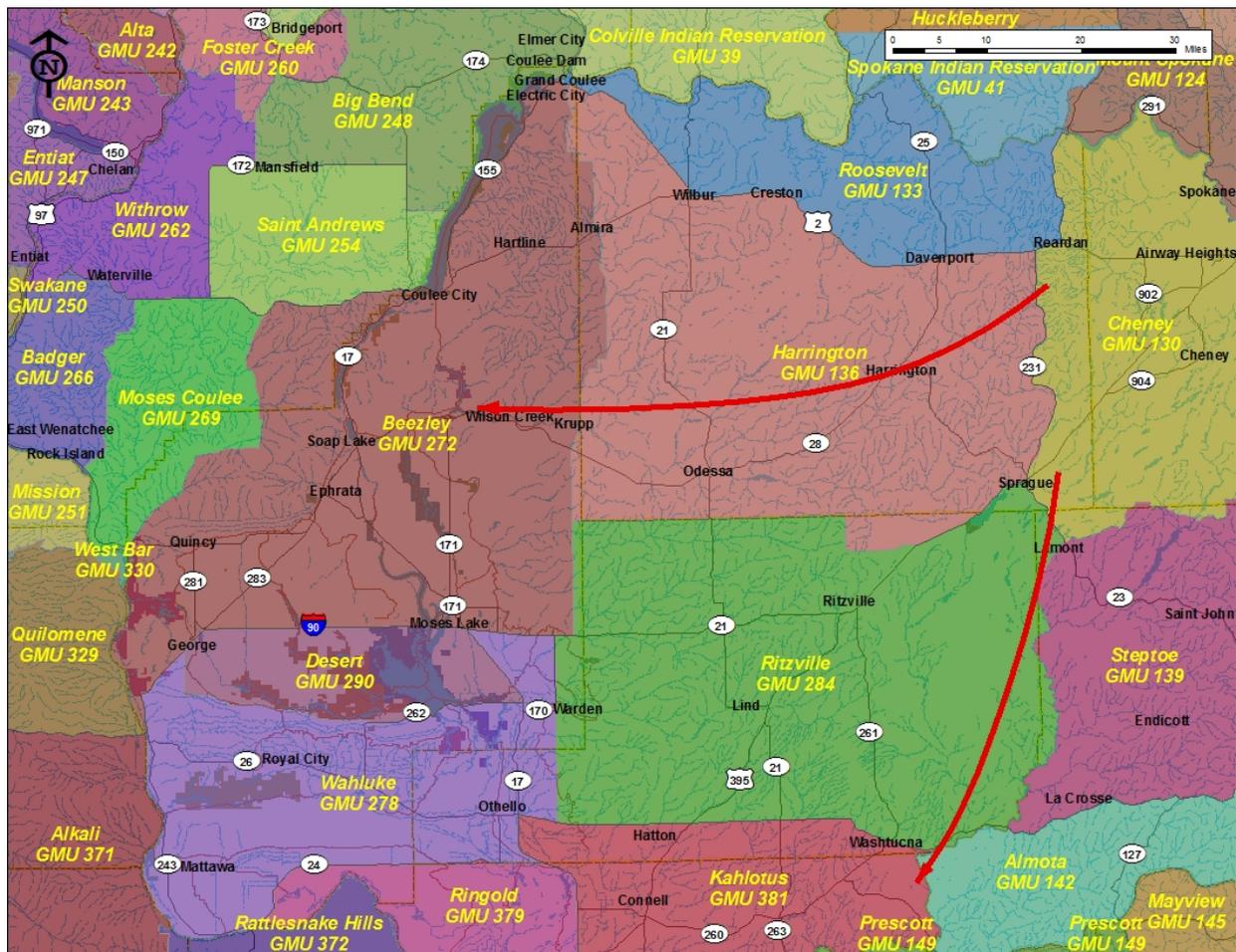


FIGURE 3. GENERALIZED PATTERNS OF FALL AND WINTER MULE DEER MIGRATION INTO THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Most deer harvest occurs in GMUs 272 (Beezley) and 284 where post-hunt buck:doe ratios typically range between 20–30:100. Post-harvest surveys in both GMU's were at the low end (20:100) during the 2013 post-hunt survey ground counts. Winter conditions were favorable with regards to lack of snow cover but dry conditions resulted in a limited fall green-up of cool season grasses (Sandberg's bluegrass and cheatgrass) which may have forced deer to rely on winter wheat. Simply put, harvest is expected to drop slightly from the last couple years, which have produced higher than average harvest rates, but harvest should be close to the long-term average. Post-hunt fawn:doe ratios indicate herd productivity was moderate in all surveyed GMUs; these fawns will become the legal bucks of 2015.

GMU 272 includes 53,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex (Gloyd Seeps, Banks Lake, Sun Lakes, Billy Clapp, and Quincy Lakes units) most of which is open to hunting. The number of deer hunters hunting within GMU 272 ranges from about 1,200 to 1,600 with recent years hosting about 1,400 hunters. Success rates in GMU 272 range from about 20-30% with a long-term average of 25%. Muzzleloader hunters experience the highest success rates (29%), followed by modern firearm (24%) and archery (20%). Permit hunters in the Lakeview Unit typically see 50-70% success rates but the 2013 season success rate fell to 27%, probably due to the lack of snow cover which allowed mule deer to utilize winter wheat in the Beezley Hills rather than the orchards that this hunt is intended to protect.

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. The number of deer hunters hunting within GMU 284 ranges from about 650-1,100 with recent years hosting about 800 hunters. Success rates in GMU 284 range from about 30-50% with a long-term average of 39%. Modern firearm hunters experience higher success rates (37%), followed by muzzleloader (28%) and archery (27%). Permit hunters experience the highest success rates, ranging from 64-81% and a long-term average of 72%.

GMU 290 is a permit only unit, thus all hunting opportunities in GMU 290 (Desert Unit) are issued through the public 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.

GMU 278 includes 36,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex (Lower Crab Creek Unit), which is open to hunting. Harvest in this unit falls between 20 and 70 deer, with recent years harvesting about 60 deer. Hunter numbers range from about 150 to 300, with recent years hosting close to 300 hunters, which may account for the increase in harvest rate. Success rates for this unit range from about 10-25% with a long-term average of 18%. Muzzleloader hunters experience the highest success rates (24%), followed by modern firearm (17%) and archery (10%).

DEER AREAS

There are localized areas in District 5 where deer congregate during harsh or prolonged winters and have the potential to cause 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; Figure 4) located in GMU 272 and Deer Area 2011 (Benge; Figure 5) located in GMU 284. See the most recent [Big Game Hunting Seasons & Regulations Pamphlet](#) for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions.

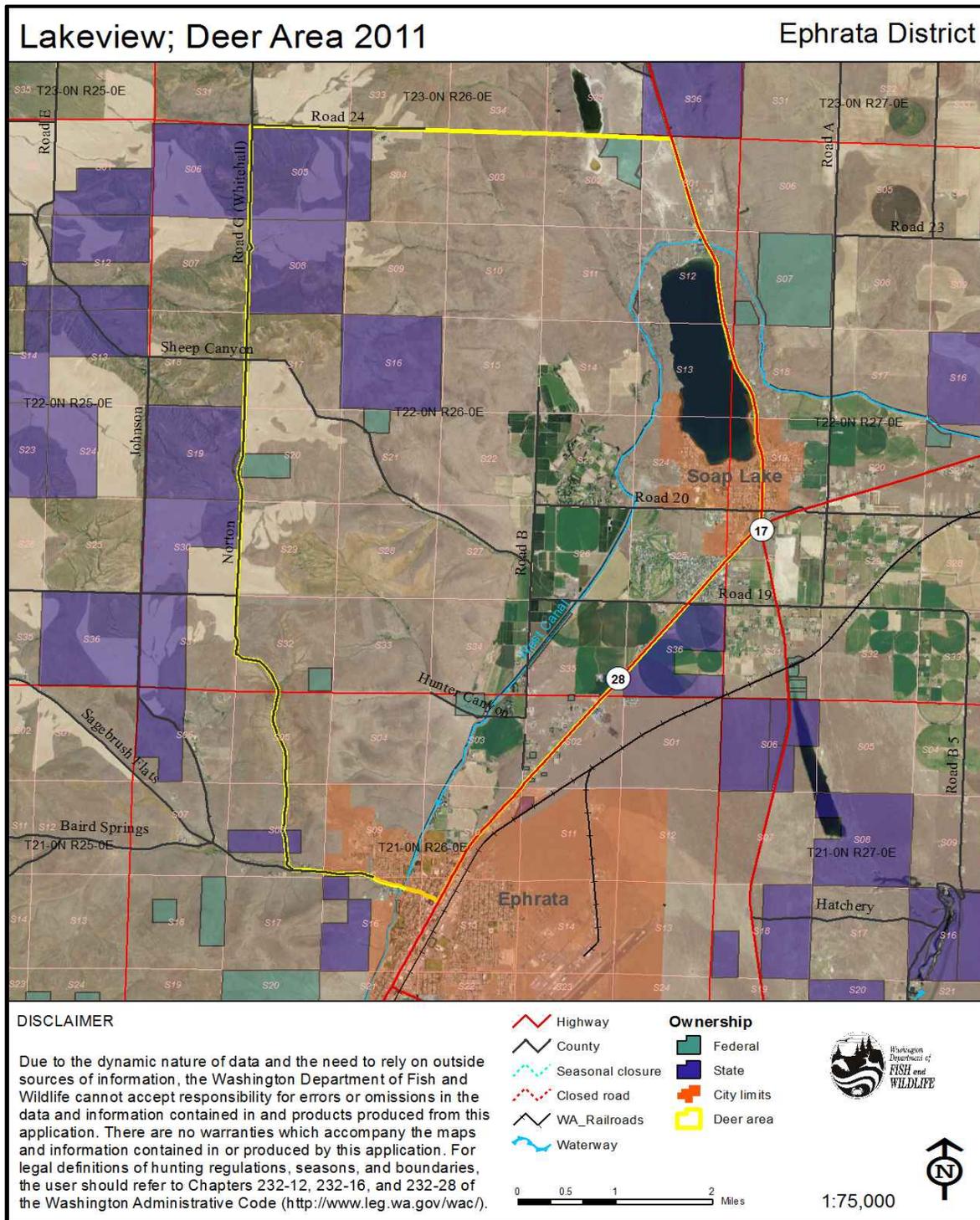


FIGURE 4. LAKEVIEW DEER AREA MAP.

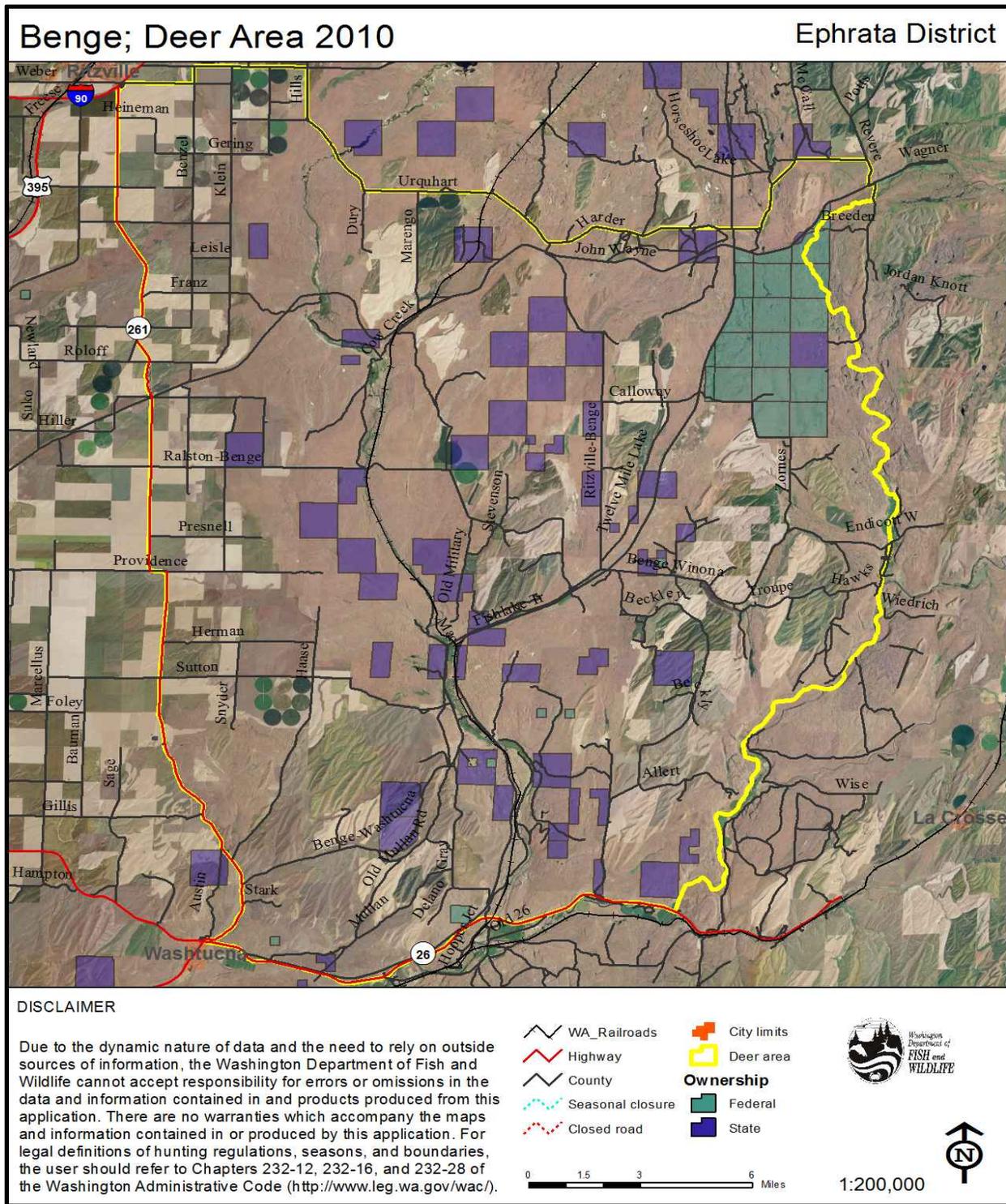


FIGURE 5. BENGE DEER AREA MAP.

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The Ephrata District does not have a resident population of black bears. The establishment of black bear populations in this district is not expected in the foreseeable future.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

The Ephrata District 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.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Modeling efforts suggest a small population of adult cougar in the Ephrata District and annual harvest is very low. Cougar harvest comes mostly from GMU 272 (Beezley Hills). Populations are expected to remain stable in this area for the foreseeable future.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

The Ephrata District 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.

PHEASANT

Grant County was Washington’s top pheasant producing county in 2013. Hunters bagged 8,353 roosters in Grant County and 1,543 in Adams County for a total harvest of 9,896 pheasants in District 5.

The largest wild populations of pheasants on WDFW lands in the Ephrata district are likely to be found within the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George (Figure 6). 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.

Conditions have been favorable for pheasant production beginning with a mild winter with little snow cover which allowed birds to survive winter in good condition. Spring conditions were dry, with few heavy showers which often result in mortality for young broods. But dry conditions also limit productivity of invertebrates, which are a critical dietary component of young pheasant chicks. Thus pheasant production in the irrigated portions of the district should be better than average while production in the dryland areas is likely to be slightly below average. In short, expect similar to slightly increased numbers of wild pheasants as observed during the 2013 season. Most hunters who invest considerable effort and cover a lot of ground will cross paths with a few 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

Grant County was Washington's second highest producing county in 2013; Adams County is not a destination quail hunting county. Hunters bagged 12,197 quail in District 5 in 2013 (10,867 in Grant County and 1,330 in Adams County).

Traditional quail hunting areas on WDFW lands in the Ephrata district 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 (Figure 6). 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. Summer conditions were great for brood survival.

CHUKAR AND PARTRIDGE

During the 2013 season, hunters harvested 340 chukar and 313 gray partridge in District 5. The vast majority of the harvest for both species was from Grant County and harvest was down significantly from the previous year. The Ephrata District is not a popular destination for chukar/partridge hunters but a few birds can be found. Most chukar hunting in the Ephrata District occurs in the Coulee Corridor areas around Banks and Lenore Lakes and along the Columbia River breaks north of Vantage. (Figure 6) Chukar is a challenging but rewarding game bird to pursue. Though the Ephrata District has some chukar hunting opportunities there are much better areas of the state to focus ones' efforts. 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 which had very little snow cover. Spring and summer conditions were fair/good.

DOVE

Grant County was Washington's top dove producing county in 2013. Dove hunters harvested 16,027 doves, down slightly from last year. Grant County recorded the highest dove harvest with hunters bagging 14,690; hunters harvested 1,337 doves in Adams County.

Dove hunting is expected to be fair/good in 2014 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.

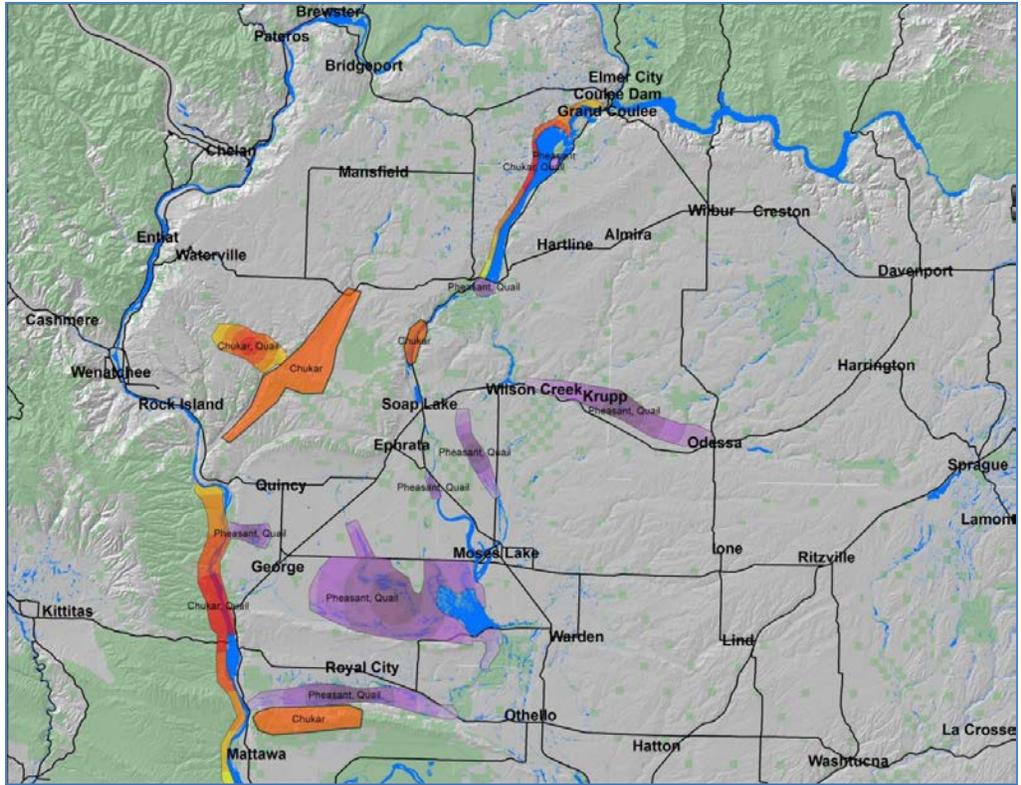


FIGURE 6. GENERALIZED UPLAND BIRD CONCENTRATIONS (PHEASANT, QUAIL, AND CHUKAR) THROUGHOUT THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

UPLAND BIRD MANAGEMENT

Upland bird management in the Ephrata District 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 Project² 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 over 200 acres of nesting cover. These fields required a fallow period to reduce the seedbed of noxious weeds and invasive vegetation, which is now completed. Seeding of native perennial grasses is planned for fall of 2014.

² BOR 2007; <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ea/wash/potholes/index.html>

WATERFOWL

Ducks – Grant County was Washington’s top duck producing county in 2013. Last year hunters harvested 55,642 ducks in Grant County. Adams County hunters added 9,609 ducks for a district total of 65,251.

Geese – Grant County was Washington’s top goose producing county in 2013. Last year hunters harvested 12,852 geese in Grant County. Adams County hunters added 2,284 geese for a district total of 15,136.

Waterfowl Population Status:

The Washington Breeding Population Survey (BPOP), conducted in May, has been occurring since 2009 and covers the areas shown in Figure 7. This survey is an indicator of breeding effort as it estimates the number of waterfowl present during the breeding season. Results of this survey are provided for several of the more common waterfowl species which both breed and are commonly harvested in Eastern Washington.

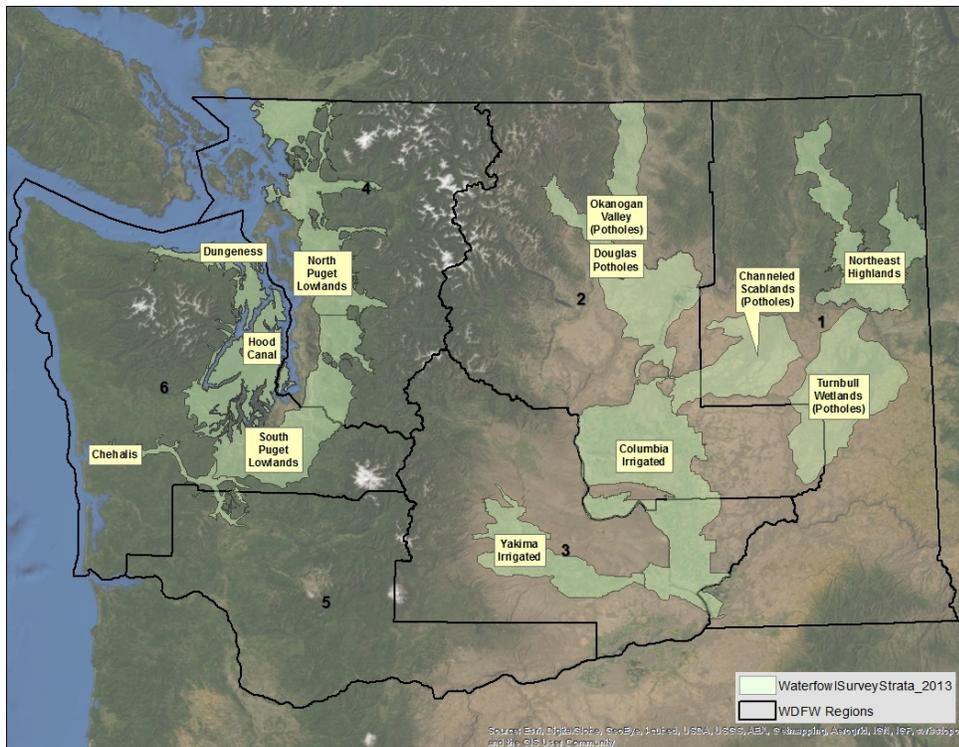


FIGURE 7. AREAS OF WASHINGTON THAT ARE COVERED DURING THE ANNUAL WATERFOWL BREEDING POPULATION SURVEYS.

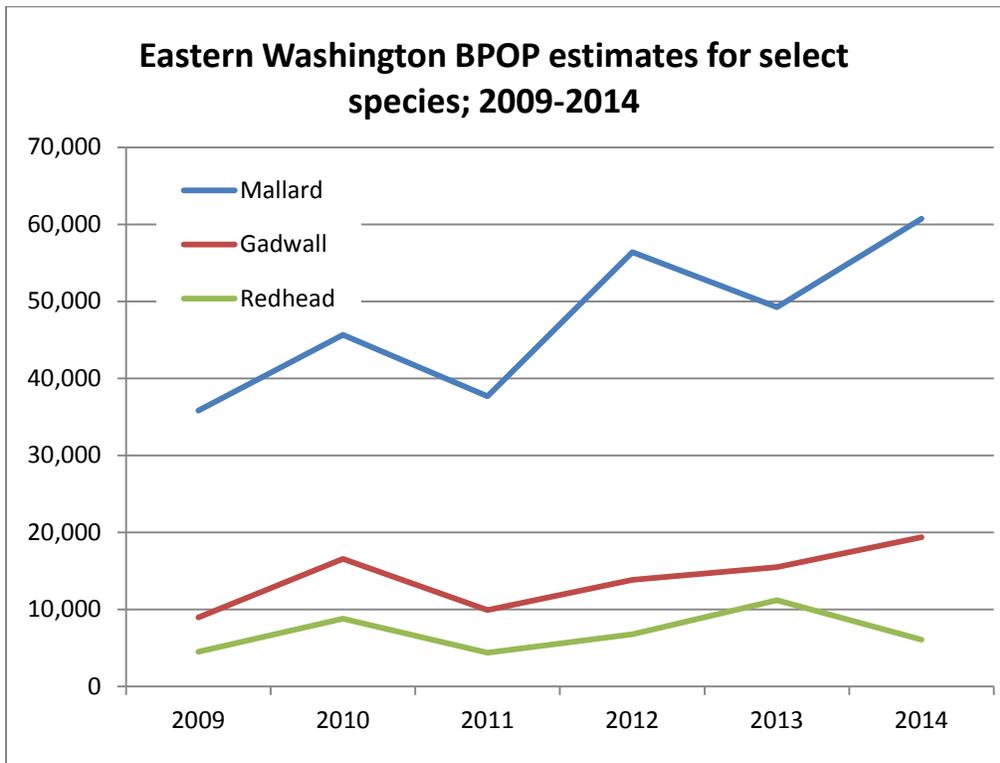


FIGURE 8. EASTERN WASHINGTON BREEDING POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR MALLARD, GADWALL, AND REDHEAD; 2009-2014.

In addition to the BPOP survey, WDFW also conducts regular brood routes throughout Eastern Washington. Routes in the Ephrata District include the East Low Canal, West Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake (Figure 9). Results of that survey are included below and give an understanding of nesting success.

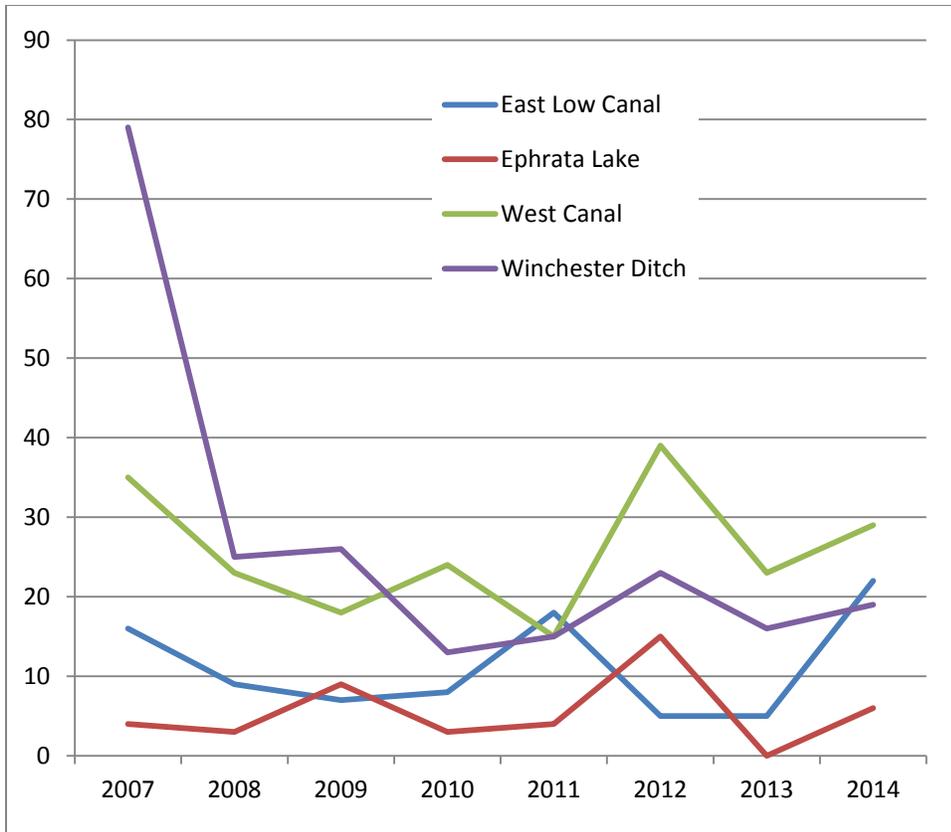


FIGURE 9. DUCK BROOD COUNT TOTALS FOR EPHRATA DISTRICT STRATA INCLUDING WEST CANAL, EAST CANAL, WINCHESTER DITCH, AND EPHRATA LAKE.

Winter Waterfowl Surveys, including the USFWS Midwinter Survey conducted during the first week of January, can be located at the link listed below. Areas covered during this survey are shown in Figure 10.

http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regions/region2/waterfowl_surveys.html.

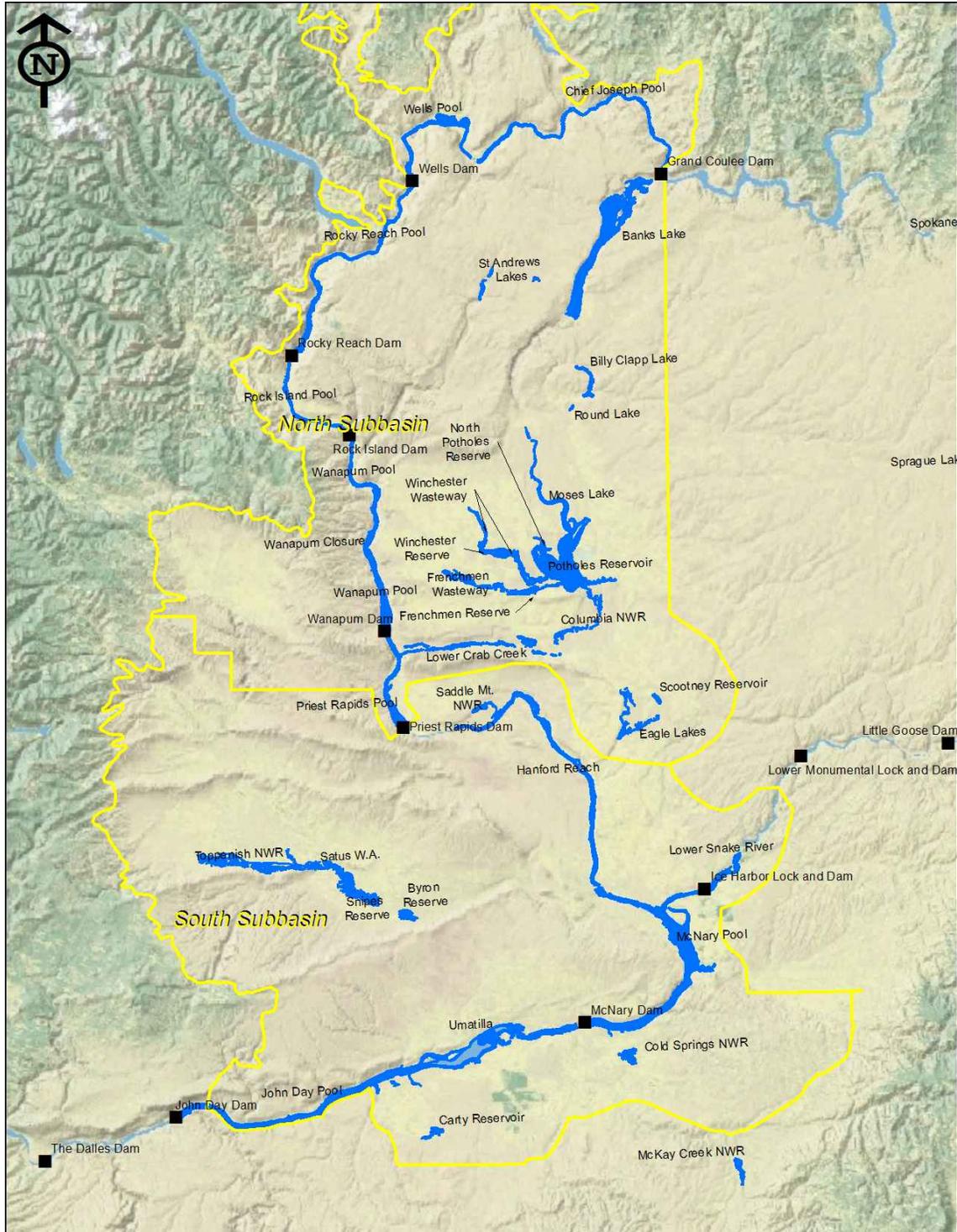


FIGURE 10. SURVEY STRATA USED DURING WINTER WATERFOWL SURVEYS. THESE AREAS REPRESENT LOCATIONS OF POTENTIAL WATERFOWL CONCENTRATIONS.

Waterfowl Migration Chronology and Concentration Areas:

Migration will bring the best waterfowl hunting in the basin (Figure 11). November will bring large numbers of mallards, wigeon, gadwalls, teal, scaup, redheads, and canvasbacks. Until this time hunters must rely on locally produced birds and early season migrants, such as American wigeon and green-winged teal. 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.

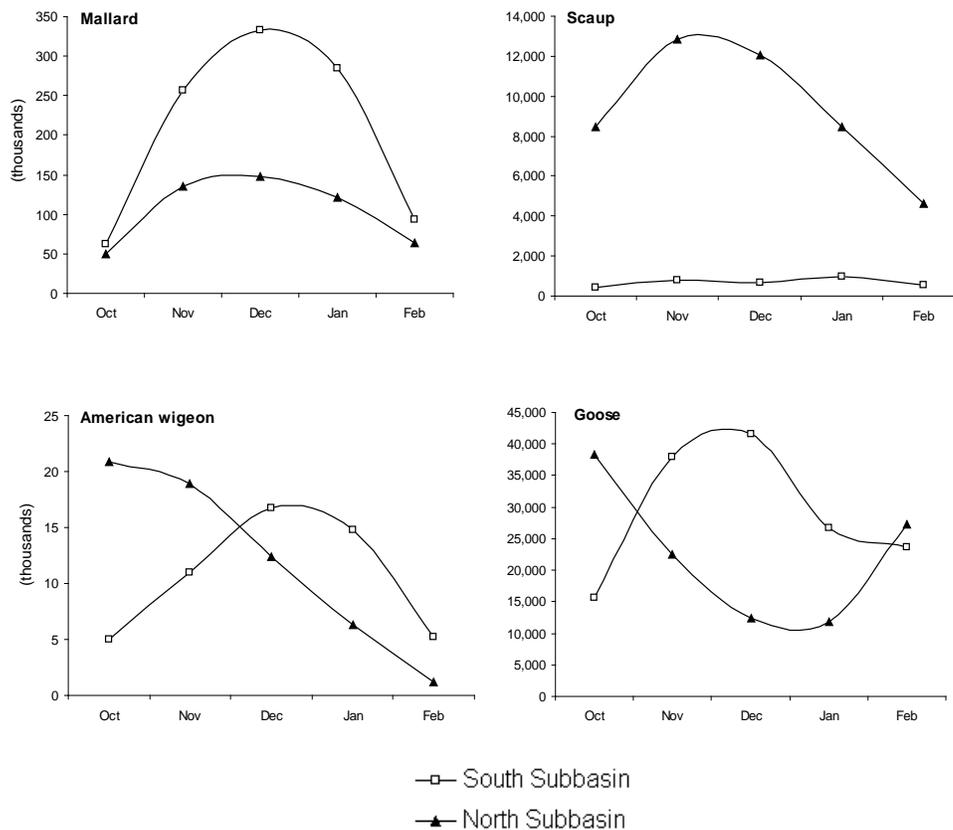


FIGURE 11. MIGRATION CURVES FOR SEVERAL SPECIES WHICH WINTER IN LARGE NUMBERS ON THE COLUMBIA PLATEAU. REFER TO FIGURE 12 ABOVE FOR MAP OF SUBBASIN BOUNDARIES.

Understanding Waterfowl Migration:

The waterfowl hunting season the Ephrata District is largely dependent upon bird production in Alberta, but locally produced birds remain important. Hunters must use caution when interpreting the spring habitat conditions reports. The first step in understanding the relationship between breeding conditions and the expected harvest is to understand where Columbia Plateau wintering birds are produced. Munro and Kimball (1982) report that the Northern Pacific breeding area (includes: Alaska, British Columbia, and Yukon-west Mackenzie minor reference area) 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 (Figure 12). Band recoveries of locally banded birds harvested in Washington exhibit a similar pattern, though over time, these patterns may change and these band recoveries represent a long-term dataset (1949-2012; Figure 13).

Of additional consideration, Rabenberg (1982) reports that “breeding pair and production indices from southwestern Alberta were negatively correlated with Basin³ mid-winter mallard populations”. Thus the degree to which birds produced in Southwestern Alberta migrate through the Basin may be variable or may not be fully understood. Perhaps the important consideration is that poor breeding conditions on the prairie parklands has been shown to displace birds to the north-northwest to northern Alberta, Alaska, and the Northwest Territories (Buller 1975, Rabenberg 1982). Birds that are displaced to these areas have a higher likelihood of migrating through the Basin during fall and winter. This is evidenced by the peak of mid-winter populations in the “Basin” following severe drought across southern Canada and the Dakotas during the early 60s.

³ “Basin” includes all important waterfowl wintering areas adjacent to, or in-between, Moses Lake, Washington and Hermiston, Oregon.

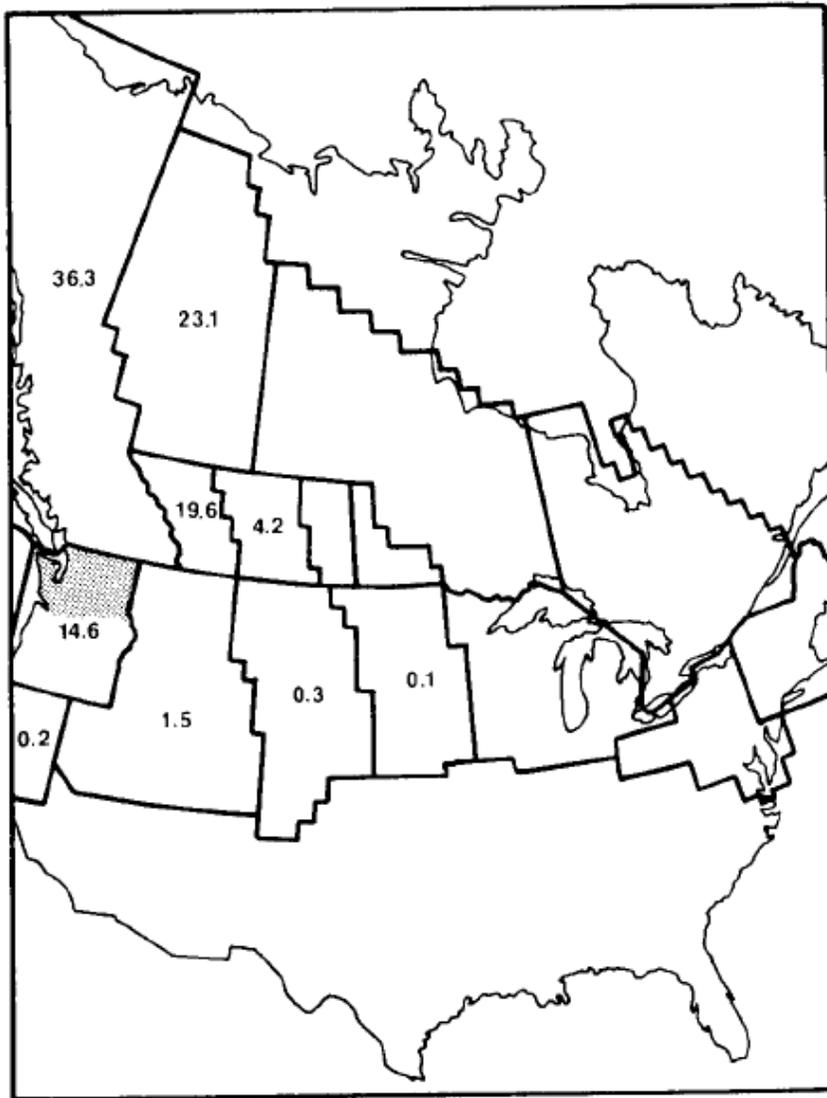


Fig. D-11. Percent derivation of the mallard harvest in *Washington* (shaded) from major breeding reference areas.

FIGURE 12. 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.

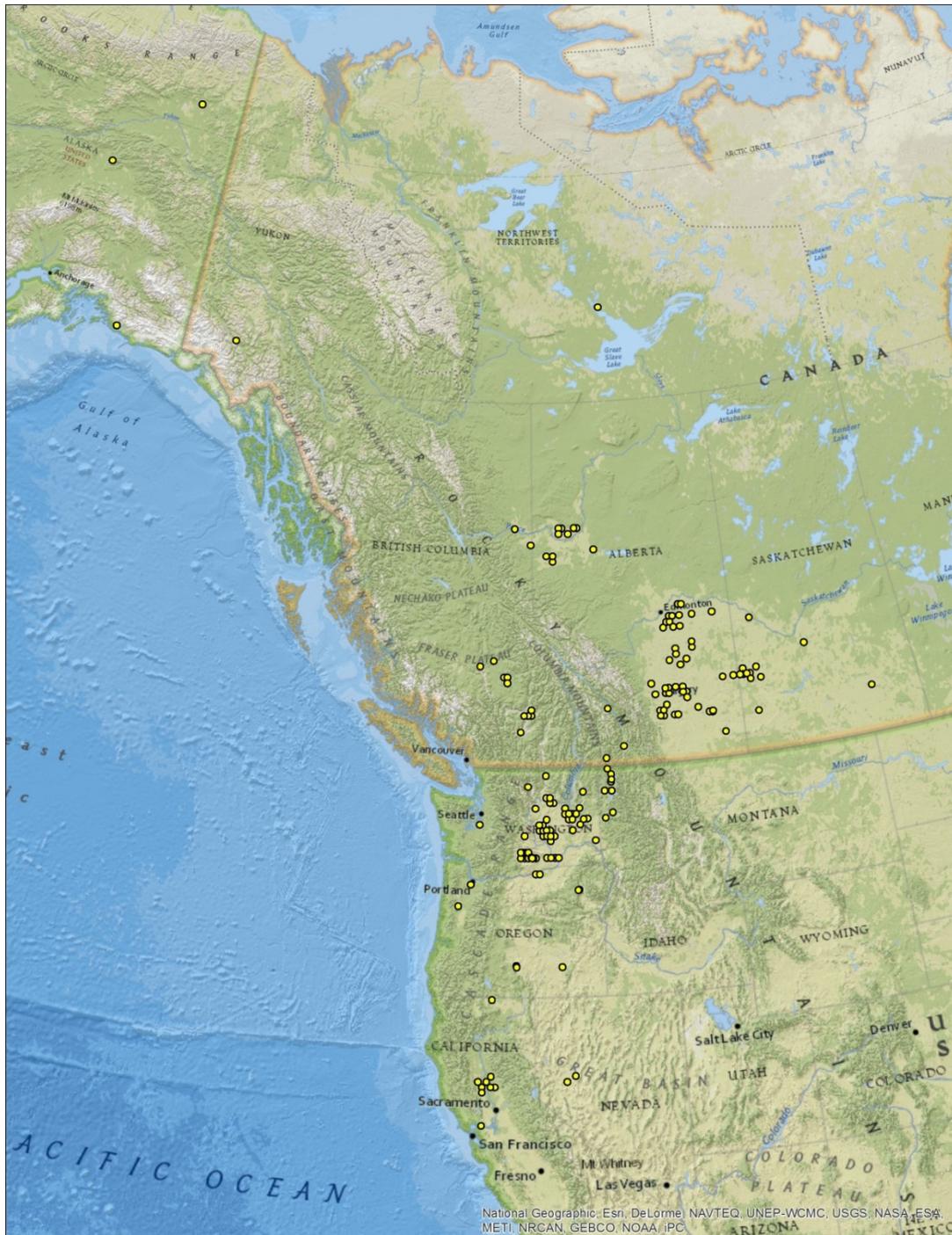


FIGURE 13. LOCATIONS (YELLOW DOTS) WHERE LOCAL MALLARDS (DUCKLINGS) WERE BANDED PRIOR TO BEING HARVESTED IN WASHINGTON STATE. BASED ON BANDING EFFORTS FROM 1949-2012.

Based on Mallard Breeding Population Estimates and 2014 breeding habitat conditions from USFWS Trends in Duck Breeding Populations; 1955-2014 (Figure 12), waterfowl hunting in the Columbia Plateau should be good this year. Perhaps the most compelling reasons to expect a good season in the Ephrata District is the 72% increase in mallard numbers in the ‘Central and Northern Alberta – NE British Columbia – NW Territories strata’ and the 27% increase in the ‘Southern Alberta strata’. But hunters must be aware that weather conditions can be as responsible for waterfowl harvest as bird numbers, so hope for unstable weather patterns bringing short-lived winter storms followed by warming trends.

Table 2. Mallard breeding population estimates (in thousands) for regions in the traditional survey area.

Region	2014	2013	Change from 2013		Change from LTA		
			%	P	LTA ^a	%	P
Alaska–Yukon Territory– Old Crow Flats	501	338	+48	0.018	377	+33	0.031
C. & N. Alberta–N.E. British Columbia–NWT	1,757	1,020	+72	<0.001	1,084	+62	<0.001
N. Saskatchewan– N. Manitoba–W. Ontario	1,126	1,427	–21	0.329	1,130	0	0.984
S. Alberta	1,444	1,141	+27	0.011	1,073	+34	<0.001
S. Saskatchewan	2,553	2,576	–1	0.907	2,073	+23	<0.001
S. Manitoba	602	448	+34	0.007	385	+56	<0.001
Montana & Western Dakotas	1,014	794	+28	0.106	516	+96	<0.001
Eastern Dakotas	1,903	2,627	–28	0.001	1,035	+84	<0.001
Total	10,900	10,372	+5	0.292	7,673	+42	<0.001

^a Long-term average, 1955–2013.

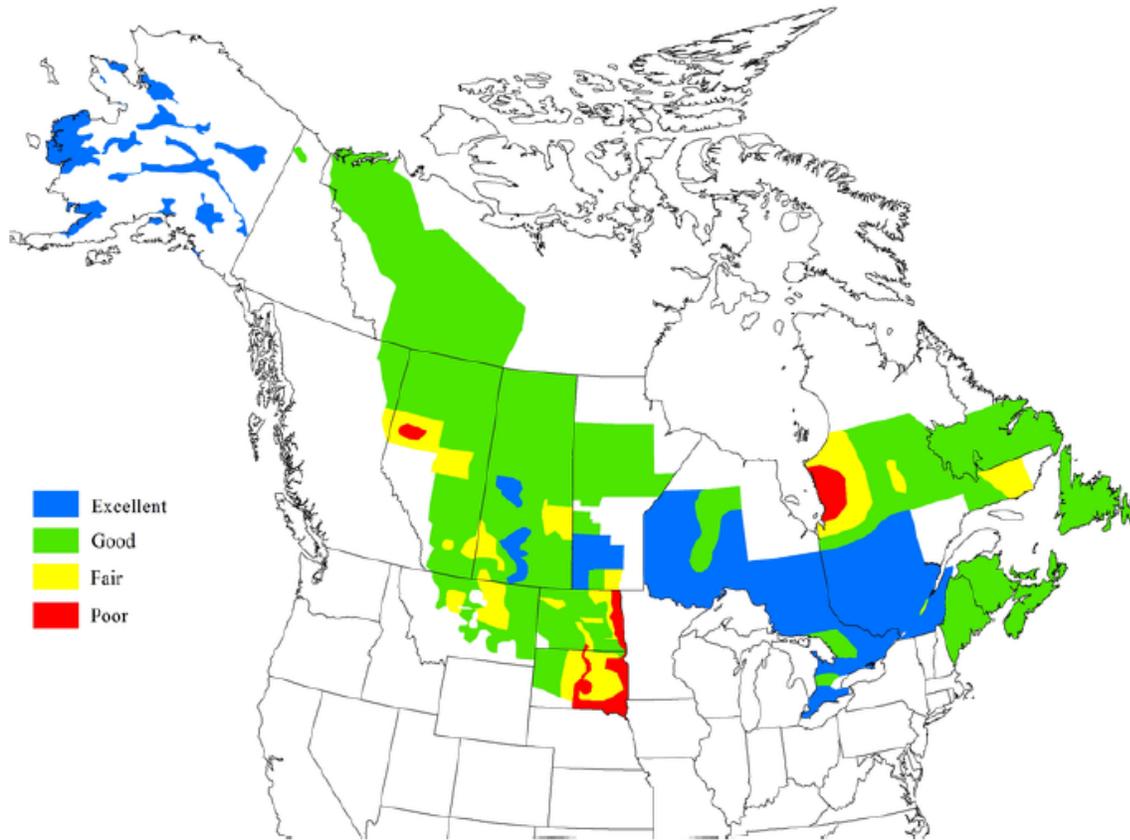


Figure 4. Breeding waterfowl habitat conditions during the 2014 Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey, as judged by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service biologists.

FIGURE 12. BREEDING POPULATION ESTIMATES AND HABITAT CONDITIONS FROM USFWS TRENDS IN DUCK BREEDING POPULATIONS; 1955-2014.

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 (Figure 13). 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 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 (Figure 14), 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 water levels do increase dramatically through the hunting season (Figure 15).

Winchester Lake is another location where hunters can expect to see good numbers of waterfowl but hunting pressure is relatively high there. 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.

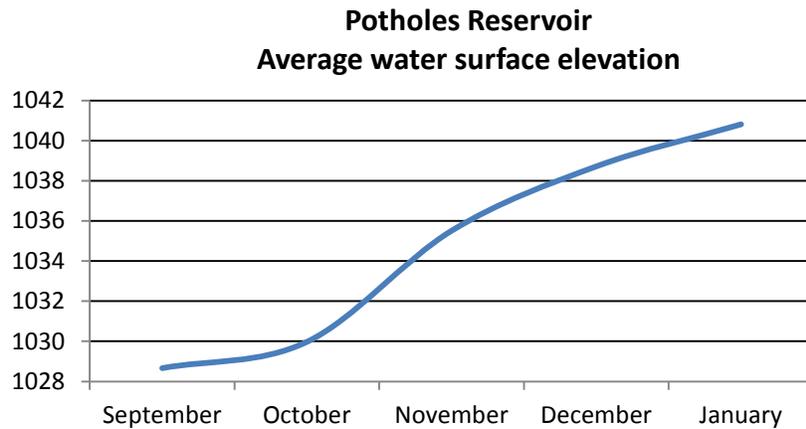


FIGURE 15. POTHOLE RESERVOIR WATER SURFACE ELEVATION (IN FEET) DURING WATERFOWL SEASON. NOTE THAT WATER SURFACE ELEVATION IS MEASURED AT O’SULLIVAN DAM AND SOME LAG IN FLOODING WILL OCCUR IN THE UPPER PORTIONS OF THE RESERVOIR.

Dogs are often an absolute necessity for retrieving throughout most of the Ephrata District but Regulated Access Areas (RAA) have some shallow ponds which could be hunted with a pair of chest waders. 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 16 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 Ephrata regional office at (509) 754-4624 for details about this program and the Regulated Access Areas.

Regulated Access Areas in the District (Winchester RAA and Frenchmen RAA) provide limited entry opportunities. Hunting of the Winchester RAA will be managed through an online reservation system beginning during the 2014 season. Reservations will be required to use a parking spot prior to 9am, starting from opening day and lasting through November. Drop-in’s will be allowed after 9am if a parking spot is available. Reservations not arriving by 9am will forfeit their reservation, no exceptions. Note: The access into Winchester Reserve has changed.

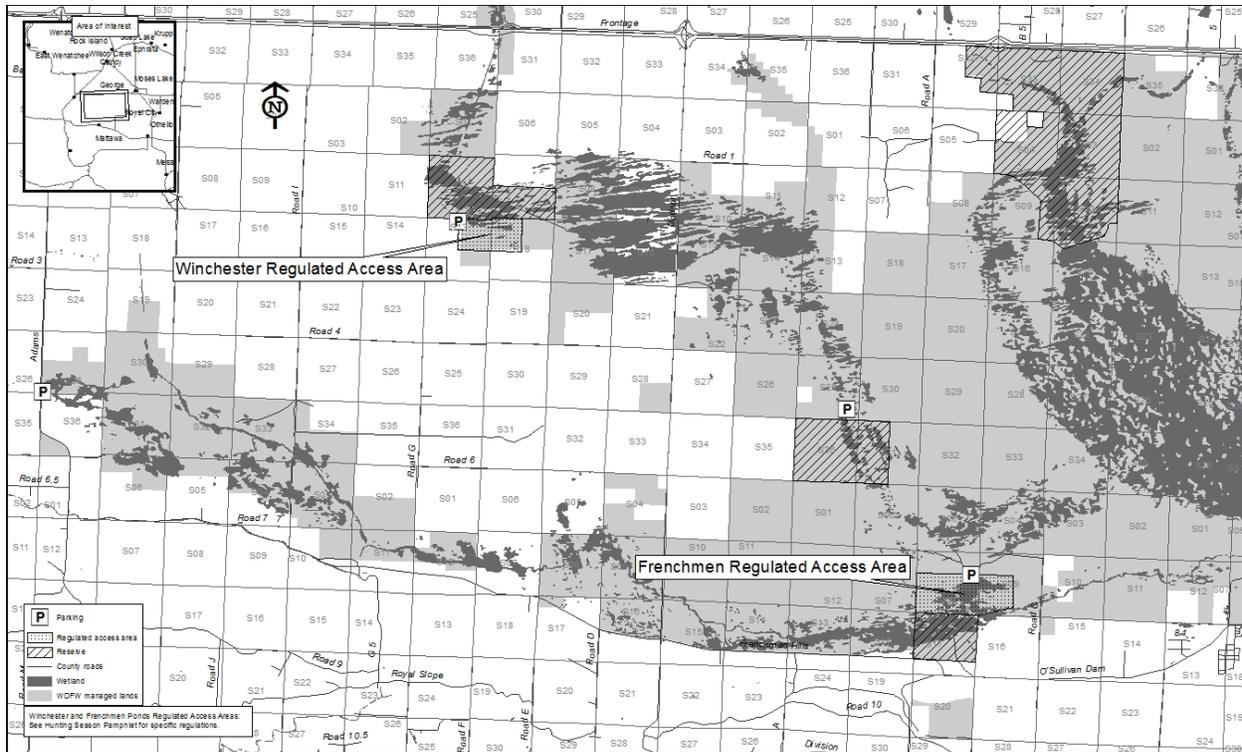


FIGURE 16. LOCATIONS OF THE FRENCHMEN AND WINCHESTER REGULATED ACCESS AREAS WEST OF POTHOLES RESERVOIR.

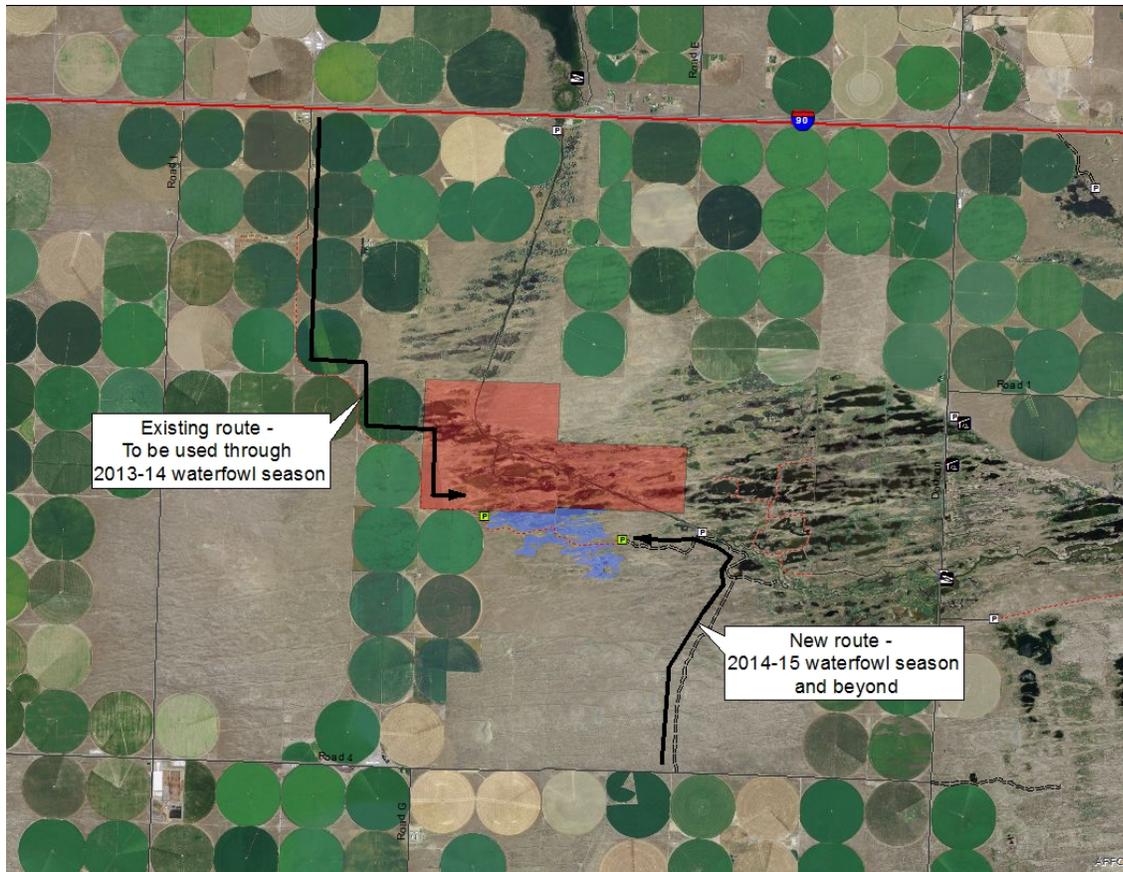


FIGURE 17. CHANGE IN ACCESS ROUTE FOR THE WINCHESTER REGULATED ACCESS AREA, EFFECTIVE DURING THE 2014-15 SEASON AND BEYOND.

Lastly, when targeting mallards, as most waterfowl hunters do, it pays to understand where the grain corn is likely to be found. Figure 18 below was created using the USDA NASS Cropland Data layers for corn (2006-2012). These data layers display where corn was grown during a given year. The layers are stacked and displayed at 75% transparency, so corn fields only planted once during the 2006-2012 time period would display as dull yellow, whereas corn fields planted many times during the 2006-2012 time period would display as bright yellow. Unfortunately, the data layers do not discriminate between corn varieties (sweet, silage, grain) but this map does show some important waterfowl foraging areas having a preponderance of bright yellow and may prove to be a useful tool when scouting.

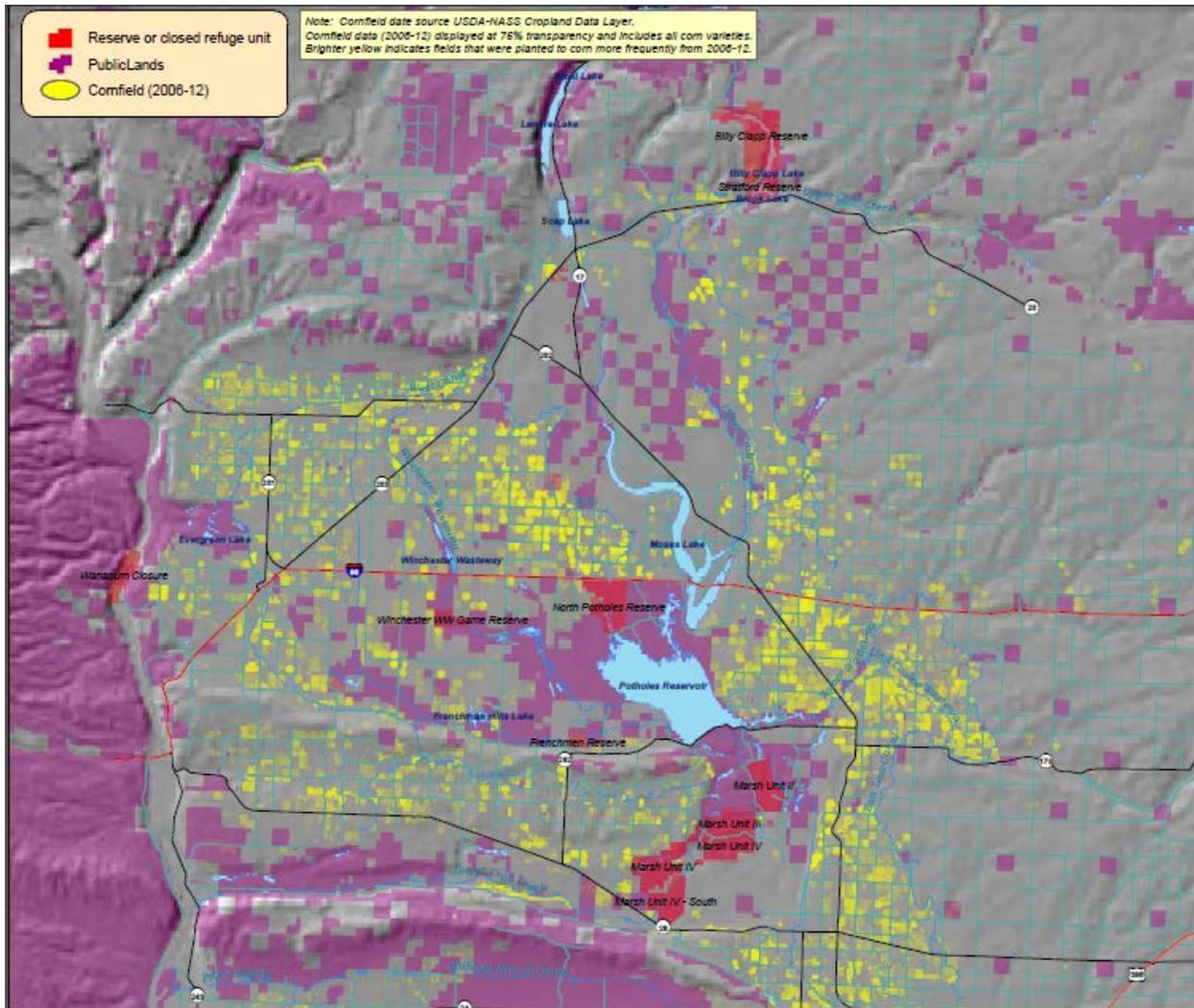


FIGURE 20. JUXTAPOSITION OF CORN PLANTING RELATIVE TO WATERFOWL SANCTUARY AREAS. THE BRIGHTER THE YELLOW, THE GREATER THE FREQUENCY THE FIELD IS PLANTED IN CORN.

SMALL GAME

Small game in the Ephrata District 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. Formal surveys to assess population status of small game species are not conducted in the Ephrata District. Bobcats occur in the Ephrata District 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 the Ephrata District 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 the Ephrata district 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. Hunters targeting cottontails should be aware of the endangered pygmy rabbit which looks similar to cottontails and is found in shrub-steppe habitat. There is much opportunity for coyote hunting throughout most of the Ephrata District. Grant County had the second highest harvest of coyotes during the 2013 season. 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 the Ephrata District.

PUBLIC LANDS

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 WDFW Lands [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 the Ephrata District. For more information on this program and release sites in this district, please visit the Enhancement Program's [website](#).

Department of Natural Resources:

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](#).

National Forest:

There is no national forest in the Ephrata District.

Bureau of Land Management:

Some BLM land is found in the Ephrata District and is open to public hunting. For more information on BLM property or to order maps, please visit the blm.gov website.

Other:

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) maintains property that is open to public use for recreational purposes, much of this land is managed by WDFW but not all. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on BOR land can be found [here](#).

ADA Access:

The Ephrata District 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.

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.

WDFW is currently working with the local Washington Waterfowl Association chapter to administer an ALEA grant to develop two ADA hunting blinds.

PRIVATE LANDS

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

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 200,000 acres of private property in the Ephrata District 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.

Private Lands Access	Grant Co	Adams Co
Feel Free To Hunt	18,000	16,000
Hunt By Written Permission	49,000	110,000
Hunt By Reservation (Online)	18,000	0
TOTAL	87,000	126,000

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bird Dog Training:

The Ephrata District 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 1. List of target shooting facilities in the Ephrata District.

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

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Hunting Season Prospects 2014

District 5 – Grant and Adams Counties

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 (Figure 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.

2014

Scott Fitkin, District Wildlife Biologist
Jeff Heinlen, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 6 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Okanogan County

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DISTRICT 6 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Wildfires burned about 270,000 acres this summer in the western portion of District 6, so hunters will need to check the availability of their favorite locations before heading into the field. Updates on fires and related closures can be obtained through multiple sources, including the Okanogan National Forest, and the Washington departments of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation. As noted below, significant unburned areas exist throughout District 6, and those locations could see increased numbers of game animals.

Most of the affected lands are in the Methow Valley. As of late August, the most seriously affected GMUs in descending order of impact were Units 239, 242, and 224. Smaller portions of Units 218 and 231 also burned. At least two major fires were technically still active, but burn activity was minimal, and no significant expansion of the fire perimeters is expected.

Large areas were closed to public access in the immediate wake of the fires, but most parcels were reopened in the following weeks. Smaller area closures remained in place around the Little Bridge and Upper Falls fires, and some U.S. Forest Service roads remained closed within the Carlton Complex Fire perimeter. Flash floods and mudslides from intense thunderstorms that followed the fires caused widespread damage to primary and secondary roads, particularly in GMUs 224, 239, and 242. Periodic road closures were required in some areas, primarily along State Routes 20 (the North Cascades Highway) and 153 near Twisp. It is possible some road and area closures could last throughout the hunting season.

Wildlife fires typically do not kill a significant percentage of larger mammals or birds directly. Even so, the fires and resulting impacts are likely to significantly affect game distribution on the landscape, and these effects could be highly variable. Where fires burned intensely, wildlife will likely be scarce; however, adjacent unburned areas could actually see an influx of animals. Game prevalence in lightly or partially burned areas will likely be somewhere in between. If substantial fall rain and significant associated green-up occurs, this could mitigate the fire effects somewhat and change animal distribution further, bringing animals back into the fire perimeter at least temporarily.

Emergency changes to this year's hunting regulations are being considered to increase antlerless deer harvest in heavily impacted areas. This will likely be accomplished through the use of increased youth, senior, disabled, 2nd deer, and master hunter permits drawn from this year's applicant pool for relevant GMUs; however, specific details are still being worked out. Additionally, damage related permits will also be used to address anticipated agricultural nuisance issues as they develop.

Individual write-ups below are independent of the fire effects unless specifically noted in red. Whenever possible, we will update this site with more current and specific information. In the meantime, fire-related information is available on the following websites:

<http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>

<http://www.geomac.gov/viewer/viewer.shtml>

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

<http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/wildfires/>

District Overview

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), and 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.

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.

2013 District 6 Elk Harvest Summary: Elk are scarce in Okanogan County, and District 6 hunters harvested only 17 in 2013, five more than in 2012. Eight of the 17 came from GMU 204, and all but two were taken by modern firearm hunters.

2013 District 6 Elk Harvest Statistics: [Elk Total Harvest](#)

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 again this year. Winter fawn survivorship and associated recruitment have been at or above average four of the last five years and hunters can expect to see moderate numbers of younger bucks. Post-season buck ratios in December of 2013 were down somewhat as compared to the previous year; however, the observed ratio of 25 bucks per 100 does is still excellent and should translate into good carryover or older age-class bucks.

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. Deer are likely to be particularly attracted to more moist environments this year given the especially hot, dry summer. *In late August, it was noted that if significant fall green-up materialized in this summer's burn areas, those areas could attract sizeable numbers of deer. In addition, many areas on private lands adjacent to the fires saw an influx of displaced deer and associated damage. These conditions could make it a good year to seek landowner permission for hunting access in fire affected areas.*

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.

Most of the winter range in Units 239 and 242, and much of the high density winter range in Unit 224, burned in this summer's fires. Significant changes to deer distribution and abundance in those units was anticipated; however, as of late August, it was still too early to accurately predict specific effects. Late permit hunt changes were being considered for GMUs heavily impacted by the fires. Individual notifications were planned for permit holders if any permit hunt changes were implemented.

For those hunters with 2nd 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.

Changes to the geographic scope of Deer area 2012 were being considered in late August as a result of fire impacts to surrounding GMUs. Individual notifications were planned for permit holders if any permit hunt changes were implemented.

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 regulation changes are on tap for the 2014 general seasons.

As noted above, some significant permit hunt adjustments were being considered in late August to help address issues created by this summer's wildfires.

2013 District 6 Deer Harvest Summary: General season hunters harvested 2,047 deer from the 10 game management units comprising District 6, down slightly as compared to 2012. Similarly, general season success rates fell a bit for most user groups, but improved modestly for muzzleloaders and ended up as follows: Modern – 14%, Muzzleloader – 25%, Archery – 24%, and Muilt – 21%. Special permit holders harvested 337 deer in District 6, 195 antlerless and 142 bucks.

Modern firearm hunters accounted for about 68 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 (648 animals). GMUs 215, 218, 224, and 233 also produced good tallies. These five units combined accounted for 74% of the total number of deer taken in District 6.

2013 District 6 Deer Harvest Statistics: [Deer General Season Harvest](#)
[Deer Special Permit Harvest](#)



MULE DEER AND WHITE-TAILED DEER – SCOTT FITKIN

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 but will probably peak early this year (possibly starting as early as late August) due to the hot dry weather. *The late August fires likely made bears scarce in the affected areas since natural food availability was extremely limited in those locations.*

For hunters pursuing black bear in the northern Cascades, it is critical for you to positively identify the bear species, as endangered grizzly bears potentially also inhabit these areas. We

have posted on our web site some interactive training materials from 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.

2013 District 6 Black Bear Harvest Summary: District 6 hunters harvested 103 black bear last season in the Okanogan Bear Management Unit (BMU 5), an 11% decrease from the 2012 tally. Last year, bears pursued robust berry crops throughout the district and harvest was spread accordingly across all GMUs. GMU 204 in the Northeastern BMU again led the way with 42 animals taken.

2013 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 the best opportunities to spot the cats on the move are at dawn and dusk.

The summer's fires directly affected deer distribution in the burned areas, which also had an effect on cougar distribution. This occurred particularly as deer began to concentrate for the winter.

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 most GMUs. As a result, cougar hunting opportunities in District 6 should be good in 2014-15. 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 <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>.

2013 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.

2013 District 6 Cougar Harvest Statistics: [East Cascades North CMU Cougar Harvest](#)



COUGAR WITH KITTEN – SCOTT FITKIN

DUCK AND CANADA GOOSE

Overall, waterfowl surveys indicate waterfowl brood production is up modestly in the potholes region of Eastern Washington compared to 2013. Locally, water levels are down due to the hot dry summer and the number of potholes retaining water during the hunting season will likely be reduced. 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

2013 District 6 Waterfowl Harvest Summary: Duck harvest was down 32% in District 6 in 2013, likely due to mild early winter weather up north and extensive ice coverage locally. Conversely, hunters bagged 1,365 Canada geese in 2013, a 7% increase over the 2012 harvest.

2013 District 6 Waterfowl Harvest Statistics: [Duck Harvest Statewide and by County](#)
[Canada Goose Harvest Statewide and by County](#)



CANADA GEESE IN A METHOW VALLEY GRAIN FIELD – SCOTT FITKIN

PARTRIDGE (GRAY AND CHUKAR)

In general, 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.

More specifically, dramatically reduced harvest and harvest success without a similar magnitude change in hunter numbers suggests gray partridge and chukar productivity fell sharply in 2013. It appears likely that the cold, wet spring resulted in significant chick mortality.

Originally, more moderate weather this spring suggested productivity and associated harvest opportunity would be better in 2014. This is likely still true in areas outside of the summer burns. Unfortunately, the fires consumed a significant portion of the district's partridge habitat and bird numbers in those areas will likely be spotty and greatly reduced as a result.

2013 District 6 Partridge Harvest Summary: Compared to 2012, both chukar and gray partridge harvest decreased significantly in District 6 last year. Hunters harvested only 137 chukar (a 90% decrease). Similarly, gray partridge declined by 74% with only 370 birds taken.

2013 District 6 Partridge Harvest Statistics: [Chukar Harvest Statewide and by County](#)
[Gray Partridge Harvest Statewide and by County](#)

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.

Prior to the fires over the summer, we anticipated generally favorable opportunities for Forest Grouse and harvest success rates similar to last year. As a result of the fires, areas adjacent to and outside of this year's burn perimeters may see an influx of birds. Conversely, areas within the burns likely have very few birds, although sizeable unburned islands surrounded by charred ground could potentially hold locally concentrated populations. In addition, if significant fall green-up presents itself, some birds may return to burned areas to take advantage of sprouting shoots and buds. The best bets for hunting are likely to be USFS lands throughout the district, as well as forested portions of the Sinlahekin and Methow Wildlife Areas outside of this year's burn perimeters. In the long-term, the extensive burning at lower elevations may well enhance grouse production in the spring of coming seasons; however, the additional loss of winter habitat at middle and upper elevations may decrease over-winter carrying capacity.

2013 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 mixed harvest of 7,017 dusky, ruffed, and spruce grouse. While impressive, that number represents an 8-percent decline from 2012 and a 45-percent drop from the five-year average harvest average; however, much of the decline can be attributed to reduced hunter participation.

2013 District 6 Forest Grouse Harvest Statistics: [Forest Grouse Harvest Statewide and by County](#)



MALE DUSKY GROUSE AND FEMALE SPRUCE GROUSE – SCOTT FITKIN

PHEASANT

Pheasants occur at low densities and in a patchy distribution throughout the Okanogan Watershed 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.

Game farm-produced roosters will once again be released in the district; however, the Chiliwist release site will not be used this year due to the effects of this summer's fire at that location. All releases will occur at the traditional Kline and Hegdahl 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.

2013 District 6 Pheasant Harvest Summary: Hunters bagged 520 pheasants last year in Okanogan County, a drop of almost 50% as compared to 2012 and the current five-year average. Most of this decline can be attributed to a reduced number of released birds.

2013 District 6 Pheasant Harvest Statistics: [Pheasant Harvest 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. 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 traditionally good places to start.

In general for this season, a mild winter and more favorable spring conditions had set the stage for improved quail prospects as compared to 2013. That may still be true outside of the late August burn areas; however, the fires blackened a significant portion of the district's quail habitat, including virtually all of the Chiliwist and Indian Dan Canyon portions of the wildlife areas.

2013 District 6 Quail Harvest Summary: Quail harvest dipped slightly from the 2012 tally and is down 18% from the five-year average. Even so, District 6 hunters still bagged about 6,500 birds in 2013.

2013 District 6 Quail Harvest Statistics: [Quail Harvest 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 and 242, with the majority of the birds being located in the latter 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.

The late August fires likely pushed turkeys out of the lower elevations in the SE portion GMU 242 and the southern portion of GMU 224.

MOURNING DOVE

The 2013 dove call count surveys tallied bird numbers similar to last year, with overall numbers still down slightly from the 10-year survey average. Look for doves in planted food crops in the Sinlahekin and at lower elevations on other public land. Hunting success will depend on warm weather keeping the birds in the area through the season.

Much of the dove habitat on the Methow Wildlife Area, as well as the Chiliwist and Indian Dan Canyon Wildlife Area Units, were heavily burned, significantly reducing dove harvest opportunities in District 6 for this season.

2013 District 6 Dove Harvest Summary: Similar to other shrub-steppe upland game birds, dove harvest decreased 19% as compared to 2012, and remained 28% below the five-year average harvest in the district.

2013 District 6 Mourning Dove Harvest Statistics: Mourning Dove Harvest Statewide and by Count

2014

David Volsen, District Wildlife Biologist
Jon Gallie, Assistant District Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 7 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Chelan and Douglas Counties

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DISTRICT 7 GENERAL OVERVIEW

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 made up of privately owned lands, 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 deer 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. The 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 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 open cliff and talus slope habitats in both counties, as are valley quail. Gray partridge, or huns, are found primarily in Douglas County. Doves can be found in both Counties; however, most of the success is from Douglas County. There are two ring-necked pheasant release sites in Chelan County (Swakane and Chelan Butte Wildlife Areas), but there are spots in Douglas County where self-sustaining populations can be found.

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 habitats in Douglas County.

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, but opportunities are also available along the Columbia River.

ELK

Almost the entire harvest of elk in the Wenatchee District comes from part of the Colockum herd in Chelan County. 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 harvested 58 elk in Chelan County last year. Success rates between weapon types vary and overall success varies from year to year. In 2013 muzzleloader hunters had an 8% success

rate while archers had a 7% rate and modern firearms hunters 5%. Most of the harvested elk (45) came out of GMU 251, with the remaining few harvested in GMUs 244, 245, and 249.

The recent change to a true spike rule for the Colockum has shown increases in escapement of yearling bulls. Mature bulls use a 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.

GMU 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 is also a unique opportunity in Elk Area 2033, where there is an open antlerless season, however this is almost exclusively on private land. It is designed to reduce conflict with orchards, and hunters would need to talk with local landowners to get access.

There are no notable changes in elk hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2014.

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.

2014 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 as well as retaining a high ratio of adult bucks in the population. Across Chelan County, the post season ratio was 23.3

bucks per 100 does, with a range from 20 to 28 in 2013. While these numbers are lower than they are traditionally, the lack of snow during surveys could have been a factor in detecting bucks. Despite the slightly lower ratio, an impressive 67% of the bucks surveyed were mature (3 and 4+ points). Fawn ratios were high, and winter conditions were mild, 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. Surveys in Douglas County were good, with overall buck to doe ratio of 22, one of the highest in the county in years. Without mountains and forests to hide in, buck escapement is lower in the sagelands, and only 25 % of the surveyed bucks were mature. Productivity remains good in Douglas County as the fawn to doe ratio was above average. This herd is on the increase and should continue to provide excellent hunting opportunity during the general season and antlerless permits.

Hunters took 1,520 deer off the district in 2013, 1,418 bucks and 102 antlerless. The highest harvest came off GMU 247 in Chelan County at 205 deer and in Douglas County GMU 248 with 182 deer. The percentage of 4-point bucks in the antlered harvest was 41% for Chelan County and 35% in Douglas County. Douglas County had a greater percentage of 3-point bucks at 44% whereas Chelan had 38%. Chelan County, on the other hand, produced a higher percentage of 5-point bucks at 20%, and Douglas the lower percentage at 10%.

Douglas County is a consistent producer of mule deer opportunity, and conditions should be similar in 2014. 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 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. Optimal hunting areas will include a mixture of sagebrush cover and adjacent agricultural fields for forage (mostly winter wheat and canola fields). 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. While the majority of the county is private, over 106,000 acres are enrolled into hunter access programs including areas where hunters are free to access or access with written permission.

BEAR

The bear hunting opportunity in the Wenatchee District should be similar to 2013, 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 2013, 184 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 2014.

COUGAR

Similar to black bears, cougar management is based primarily off harvest data rather than intensive surveys and population monitoring. In 2013 a total of 17 cougar were harvested in the district, with 11 of the cougars taken during general hunting, and the other six cougars having been removed under a depredation or other situation. Ten of the 17 cats harvested were females, seven were males.

The opportunity to a harvest cougar in the Wenatchee District expanded under the new season structure in 2012 that remains in place for 2014. 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 2014 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 132 sheep in 2014. The Chelan Butte herd produced a count of 74 sheep in 2008, increasing to a minimum count of 172 sheep in 2014. 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 2014, there are five (5) California bighorn limited entry drawing permits issued for Chelan County. Since 2001 twelve permits have been offered for sheep in the Swakane unit. In those years 13 sheep have been harvest due to the inclusion of an auction hunt in 2002. The world 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 nine years produced 24 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 four years of harvest, four 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 27, 25

and 16 for Swakane, Chelan Butte and Manson herds. Sightability and conditions play a large role in these counts. With two herds increasing and one herd stable, the hunting opportunities should increase in the future to keep pace with the increase in rams.

There are no notable changes in bighorn sheep hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2014

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 57 goats was recorded between 2010 and 2014. In the Tumwater Canyon area a high count of 33 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 2013-2014 survey, a high count of 190 mountain goats was made, with a minimum of 95 goats on each South and North Chelan units. Counts are made along both the north and south shores of the lake. Year to year counts vary 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.

Three (3) mountain goat tags were issued for the Wenatchee District under limited entry drawings this year. Since 2001, 19 drawing permits have been issued for the Chelan North, and 14 goats harvested. Two of the goats were harvested by auction/raffle hunters. Four of the 14 were female goats. A single permit was offered on the Chelan South, with the first goat being harvested in 2013. 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 2014.

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.

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 2013 the district harvested 956 pheasants.

Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites on the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area and the Swakane WMA birds should visit the WDFW hunting web site for more information. The Colockum Wildlife Area 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 2013 proved somewhat lower than average with a total harvest of 12,494. Harvest numbers for Chelan County have been consistently higher than Douglas County.

Conditions going into the 2013 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 private landowners.

GRAY PARTRIDGE

2013 was a poor year for huns with a total of 438 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 fields enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program with lots of grass cover extending into draws, often a good place to find coveys.

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 2013. 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 chukar

harvested per days hunted has started to increase, indicating that birds are on hills if hunters are willing to chase them. In 2013 we saw a harvest of 1,000 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 permission 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 has remained steady in recent years, with 2,320 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. Harvest was at 4,058 birds last fall from only 318 hunters. 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 similar to other years. Surveys over the past 3-4 years indicate that turkey numbers are stable. 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. A total of 43 toms were harvested in 2013.

In Chelan County, the number of turkeys 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, such as the Colockum Wildlife Area. 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. Most of these areas are private down low, but hunters can head up forest roads onto Forest Service land to find good turkey hunting opportunities.

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 (14,451 ducks for 2013) 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 8,438 ducks in 2013. 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 2014, 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 similar season in 2014.

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 2014.

	Douglas County	Chelan County
Feel Free to Hunt	19,705	0
Hunt By Written Permission	85,241	0
Register to Hunt	1,640	0
Total	106,586	0

TABLE 1. DISTRICT 7 UPLAND AND SMALL GAME HARVEST, AND HUNTER PARTICIPATION FROM 2008 THROUGH 2013.

Species	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters
Quail	12,898	1,755	13,774	1,876	15,088	1,702	13,169	1,658	9,874	1,162	12,494	1,450
Chukar	3,885	1,110	2,865	1,233	2,452	1,093	2,201	846	1,210	589	999	781
Mourning Dove	5,308	521	4,984	484	5,979	447	3,506	402	2,957	285	4,058	318
Forest Grouse	6,483	2,579	8,375	3,571	3,290	2,522	2,418	1,412	2,758	1,592	2,320	1,284
Pheasant	1,602	1,092	1,812	1,221	1,768	892	1,506	827	1,563	802	956	731
Gray Partridge	448	320	114	228	444	262	411	279	1,151	330	438	253
Duck	11,511	978	9,626	1,063	13,947	998	14,528	1,123	14,777	1,055	14,451	1,136
Canada Goose	2,152	471	1,261	475	1,252	519	1,082	526	1,774	525	1,340	626
Sept Canada Goose	157	65	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	0	531	66
Cottontail Rabbit	136	153	221	212	397	171	375	127	346	158	469	153
Snowshoe Hare	28	46	10	29	0	18	48	47	0	10	109	66
Snipe	0	0	0	0	55	18	5	11	0	7	0	0

* NO SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE SEASON WAS OFFERED DURING 2009-2012. OPENED AGAIN IN 2013.

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

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

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

Public Lands Information Available

**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

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

Public Lands Information Available

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

FIGURE 1. UPLAND GAME HUNTING AREAS IN THE WENATCHEE DISTRICT.

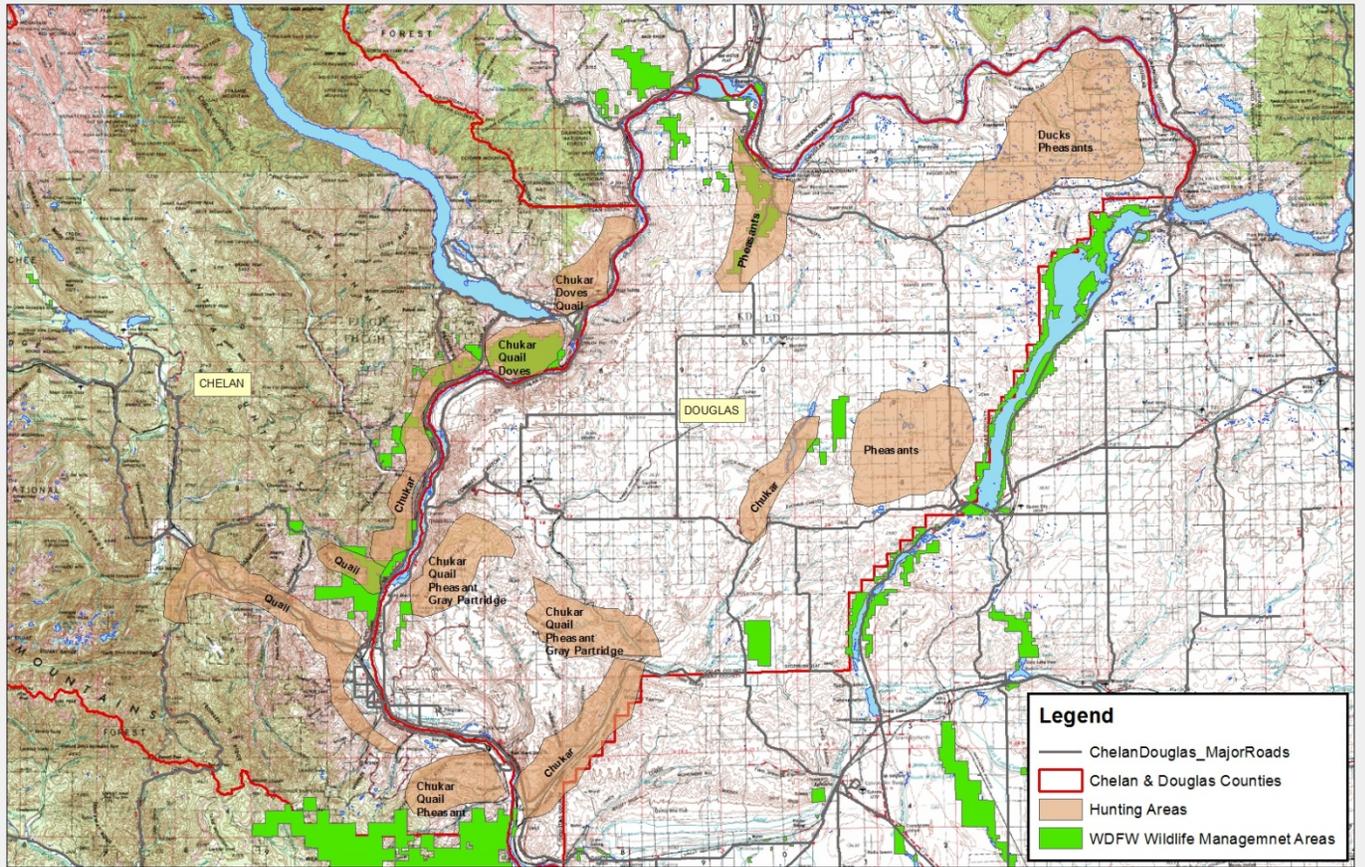


FIGURE 2. MAP OF THE WDFW BRIDGEPORT UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

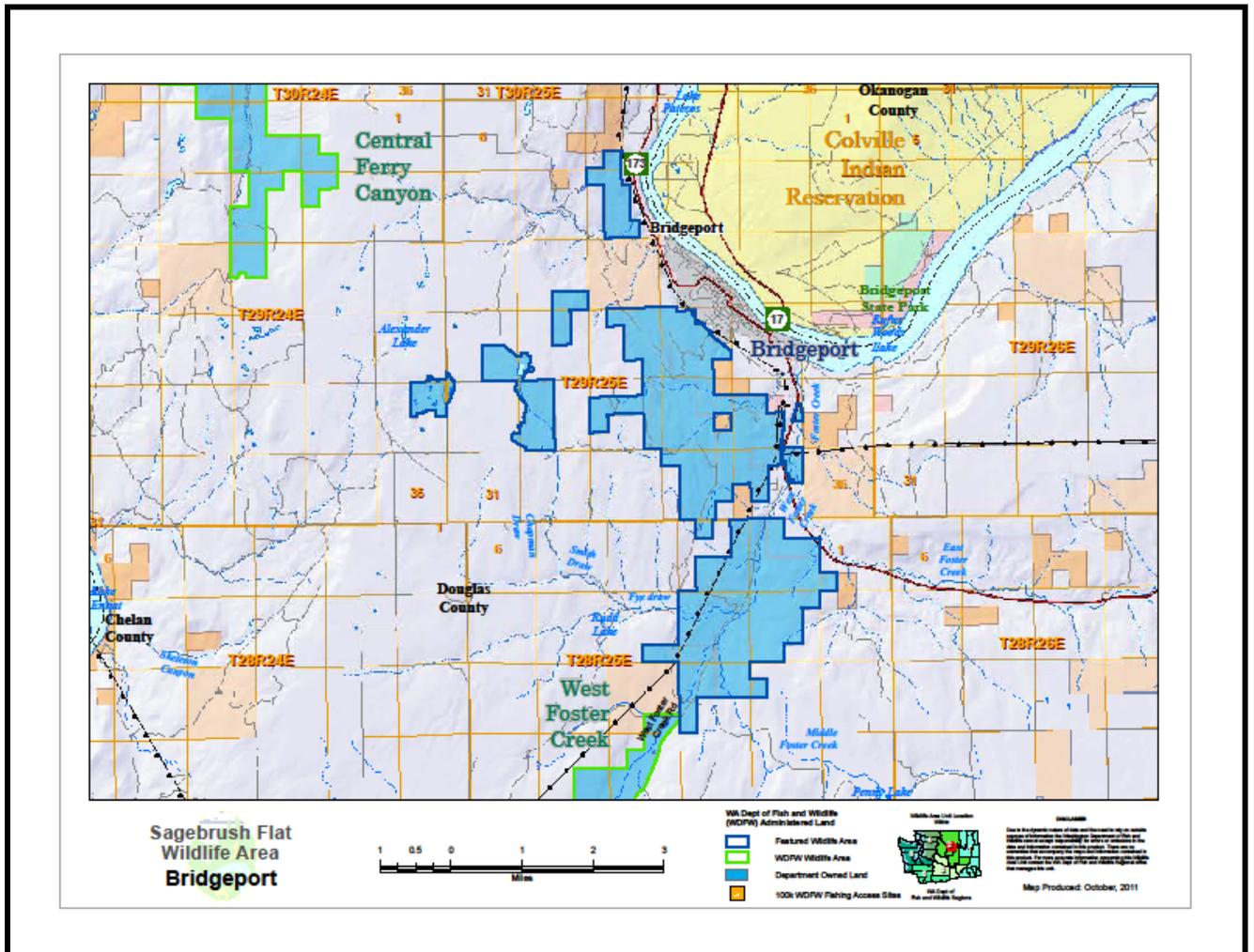


FIGURE 3. MAP OF THE WDFW BRIDGEPORT BAR UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

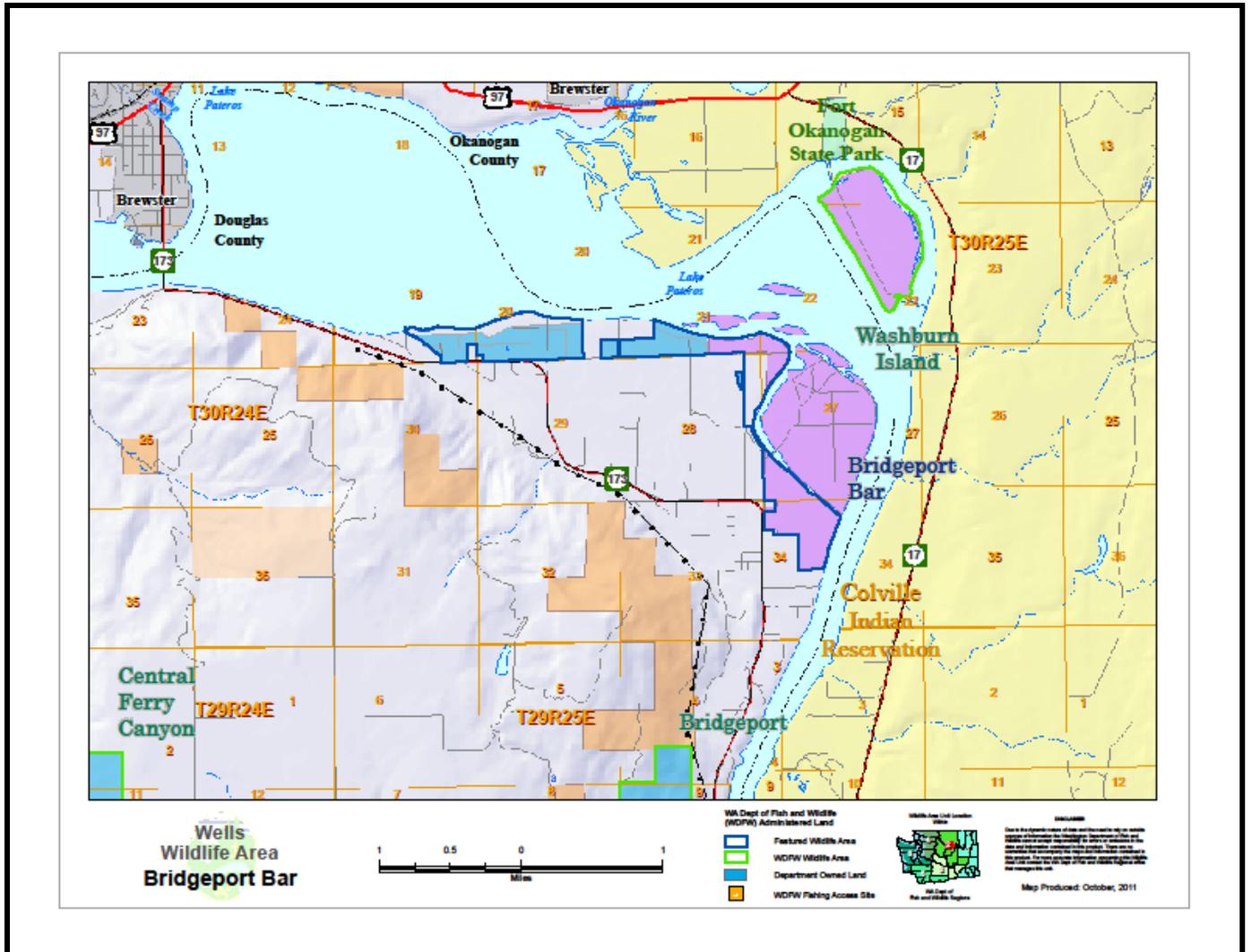


FIGURE 4. MAP OF THE WDFW CENTRAL FERRY CANYON UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY (EXTENSIVE HABITAT LOSS DUE TO WILDFIRE IN 2012).

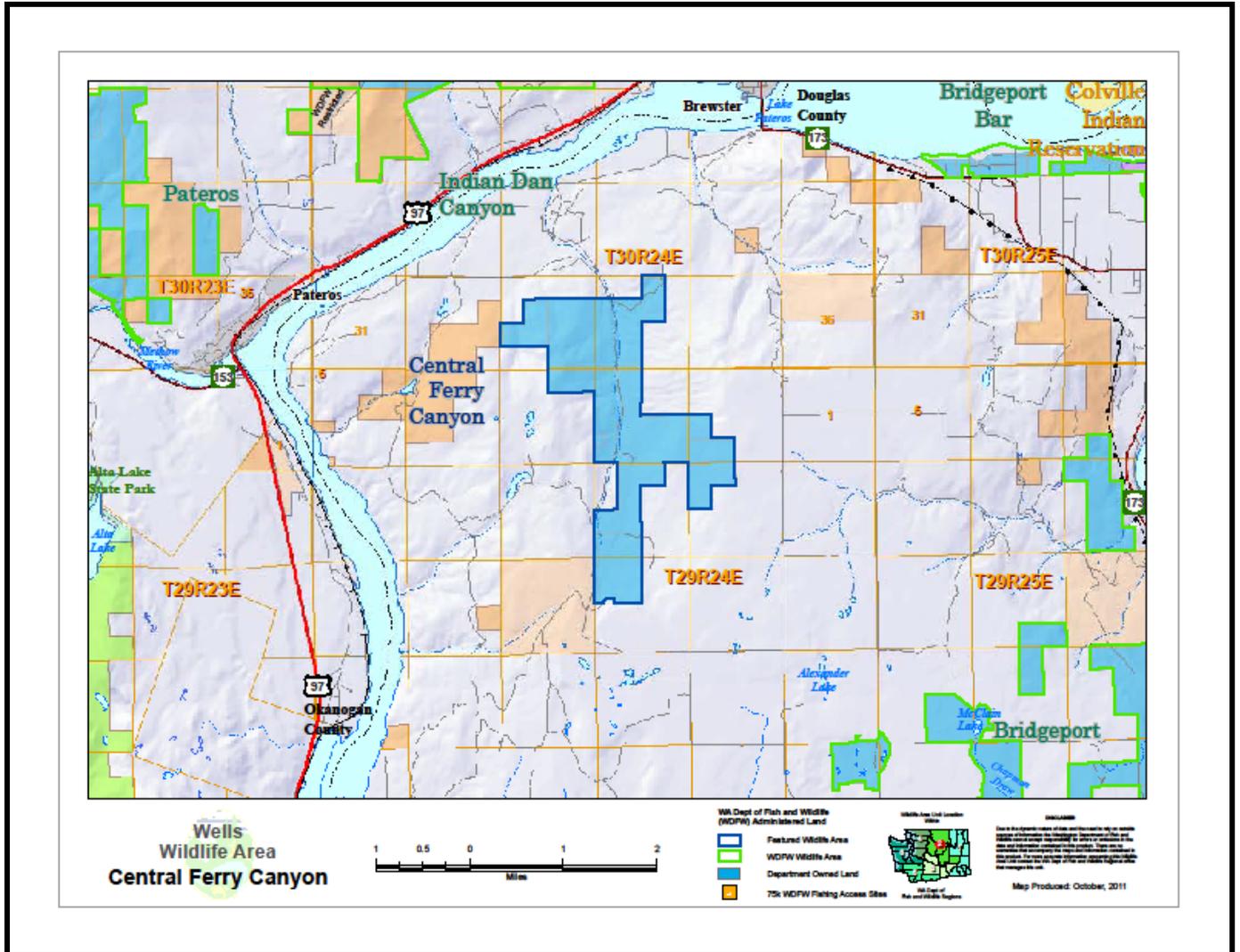


FIGURE 5. MAP OF THE WDFW WEST FOSTER CREEK UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

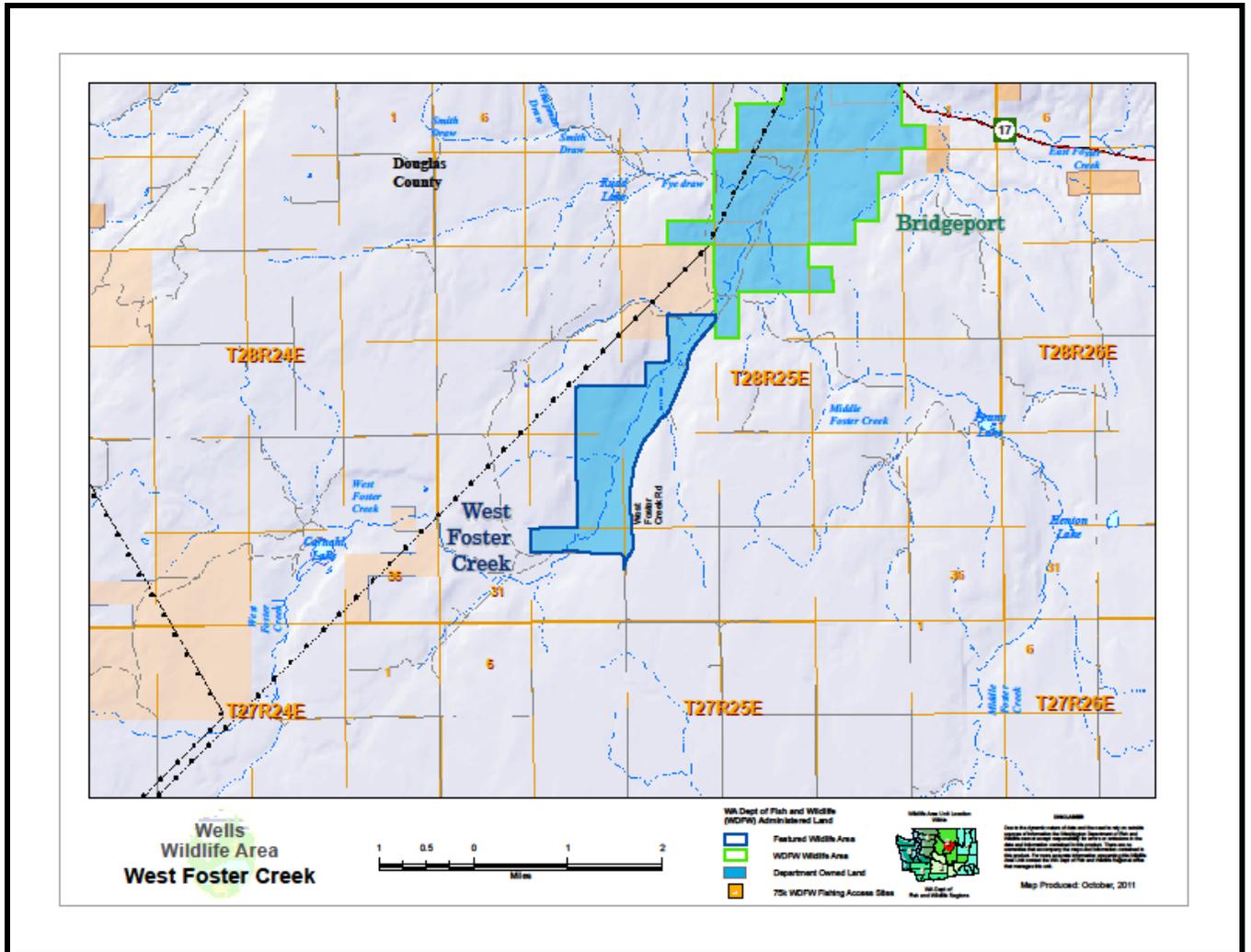


FIGURE 6. MAP OF THE WDFW CHESTER BUTTE AND DORMAIER UNITS, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

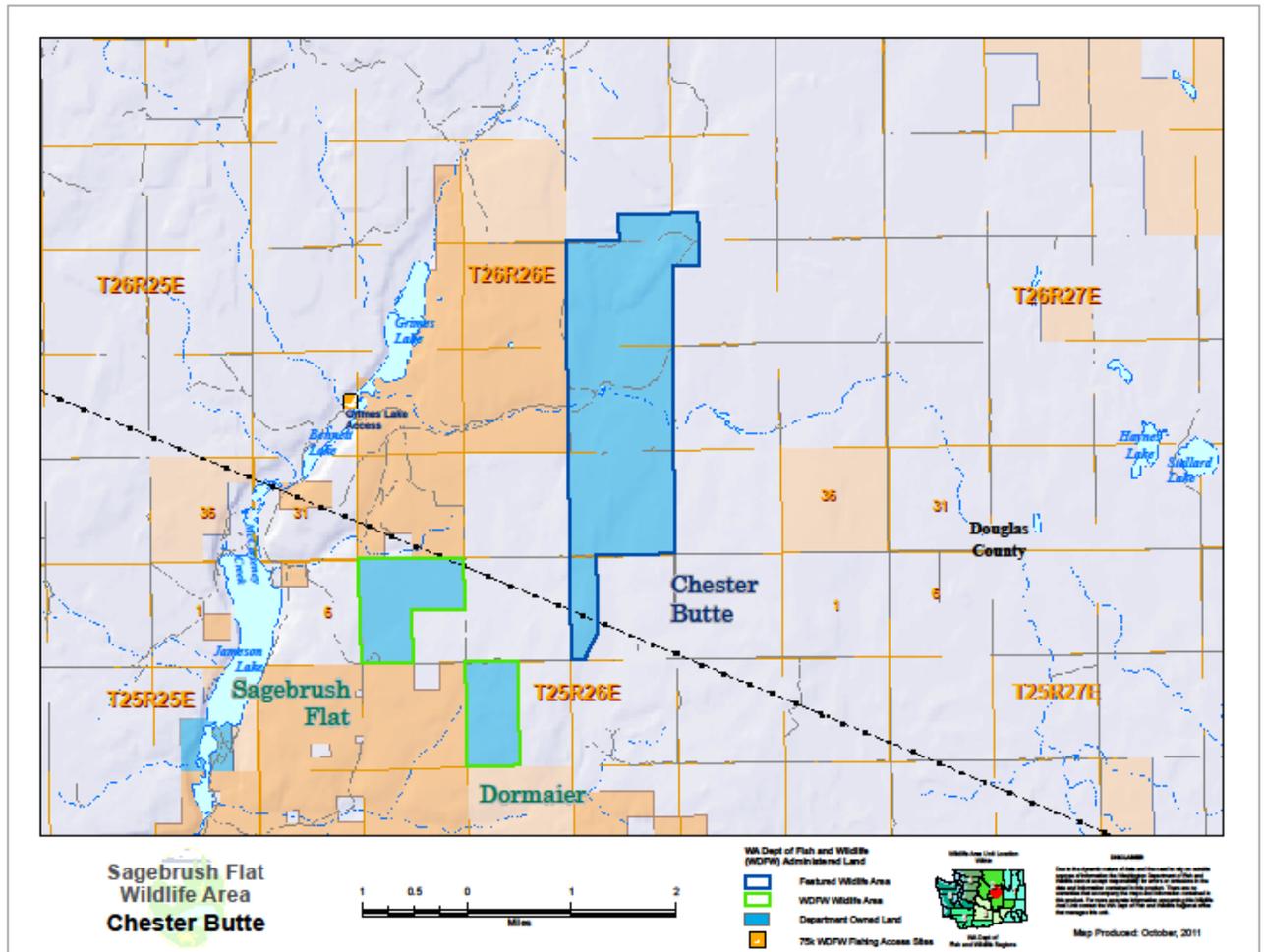


FIGURE 7. MAP OF THE WDFW CHELAN BUTTE UNIT, CHELAN COUNTY.

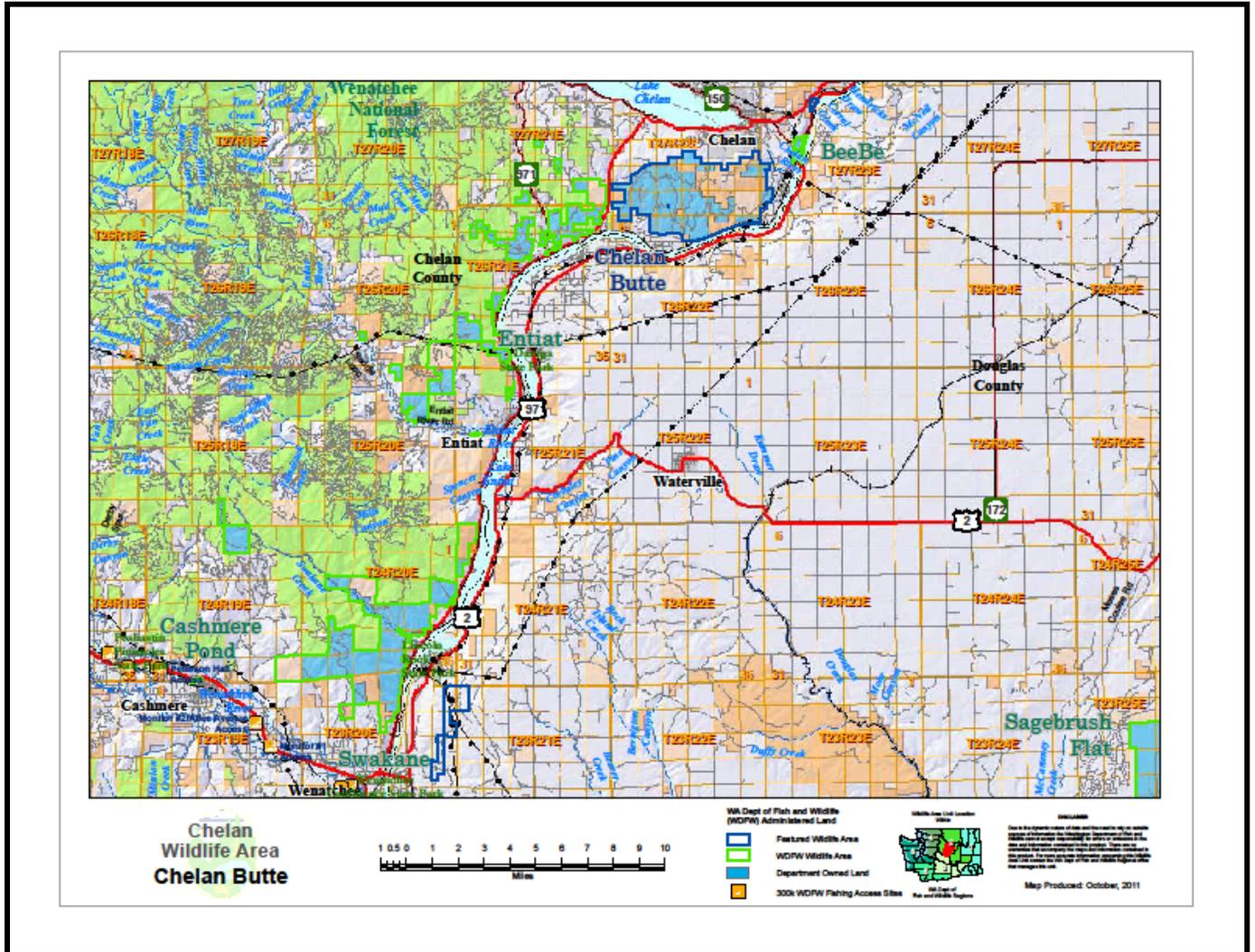


FIGURE 8. MAP OF THE WDFW ENTIAT UNIT, CHELAN COUNTY.

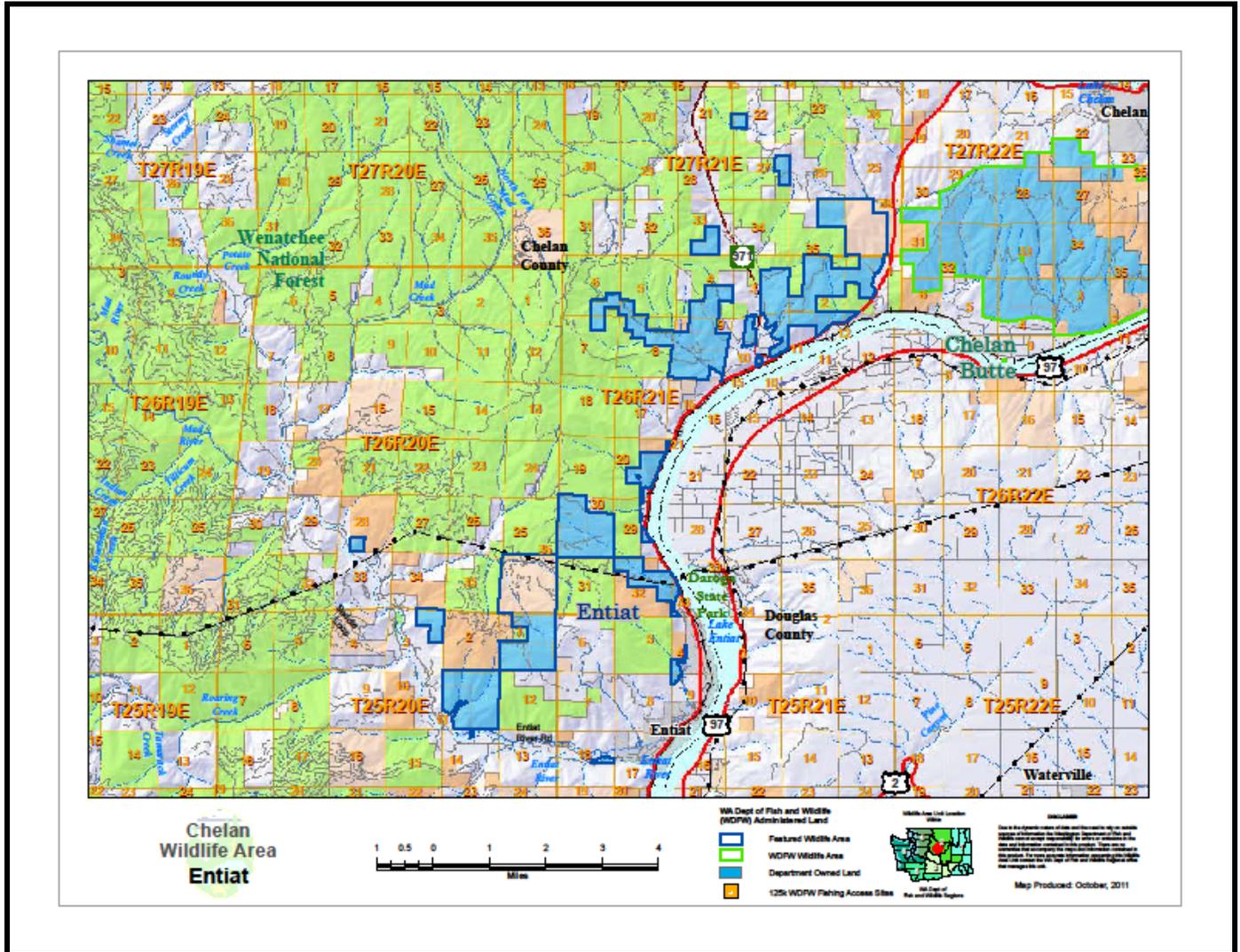
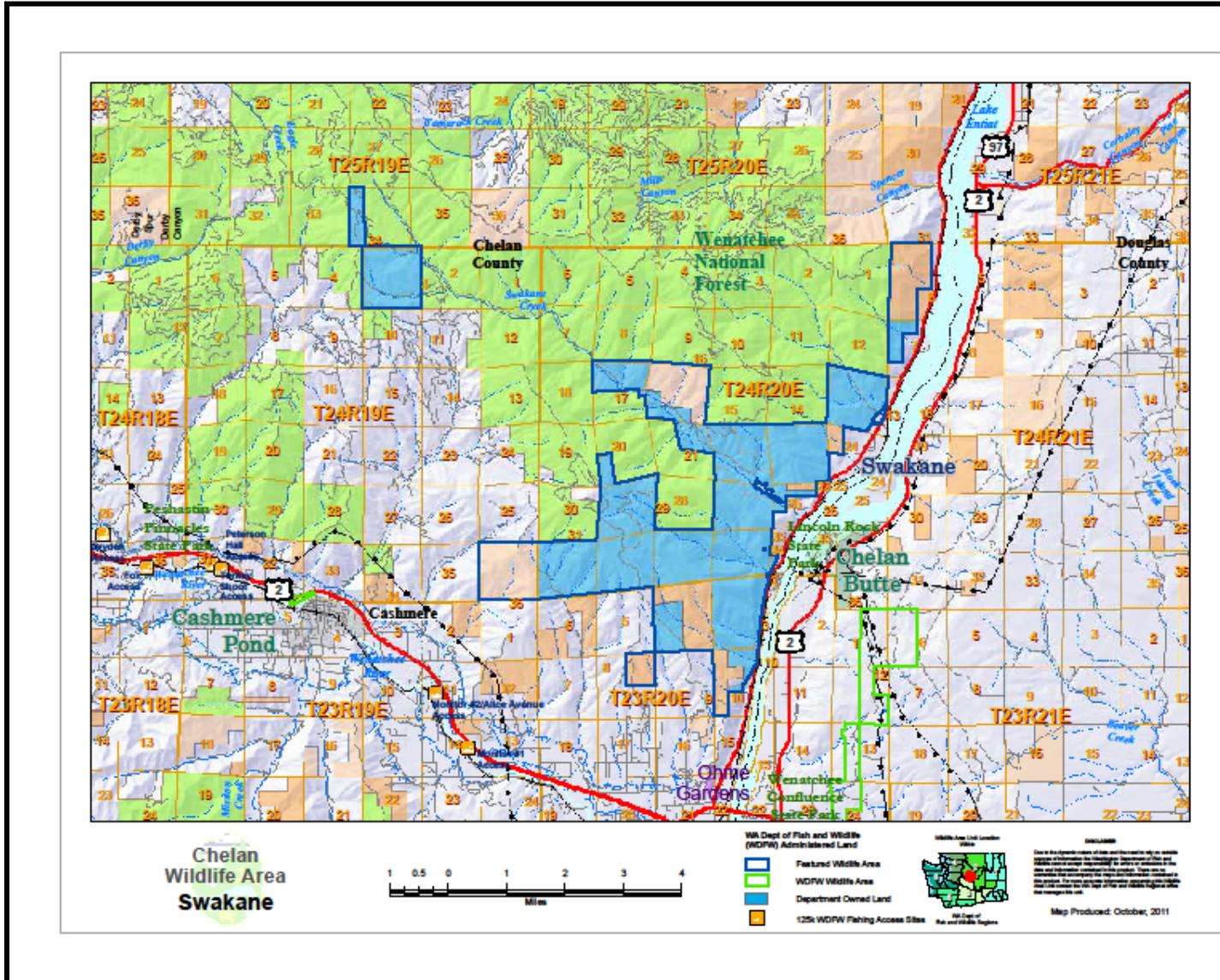


FIGURE 9. MAP OF THE WDFW SWAKANE UNIT, CHELAN COUNTY.



2014

Jeff Bernatowicz, District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 8 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Yakima and Kittitas Counties

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DISTRICT 8 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 8 is located in south central Washington. Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 8 include 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), 330 (West Bar), 334 (Ellensburg), 335 (Teaway), 336 (Taneum), 340 (Manastash), 342 (Umtaneum), 346 (Little Naches), 352 (Nile), 356 (Bumping), 360 (Bethel), 364 (Rimrock), 368 (Cowiche), 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 6,000 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 consists of 327,000 acres south of I-90, 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 pursue 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 (Teaway) 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 populations 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).

ELK

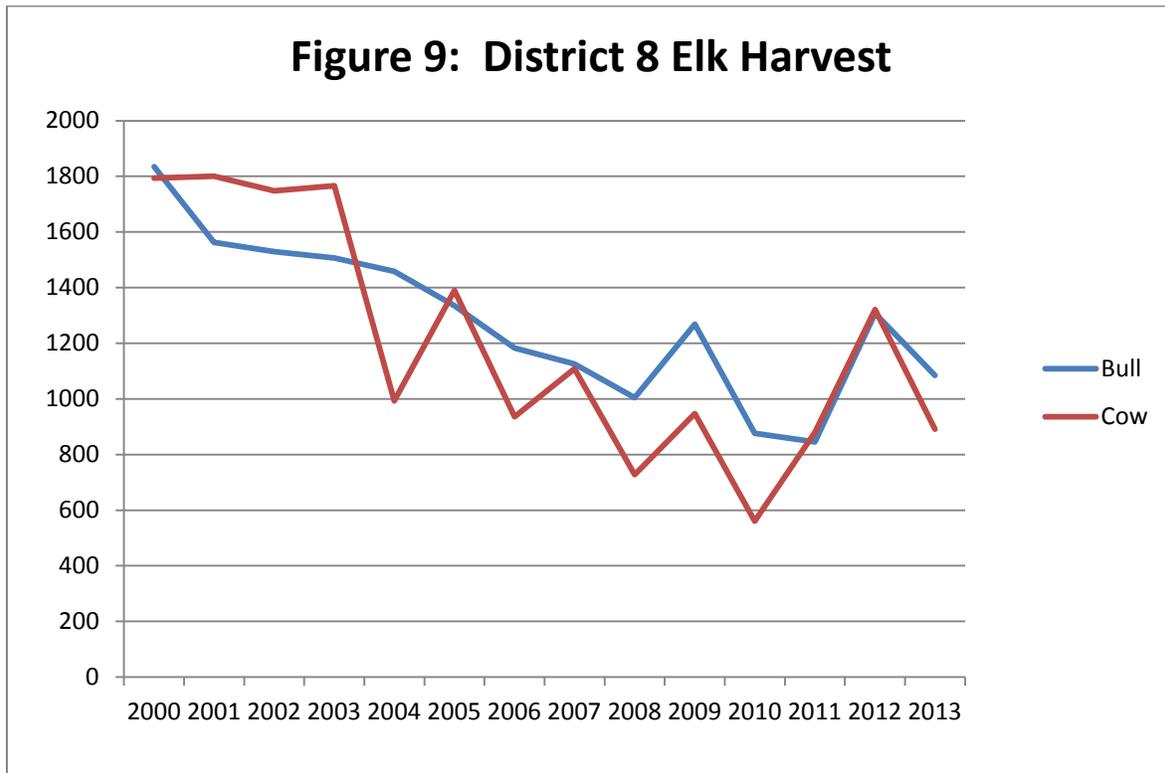
This district is the best in the state for elk hunting. However, with that distinction comes relatively high hunter densities. Opening weekend is usually crowded. However, a recent trend has been for hunters to pull up camp and head home before the second weekend. As hunters have become less active, harvest has declined (figure 9) despite stable or increasing elk numbers. If you are looking for a higher quality experience, consider hunting the last 2-3 days of the season, away from open roads.

The winter of 2013-14 was very mild. Elk did not show up on feed sites or typical winter range areas in large numbers, so aerial surveys were not conducted in the Yakima area. There were fairly large numbers of elk going into the 2013 season and harvest was lower than expected. If not harvested, elk in District 8 have demonstrated typically high survival. Surveys in the Colockum did find increased numbers of elk and the same is expected for the Yakima herd. Both the Yakima and Colockum herds are above objective and opportunity is being increased via special permits. Relatively high numbers of antlerless permits were issued for the 2014 season. Muzzleloader hunters have a high probability of drawing an antlerless permit. Archers should note GMU 335 is now open for antlerless early season, while GMU 342 was added to the late general season. Expect opportunity to be maintained or increased for all users in the near future.

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 continue to hunt the general elk season 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 you would be hunting for that big bull. “Quality” elk hunting in this part of the state includes a very good chance of seeing several mature bulls in a season.

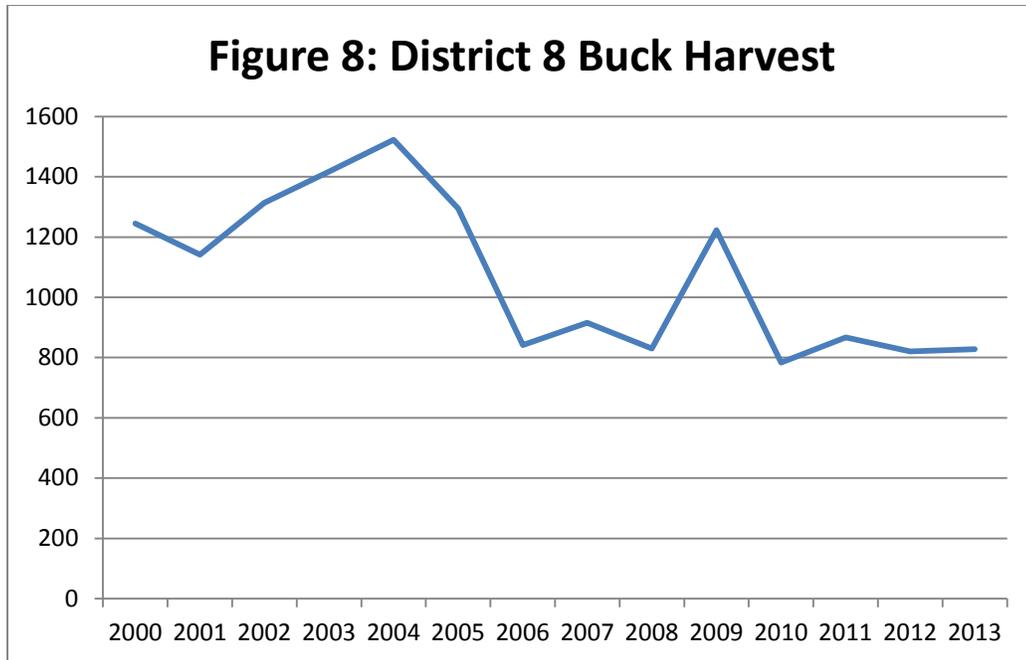
Elk hunting success in this district is often related to weather. Warm, dry falls without snow in the high country to move elk around often makes for lower harvest and hunter success. When early snow comes, most hunters know that the elk hunting can be great in this part of the state, as elk begin to move lower towards their wintering areas. Elk are still around when the early snows do not come, but hunters will find them at higher elevations on summer ranges even into the fall. Some of the wilderness country in the Yakima herd range can provide excellent hunting opportunity for those willing to invest the effort to chase elk in the high country.



DEER

Deer harvest in District 8 has been down from historic highs for a number of years, most likely reflecting the effects of deer hair-loss syndrome associated with exotic lice. The average hunter success the last 5 years has been 8% compared to a statewide average of 28%. Following a sharp decline from 2004-2006, the harvest has been relatively static of late. There was no change in 2013. There have been mild winters and decent fawn production, but there hasn't been much of a detectable population response. 2014 may not be much different, although there are some signs of slow recovery in the deer population. Areas such as the Teanaway remain among the best prospects for deer hunting opportunity.

Hunter numbers have declined with the reduced 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 (Teanaway) and 342 (Umtaneum), but so are hunter numbers.



WATERFOWL

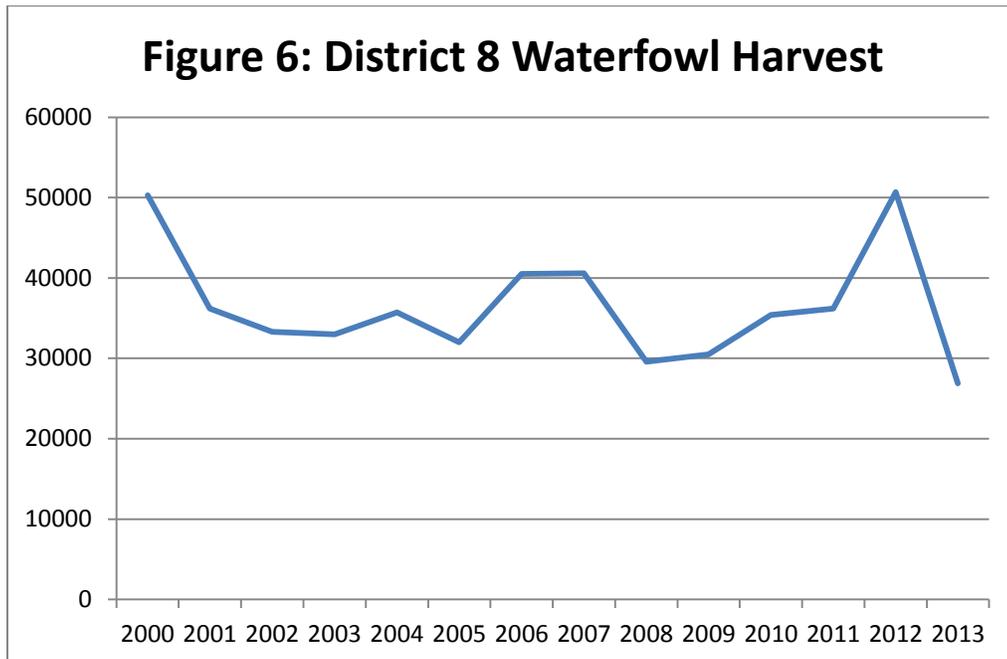
The USFWS flyway counts indicate 2014 populations are up from 2013 and 43% above the long term average. Mallard populations in the flyway were up 5% from 2013. Widgeon and teal numbers are up 14% and 18%.

Yakima County has averaged over 31,000 ducks harvested the last 5 years, which is 3rd best in the state. In 2013, the harvest declined almost 50% to one of the lowest levels in years (Figure 6). Even private guns clubs noted the low numbers of ducks. The reasons for this aren't completely known. Early in the season, local ducks left portions of the valley and the migrants did not appear to stop. The weather was typical, with a freeze around Thanksgiving and a thaw in January. Some birds used the valley in late January, but overall numbers were low most of the season. This followed an excellent year in 2012. An El Nino winter is predicted for 2014, which usually means above average temperatures. Hopefully 2014 will be more like 2012 than 2013.

The best waterfowl 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) maintains a public hunting program and there are great duck hunting opportunities on the reservation. 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, visit ynwildlife.org.

Band returns suggest many locally produced ducks are staying in the Yakima Valley. No data are available on the 2014 production, so it is difficult to predict early season success. Late season hunting can be difficult. Most ponds and 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.”](#)



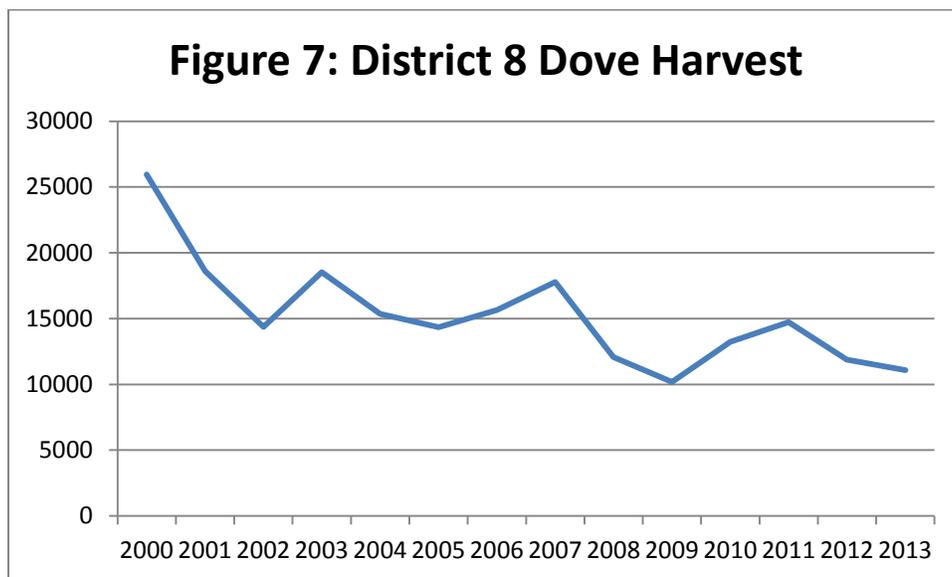
DOVE

Trapping/banding has just begun at this writing, so no new information is available on survival/hatch. Yakima County typically ranks 2nd 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) Reservation. YN grows wheat on portions of their Satus Wildlife Area. For information on hunting YN, visit ynwildlife.org.

Dove 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. Harvest has been relatively stable the last 5 years (Figure 7) despite declining hunter numbers.

Many hunters ask about Eurasian collared dove hunting opportunity, as the season is 365 days, no limits. Eurasian Collared Dove numbers have increased dramatically in the last 5 years. No information is collected on harvest, but collared doves are now very common. The problem for hunters is that the majority of collared doves are in urban areas. Collared doves seem to act more like rock doves (*i.e.*, pigeons) than mourning doves. Some hunters occasionally find some opportunity at roost sites and in a few fields, but good hunting is rare. Eurasian collared dove harvest is more of a bonus while hunting other birds rather than targeted by most hunters. Making a trip hoping to find Eurasian collared dove opportunity may be frustrating.

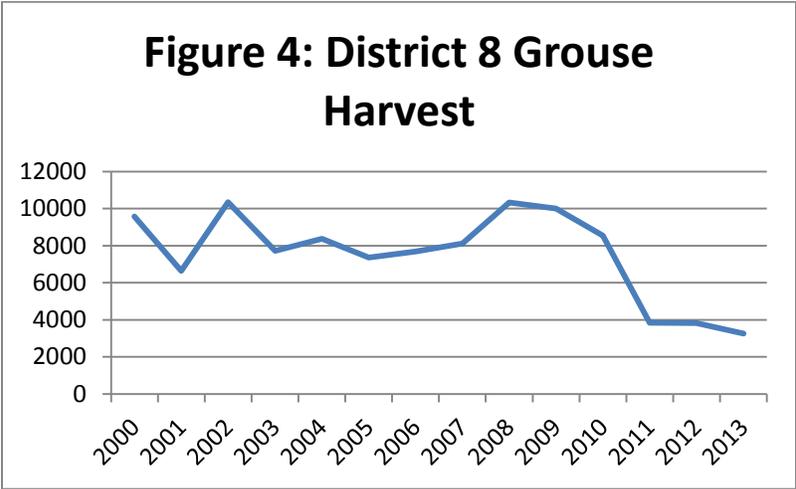


FOREST GROUSE



The 2013 grouse harvest in District 8 was one of the lowest in recent history (Figure 4), hunters averaged only 0.2 birds per day. No data is available on the 2014 hatch.

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. Hunters serious about finding grouse should look for areas with low densities of open roads and hike.



PHEASANT

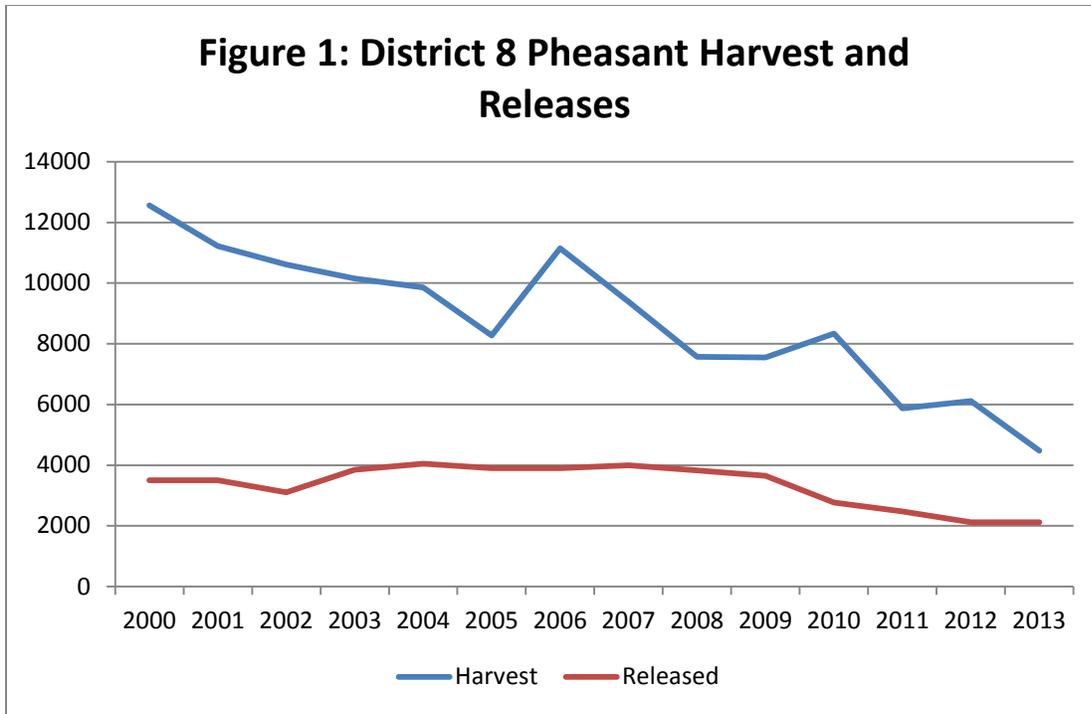
The 2013 pheasant harvest in District 8 was one of the lowest in recent history (Figure 1). There are very few wild pheasant in the district outside of the Yakima Valley on the Yakama Nation (YN) Reservation. The trend on the YN Reservation has been for declining pheasant populations due to conversion from idle land to crops, especially grain farming. The main reason for loss of pheasant habitat is the Energy Independence and Security Act (2007) which mandated increased use of “renewable” fuel. Ethanol production increased from 1.6 billion to 13.9 billion gallons between 2001 and 2011. Much of the ethanol is produced from corn. The act set a goal of 15 billion gallons of ethanol from corn by 2015. Approximately 2.4 million acres of additional corn will be needed by 2015. There will be considerable pressure to convert any land capable of production into crops and the downward trend in pheasant will likely continue.

Predicting changes in pheasant numbers based on weather is difficult. More moisture is usually better than less. For example, after the severe winter of 1996-97 and a cool 1997 spring, pheasant harvest increased 40% in Yakima County. In South Dakota, the wettest spring in history was 2007 (12+ inches of rain in May). The 2007, South Dakota pheasant harvest and hunter satisfaction was the highest in recent history. All upland game birds re-nest. Even the worst spring weather can provide excellent cover and insects for the late hatch.

A warm spring can provide good nesting cover and insect production for the early hatch, provided there is enough soil moisture. The weather in the Yakima Valley this past winter and spring has been warm and relatively dry. The early hatch pheasant, especially those near moist soil, should have done well. June has been very dry. Late hatch, especially those on drier sites, could be poor.

No pheasant surveys are conducted in District 8. YN conducts production and posts their data in late summer. For information on hunting the YN Reservation and their surveys, visit ynwildlife.org.

Released pheasants are becoming a significant source of recreation for many hunters. About 2,000 roosters will be released in District 8. The 2014 allocation has not been set, but about 1000 birds are expected at the Sunnyside Wildlife Area, 600 at Cottonwoods, and 400 at Whiskey Dick. For the youth hunt, birds will only be released at Sunnyside and Cottonwoods. The local chapter of Pheasants Forever (PF) has been raising pheasant in “surrogators” and releasing at Sunnyside and on the YN Reservation. It is unclear how much surrogator birds contribute to harvest, but PF is increasing production in 2014.



QUAIL

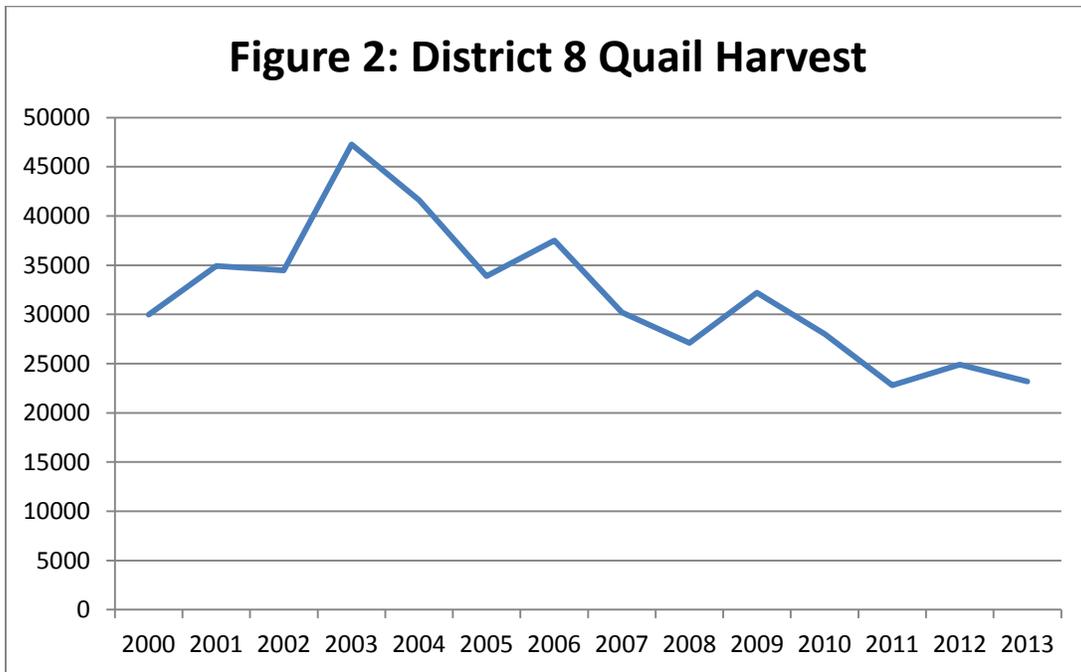
California Quail can be found in most non-timbered portions of the district. The best habitat and highest number of quail can be found in the lower Yakima Valley. This is evident in the harvest statistics where Yakima County leads the state in quail harvest with an average of 24,000 birds over the last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

The trend has been for declining total quail harvest (Figure 2). The trend may not represent actual quail populations as surveys on the YN Reservation have found increasing numbers of birds. Quail are often secondary to pheasant. The lack of pheasant and pheasant hunters might be contributing to the decline in total harvest. YN will post quail survey numbers later this summer.

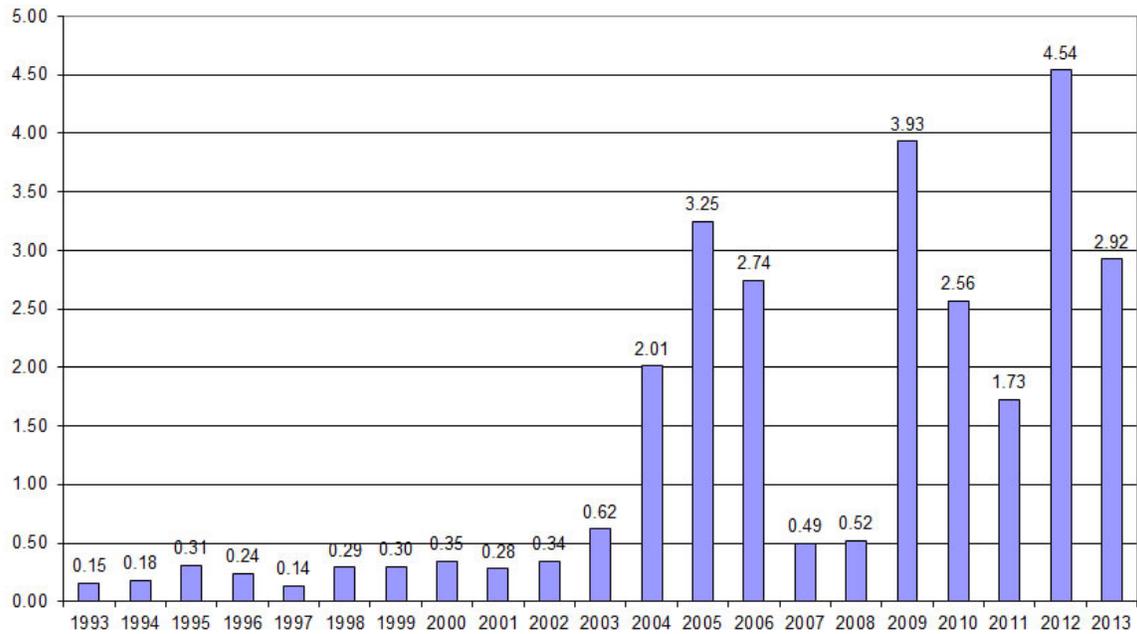
There has been no significant winter weather in the Yakima Valley to impact quail populations in over 15 years. Quail hatches are particularly hard to estimate based on weather. The best populations are along the Yakima River corridor. Even in the driest years, many nests can be wiped out by flood water due to mountain snowmelt in May-June. Quail are persistent re-nesters and will take advantage of the new vegetation and insect production once the river drops. It's not unusual to see good hatches in late August or early September.

In 2014, no floods occurred and the weather was warm and relatively dry. Early hatches may have been good, especially in areas with good riparian habitat. Quail in more arid locations might not have done as well.

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, visit ynwildlife.org.

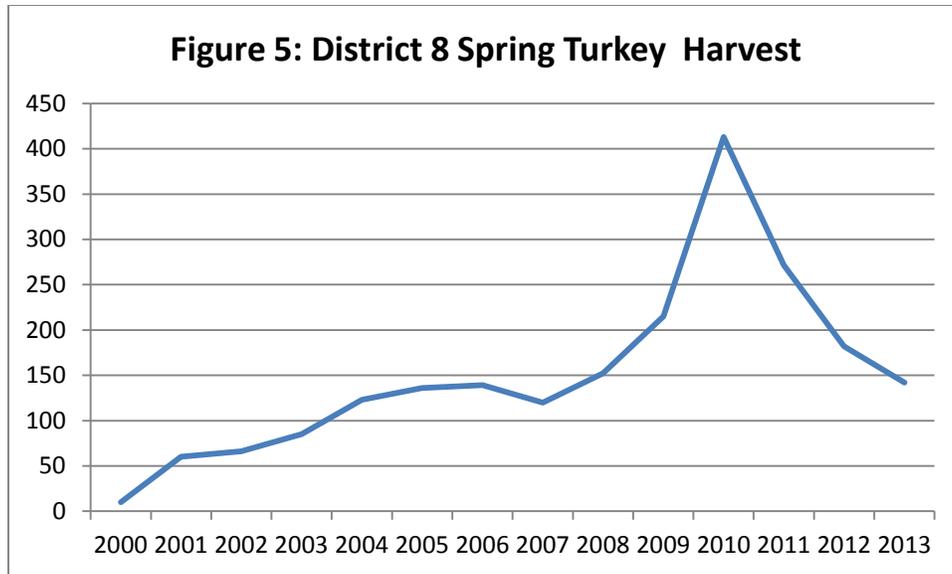


Average number of quail per mile observed during brood counts on the Yakama Reservation



TURKEY

Turkey populations had been doing fairly well in the district following releases in the late 1990s, but now appear to be declining. It isn't unusual for newly established populations to reach high numbers, and then decline to a lower level. Most of the harvest in the district comes from the northern portion (GMU's 328 [Naneum], 329 [Quilomene], and 335 [Teaway]). The best populations early in the spring are on private lands in the lower elevations of GMU 335. By May, some birds will be moving into higher elevations on the Teaway Community Forest.



PARTRIDGE (CHUKAR/HUNGARIAN)

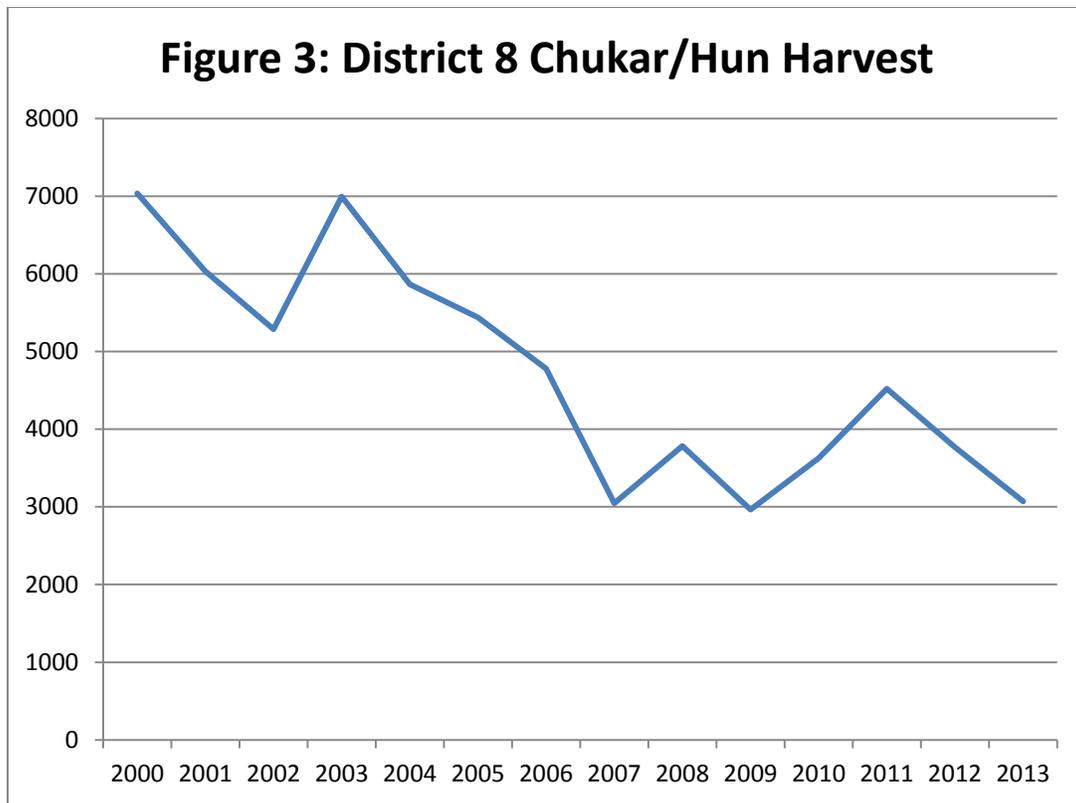


Partridge harvest in 2013 was relatively poor (Figure 3). No population surveys are conducted, but observations by partridge hunters suggest a downward trend the last few years. Winters have

been mild, yet partridge populations have been relatively poor the last few years. The exact reasons for the decline are unknown. Fires have probably reduced the quality of partridge habitat across District 8. Fires reduce nesting cover and the diversity of plants. The Yakima Training Center has had frequent fires the last 10 years. In 2013, 72,000 acres of partridge habitat burned on the Colockum and Quilomene Wildlife Areas in Kittitas Counties. Spring 2014 has been warm and dry with frequent fires in the Wenas wildlife area. The largest wildfire burned nearly 9,000 acres in June and fire season is ongoing. Expect more fires as the summer goes on, especially on YTC. Long term, the downward trend in partridge harvest will probably continue.

There is plenty of public land for partridge hunting in the district. The 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) supports over 300,000 acres of potential partridge habitat. Chukar can also be found on east portions of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area.

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 2014 is unknown at this writing. Hunters 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 509-577-3209.



2014

David Anderson, District 9 Wildlife Biologist
Eric Holman, District 10 Wildlife Biologist
Nicholle Stephens, Private Lands Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 9 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Skamania, Clark, and Klickitat Counties

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DISTRICT 9 GENERAL OVERVIEW

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 (Battle Ground), 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.

District 9 is one of the most diverse habitat areas of the state that includes 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. Most timber companies maintain recreational access hotlines where hunters can find out if the land is closed to fire danger prior to hunting. You can find a list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by Private Industrial Timber Companies at the end of this document.

Hancock Timberlands in GMU 578 (West Klickitat) 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 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.

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 opportunity for 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. GMU 574 (Wind River), 572 (Siouxon), and 578 (West Klickitat) are all good elk units. GMU's 574 and 572 are primarily USFS public lands. GMU 578 is primarily private lands so make sure you have good maps for identifying ownerships.

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.

BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

Since 2008, WDFW has received increasing reports of elk with misshapen hooves in Cowlitz, Pacific, Lewis, Clark, Wahkiakum, and Grays Harbor counties, all within the range of the Willapa and Mt. St. Helens elk herds.

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 scientific panel working on the disease agreed that the disease most likely involves a type of bacterial infection that leaves elk with missing or misshapen hooves and that the disease closely resembles contagious [ovine digital dermatitis](#) in sheep. These bacteria (*Treponema* sp.) have

been linked to an increase of hoof disease in sheep and cattle in many parts of the world, but have never before been documented in elk or other wildlife. There is no reason to believe that elk hoof disease is contagious to humans and similar diseases in livestock do not affect humans. Thousands of elk have been harvested in southwest Washington since the disease first appeared and WDFW is not aware of any cases of human disease that have been associated with hoof disease in elk.

Microscopic examination of tissues, including meat, from elk affected by hoof disease has not revealed evidence of infection, inflammation, or any other indication that the meat is unsuitable for human consumption. In all animals inspected to date, the disease has been limited to the hooves, and the meat has been normal. Domestic animals that are severely affected by hoof disease are commonly slaughtered, and hoof disease in domestic animals does not cause federal meat inspectors to condemn the meat as unsuitable for human food. If the meat looks and smells normal, and if common sense and good hygiene are practiced during the harvesting, processing, and cooking; the meat is most likely safe to eat. Please see the Department's website [Wild Game Meat Food Safety](#).

Hunters should be aware to minimize the spread of the disease; the Department has proposed new regulations requiring hunters to leave the hooves of any elk taken in the affected area on site. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission is scheduled to hear public comments and take action on this proposal in August, so please check the Department's website for more details on this regulation before your hunt starts this fall.

More information can be found on page 60 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.

DEER

Deer populations are generally stable in lower elevation units such as Washougal (568) and Battle Ground (564), as well as the Klickitat County GMU's West Klickitat (578) and Grayback (388). Deer hunting in East Klickitat (382) should not be at potential as post season buck numbers have been poor over the past few years. Expect success rates to stay lower than normal until populations rebound. Deer populations are generally low 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 2014 hunt. Please see both the [Game Harvest Statistics and Game Status and Trend](#)

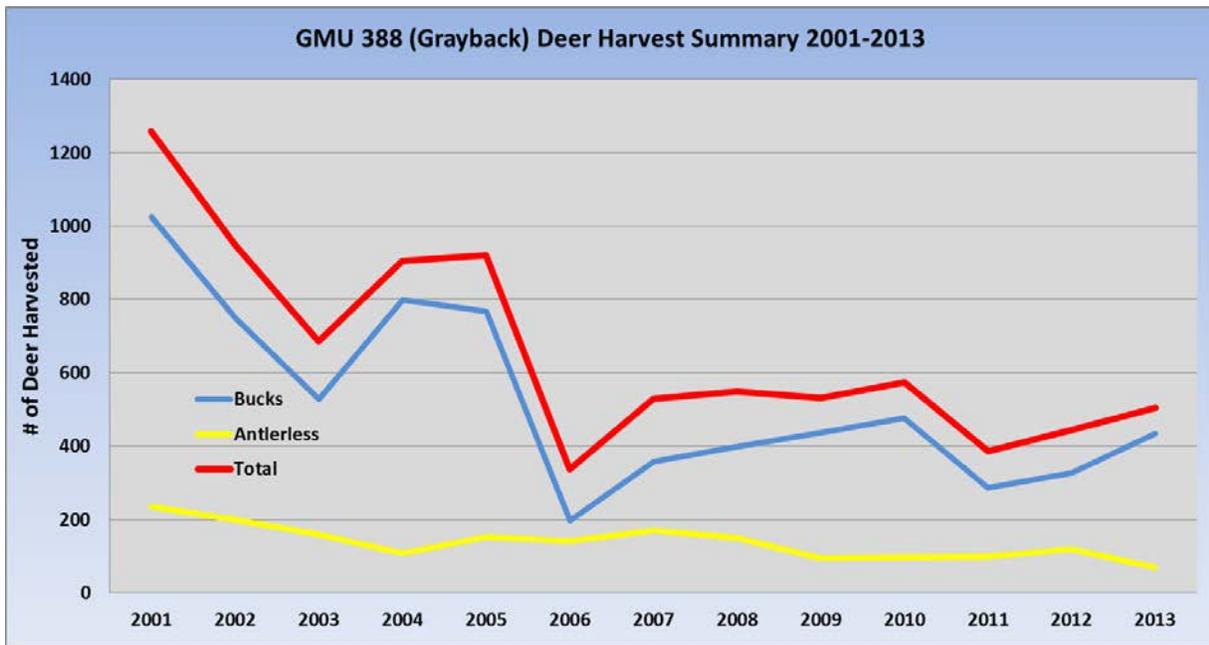
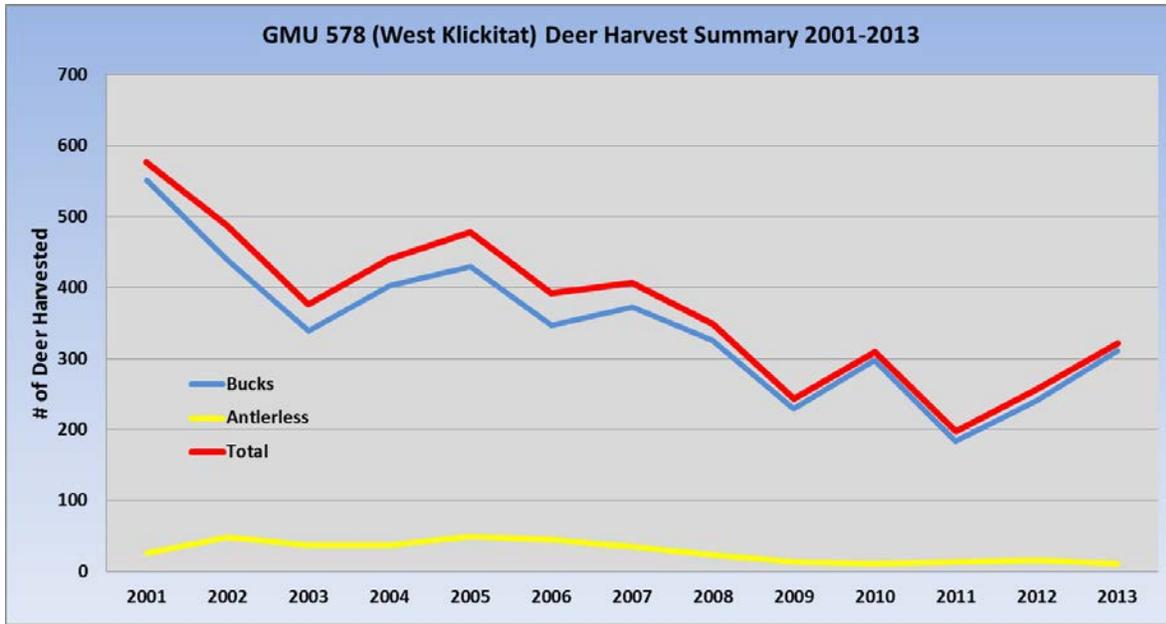
[Reports](#) on the Hunting page of the WDFW website for much more information on deer management in District 9.

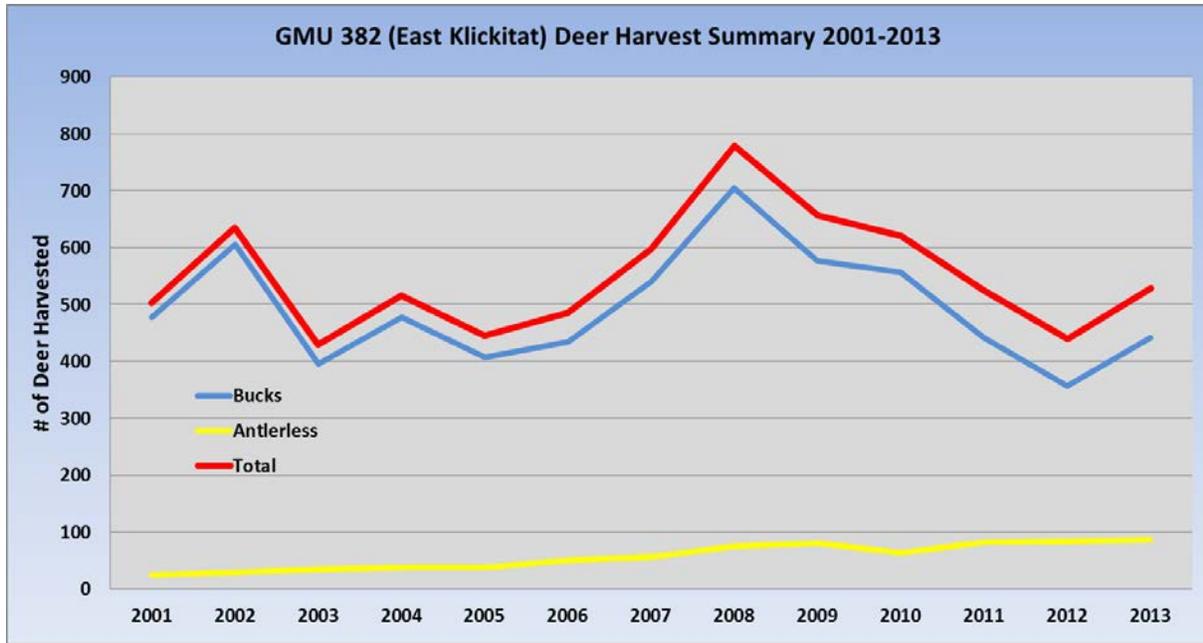
Successful hunting for black-tailed deer is primarily a function of the effort, focus, and energy that hunters put into the hunt. Black-tailed deer thrive in heavily vegetated habitats and are often very nocturnal in nature. This means that successful black-tail hunters must be in position early in the 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 83 of the 2014 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.





BEAR

District 9 is split between two black bear hunt zones for the fall bear hunting season; the South Cascades (GMUs 574, 572, 568, 564, and 560) in which the season runs from August 15- November 15, and the East Cascades (GMUs 578, 388, and 382) which runs from August 1- November 15. Harvest numbers and hunter success for 2013 in the South Cascades and East Cascades zone were 102 (2.6% success) and 184 (4% success), respectively.

All successful bear hunters must submit the premolar tooth in a tooth envelope—see page 64 of the pamphlet for more details.

COUGAR

Cougars are difficult to target and are typically harvested opportunistically by deer and elk hunters. The early cougar hunting season runs from September 1 - December 31. A season harvest guideline system was initiated in 2012, which closes hunt areas after January 1st 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](#). All cougar pelts must be sealed by WDFW within 5 days of harvest. Contact a WDFW office to make an appointment to have a cougar pelt sealed. In 2013-14, the cougar harvest for District 9 GMUs was as follows: GMU 382- 8, GMU 388- 2, GMU 578- 4, GMU 574- 1, GMU 560- 4, GMU 572- 2, GMU 568- 3.

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/.

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 generally 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 this fall should be excellent based on breeding season reports from British Columbia and Alaska. A wet spring resulted in abundant habitat for waterfowl production. 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 2014 indicate a decline in dove numbers and fall hunting should be below average to poor. Some dove hunting opportunity exists in the Vancouver lowlands, i.e. Shillapoo Wildlife Area.

FOREST GROUSE

Grouse numbers should be reduced somewhat in 2014 due to a cooler and wetter spring 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 scouting areas prior to their hunt. In District 9, the predominance of quality grouse habitat is located on USFS lands in Skamania County and select areas of the Simcoe Mountains west of Highway 97 in 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

Details about each of the pheasant hunting sites are listed below.

Clark County Pheasant Release Sites

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

The Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release sites are on WDFW owned land and comprise approximately 1,450 acres. To reach both the Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release sites take the Fourth Plain Blvd. exit (exit #1 D) off I-5. Go west on Fourth Plain Blvd. For the Vancouver Lake release site, head north on Fruit Valley Road, then west on La Frombois Road to the site. For the Shillapoo Release site, stay on Lower River Road to the site.

Woodland Bottoms

This 270 acre site is partially owned by DNR and partially privately owned. To find the Woodland Bottoms release site, take the Woodland exit (exit 21) off I-5. Head west on Goerig Road and Davidson Ave. Go around Horseshoe Lake on South Pekin Road to Whalen Road. Travel west on Whalen Road, then south on Kuhns Road to the release site.

Klickitat County Pheasant Release Sites

A total of approximately 400 pheasants are released at three sites in Klickitat County each year. 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.

QUAIL, GRAY PARTRIDGE, AND CHUKAR

Spring conditions have been wetter than normal and landowner reports indicate that upland bird populations in eastern Klickitat County are currently suppressed. Expect upland bird hunting in GMU's 388 and 382 to be less than desirable in this fall. 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.

TURKEY

Wild Turkey populations in Klickitat County continue to be healthy and hunting conditions for the fall of 2014 should be good. Turkeys with broods have been seen in the late spring in western and central 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, from the town of Klickitat south. 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

PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)

601 Bond Road
PO Box 280
Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov

Link to purchase DNR quad maps:

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public_lands_quadrangle_maps.aspx

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Link to purchase ranger district maps:

http://www.nationalforeststore.com/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=NFS&Category_Code=R6WA

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

Green Diamond

- Use red dot-green dot system of identifying roads that are open to motorized access and those which are closed
- Fee access program in place on some properties in Mason County
<http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/FAQ/>

Hancock Forest Management (HFM)

HFM Cathlamet Tree Farm,

- Access hotline 360-795-3653

HFM Klickitat Timberlands

- Generally open to walk-in access with motorized access through property via County roads
- Access hotline (509) 364-3331

Longview Timber

- Access Hotline (360) 442-7619

Pope Resources/ORM

- Generally open to walk-in access

Port Blakely

- Generally open to walk-in access

Rayonier

- Access varies. Includes areas free to the public, permit access and leased parcels. See <http://www.rayonierhunting.com/> for details

SDS (Stevenson Land Company or Broughton)

- Generally open to walk-in access. More info at: <http://stevensonlandcompany.com/recreation-opportunities/>

Sierra Pacific

Ryderwood Tree Farm

- Access hotline 360-623-1299

Weyerhaeuser

- Recreational access hotline-866-636-6531, recreation webpage <http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/Businesses/RecreationalAccess/Washington>
- Access varies by tree farm
 - St. Helens Tree Farm
 - Access is primarily permit only. Permits can be purchased on website above. Select blocks are also open for free walk-in access. Please see website for details including maps.
 - Yacolt- Yacolt- Washougal GMU 568
 - Yacolt Burn Club opens and closes gates in morning and evening, beginning early Oct (after fire danger has subsided) until mid-Dec. Rd#s 8200, 8600, & 8500. Don't remain behind gates after sunset, you will be locked in.
 - Vail- Permit and lease access
 - Pe Ell- Permit, lease and some free access
 - 56,000 acres of free public access around Doty/Coyote crest, which is around the north end of the eastern border between Lewis and Pacific Counties.

- Columbia Timberlands (formerly Longview Timber)
 - Generally open to walk-in access with some mainlines open for motorized access.

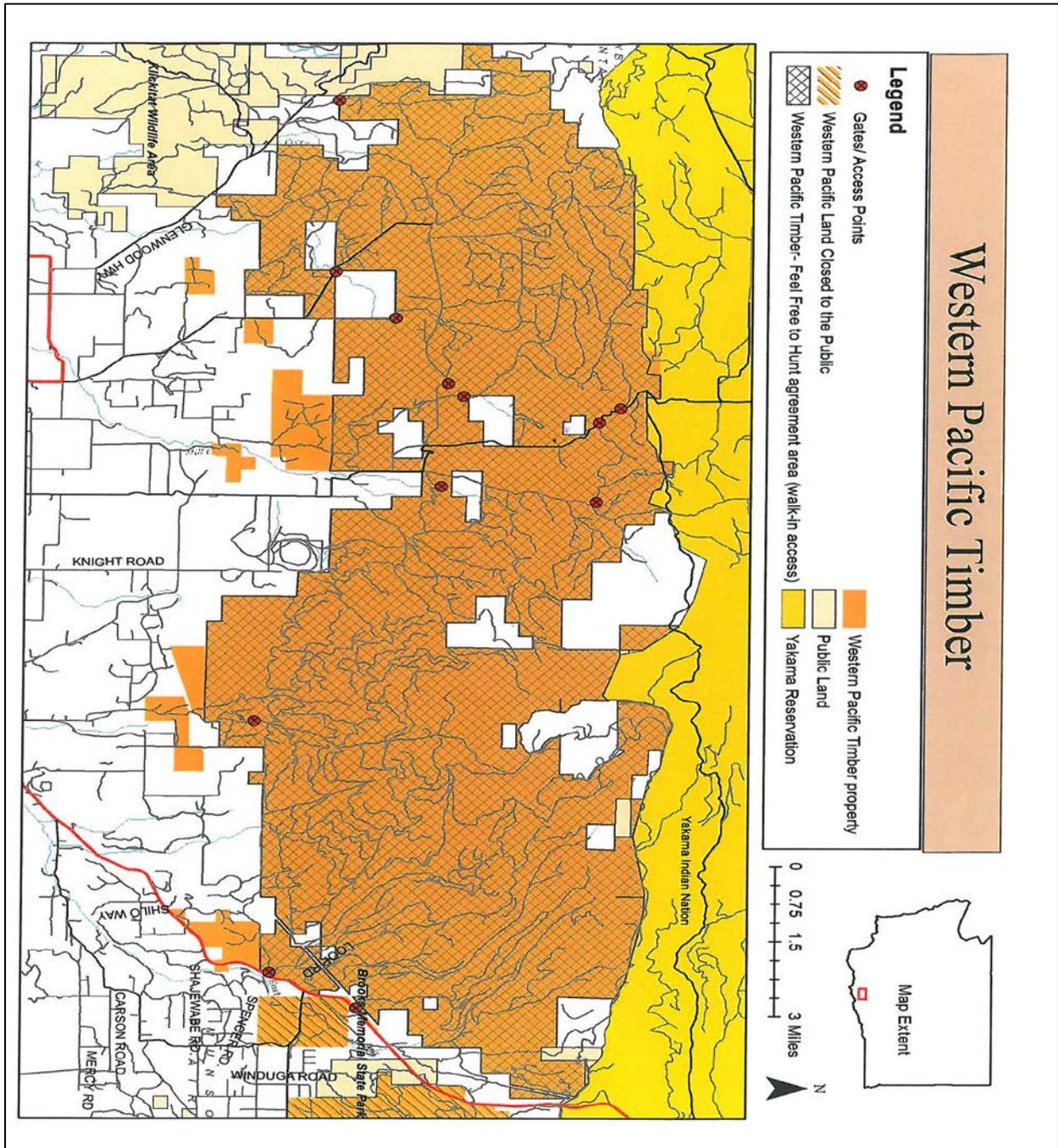
Western Pacific Timber

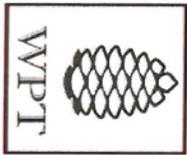
- The majority of these lands are enrolled in WDFW’s Feel Free to Hunt Program (FFTH). The lands are open to walk in access only, with the exception of county roads that run through the property and remain open for motorized access.
- More information can be located at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/hunt/128/
- Western Pacific lands East of HWY 97 are CLOSED to public access
- Contact WPT Boise office (208) 343-6074 for closure updates

West Fork Timber

- Generally open to walk-in access

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.

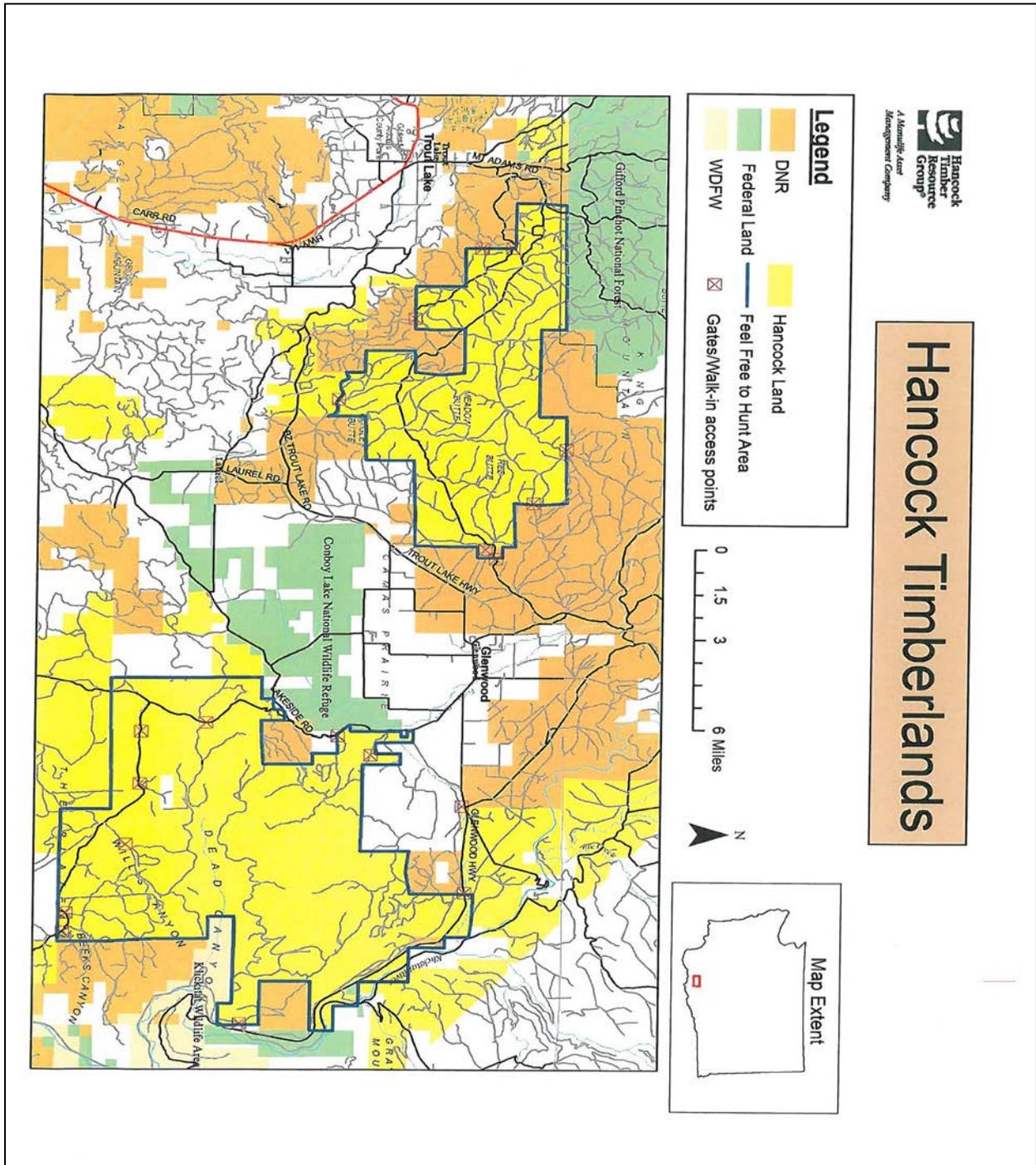
- ***Obey road closures. No vehicles are permitted behind gates. Do not block or obstruct gates.***
- ***No firewood cutting is permitted without a written permit from Western Pacific Timber.***
- ***No campfires or other open fires are permitted.***
- ***No littering or dumping***
- ***If you camp, 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 CLICKITAT TIMBERLANDS:





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

2014

Eric Holman, District Wildlife Biologist
Stefanie Bergh, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist
Nicholle Stephens, Private Lands Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 10 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

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DISTRICT 10 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District Game Management Units / Geography: 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), 530 (Ryderwood), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). This wide area includes maritime rolling hills in Wahkiakum County to Cascade peaks in Lewis County.

District Land Ownership / Hunting Access: 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 or to sell access permits for hunting seasons to a limited number of participants. Understanding the recreational access policies of individual timber companies is an important first step in planning your hunt. Recreational access information is typically available on timber company websites or by calling access hotlines. You can find a list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by Private Industrial Timber Companies at the end of this document. It is always a good idea to obtain a map from the landowner where you wish to hunt if one is available.

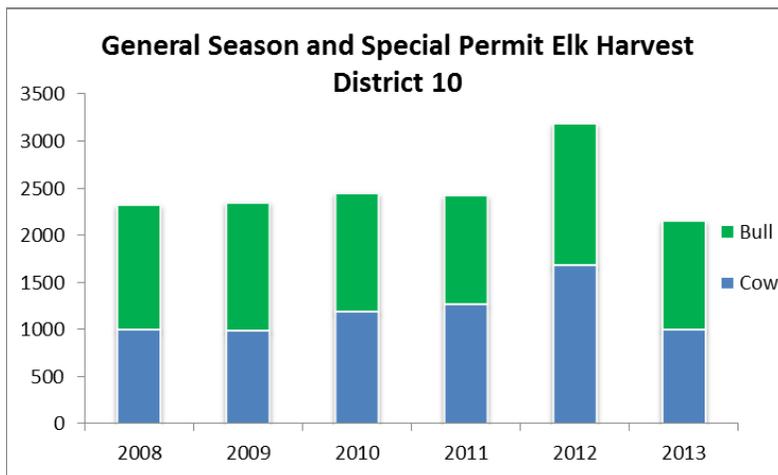
Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10. Major changes to hunting access this year include the requirement to purchase an access permit to hunt on Weyerhaeuser land on their St. Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). Access permits are being sold for \$150. A few select areas remain open to free recreational access. Information about recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land, including maps, can be found [here or by calling 1-866-636-6531](#).

Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but may have limited motorized vehicle access. Major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Hancock Forest Management, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond, Olympic Resource Management, West Fork Timber, and Weyerhaeuser's Columbia Timberlands (formerly Longview Timber). 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 97 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.

ELK

District 10 has historically been among the leaders in statewide harvest for elk. The highest general season harvests in 2013 occurred in 520 (Winston), 506 (Willapa Hills), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). There are also many permit hunts in District 10; offered to manage the elk population, address agricultural damage caused by elk, and provide recreational opportunity. Additionally, three GMUs—522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), and 556 (Toutle)—are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In 2013, 836 elk were harvested by permit and 1,318 during the general season in District 10. Generally, a 5-point elk would be a nice trophy in this district as 6-point bulls are few and far between.



Elk populations in the Game Management Units comprising the Mt. St. Helens elk herd area are down from historic highs reached during the mid-2000s. This population reduction was implemented per the St. Helens Elk Herd Plan <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00771/>. Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity combined with some years of late winter and spring storms have reduced the elk population in these GMUs. Antlerless hunting opportunity has been reduced accordingly and those hunters holding antlerless permits in 2014 should enjoy less-crowded conditions compared to years past.



MT. ST. HELENS ANTLERLESS ELK PERMIT HUNT SUCCESS

General bull elk season hunters may find legal bulls challenging to locate during the 2014 hunt as the lingering winter of 2012-13 and very dry fall of 2012 along with increased antlerless harvest did reduce calf production during those years. Nonetheless, the District 10 elk population produces a harvest of more than 1,000 bull elk annually and those hunters who put in the effort and remain focused may be rewarded with success.



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 GMUs 506 or 530 (Willapa Hills and Ryderwood), where blocks of state (DNR) forest lands are available, 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. Additionally, for more information regarding elk management in WDFW Region 5 (Districts 10 and 9) please see: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01557/wdfw01557.pdf>

BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

Since 2008, WDFW has received increasing reports of elk with misshapen hooves in Cowlitz, Pacific, Lewis, Clark, Wahkiakum, and Grays Harbor counties, all within the range of the Willapa and Mt. St. Helens elk herds.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 10 – Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

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 scientific panel working on the disease agreed that the disease most likely involves a type of bacterial infection that leaves elk with missing or misshapen hooves and that the disease closely resembles contagious [ovine digital dermatitis](#) in sheep. These bacteria (*Treponema* sp.) have been linked to an increase of hoof disease in sheep and cattle in many parts of the world, but have never before been documented in elk or other wildlife. There is no reason to believe that elk hoof disease is contagious to humans and similar diseases in livestock do not affect humans. Thousands of elk have been harvested in southwest Washington since the disease first appeared and WDFW is not aware of any cases of human disease that have been associated with hoof disease in elk.

Microscopic examination of tissues, including meat, from elk affected by hoof disease has not revealed evidence of infection, inflammation, or any other indication that the meat is unsuitable for human consumption. In all animals inspected to date, the disease has been limited to the hooves, and the meat has been normal. Domestic animals that are severely affected by hoof disease are commonly slaughtered, and hoof disease in domestic animals does not cause federal meat inspectors to condemn the meat as unsuitable for human food. If the meat looks and smells normal, and if common sense and good hygiene are practiced during the harvesting, processing, and cooking; the meat is most likely safe to eat. Please see the Department's website [Wild Game Meat Food Safety](#).

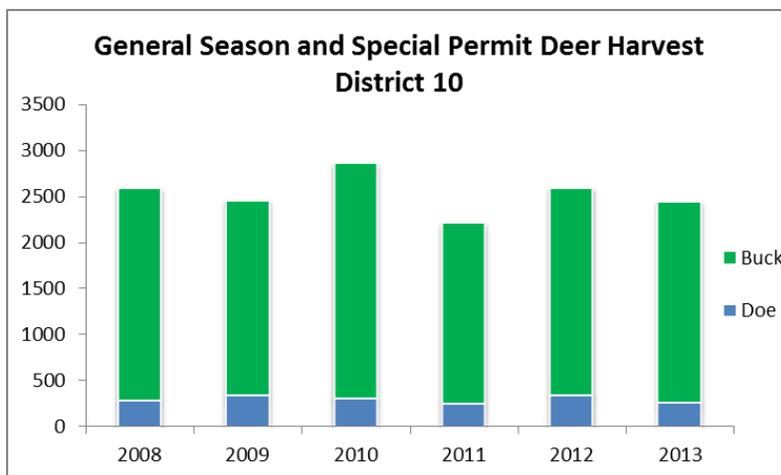
Hunters should be aware to minimize the spread of the disease; the Department has proposed new regulations requiring hunters to leave the hooves of any elk taken in the affected area on site. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission is scheduled to hear public comments and take action on this proposal in August, so please check the Department's website for more details on this regulation before your hunt starts this fall.

More information can be found on page 60 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.

DEER

Several GMUs in District 10 are tops in the state for black-tail deer harvest. The highest general season buck harvests in 2013 occurred in 530 (Ryderwood), 501 (Lincoln), 520 (Winston), and 505 (Mossy rock). The majority of the antlerless harvest occurs during the general archery and muzzleloader seasons since there are very few antlerless special permits. For more information on deer in WDFW’s Region 5 (Districts 10 and 9), please see: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01557/wdfw01557.pdf>

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.



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 2013 in the South Cascades and Coastal zone were 102 (2.6% success) and 211 (6.3% success), respectively. In 2013, harvest and hunter success in the South Cascades and Coastal zone were 141 (3.7% success) and 229 (6.5% success), respectively.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 10 – Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

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.

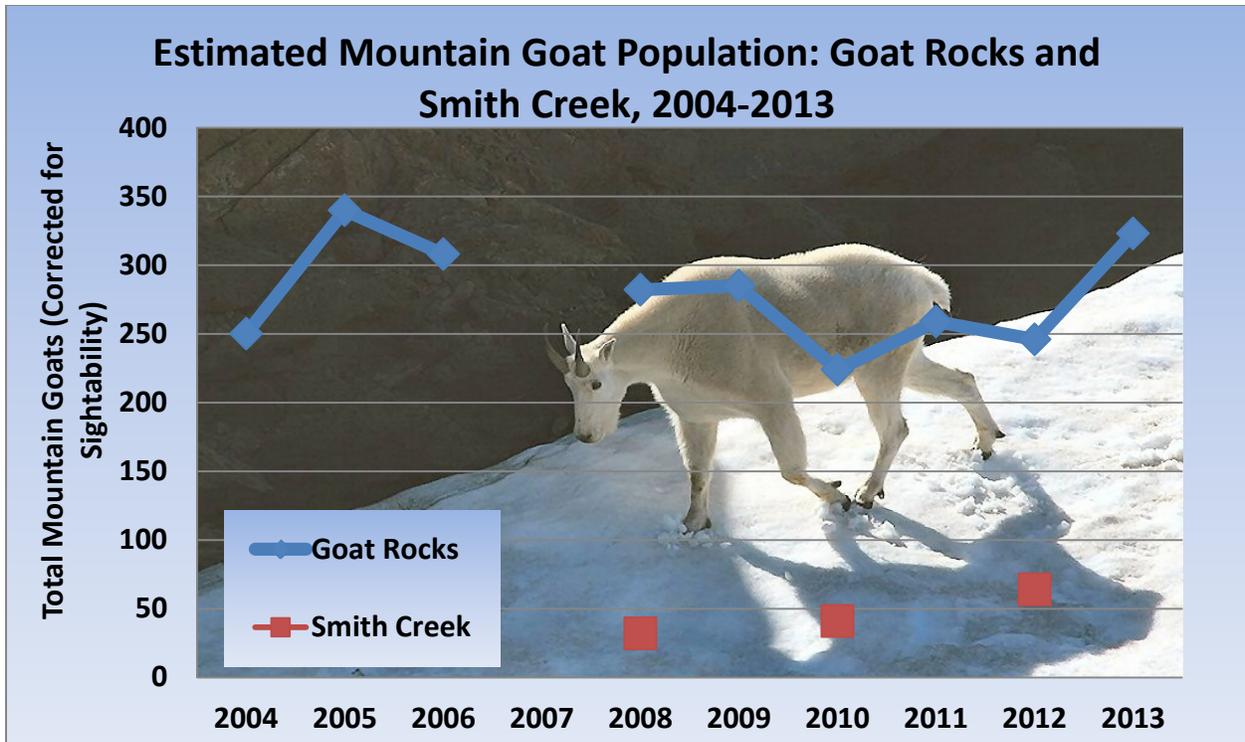
All successful bear hunters must submit the premolar tooth in a tooth envelope—see page 64 of the pamphlet for more details.

COUGAR

In 2013-2014 one cougar was harvested in each of the following GMUs: 503 (Randle), 510 (Stormking), 520 (Winston) and 530 (Ryderwood). Three were harvested in 516 (Packwood), which closed the season there on 1/18/14. Beginning in the 2012-2013 season a harvest guideline system was initiated, which closes hunt areas after January 1st 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. Populations in the Goat Rocks/Tieton River Goat area have remained stable at approximately 300 goats over several years. Hunter success in this unit is usually 100%.



A voluntary program began 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 BIRD

Upland birds are impacted by spring conditions during the hatch, which directly affect chick survival. 2014 was 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. 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. Surveys conducted by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicate strong duck numbers. Please see the following sources for excellent information on North American waterfowl

populations: <http://www.flyways.us/> <http://c3405147.r47.cf0.rackcdn.com/bpop/2014TrendsInBreedingDuckPopulations.pdf> <http://www.flyways.us/status-of-waterfowl/pilot-reports>. Hunters are reminded to consult the regulations pamphlet for details. 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 2013 was 3,336 in Cowlitz County, 8,165 in Lewis County, and 3,600 in Wahkiakum County. The reduced duck harvest reflects the mild fall weather during 2013 and prospective hunters should be aware that success often depends on the severity of fall/winter weather with more severe conditions generally producing better duck hunting in southwest Washington.



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.



CAKTLING CANADA GEESE IN SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 10 – Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

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.



LATE GOOSE SEASON PARTICIPANTS

Regular fall goose harvest in 2013 was 594 in Cowlitz County, 1,289 in Lewis County, and 78 in Wahkiakum County. Harvest during the 6-day long September season in 2013 was 277 in Cowlitz County, 509 in Lewis County, and 16 in Wahkiakum County.



ZONE 2A GOOSE CHECK STATION

PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)

601 Bond Road
PO Box 280
Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov

Link to purchase DNR quad maps:

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public_lands_quadrangle_maps.aspx

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Link to purchase ranger district maps:

http://www.nationalforeststore.com/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=NFS&Category_Code=R6WA

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

Green Diamond

- Use the red dot-green dot system of identifying roads that are open to motorized access and those which are closed
- Fee access program in place in on some properties in Mason County
<http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/FAQ/>

Hancock Forest Management (HFM)

HFM Cathlamet Tree Farm,

- Access hotline 360-795-3653

HFM Klickitat Timberlands

- Generally open to walk-in access with motorized access through property via County roads
- Access hotline (509) 364-3331

Longview Timber

- Access Hotline (360) 442-7619

Pope Resources/ORM

- Generally open to walk-in access

Port Blakely

- Generally open to walk-in access

Rayonier

- Access varies. Includes areas free to the public, permit access and leased parcels. See <http://www.rayonierhunting.com/> for details

SDS (Stevenson Land Company or Broughton)

- Generally open to walk-in access. More info at: <http://stevensonlandcompany.com/recreation-opportunities/>

Sierra Pacific

Ryderwood Tree Farm

- Access hotline 360-623-1299

Weyerhaeuser

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 10 – Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

- Recreational access hotline-866-636-6531, recreation webpage <http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/Businesses/RecreationalAccess/Washington>
- Access varies by tree farm
 - St. Helens Tree Farm
 - Access is primarily permit only. Permits can be purchased on the website above. Select blocks are also open for free walk-in access. Please see website for details including maps.
 - Yacolt- Yacolt- Washougal GMU 568
 - Yacolt Burn Club opens and closes gates in morning and evening, beginning early Oct (after fire danger has subsided) until mid-Dec. Rd#s 8200, 8600, & 8500. Don't remain behind gates after sunset. You will be locked in.
 - Vail- Permit and lease access
 - Pe Ell- Permit, lease, and some free access
 - 56,000 acres of free public access around Doty/Coyote crest which is around the north end of the eastern border between Lewis and Pacific Counties.
 - Columbia Timberlands (formerly Longview Timber)
 - Generally open to walk-in access with some mainlines open for motorized access.

Western Pacific Timber

- Majority of these lands are enrolled in WDFW's Feel Free to Hunt Program (FFTH). The lands are open to walk in access only, with the exception of County roads that run through the property and remain open for motorized access.
- More information can be located at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/hunt/128/
- Western Pacific lands East of HWY 97 are CLOSED to public access
- WPT Boise office (208) 343-6074 for closure updates

West Fork Timber

- Generally open to walk-in access

2014

Michelle Tirhi, District Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 11 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Thurston and Pierce Counties and GMU 667 of Lewis County

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DISTRICT 11 GENERAL OVERVIEW

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 Capitol State Forest (GMU 663) and 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 they require the purchase of access permits to enter (obtained thru those respective companies).

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 Rainier 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. Sheriff's Restrictions can be found here: <http://matterhorn3.co.pierce.wa.us/publicgis/>, while Pierce County regulations can be found here: www.co.pierce.wa.us/documentcenter/view/3810. No shooting and controlled shooting zones in Thurston County be seen here: <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/sheriff/docs/ShootingZones20090818.pdf>.

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, 653, and 654 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.

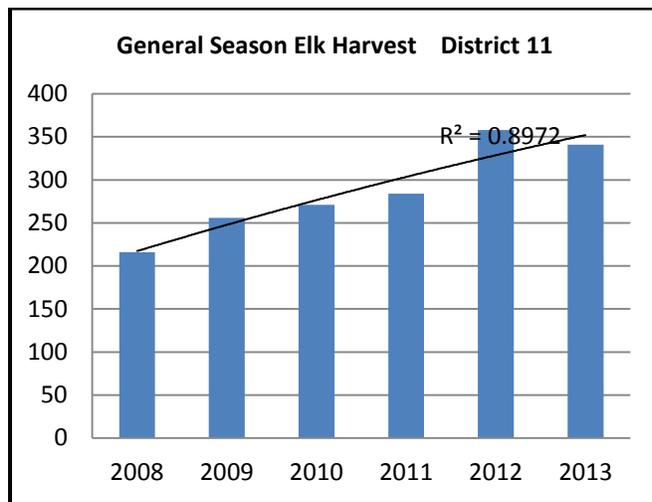
The Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forests and University of Washington Charles Lathrop Pack Experimental and Demonstration Forest (Pack Forest) in GMU 654 are good prospects for deer or elk and can be accessed by boot, bike, or horse during the general deer or elk season. Vehicle access during the hunting season in Elbe Hills is allowed only for hunter's having a disabled access permit (see Disabled Hunting on the WDFW website for more information). UW Pack Forest managers caution hunters to be aware of students conducting research in the forest any time of the year. Maps of Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forest as well as other Washington Department of Natural Resource public lands in the South Puget Sound can be found at <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Pages/PubMaps.aspx>.

Sub-herds of the South Rainier elk herd continue to increase and expand on and around the Centralia Coal Mine and Skookumchuk Wildlife Area (GMU 667). Hunters are encouraged to scout the area from the [Skookumchuk Wildlife Area](#) south to the northern boundary of the Centralia Coal Mine (GMU 667). Hunting on the coal mine is only allowed under specialized permits which require a mining escort (two senior and two disabled hunter offered in 2014; 5 permits each; see WDFW hunting regulations). Limited elk can occasionally be found and hunted on the West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area in south Thurston County (GMU 666), on JBLM property in Pierce County (GMU 652; see previous discussion on hunting requirements), and off Delphi Road SW in western Thurston County (GMU 666). Elk cannot be hunted on property owned by USFWS in the Black River refuge (e.g. former Weaks Dairy).

Elk continue to increase on private farmlands and properties in GMUs 652 (around Graham, Buckley, and Enumclaw), GMU 667 (Yelm and Hanaford area), and GMU 666 (foothills of Capitol State Forest to Delphi Rd SW and Waddell Creek Rd SW). 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 permit hunt is offered this season within the elk management area 6013 of GMU 652 (10 any weapon antlerless permits). 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.

Three damage permit hunts are also provided in the Hanaford area (designated elk area 6069; 5 permits each). Finally, regional master hunter elk permits (hunt number 2722) have been used in the District when additional harvest was needed. Overall, opportunity to harvest an elk is high in these damage areas considering the increasing trend in elk with access being the primary limitation.

General season elk harvest has been gradually increasing over the past several years across District 11. This makes for good prospects for harvesting an elk throughout the district in 2014. Archery hunters had an 8.9% success rate in 2013 (down from 11% in 2012), modern firearm hunters a 10.3% success rate (comparable to the 10.5% in 2012), multiple weapons owners a 17.7% success rate (down from 24.2% in 2012), and muzzleloaders a 14.8% success rate (down slightly from 15.1% in 2012).



DEER

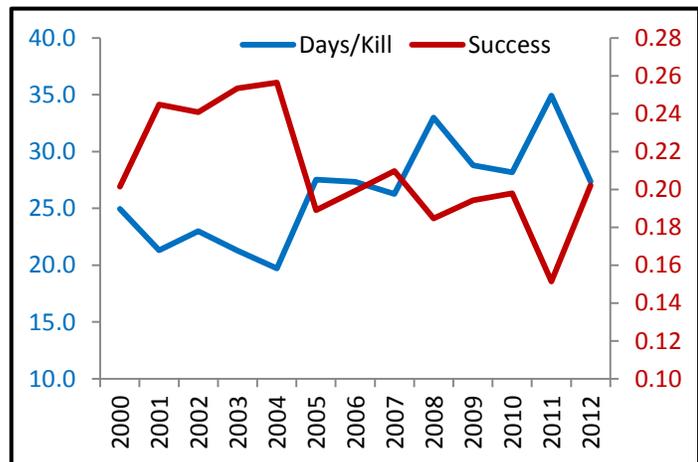
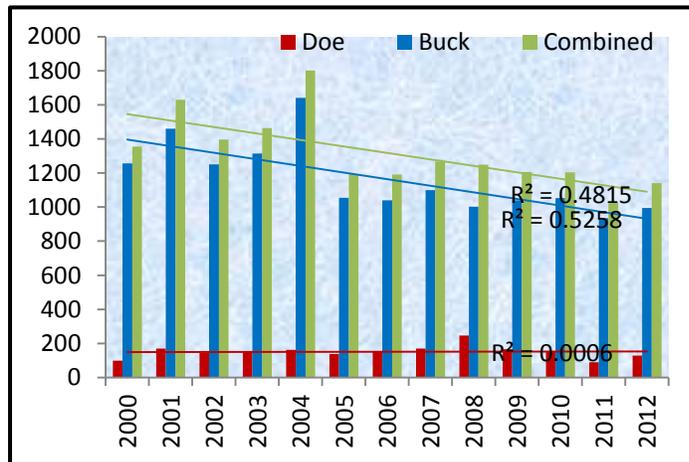
Black-tailed deer population surveys in District 11 are limited; surveys are not done annually and when they are done, they consist of one survey done in the highest quality location (Vail Tree Farm). Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best opportunity for deer hunting. Hunters 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 limited access recreation program is in effect for Vail Tree Farm. Hunters are required by Weyerhaeuser to purchase an access permit in order to access Vail Tree Farm. Permits allow

access from August 1 to December 31. A maximum of 750 permits are sold to access the 155,000-acre Vail tree farm at a cost of \$150 each. Weyerhaeuser also offers for bid six leases allowing access rights for one full year. All forestry operations will continue during the permit and lease season. Additional information can be located on the Weyerhaeuser website or by calling 866-636-6531. Hancock Timber Resources also require an access permit for motorized access to the Kapowsin, Eatonville, and White River and tree farms. Prices for 2014 are as follows: **Kapowsin** = \$375; **Eatonville** = \$275; **White River** = \$250. For more information on hunting/accessing Hancock Timber Resource land call 800-782-1493.

High elevation trophy black-tail hunting experiences can be found in the eastern portions of GMUs 653 and 654 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).

District 11 deer are managed as two separate population management units: PMU 62 comprised of GMUs 652, 666, and 667, and PMU 67 comprised of GMUs 653 and 654. PMU 62 experienced a gradual decline in harvest from 2000-2004 (peak) followed by a fairly constant harvest since. This decline is likely attributed to declines in harvest on the Vail Tree Farm in the early 2000s as well as manipulation of permit availability. Catch per unit effort has also remained constant since 2005, with the exception of 2011. In summary, hunting prospects in PMU 62 will remain similar to 2013.



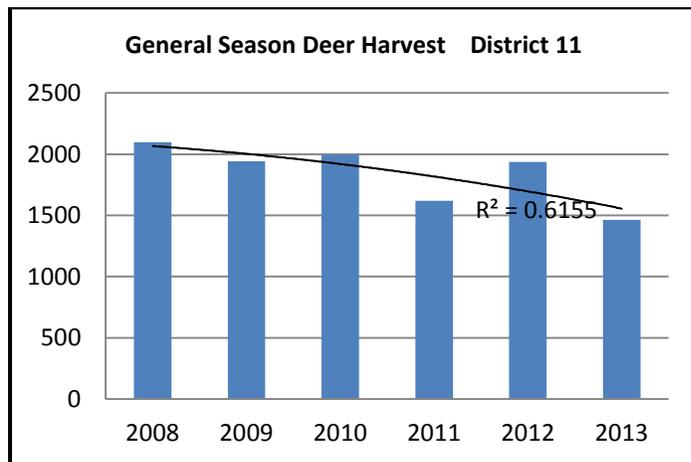
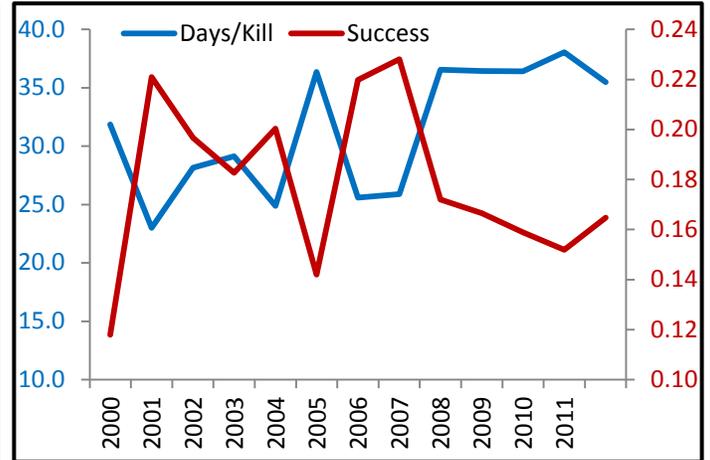
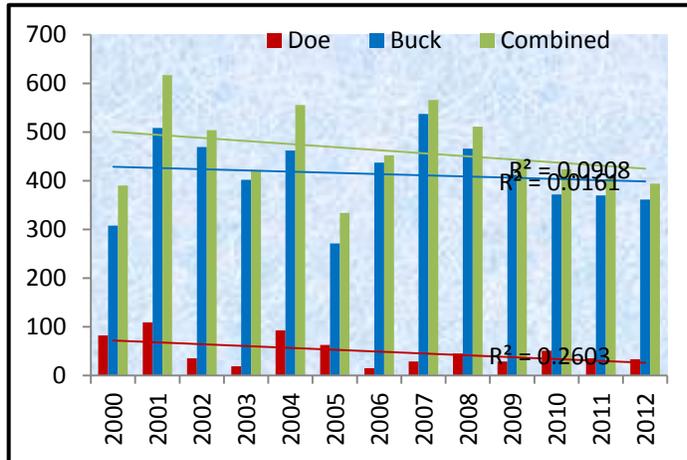
PMU 62 BLACK TAILED DEER HARVEST DATA

PMU 67 has also experienced a declining trend in harvest since 2000 but only a modest decline over the past five years. Harvest per unit effort is showing disturbing trends in PMU 67 with success rates falling and effort increasing since 2008. Warm weather during 2010-2013 hunting seasons, in particular over weekends, is likely partially to blame.

Hunting Season Prospects 2014
 GMU 667 of Lewis County

District 11 – Thurston and Pierce Counties and

Hunters' best option is to wait for cloudy, colder weather. General season deer harvest across District 11 is showing the same declining trend. In 2013, archery hunters experienced an 18% success rate, modern firearm hunters a 24% success rate, multiple weapon hunters a 26% success rate, and muzzleloaders a 13% success rate during general season within the district. These are all slightly up from 2012 which is a positive prospect for deer hunters.



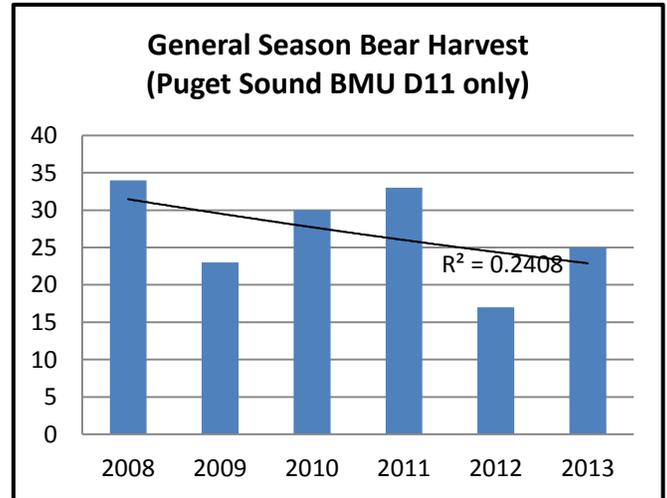
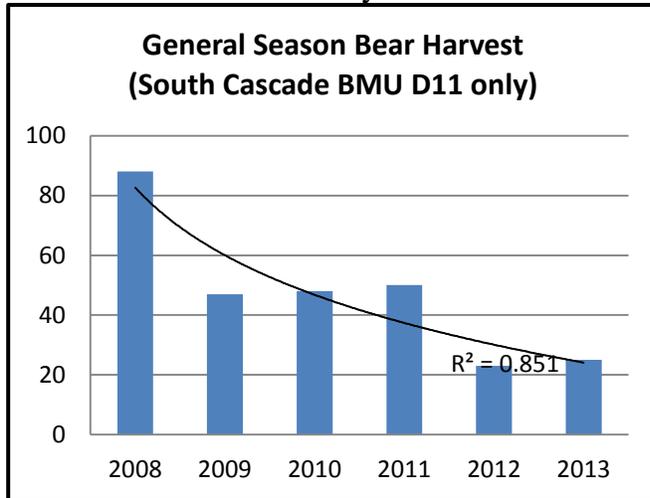
BEAR

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 opportunity within District 11 to hunt bear both in the fall general and spring special permit hunting seasons. However, trends in both hunts are declining and thus prospects in the district may not be as good as previous years.

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 663), and Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Parks (GMU 654) offer the best prospects for bear hunters in the district. (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 15 April to 15 June, 2015 season. Those successfully drawn for a permit must purchase an access permit from Hancock. Ninety one hunters successfully harvested six black bear in 2013 under the spring permit hunt for a hunter success rate of 6.6% (compared to 93 hunters harvesting 8 bear in 2012 for an 8.6% success rate). These rates are low compared to other spring bear hunts statewide whose success rates range from 20-50%. Thus prospects for harvesting black bear in spring remain marginal on the Kapowsin Tree Farm.

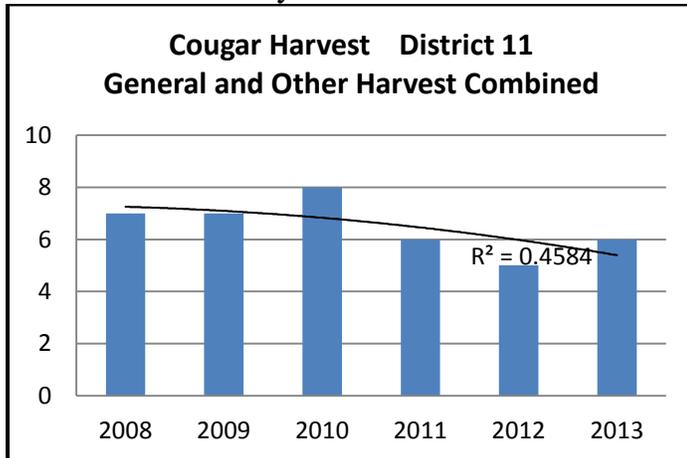
General season bear harvest trends in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BMU (e.g. GMUs 653 and 654) have been generally declining over the past several years. After a 52% decline in harvest from 2011 to 2012, harvest rose slightly in 2013. General season bear harvest in the District 11 portion of the Puget Sound BMU (e.g. GMUs 652, 666, 667) shows a weak declining trend over the past several years with a significant increase in 2013 harvest following the 46% decline recorded from 2011 to 2012.



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). Cougar seasons will run from 1 September to 31 March for any weapon, and may close January 1 if harvest meets or exceeds the harvest quota in particular GMUs as specified in the game pamphlet. GMUs 652 and 666 have no quota limit, GMUs 653 and 654 have a quota of 4-6 cougar, and GMU 667 has a quota of 3-4 cougar.

In general, cougar harvest in District 11 has remained relatively constant since 2008. A total of 6 cougar were reported harvested in the district from all sources in 2013 (compared to 5 in 2012). The Skookumchuck (GMU 667) annually provides one of the highest cougar harvests of all western Washington GMUs. Thus, prospects for hunting cougar in the district are very good.



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. With the exception of 2013, waterfowl numbers have been on the upswing in the United States and that trend continued in 2014. According to USFWS, the total duck population as counted on traditional survey areas was 49.2 million breeding ducks, which is 8% higher than last year’s estimate of 45.6 million, and 43% above the long-term average. The total pond estimate was 7.2 million, similar to last year’s estimate of 6.9 million and 40% above the long-term average of 5.1 million.

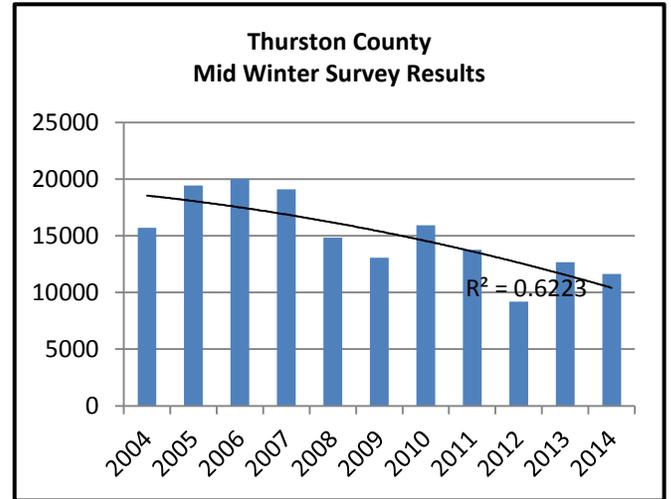
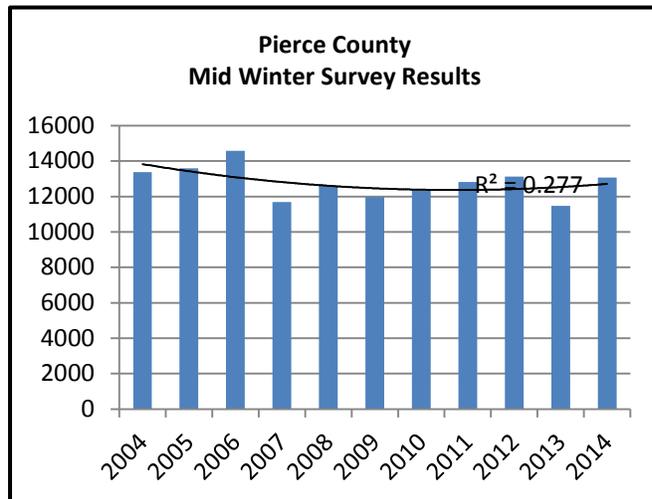
Additionally, most breeding population estimates of several species commonly found in District 11 remained stable from 2013 to 2014 in the primary North American breeding areas as follows (USFWS; <http://www.flyways.us/status-of-waterfowl/population-estimates>):

Species	Breeding Population Estimate Trend
Mallard	similar to 2013 and 42% above the long-term average
Green-winged teal	similar to the 2013 estimate and 69% above the long-term average
Gadwall	similar to the 2013 estimate and 102% above the long-term average
American wigeon	18% above the 2013 estimate and 20% above the long-term average
Northern shovelers	similar to 2013 estimates and 114% above the long-term average
Northern pintails	similar to 2013 estimates but 20% below the long-term average
Scaup	similar to the 2013 estimate and similar to the long-term average

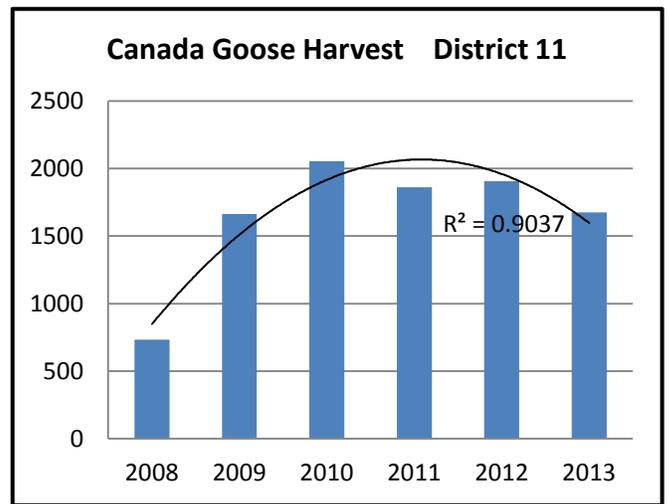
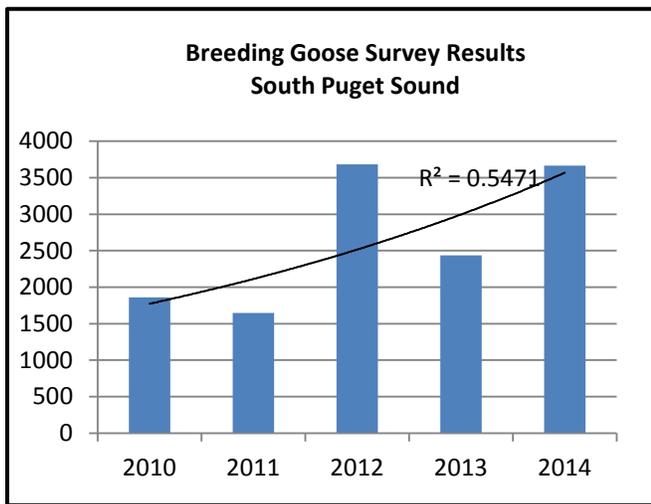
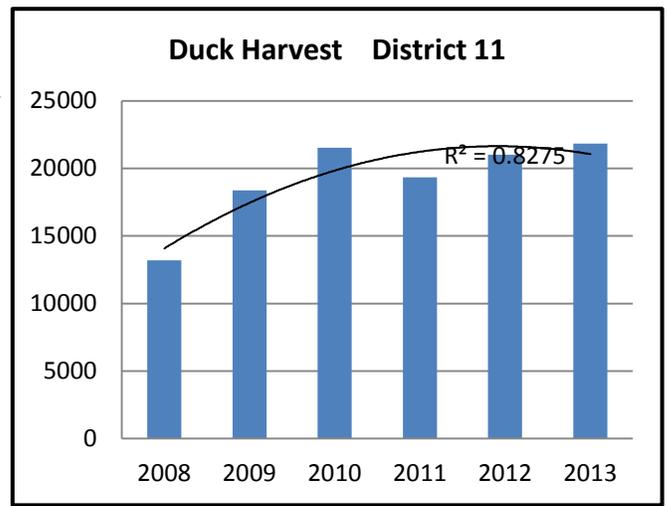
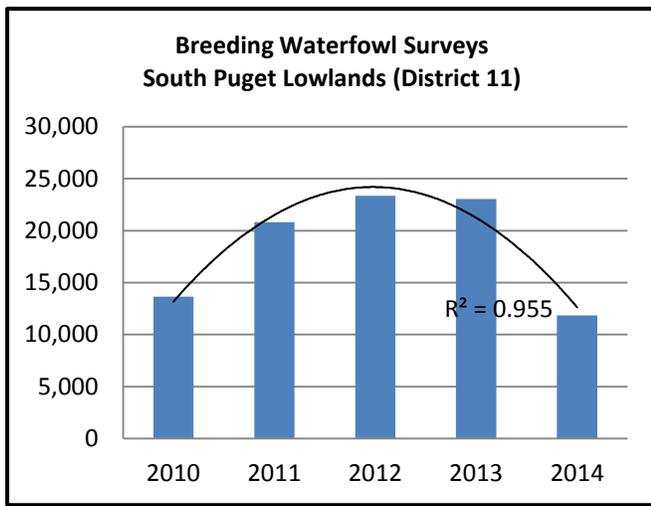
Thurston County supports significantly more waterfowl than Pierce County, primarily as a result of Nisqually Wildlife Refuge and other Puget Sound inlets. However, District 11 continues to see a decline in mid-winter waterfowl counts in Thurston but not Pierce County, which has remained relatively stable. 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. Overall, the South Puget Sound lowlands support almost twice as many waterfowl as any other Western Washington location. Breeding season waterfowl survey results for the South Puget lowlands was roughly half the total over the past three seasons. This may be attributed to an earlier than normal spring migration and nest season in 2014, which resulted in a reduction in migratory waterfowl visible during the survey window rather than a true reduction in waterfowl.

Midwinter counts within District 11 have shown a gradual decline over the past ten years in Thurston County while Pierce County has remained fairly constant. Breeding season surveys in the South Puget Sound also showed a significant decline in 2014 after a three year increasing trend. Surveyors reported lower than normal water conditions in Pierce County this spring which may contribute to reduced numbers of waterfowl. After a significant increase in duck harvest in 2008, harvest has slightly increased over the past five years, a trend which should continue in 2014. Although goose harvest slightly declined in 2013, goose breeding season surveys in 2014 increased in the district and thus prospects for harvesting geese is good.



*INCLUDES ONLY THOSE SITES THAT WERE CONSISTENTLY SURVEYED OVER THE YEARS REPORTED.



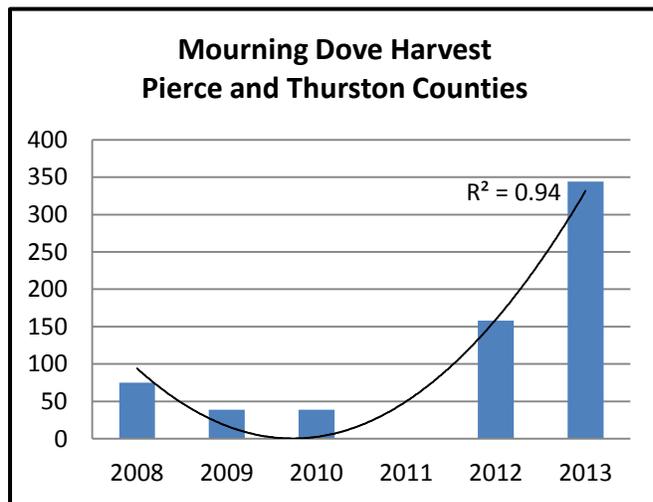
Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies in the district that are surrounded by housing; hunters are urged to obey all hunting regulations at such sites to avoid potential future closures. All bodies of water are open for hunting unless located within a county firearm restriction area (see introduction). 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: [Nisqually Wildlife Refuge](#); Puget Sound marine inlets associated with western islands of Pierce County and Henderson, Budd, and Eld Inlets of Thurston County; Centralia Mine, Lewis County. Flooded agricultural fields in the western half of the district can be good prospects for waterfowl hunting; however, hunters must seek landowner access permission prior to hunting these sites. Note that a majority of the water bodies on Key

Peninsula, Pierce County, are within a firearm restriction zone, thus prohibiting waterfowl hunting. 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 information on hunting Nisqually Wildlife Refuge go to http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Nisqually/visit/visitor_activities/hunting.html or call (360) 753-9467.

MOURNING DOVE

District 11 is not a prime dove hunting area, although harvest significantly increased in 2012 and 2013. Average harvest was 38 birds a year from 2008 to 2011 and then spiked to 344 birds in 2013. The best dove hunting in District 11 in declining order is in Lewis, followed by Pierce, followed by Thurston, with Lewis and Pierce having almost four times as many birds harvested than Thurston County.



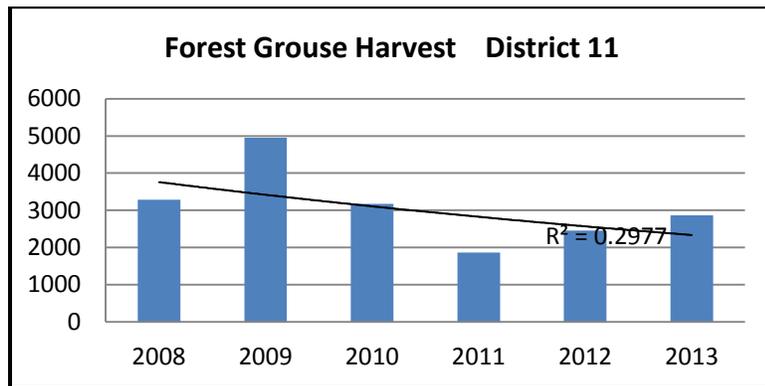
FOREST GROUSE

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 663). Forest grouse have been experiencing a weak downward trend in District 11 over the past 5 years, but they increased slightly in 2013. Pierce County provides an average of 2,000 grouse harvested per year while Thurston County averages 1,000 annually.

A hunter must purchase either a big game license or 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 1 September thru 31 December with a daily bag limit of 4 of any species and a possession limit of 12 of any species.



PHEASANT

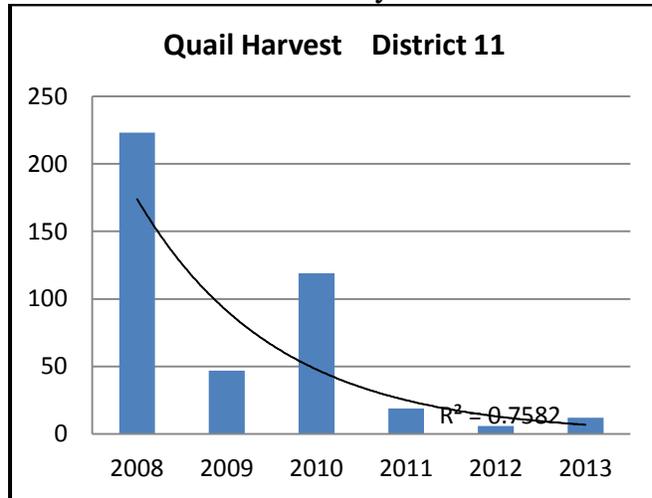
Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#). The release program utilizes state (Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck) and federal (JBLM) managed lands. There are special access processes in place for [JBLM](#), so please visit their web site. Note that [non-toxic shot](#) is required on all pheasant release sites statewide. The general pheasant season is open from 8:00am to 4:00pm, 27 September to 30 November, 2014, 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
at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/western/>.

An estimated forty thousand pheasant will be released in 2014 across southwestern Washington pheasant release areas. This represents a 2000 bird increase over 2013. Approximately 1900 pheasants (4.9% of total production) will be released at the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area this season, with 50-75 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays beginning 17 September thru Thanksgiving Day morning. Approximately 3900 pheasants (9.8% of total production) 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 5200 pheasants (13.1% of total production) 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 thru 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 as 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 a slight increase from 6 harvested in 2012 to 12 harvested in 2013 in Thurston County (no quail have been harvested in Pierce County for the past three years). Regardless of this trend, quail harvest in Thurston County is not significantly lower than 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 and northern Lewis County. Mountain Quail are more prevalent in the brushy areas of Key Peninsula, Pierce County, and southeast portions of Thurston County. However, access may be limited. The western Washington California Quail season runs 27 September thru 30 November with a daily mixed bag limit of 10 and possession mixed bag limit of 30. The Mountain quail season runs 27 September thru 30 November with a daily bag limit of 2 and possession limit of 4.

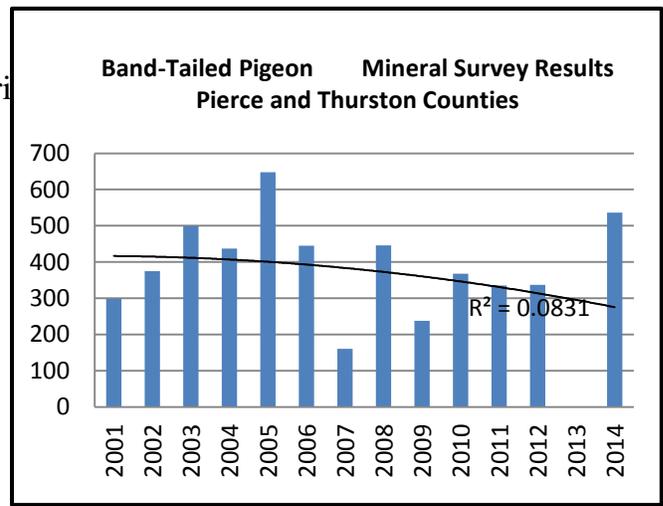
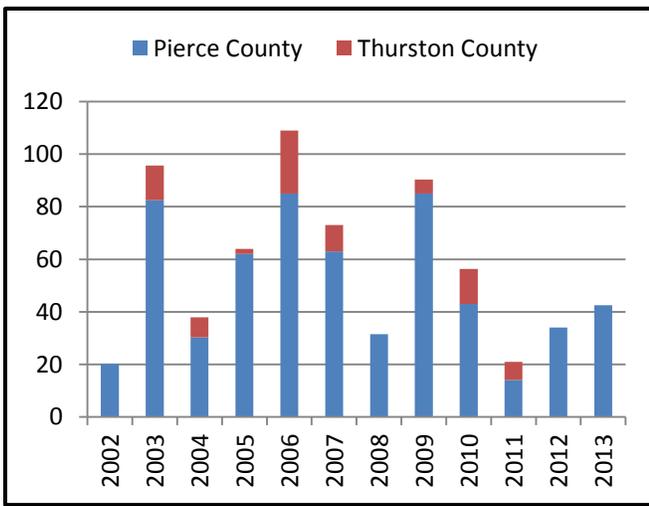


TURKEY

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 2008-2013 average turkey harvest in District 11 is 12, with almost all that harvest in Skookumchuck (GMU 667), followed by a few in Deschutes (GMU 666). The statewide turkey season runs 15 April thru 31 May. Male turkeys and turkeys with visible beards only are legal with a western Washington limit of one (except two turkey limit in Klickitat County).

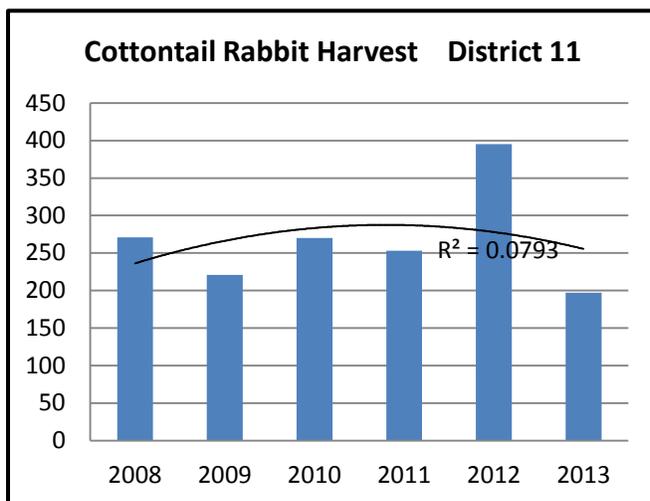
BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Total harvest in Washington in 2013 was 129 pigeons, with Pierce County (District 11) providing the third highest harvest at 42 birds, just behind Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties. Pierce County also supports the third highest average annual harvest of pigeons since 2002. No pigeons were harvested in Thurston County the past two years, and it ranks low in regards to harvest compared to other western counties. Bandtail numbers collected during July surveys at traditional mineral sites rose significantly in 2013 and 2014 across District 11, although the long-term trend shows a weak decline. Thus, prospects remain decent for pigeon hunting in Pierce County but not necessarily in Thurston County. The best hunting locations for band-tails in District 11 are Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and Luhr Beach area (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 opportunities in western Washington. Rabbits are prolific in the shrub and grassland habitats found throughout Pierce and Thurston counties. Cottontail rabbit harvest in the district remained stable from 2008 to 2011, spiked significantly in 2012, but then declined in harvest in 2013. The average harvest since 2008 has been 268 cottontails harvested across the district annually. Both Thurston and Pierce County have been experiencing a decline in cottontail harvest over the past 5 years. Pierce experienced a 31% decline in harvest and Thurston a 28% decline since 2008. Success per unit effort has declined significantly in Pierce County since 2008, while in Thurston the trend has significantly improved. What this suggests is that a real reduction in availability of cottontails is taking place in Pierce whereas trends in Thurston are more related to lack of hunter participation. Despite decreasing trends in Pierce County it remains one of the best places in the south Puget Sound to hunt cottontails.



2014

Chris Anderson, District Biologist
Mike Smith, Assistant District Biologist



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DISTRICT 12 HUNTING PROSPECTS

King County

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DISTRICT 12 GENERAL OVERVIEW

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.

Remember to be a good hunting and outdoor recreation steward – be respectful of others on public, multi-use properties that have high consumptive and non-consumptive use. Don't hunt areas where there is heavy, regular recreation use. Pick up after yourself and don't leave a gut pile – no one wants to hike by such things; hunters and other outdoors enthusiasts alike.

ELK

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.



COW AND CALF ELK IN GMU 454. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.



SMALL BULL ELK IN GMU 460. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.

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

DEER

Population surveys have not been conducted for several years throughout District 12, but hunting prospects are believed to be quite good on private and public lands, where hunting is allowed, from anecdotal observations.

GMU 422 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. Island Center Forest, King Co. Parks, offers modern firearm season access to the public. Please see here for location information, King Co. Department of Natural Resource announcements, and any hunt restrictions in the few weeks prior to the opening of modern firearm season:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/recreation/parks/trails/backcountry/islandcenterforest.aspx>

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 DOE ON THE SNOQUALMIE TREE FARM, GMU 460. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.

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](#).

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.



BEAR CUBS IN A DEN IN GMU 460. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.

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 hour restrictions for pheasant and quail in Western Washington are from 8am to 4pm. This includes Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. 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.

TURKEY

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

Population estimates are looking good for the Pacific Flyway this year. Opportunity of harvest should be good, 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."](#)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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 83 of the [2014 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.

2014

Ruth Milner, District Wildlife Biologist



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DISTRICT 13 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Snohomish, San Juan, and Island Counties

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DISTRICT 13 GENERAL OVERVIEW

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 specific trails 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 the [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. Hunters should strictly observe “No Parking” signs as local landowners will tow vehicles found on their property.



TYPICAL NO PARKING/NO TRESPASSING SIGNS IN RURAL AREAS OF DISTRICT 13

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.

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. Four elk were harvested from GMU 448 in 2013. 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. Forty-three hunters harvested 12 elk in the GMU in 2013.

DEER

Black-tailed Deer GMU 448: District 13 includes GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) and GMU 450 (Cascade), and the majority of the harvest comes from GMU 448. On average, 120-150 deer are harvested annually in GMU 448. Hunters who take the time to scout and learn the area will increase their likelihood of success. We strongly encourage planning and familiarization with local conditions well in advance of hunting season.

Much of GMU 448 is forested, with trees in a 30-50 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 dramatically. However, food may be limited in clear

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 13 – Snohomish, San Juan, and Island Counties

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. Parking and walk in access to DNR and private forest land is available at the intersection of Menzel Lake Road and the P-5000 Road. This gate is located 4.6 miles south of the intersection of Alder Place and Menzel Lake Road in Granite Falls. Parking at other gated access areas in this general area may be limited.



P-5000 ROAD ACCESS GATE

At the south end of GMU 448, walk in access is available off the Sultan Basin Road. This area has mixed public and private ownership, and hunters should pay close attention to signs designating areas where discharge of firearms is prohibited. Access to DNR lands requires a Discover Pass, and these areas will be signed. DNR properties are gated, and shooting is permitted only during legal hunting seasons.

Vehicle access is available on US Forest Service Roads around Snohomish County.



TYPICAL DNR SIGNS

Black-tailed Deer: Island Units: Beginning in 2013, **GMU 410** was divided into several **distinct new units** assigned to individual islands. This change will provide more accurate harvest information and assist with the development of management strategies in the islands. GMU 410 is now comprised of those remaining islands that were not assigned a specific number. New GMUs are as follows:

GMU 411: Orcas Island

GMU412: Shaw Island

GMU 413: San Juan Island

GMU 414: Lopez Island

GMU 415: Blakely Island

GMU 416: Decatur Island

GMU 417 Cypress Island

GMU419: Guemes Island

GMU 420: Whidbey Island

GMU 421: Camano Island

We ask that hunters take note of these changes and accurately report their correct GMU when filling out the harvest report.

GMUs 410-419: Public access on islands within the San Juan Archipelago (San Juan and Skagit Counties) is 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 on private property.

Small parcels of public land are open to hunting on Lopez Island (**GMU 414**) on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ownership within the National Monument. BLM lands in the San Juan Islands are administered out of the Wenatchee field office. Hunters should call (509) 665-2100 for information. Additional information is available at: <http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/sanjuans/>.

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The San Juan County Land Bank manages Lopez Hill, which continues to allow limited hunting. Lopez Hill will be open for hunting from September 1 through October 31. More information can be found at: http://www.sjclandbank.org/images_lopez/LopezHill_map.pdf and questions can be sent to timc@rockisland.com.

Overnight camping is not allowed in the National Monument or on Lopez Hill. Please check state and county parks for camping.

Cypress Island (GMU 417) is largely owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), but some parcels are privately owned. Maps, trails and access rules can be found at: http://www.dnr.wa.gov/AboutDNR/ManagedLands/Pages/amp_na_cypress_island.aspx.

GMU 420 & 421: Deer are abundant on both islands. However, very little public land is available for hunting on any island, including Whidbey and Camano Islands. Hunters should obtain 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.

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 May and June provided good vegetation growth and berry production. However, late season snows may limit the availability of berries at high elevations.

COUGAR

GMU's 448 and 450 are hunt areas with a harvest guideline. In these GMU's, the Director may close the cougar late hunting season after January 1 if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. Cougar hunters may hunt cougar from January 1 until the hunt area harvest guideline has been reached and the GMU is closed by the Director, or until March 31, whichever occurs

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 13 – Snohomish, San Juan, and Island Counties

first. It is each cougar hunter's responsibility to verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in GMUs 448 and 450. Cougar hunters can verify if the season is open or closed by calling the toll free cougar hunting hotline (1-866-364-4868) or visiting this website. The hotline and website will be updated weekly beginning January 1, 2015.

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>. In 2014, the cougar harvest did not exceed the guideline and the units remained open throughout the season.

PHEASANT

Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#).

In Snohomish County, public pheasant and waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area and on Leque Island on the Skagit Wildlife Area. There are 2 access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit. 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 Home Acres 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 51st 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 will be open following the 8am to 4pm hunting hours.

Ebey Island Unit will receive 35-45 birds released on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Leque Island will receive 30-45 birds released on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday evenings.



PARKING AND PHEASANT RELEASE AREAS AVAILABLE AT EBHEY ISLAND

In Island County, release sites on Whidbey Island will include Bayview, Arnold Farm, OLF Coupeville and the Sea Plane Base. Hunters should check <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/western/> for the location of specific sites. Fifteen to twenty birds will be released on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday mornings, except for Bayview, where releases will be Saturday and Sunday mornings.

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. Civilian hunters will be required to submit to a background check prior to

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 13 – Snohomish, San Juan, and Island Counties

hunting Navy property. As a result, hunts should be planned well in advance and all hunters are advised to check with WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873) for the most up to date rules and requirements.

GROUSE

Ruffed grouse is the common species in District 13, and blue grouse may be found at higher elevations. May and June were wetter than average in 2014, which may have negatively affected chick survival. Hunters should look for mixed conifer and hardwood areas, especially in riparian areas, for the most likely place to find grouse.

WATERFOWL

Record counts for several species and large increases in areas important to Washington, combined with higher breeding populations in BC and Washington, provide great potential for the 2014-15 season.

Waterfowl hunting in District 13 is expected to be productive as long as 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 wetter, hunters can expect increasing numbers of waterfowl to arrive in District 13.

We expect to have at least four waterfowl quality hunt units in the Stillaguamish Delta and four snow goose units in the same general area in the coming season. These sites are all located on private lands that are enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. More information about individual sites, including maps and access rules, as well as the program in general, may be found at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/. Waterfowl hunt units on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every unit will be available on opening day. We anticipate that all units will be open by mid-November.

Access to public lands on Whidbey Island is extremely limited. Hunters should be aware that Deer Lagoon is 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).

Hunting Season Prospects 2014 District 13 – Snohomish, San Juan, and Island Counties

The Spencer Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be boat access and walk in this year. Parking for the Spencer Island Unit will be 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 Home Acres Road near 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 51st St SE.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see “Let’s Go Waterfowl Hunting” at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/>.

2014

Chris Danilson, District Wildlife Biologist
Paul DeBruyn, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



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DISTRICT 14 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Skagit and Whatcom Counties

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DISTRICT 14 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 14 is comprised of Skagit and Whatcom Counties and lies in the far northwestern mainland part of Washington. The western extent of the district is associated with the marine waters of Puget Sound and features a vibrant agricultural land base. These lowlands support an abundance of wildlife in the “Skagit Flats” and western Whatcom Counties, including a diverse and abundant assemblage of resident and overwintering waterfowl species. The Skagit and Nooksack Rivers are the two main river systems in the district. Lower elevation forested uplands within the Skagit and Nooksack watersheds are owned and/or managed by private timber companies and the Washington Department of Natural Resources. At timber production areas, these lower elevation working forests provide good to excellent big game hunting opportunities. Higher elevation forest lands within the district are managed by the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and North Cascades National Park (hunting is allowed in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area). These federal lands are associated with the North Cascades Mountains and support game species such as mountain goats, black bear, and black-tailed deer.

From north to south, the core Game Management Units (GMUs) that comprise District 14 are Nooksack and Diablo (i.e. GMUs 418 & 426), which are mostly in Whatcom County, and Sauk (i.e. GMU 437), which is almost entirely within Skagit County. Additionally, portions of North Sound, Stillaguamish, and Cascade (i.e. GMUs 407, 448 & 450) are also within the district.

Among the many hunting opportunities within this district, perhaps the most notable are:

- Saltwater and inland waterfowl hunting opportunities within the highest concentration of waterfowl in western Washington.
- Diversity of waterfowl hunting options including lesser snow geese, Pacific brant, harlequin ducks, long-tailed ducks, and scoters.
- Extensive non-vehicular access to public and private forest lands that do not currently charge an access fee for hunting big game and forest grouse.
- “Permit Only” quality bull elk hunts within the recovering North Cascades elk herd with trophy quality animals, liberal season dates, and high success rates.
- Once-in-a-lifetime mountain goat harvest opportunities for five permit holders within the Mount Baker Wilderness Area.

Current Species Status

The primary big game species in District 14 are black-tailed deer, elk, black bear, cougar, and mountain goat. Each of these species remains open for hunting with restrictions as outlined in Washington’s 2014 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations, which can be found at: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01589/wdfw01589.pdf>. Black-tailed deer, black bear, and cougar continue to provide over the counter tag opportunities. Elk, spring black bear, and mountain goats are managed as “draw only” hunts because of the sensitivity of each of these populations to hunting, either because they are below population objective (elk), more vulnerable to harvest (spring black bear), or have lower reproductive rates (goats).

Like most of Western Washington, District 14 does not have native upland game bird populations and is not managed for these species. The exception to this is that WDFW will

continue to implement a pen-raised pheasant release program in Skagit and Whatcom Counties in 2015. Other game birds that WDFW manages collectively as “forest grouse” include the ruffed grouse and dusky and sooty grouse. Ruffed and sooty grouse (formerly referred to as blue grouse) occur in District 14 and continue to have long seasons (Sept. 1 – Dec. 31) with a daily bag limit of four of any species.

Due to high overall population sizes and stable reproductive rates of waterfowl, the Pacific Flyway states continue to enjoy extremely liberal hunting seasons in terms of number of hunting days and bag limits. Like the remainder of the state, there has been no change in the status of any of the waterfowl species in District 14. Within District 14, lesser snow geese, Pacific brant, and sea ducks (e.g. harlequin, scoter, long-tailed, and goldeneye) require that hunters apply for and possess a special “migratory bird authorization” while hunting and submit a harvest report card at the end of the season.

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 has slowed the overall growth of the population somewhat.

Based on post-hunt surveys conducted in March and April of 2014, the total population size of the North Cascades herd is approximately 1,400 to 1,500 animals (including juvenile recruitment from this spring. Bull:cow and calf:cow ratios from 2014 surveys this spring were both slightly over 30:100, indicating that winter survival was similar to previous years. Roughly 30 percent of all bulls (including spikes) observed during spring flights were mature bulls (i.e. 5X5 or better).



Although the North Cascades elk herd continues to recover, the desired population of 1,950 elk, which was established in 2002, has not been met. Since the resumption of very limited hunting of

this elk population in 2007, opportunities have been limited to bull-only hunts. This provides some recreational harvest, while allowing the population to continue to grow. A major downside to the current harvest management framework for this population is that antlerless elk harvest to address agricultural damage is constraining population recovery. Additionally, this harvest opportunity is limited to a select few (e.g. landowners and master hunters) and, being within a more populated agricultural areas, is not the desirable harvest situation that most hunters would prefer.

Despite this, the North Cascades elk herd offers one of the premier bull elk hunting opportunities in Western Washington. Archery, Muzzleloader, and modern firearm hunters each have the chance to harvest bull elk with “any bull” or “spike only” tags. The harvest success rate is high for all three firearm types due to limited hunting pressure and lengthy seasons. Since this hunt began in 2007, hunter success has ranged from 61 to 93 percent. In 2013, the harvest success rate was 91 percent, with 20 of 22 hunters who participated harvesting a bull elk. Of the eleven bulls harvested with the “any bull” tags, the average bull was a 5X5 or 6X6, with a few larger than this.



In 2013, 20 antlerless tags were provided to archery and muzzleloader hunters, but confined to the Elk Area 4941 within the Skagit River Valley, where elk related agricultural damage complaints are on the rise. Despite the high density of elk within this area, the harvest success

rate for these tag holders was only 50 percent. Most of the tag holders that didn't punch their tag attributed this to short season length and the challenge of obtaining permission from multiple landowners.

Elk hunting prospects for 2014 will again be restricted to limited entry bull hunts in GMU 418 and Elk Area 4941 (which is within GMU 437). A total of 23 “any bull” and “spike only” tags have been allocated. The antlerless tags offered in 2013 will not be offered in 2014. Instead, two pools of master hunters have been drawn up for “Skagit River” and “Region 4 North” to address elk related issues on specific properties.

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. GMU 407 tends to have greater numbers of elk, but access to private property is the key to getting a real opportunity here.

Changes to the 2014 hunting regulations specific to the North Cascades elk herd are:

- Elimination of the 20 archery and muzzleloader tags offered in 2013 for antlerless elk in Elk Area 4941
- Elimination of antler restrictions for modern firearm hunters in GMU 407 (North Sound)
- Return of the “Skagit River” master hunt pool in Elk Area 4941

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at

[Game Harvest Reports.](#)

DEER

WDFW does not currently conduct black-tailed deer surveys in Region 4. Biologist's observations and other anecdotal reports support the general notion that black-tail 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 provides the best opportunity for successfully harvesting a deer in District 14. In 2014, 659 deer were harvested in GMU 407 during the general season over-the-counter tag hunts. This was a 20 percent increase over the 2012 harvest for this GMU. The combined general season deer harvest within the other GMUs in the district (i.e. 418, 426, and 437) amounts to less than half of the harvest in GMU 407, with only 290 deer harvested.

The drastic difference in harvest rates between GMU 407 and other GMUs within the district is related to the number of hunting days available, deer densities, and ease of access. Simply put, GMU 407 provides hunting opportunities that the other GMUs do not and today's hunters have learned to adapt to this and take advantage of it. 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 [2014 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. Both of these wilderness areas are open for the "high buck hunt" between September 15th and 25th).

Modern firearm hunters are currently offered a permit only buck hunt opportunity in GMUs 418, 426, and 437. These tags give hunters an opportunity to take to the field to attempt to harvest a quality buck during the rut (November 15th-20th). Recent success has been in the 40 to 60 percent range for hunters who end up participating. Last year, WDFW was able to negotiate behind the gate access for the 25 permit holders in GMU 418, and negotiations are underway to expand this opportunity more in 2014. Quality buck tags for modern firearm hunters currently provide the best opportunity in these GMUs. Of these 60 tags issued in 2012, harvest success rates among those that reported ranged from 45.5 percent (GMU 418) to 57.1 percent (GMU 426).

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

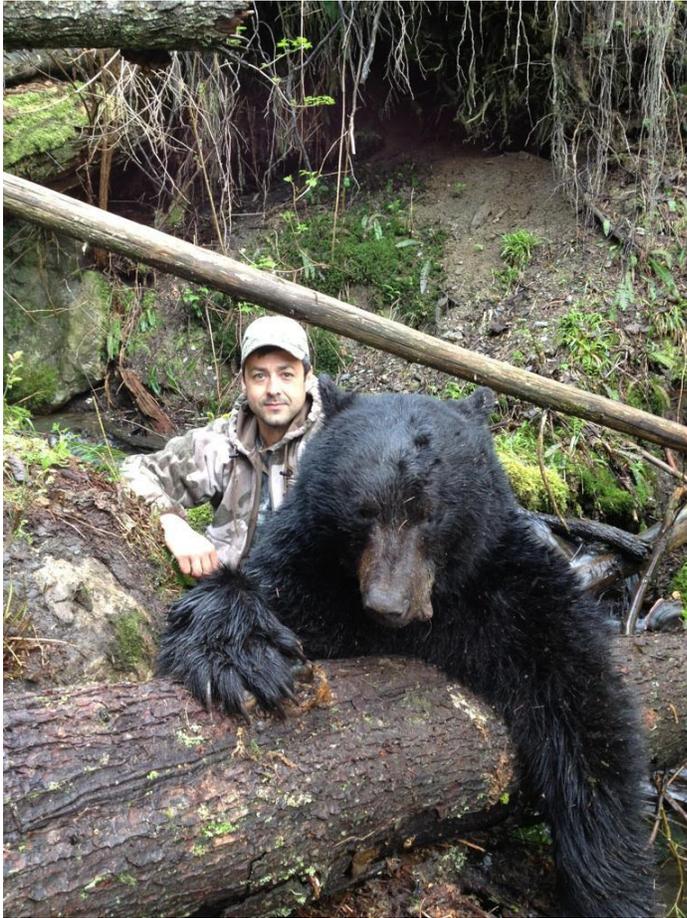
BEAR

Black bear surveys are not conducted in District 14. Instead, hunter harvest reports and age data obtained from teeth submitted by successful hunters is used to monitor population trends. The total number of bears harvested during the fall of 2013 in GMUs 407, 418, and 437 decreased by nearly 50 percent from the previous year. Only 68 bears were harvested in these GMUs during the fall, despite a similar level of hunter effort. However, the fall of 2013 was noteworthy for the spottiness of mountain huckleberries, a mainstay for bears and a key habitat element fall hunters rely on for locating bears. This has likely adversely affected harvest rates.

GMU 418 is one of the few western Washington areas where a spring bear hunt is promoted to address damage caused by bears peeling young trees (primarily Douglas fir) on managed forest lands. The extension of the season by 15 days to June 15th, which was adopted just prior to the 2013 season, appears to have helped increase and maintain high harvest rates. Additionally, the private lands hunter access managed by WDFW helps get this small pool of hunters behind gates

where bears are otherwise not disturbed by hunters.

In the spring of 2013, 10 of 30 permit holders successfully harvested a bear within this small damage area. Although harvest information is not totally finalized, it appears the 30 permit holders in 2014 also had roughly 30 percent success rate in harvesting bears during this spring hunt.



Hunter prospects for harvesting a black bear in District 14 has more to do with access and berry production than it does the previous years' harvest. 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.

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 2013 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 2014, one additional mountain goat tag was issued for this area for a total of five. A single tag holder will have sole access to the Lincoln Peak hunt unit on the eastern side of Mount Baker. The remaining four permit holders (two each in the Chowder Ridge and Avalanche Gorge hunt units) may be sharing these units with the winners of the state wide auction and raffle permits. With a lot of country and a lot of goats in these units, this small handful of hunters should have no problems working around each other.

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. The opportunity to harvest record book mountain goats exists in all units and is only limited by hunter ability, dedication and commitment. The new Washington state record for archery harvested mountain goat came from Mount Baker in 2012.

UPLAND BIRD

As mentioned above, District 14, like much of western Washington, has virtually no native upland game species. Both mourning dove and (California) quail harvest is reported for Skagit and Whatcom Counties; however, the total harvest for either is generally fewer than 100 birds per year for either county. The few turkeys reported to WDFW in the region each year are invariably a result of accidental escape or intentional release by private parties. With such small and scattered populations of upland game birds, population dynamics such as winter survival and production cannot be estimated. For similar reasons, it is impractical to relate habitat conditions to population size and hunting opportunity.

The two upland game hunting opportunities that do exist in the District are game-farmed produced pheasants and an ever growing population of Eurasian collared doves.

PHEASANT

Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#). In Skagit County, WDFW will continue to release pheasants at the Bow Hill pheasant release site on Washington

Department of Natural Resources lands for the 2014 season. Additionally, WDFW intends to move forward with pheasant release at the Samish Unit this year for the youth and senior hunts only. The three pheasant release sites in Whatcom County are WDFW’s Lake Terrell Wildlife Area, Intalco, and British Petroleum release sites. Depending on the site and availability of pheasants, somewhere between 30 and 65 birds are released on a two- or three-day/week schedule. Non-toxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites.

FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed and sooty (formerly called 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. 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 (e.g. 5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Abandoned logging roads provide good habitat for grouse and opportunities for hunting.

Season overlaps make grouse hunting a good diversion when big game is slow. Relaxed firearm restrictions (you can use a rifle or pistol) put the onus on the hunter to “make sure of your target and backstop”. 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.

EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE

While not a managed game species, Eurasian collared doves (an exotic species) are increasingly common throughout District 14. Locally, this species appears to be growing in size and expanding distribution, which includes both agricultural areas and, increasingly, within urban area neighborhoods. This species can be hunted year-round. The best situation for hunting this species is to seek landowner permission in lowland agricultural areas that have a “barnyard” setting, where birds roost in trees, but go to the ground to feed. Hunters should be sure that they are hunting in an area that does not have firearm restrictions and in a manner that is compatible with existing infrastructure (e.g. buildings, farm equipment, powerlines).

BAND-TAILED PIGEON

The general trend of decreasing band-tailed pigeon harvest is most likely associated with a decrease in hunter interest. Single day surveys from July 2014 at historic mineral sites in Skagit County suggest the normal abundance of these pigeons are present. The late September season provides an 8-10 day hunting opportunity that coincides with the migration. A migratory bird authorization card is required and the daily limit is two birds. One solid strategy is to target managed forest lands with mixed stand age classes that provide feeding areas with adjacent roosting areas. Band-tailed pigeons have strong affinities for the same areas, so scouting before your hunt is important.

WATERFOWL

Dabbling Ducks: More waterfowl are harvested in Region 4 than any other region in the state, with District 14 providing some of the best waterfowl hunting opportunities in the region. In 2013, Skagit County was again the state’s second best duck producing county (following Grant County). Total harvest in 2013 was down about 20% from the two previous years due to an unusually dry fall. Minimal late fall precipitation quickly froze up and dissipated during the thaw.

Harvest in Whatcom County was also down but only by 7%. Reports from breeding areas important to our area indicate a good year for brood production, and duck hunting should rebound if good rainfall is present early in the hunting season.



Early season hunting opportunities in District 14 are generally much more favorable on the saltwater marshes. Boat access greatly improves hunting options and prospects. Both private and public uplands in Skagit and Whatcom Counties with good food resources (e.g. corn, barley) provide good hunting prospects for dabbling ducks when harsh winter conditions ultimately arrive.

Brant and Sea Ducks: The minimum threshold of 6,000 brant in Skagit County bays must be met for the brant season to occur. This standard was set by the Pacific Flyway management plan for Pacific brant. The season has occurred in almost every year since this threshold was adopted; however dedicated brant hunters wait on pins and needles every year to hear whether they will have the opportunity to participate in this unique hunt.



In 2013, low productivity appeared to have reduced the number of western high arctic brant present to just above this threshold. The 6,000 brant threshold was exceeded and a season was held, however with a smaller proportion of juveniles present, harvest was lower.

The season for this specialized hunt is on some weekends and Wednesdays in January and will be announced when finalized. Brant hunters also have opportunities to harvest sea ducks including harlequin and long-tailed ducks, as well as scoters (as pictured below). A special migratory bird authorization card is required to hunt either brant or sea ducks.



Lesser Snow Geese: One of the mainstays of Skagit waterfowling, snow goose hunting provides yet another alternative to dabblers in District 14. Harvest of snow geese from the Washington state component of this population has declined over the past two years. While 11,000 geese were harvested in 2011 (primarily from Skagit and Snohomish Counties), only 5,800 birds were harvested in each of the past two hunting seasons. This is despite the fact that similar numbers of geese have overwintered here during the past three winters.



To a large extent, the harvest rate of snow geese is tied to the proportion of juvenile birds that arrive from their Siberian breeding grounds. Another important contributing factor is the fact that the distribution of snow geese in the Skagit has been undergoing changes as these white geese adapt to changing land use and crop conditions. Lastly, some landowners are no longer participating in WDFW's waterfowl quality hunt program, which has reduced hunting access to some extent.

Hunters interested in harvesting snow geese will also have to adapt and work to stay ahead of the game. It is critical to gain access before the season (be prepared for landowners to say no). Early season is the best time to lure geese (particularly juveniles) with decoys. Corn has become the early season favorite. As the season progresses, the diet appears to diversify with everything from winter wheat to hay/silage fields to potatoes and even berries. Public and private land on Fir Island remains the center of abundance for snows in District 14. However, geese continue to spend time in areas on either side of Interstate 5 north of Burlington and also the Edison area. Be sure to have permission before hunting private lands and be aware of special snow goose hunting rules in Skagit County.

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

HUNTER ACCESS

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 2014, WDFW staff will also facilitate access on Sierra Pacific's lands for spring bear, elk, and the modern firearm black-tailed deer quality buck permit holders.

Weyerhaeuser has recently acquired lands formerly owned by Longview Timber throughout western Washington. This includes inholdings in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. Weyerhaeuser has also indicated that it is their intent to convert all of the lands to a "fee access" management system, wherein hunters would have to apply for and purchase a permit to access their lands. At this time, the situation in District 14 remains unclear.

The Private Lands Access Program working out of the La Conner Field Office has once again negotiated access for hunters on dozens of private properties throughout Whatcom and Skagit Counties. The program currently has 55 sites lined up on private lands for the upcoming waterfowl season (25 in Skagit County and 20 in Whatcom). Many of these are sites that landowners have again enrolled in this program, while others are new. These sites offer either "open field" or "blind only" hunting primarily targeting dabbling ducks. While most of these sites are first-come first-served, several will be "reservation only". Private Lands personnel have worked with landowners to implement food plots at some sites to provide additional forage for ducks. For those lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, this can generate some excellent hunting.



More information about individual sites, including maps and access rules, as well as the program in general, may be found at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/. Waterfowl hunt units on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every unit will be available on opening day.

In addition, WDFW’s Private Lands staff has developed and enhanced hunting opportunities on WDFW lands. This includes five sites on the Bay View and Edison parcels managed by Skagit Wildlife Area.

PUBLIC LANDS

For big game, hunter access to Washington Department of Natural Resource lands decreases slightly in Whatcom County. Access to the Van Zandt dike has been restricted by the DNR to manage vehicle access during times of active logging. At the time that this report was prepared, DNR officials indicated that this will be the case for at least a portion of time this winter.

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 or abandon a significant portion of its managed road network on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie

National Forest. Ultimately, this will further restrict vehicular access to upper elevation habitats for big game and forest grouse hunting.

Among the WDFW 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, Tenant Lake, and Lake Terrell Wildlife Areas. All of these sites are managed for waterfowl and provide walk-in and/or boat access. Some blinds are also available.

2014

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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



Photo Courtesy of A. Lund, a
successful GMU 636 elk hunter.

DISTRICT 15 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Mason, Kitsap and East Jefferson Counties

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DISTRICT 15 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 15 is located in Region 6 and consists of all or portions of 6 Game Management Units (GMUs): 621 (Olympic), 624 (Coyle), 627 (Kitsap), 633 (Mason), 636 (Skokomish), and 651 (Satsop). Portions of GMUs 621 and 624 fall within District 16. Administratively, District 15 includes Mason, Kitsap and East Jefferson counties and is one of four Management Districts (11, 15, 16, and 17) that collectively comprise WDFW’s Region 6.

The landscape in District 15 is dominated by industrial forest land, and the most common habitat is characterized by young, multi-aged forests consisting primarily of Douglas fir and red alder. However, other habitats do occur, ranging from alpine in areas adjacent to Olympic National Park to marine in areas within the Salish Sea.

A range of hunting opportunities are available in District 15, including elk, deer, bear, cougar, mountain goat, waterfowl including sea ducks, and grouse. Also, a variety of small game species like rabbit, quail, coyote, and bobcat are present. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest for most game species in District 15 during the 2013 hunting season and how those estimates compare to the 2012 season and the 5-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

Table 1. Estimates of the 2012, 2013, and 5-yr average annual harvest for most game species hunted in District 15 are shown. Waterfowl and small game harvest totals were tabulated from all of Mason, Kitsap and Jefferson Counties.

Species	Harvest		
	5-yr avg.	2012	2013
Elk	28	30	28
Deer	1,563	1,784	1,530
Bear	95	89	70
Cougar	6	8	n/a
Ducks	7,493	7,461	6,898
Canada Goose	424	330	510
Snipe	47	7	0
Grouse	4,317	3,301	1,893
Mourning Dove	207	149	574
Quail	87	80	37
Snowshoe Hare	8	10	11
Cottontail Rabbit	115	80	120

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

All elk that occur in District 15 are Roosevelt elk. District 15 contains those portions of the Olympic elk herd occurring in GMUs 621, 624, 636 and 651. GMUs 627 and 633 are not included in any elk herd plan and no known elk herds currently occur in either of these units; no observations of a small herd formerly residing on the boundary of these two units have been reported in recent years. The quality of elk hunting in District 15 can generally be described as fair. GMU 651 provides the only general season elk hunting opportunity in the District, while elk hunting in GMUs 621 and 636 are by permit only. Elk in GMU 624 primarily reside near the town of Sequim, WA in District 16. GMU 651 is 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. GMUs 621 and 636 are managed with the primary goal of increasing elk herds while also minimizing negative elk-human interactions, including elk depredation to agricultural crops. Management of the Sequim herd in GMU 624 is primarily based on minimizing negative elk-human interactions, including elk depredation to agricultural crops.



Elk in GMU 621 can primarily be found along the main river valleys including the Dosewallips, Duckabush, Hamma Hamma, Lilliwaup, and North Fork Skokomish rivers. Elk in the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers either remain in the lower river valleys and on adjacent valley ridges year round or migrate to their summer range in the Olympic National Park, at times the upper Quinault River valley. The Hamma Hamma and Lilliwaup herds are generally non-migratory. The North Fork Skokomish herd is primarily resident to the upper North Fork Skokomish River valley in the Olympic National Park above Lake Cushman; often wintering near the northern end of Lake Cushman before migrating to summer range in the Mount Skokomish Wilderness. GMU 621 was closed to all elk hunting in the mid-90s for conservation reasons and is now open to hunting by permit only. We do not have a good estimate of abundance in GMU 621; however, based on herd counts and the increase in elk damage/conflict reports, we are probably at or near our management objective for this unit.

Elk in GMU 636 can primarily be found in the upper Wynoochee River valley, the Skokomish River valley, and near the town of Matlock, WA. Although some herds remain non-migratory, we have documented migratory movement from the upper Wynoochee to the Olympic National Park and the North Fork Skokomish River at Lake Cushman, as well as movement up the South Fork Skokomish river valley into the Olympic National Park. GMU 636 was closed to all elk hunting in the mid-90s for conservation reasons and later opened on a limited basis to hunting by permit only. Although we do not have a current estimate, anecdotal data suggests the elk population in the GMU 636 is likely below management objectives.

Elk in GMU 651 are distributed across the GMU roughly among 13 non-migratory sub-herds; however herd size/number remains dynamic. Although we do not have a current estimate, anecdotal data suggests the elk population in the GMU 651 is likely below management objectives.

Additionally, the WDFW management goal is to maintain 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows in the pre-season or 12 to 20 bulls per 100 cows in the post-season (WDFW 2008). Ideally, bull ratios would be collected when all age-classes of bulls are freely intermixed with cows, providing the least biased estimate of bull to cow ratios. However, sightability of bulls can be influenced by bull behavior. During pre- and post-rut periods, mature bulls are often segregated from cow/calf groups reducing the likelihood of their detection during aerial surveys. Conversely, during the rut mature bulls may exclude other bulls from cow/calf groups due to social intolerance of rutting bulls toward each other. Thus bull to cow ratios collected during pre- and post-season surveys are likely minimum estimates. Bull to cow ratios in District 15 were at or below management objectives in recent years, averaging 38: 100 cows in the fall and 29: 100 cows in the spring for GMU 621 including the Sequim herd; 20: and 18: 100 cows in the fall and spring, respectively in GMU 636; and 15: and 14: 100 cows in the fall and spring, respectively in GMU 651.

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](#).



Photo courtesy of S. Murphie

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

Hunting is influenced by multiple factors, including elk abundance, weather, access, hunting pressure, and hunting season regulations. Most elk hunting in District 15 is by permit designed to minimize hunting pressure or for safety reasons. In 2014, permits are available for all three weapon

types to hunt in GMUs 621 (29 bull permits) and 636 (8 bull permits). Most elk hunting in GMU 624 is accomplished through the Master Hunter program targeting the Sequim herd. General season hunting during the archery and modern firearm seasons is allowed in GMU 651, including a 3-point minimum or antlerless season in Elk Area 6061 for archery hunters. Although both GMUs 627 and 633 are open for general season elk hunting, hunters should avoid these GMUs as no recent observations of elk have been reported for these units.

Hunting pressure is lowest in GMU 636 and highest in GMU 651. Many of the elk herds spend a considerable amount of time on small private land parcels often associated with pastures, thus access to hunt may be limited in some areas. Further, local timber companies are starting to require an access permit to hunt their timber lands. For hunters looking for areas with the least amount of pressure and little to no private land access issues, we recommend applying for an elk permit in GMU 636 and hunting the upper Wynoochee valley area or in GMU 621 and hunting mostly DNR land near the Lilliwaup Swamp. Both of these areas will require some effort to hunt, as motorized access is often limited, but because of this the hunting pressure can be less.

Tribal hunting occurs in all three GMUs and often accounts for 50% or more of the total elk harvest in District 15 (see Figure 2). Thus the actual hunting pressure in these units is greater than WDFW hunting season statistics and permit levels might suggest.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Elk and hunter numbers are not likely to fluctuate dramatically between years and the 2014 hunting season regulations and permit levels have not changed much. There are 29 permits available for GMU 621 hunters (9 archery, 4 muzzleloader and 16 rifle). Average hunter success in this unit can be a little misleading because of the small permit levels, but 5-year averages by weapon type are 22% success for archery, 27% for muzzleloaders, and 37% for rifle hunters; actual success has been reported as low as 0% in some years. There are 7 permits available for GMU 636 elk hunters (2 archery, 2 muzzleloader and 3 rifle). Average hunter success in this unit can be a little misleading because of the small permit levels, but 5-year averages by weapon type are 17% for archery, 0% for muzzleloaders, and 30% for rifle hunters; actual success is often 0% in some years. General season hunting during the archery and modern firearm seasons is allowed in GMU 651, including a 3-point minimum or antlerless season in Elk

Area 6061 for archery hunters. One quality bull permit is available to rifle hunters in GMU 651 with a 5-year average success of 50%.

The number of elk harvested in GMUs 621, 624, 636, and 651 is shown in Figure 2, while general season trend data for hunter numbers and success in GMU 651 is presented in Figures 3 and 4.

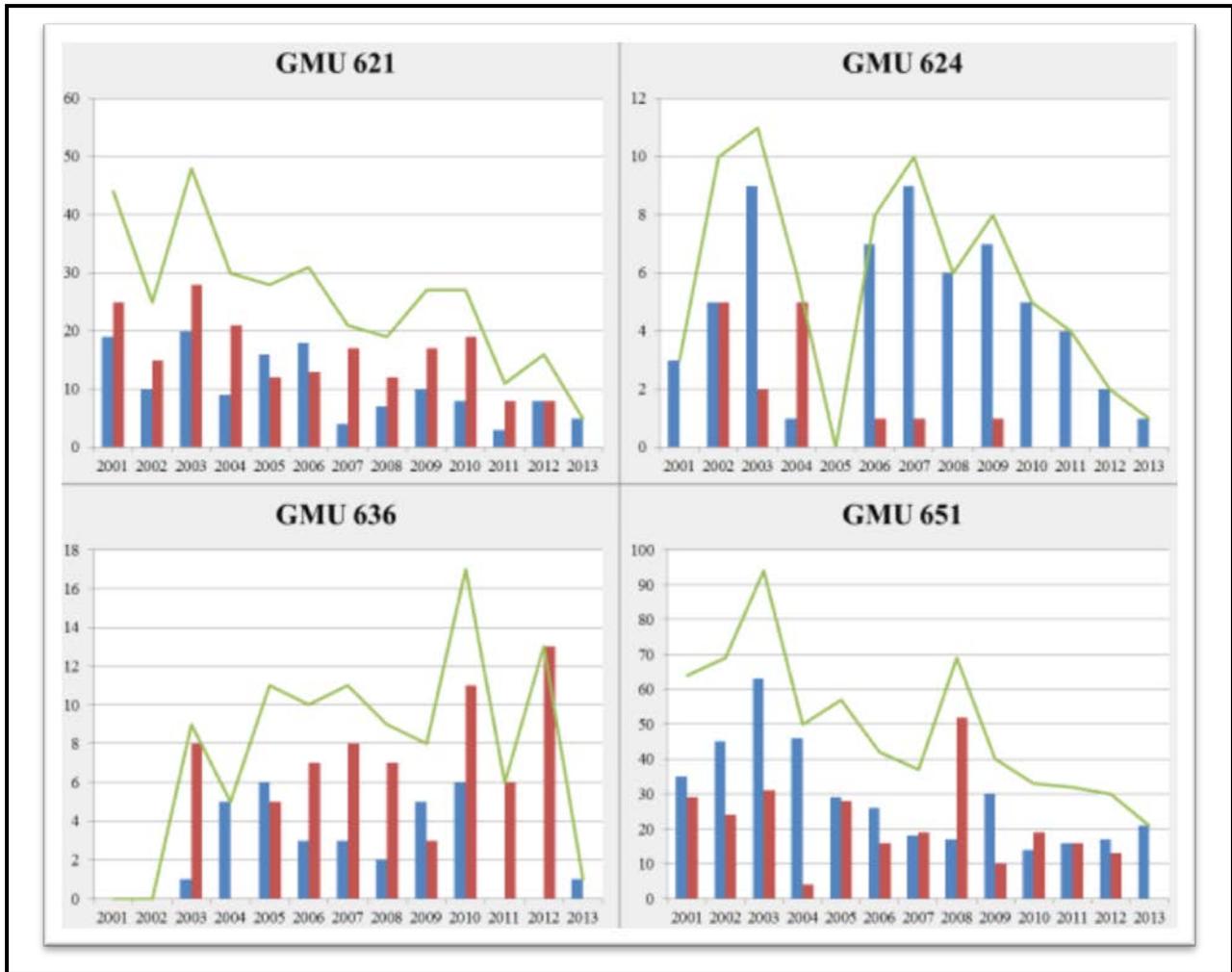


FIGURE 2. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STATE (BLUE), TRIBAL (RED), AND ALL ELK COMBINED (GREEN) HARVESTED DURING 2001–2013. HARVEST TOTALS INCLUDE GENERAL AND PERMIT SEASONS. TRIBAL HARVEST WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2013.

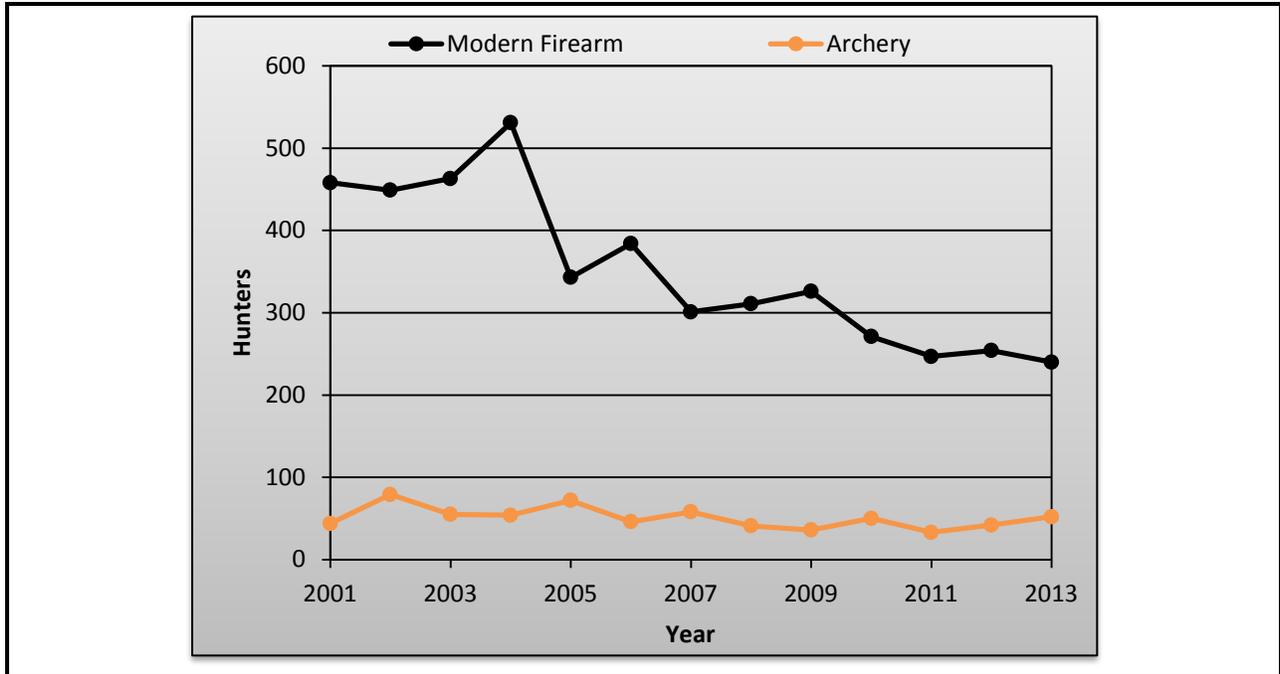


FIGURE 3. TRENDS IN ELK HUNTER NUMBERS DURING THE GENERAL MODERN FIREARM (BLACK) AND ARCHERY (ORANGE) SEASONS IN GMU 651, 2001–2013.

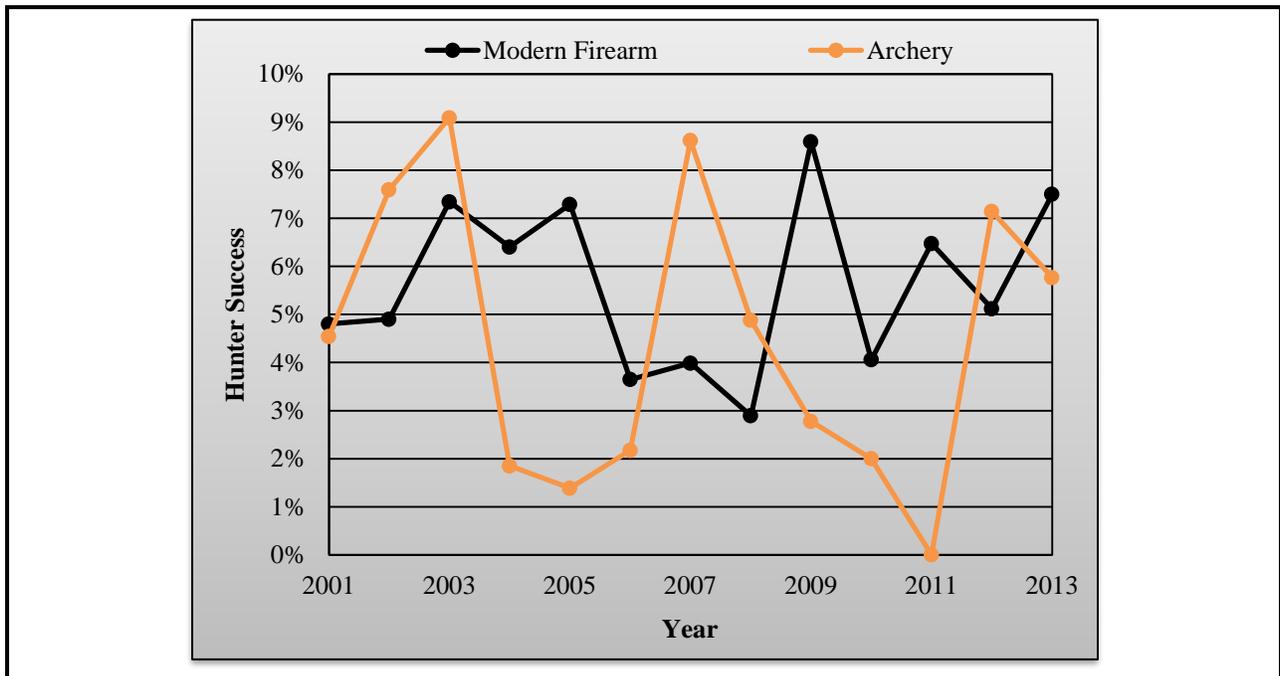


FIGURE 4. TRENDS IN HUNTER SUCCESS RATES DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM (BLACK) AND ARCHERY (ORANGE) ELK SEASONS IN GMU 651, 2001–2013.

ELK AREAS

There are two Elk Areas that occur in District 15: Elk Area 6061 (Twin Satsop) and Elk Area 6071 (Dungeness). Elk Area 6061 was established primarily to aid in addressing chronic elk damage issues, while Elk Area 6071 was established to limit elk hunting for safety reasons.

Current hunting regulations allow the harvest of 3-point minimum bull or antlerless elk during the general early archery season in EA 6061; while elk hunting in EA 6071 is usually conducted through the Master Hunter program on a limited basis.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. The number of muzzleloader permits in GMU 636 was decreased to 2 permits.
2. The number of archery permits in GMU 621 was increased to 9 permits
3. **Private timber companies in District 15 are going to fee access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Hunters should be aware of these changes and are advised to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the company's current policy. See private lands access section below for more information.**

BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

In response to the increasing trend of reports of elk with hoof disease, 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. Elk afflicted with hoof disease commonly show severely overgrown and deformed claws, and marked emaciation. The cause of this condition is believed to be associated with infectious treponeme bacteria, which have been linked to digital dermatitis in domestic sheep and cattle. Although most reports have come from areas south of District 15, at least one hunter has reported observing elk with symptoms and WDFW has confirmed the presence of hoof disease in one elk in GMU 651.

Hunters who 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/) or by [clicking here](#).

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



A successful District 15 deer hunter.

Black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) are the only species of deer that occur in District 15 and are managed to maintain productive populations, while providing for multiple uses; including recreational, educational, and aesthetic (WDFW Game Management Plan 2008). District 15 includes GMUs 621, 624, 627, 633, 636, and 651. Buck harvest is generally any antlered buck, although the

Skokomish (636) GMU is managed as a 2 point or better unit. Antlerless harvest is limited to certain weapon types and/or by permit.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 15. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and CPUE are used as surrogates to a formal index or estimate of population size. 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.

Based on all available harvest data, deer populations appear to be stable or increasing in PMU 64 and stable or declining in PMU 63 and 65. 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](#).

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

In 2014, there are ample general season deer hunting opportunities for archery, muzzleloader, and rifle hunters in District 15 (Table 2). Field observations and recent harvest trends suggest good deer hunting potential exists in GMUs 621, 627, and 633. GMU 651 remains a popular hunting unit. Good deer hunting can be found in lower elevation habitats in GMU 636, but deer density in this unit appears to drop dramatically in the higher elevations; we suspect this is largely related to habitat quality and available forage.

TABLE 2. 2014 GENERAL HUNTING SEASONS AND LEGAL DEER DESCRIPTIONS FOR GMUS 621, 624, 627, 633, 636, AND 651.

2014 General Deer Seasons						
GMU	Modern Firearm		Archery		Muzzleloader	
	Early	Late	Early	Late	Early	Late
621	Oct. 11-31, Any buck	Nov. 13-16, Any Buck	Sep. 1-26, Any Deer	Closed	Closed	Closed
624	Oct. 11-31, Any buck	Nov. 13-16, Any Buck	Sep. 1-26, Any Deer	Nov. 26-31, Any Buck	Sep. 27-Oct 5, Any Buck	Closed
627	Oct. 11-31, Any buck	Nov. 13-16, Any Buck	Sep. 1-26, Any Deer	Nov. 26-31, Any Deer	Sep. 27-Oct 5, Any Deer	Nov. 27-Dec. 15, Any Deer
633	Oct. 11-31, Any buck	Nov. 13-16, Any Buck	Sep. 1-26, Any Deer	Nov. 26-31, Any Deer	Closed	Nov. 27-Dec. 15, Any Deer
636	Oct. 11-31, 2-point min.	Nov. 13-16, 2-point min.	Sep. 1-26, 2-point min. or antlerless	Nov. 26-31, 2-point min. or antlerless	Sep. 27-Oct 5, 2-point min.	Closed
651	Oct. 11-31, Any buck	Nov. 13-16, Any Buck	Sep. 1-26, Any Deer	Closed	Closed	Nov. 27-Dec. 15, Any Deer

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON



It is typically uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 15, where severe winter weather conditions that result in large winter die-offs rarely occur. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2013 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 15 and what they can expect to encounter with regard to hunter success and hunter numbers.



FIGURE 5. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BUCK (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS (GREEN) DEER HARVESTED DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASONS COMBINED, 2001–2013. TOTAL DEER HARVEST (BLACK LINE) INCLUDES HARVEST FROM ALL SOURCES. 2013 DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY TRIBAL HARVEST.

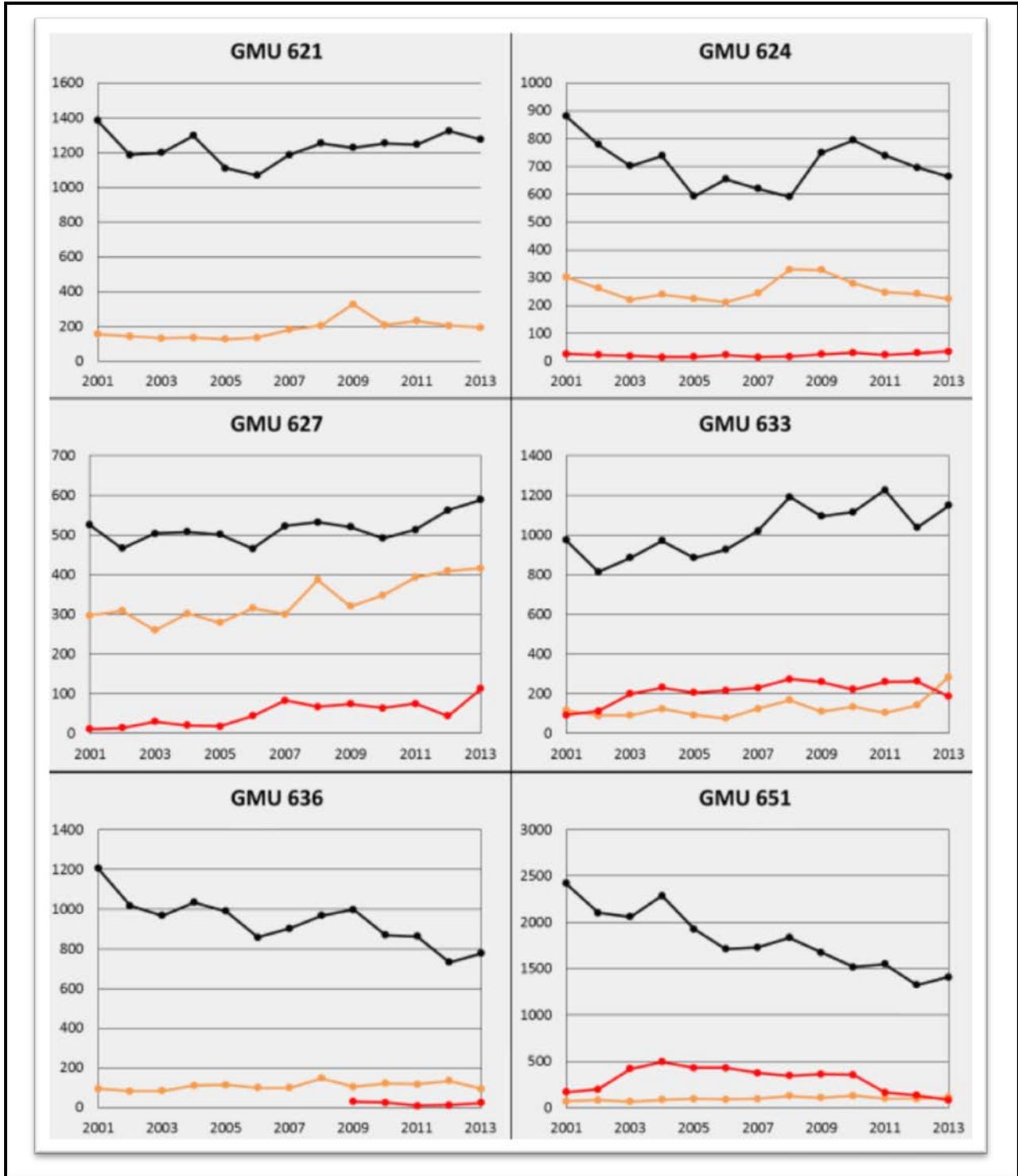


FIGURE 6. TRENDS IN HUNTER NUMBERS DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), AND MUZZLELOADER (RED) DEER SEASONS IN DISTRICT 15, 2001–2013.

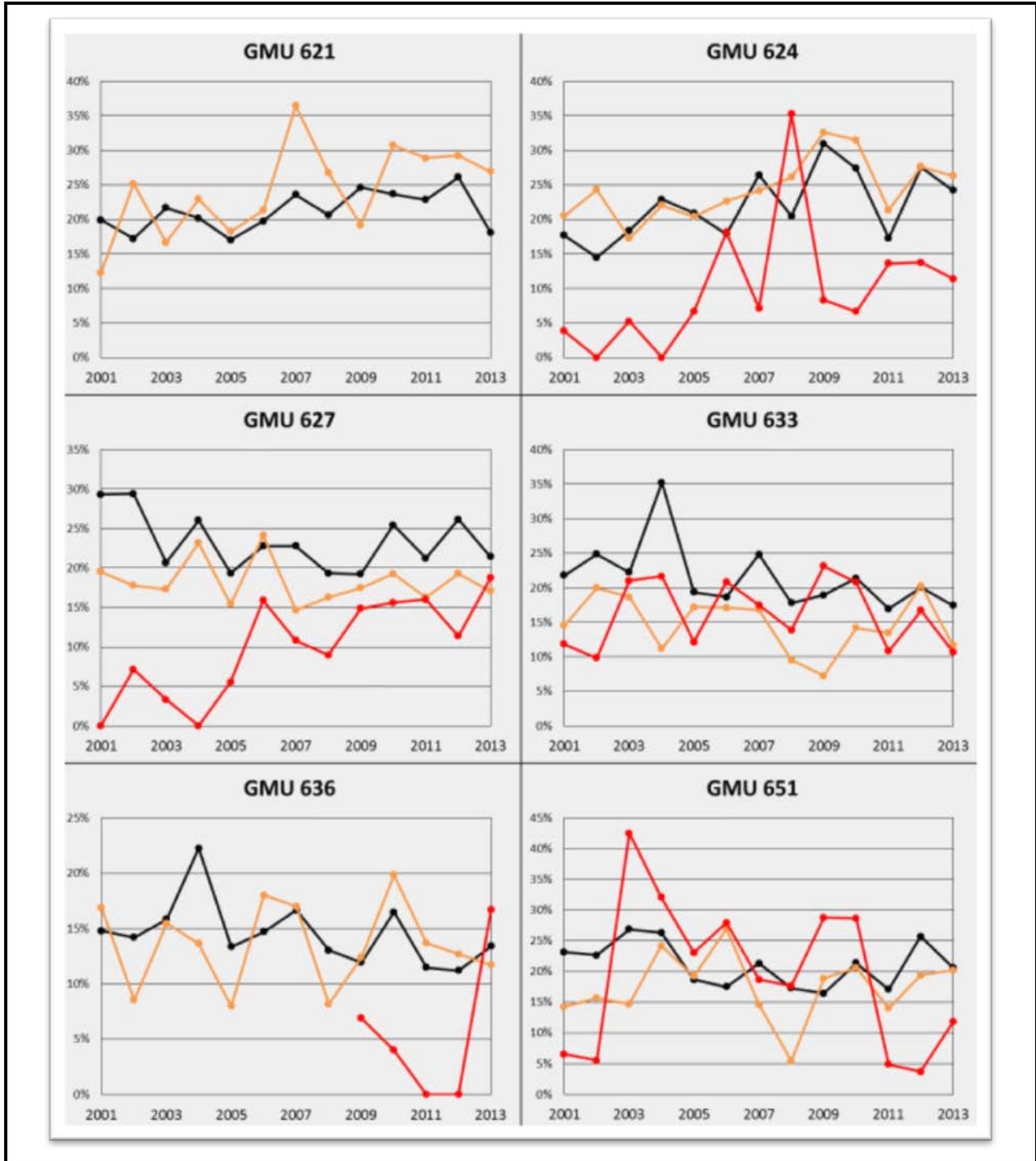


FIGURE 7. TRENDS IN HUNTER SUCCESS RATES DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), AND MUZZLELOADER (RED) DEER SEASONS IN DISTRICT 15, 2001–2013.

DEER AREAS

Deer Area 6020 is located in GMU 624 and was established primarily to aid in addressing chronic damage issues. In 2014, 40 second deer permits are available for archery hunters in this area.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

- 1. Private timber companies in District 15 are going to fee access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Hunters should be aware of these changes and are advised to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the company's current policy. See private lands access section below for more information.**

MOUNTAIN GOAT

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Mountain goats were introduced into the Olympic National Park (ONP) from Alaska in the 1920s. During the 1980s, the Olympic National Park relocated 407 goats to other ranges outside the Olympics, and from 1983 until 1997, 119 goats were taken outside the ONP during legal hunting seasons (Jenkins et al). WDFW has not had a hunting season for goats in the Olympics since 1997. We have reports of at least 2 goats taken by tribal hunters in 2013 near Mt. Elinor. The most recent estimate of goat abundance for the ONP was 344 ± 72 in 2011 and increasing (Jenkins et al). WDFW conducted a survey primarily outside the ONP, which included areas within the 2014 goat hunt units, and returned a sightability corrected estimate of 66 (90% CI: 51-81) total goats, 42 (90% CI: 32-52) of which were adults.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Six goat permits will be offered during the 2014 hunting season split between two goat areas; Mount Washington and the Brothers. These permit hunts should be viewed as management hunts, with the principal management objective to reduce goat numbers in areas where conflicts are occurring and in areas adjacent to the ONP.

As with any mountain goat hunt, hunters can expect rugged, strenuous hunting conditions as they pursue goats in the designated Olympic goat hunt units. Although we have little current information on goat distribution and movement, based on our most recent survey effort we suggest hunters focus efforts first in areas near Mount Washington, Mount Pershing, and the Brothers. We suspect the Brothers unit offers the most challenging hunting conditions, as the goats we saw in that unit were right on the ONP boundary and can easily move out of the hunt unit and into the Olympic National Park.

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears occur throughout District 15, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a bear likely occur in GMUs 621, 627 and 636.

District 15 consists of GMUs that are part of the Coastal Black Bear Management Unit (BBMU) (GMUs 621, 636, and 651) and GMUs that are part of the Puget Sound BBMU (GMUs 624, 627, and 633). The current black bear hunting season guidelines for these BBMUs are designed to maintain black bear populations at their current level. 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. The black bear hunting season for all District 15 units is August 1 to November 15, 2014; there are no spring bear hunts in this district. Hunters can purchase up to two bear tags during each license year.

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 15.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

The majority of bear harvest in District 15 comes from hunters killing a bear opportunistically while hunting other species like deer and elk; although some hunters do specifically hunt bears. Hunter success in District 15 has averaged 6% in the Coastal BBMU and 7% in the Puget Sound BBMU over the last 5 years. However, hunter success is likely higher for those hunters that specifically hunt bears versus those that buy a bear tag just in case they see one while they are deer or elk hunting.

Overall, annual bear harvest during the general bear season in District 15 has declined during the last two hunting seasons in both the Coastal and Puget Sound BBMUs (Figure 8). At the GMU level, most bears will be harvested in GMUs 621 and 627 (Figure 9). Harvest numbers during the 2013 season compared to short-term (5-year) averages suggests bear harvest has been increasing in GMU 627 (Figure 9). Overall, we expect similar harvest and success rates during the 2014 season.

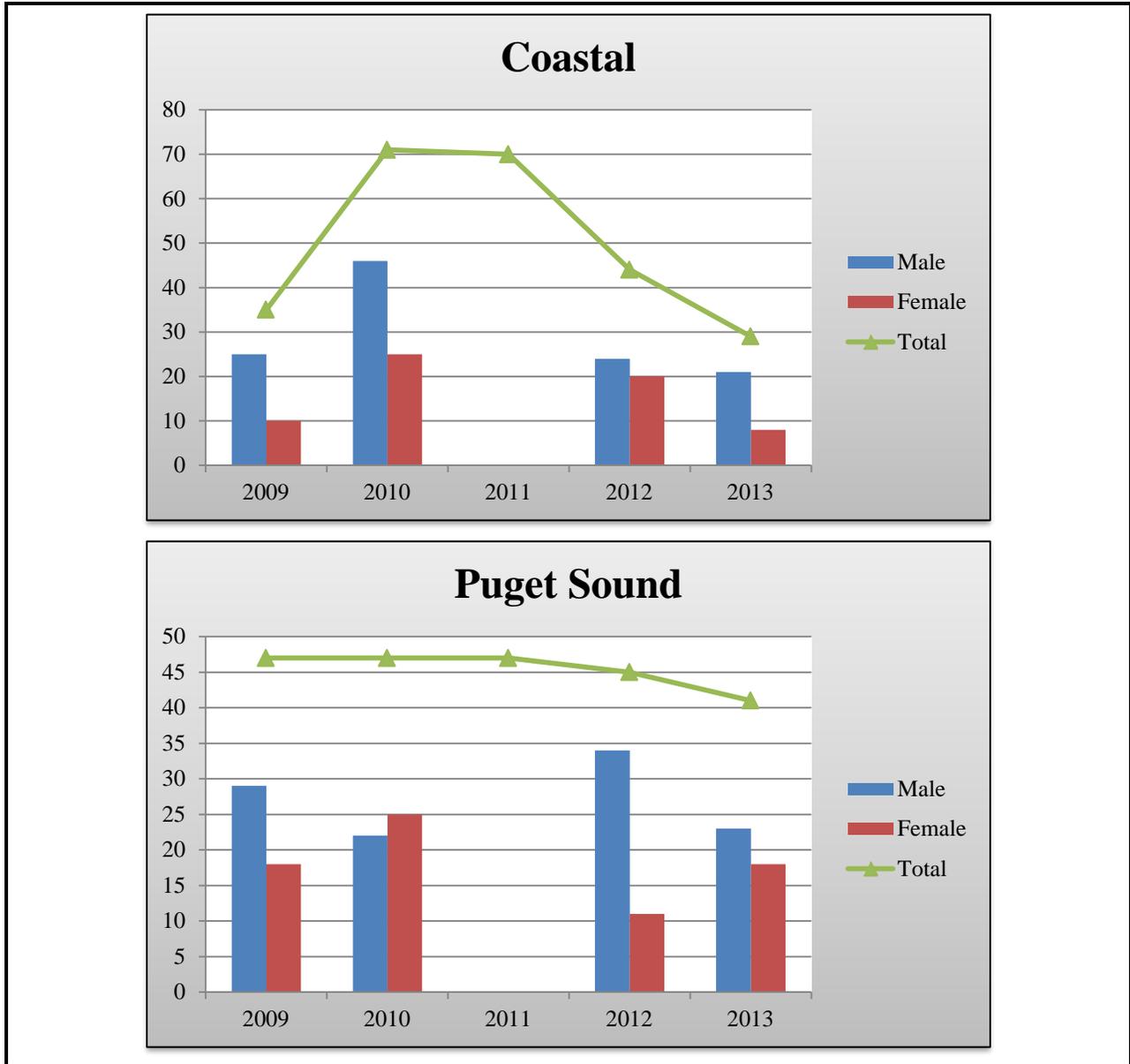


FIGURE 8. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 15, 2001–2013. BEARS REMOVED FOR SAFETY REASONS ARE NOT INCLUDED. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

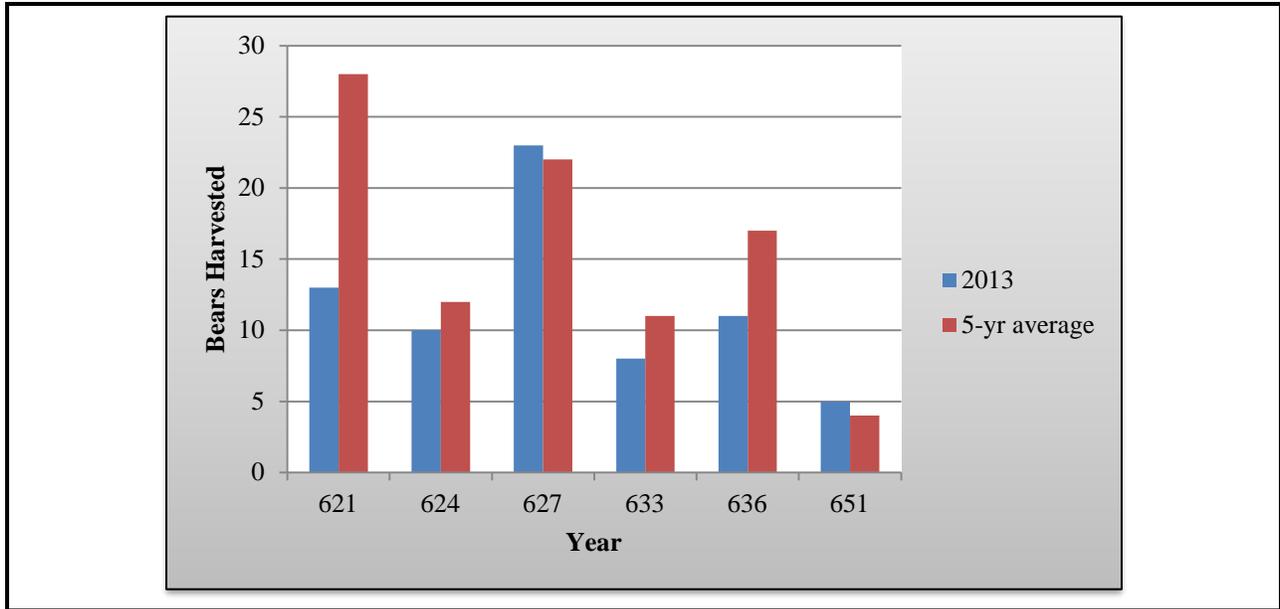


FIGURE 9. THE NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU DURING THE 2013 SEASON IN DISTRICT 15. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE FOR TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2013 season.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars occur throughout District 15 and hunting seasons are established with the primary objective of maintaining a stable cougar population. Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed the way it managed cougar harvest in Washington by shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougars harvested. A standardized approach is now used for establishing harvest guidelines based on habitat availability and a standard general season. The intent was to have a longer season, without any weapon restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest



Photo courtesy of S. Murnhie

reached or exceeded a harvest guideline.

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 15 are provided in Table 8.

For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the WDFW’s website or [click here](#).

TABLE 8. HARVEST GUIDELINES AND THE REPORTED 2013-14 HARVEST FOR THE 3 COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 15.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline 2014	Harvest Guideline 2013	2013-2014 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	4-5	4
642, 648, 651	6-8	6-8	6
621, 624, 627, 633	None	None	5

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Most cougar harvest comes from opportunistic encounters while hunters are pursuing deer, elk, or other activities, thus total cougar harvest in District 15 can vary from year to year (Figure 11). Since 1997, the number of cougars harvested annually in District 15 has averaged 6.

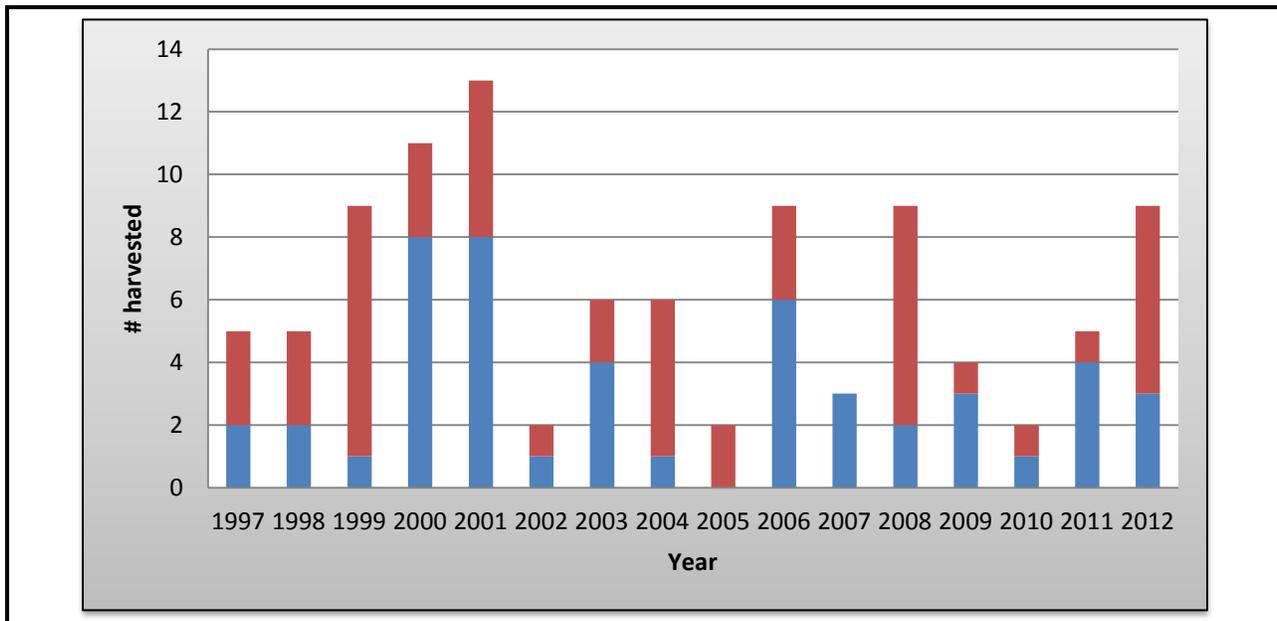


FIGURE 11. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MALE (BLUE) AND FEMALE (RED) COUGARS HARVESTED IN DISTRICT 15, 1997–2012.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2013 season.

DUCKS

COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 15. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, and common goldeneye are also present on fresh and salt water. Nesting wood ducks can be located throughout the district early in the season and can provide a unique hunting opportunity. Sea ducks including scoters, Barrow’s goldeneye, long-tailed ducks, canvasbacks, and harlequin ducks occur in Hood Canal as well as other saltwater areas.

Mallards are the most abundant species of duck in Washington and constitute the vast majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically $\geq 50\%$). However, the most abundant species of duck in District 15 is American wigeon.

POPULATION STATUS

Although some mallards and wood ducks nest in the district, the number of ducks that occur in District 15 during the hunting seasons is most strongly related to the status of breeding duck populations in Alaska. The 2014 breeding population survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 3.5 million ducks, which represents a 6% increase from the 2013 estimate of 3.3 million, and a 5% decrease from the long-term average of 3.7 million.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

With an increase in the breeding population in Alaska, hunters should expect great hunting opportunities in District 15 during the 2014 season. As in recent years, hunter success will be largely driven by rainfall and storm events during the waterfowl season. A lack of flooded farm fields can sharply reduce hunting opportunity in District 15.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Public hunting access exists and at the mouths of the Duckabush, Quilcene and Union rivers. Hunting at the Short Farm just south of Chimacum will be expanded this year, but it remains unknown if funding will be available to lease access in the Skokomish Valley and the Shine Wetland. However, many of the undeveloped lakes and marshes on the Tahuya Peninsula's DNR land offer an untapped and remote walk-in hunting opportunity for mallards, ringnecks, and scaup. District 15 wildlife biologists hope to continue expanding waterfowl hunting opportunities. Check the WDFW website for locations and restrictions as the season nears.

Due to extensive residential development on the shorelines, saltwater hunting opportunities are limited, especially in Kitsap County. Always check with the Sheriff's Department for county shooting closures before hunting.

Also, be sure to check the 2014 Migratory Waterfowl Regulation Pamphlet for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin and goldeneye) in Western Washington.

GEESE

COMMON SPECIES

The sub-species of Canada geese that are most likely to be found in District 15 include western, lesser, Taverner's, and cackler. White-fronted and occasionally snow geese can also be encountered. The goose most likely to be harvested is the larger western which breeds in the district and can be found year around.

POPULATION STATUS

Like ducks, goose numbers in the district are largely driven by weather. The more severe the weather, the more likely the northern subspecies will be present in our area. The local westerns are stable or slightly increasing.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

Goose hunting opportunities in District 15 are expected to be similar to trends observed during the last few seasons. Most geese are taken on private farm fields and securing permission is essential. When funding exists WDFW biologists attempt to lease fields that regularly attract waterfowl.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Same as listed under ducks.

FOREST GROUSE

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Although grouse occur throughout the district, Mason County offers the most opportunity for the hunter. The Olympic National Forest and Skokomish valley are two of the more popular grouse hunting areas. Blue (sooty) grouse tend to occur in the coniferous forests at higher elevations, while ruffed grouse can occur throughout the district in coniferous as well as mixed forests. In the fall, either species can be found in clearcuts feeding on berries from salal, Oregon grape, and huckleberry.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not conduct any standardized or formal surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 15. 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 CPUE is the best indicator of population trend. Unfortunately, Jefferson County is split with another district so getting actual harvest data and hunter numbers from the hunter reports is impossible. However, field observations by district biologists suggest that populations will be similar to last year.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

The total number of grouse harvested in District 15 has gradually been declining since 2001. However, so have hunter numbers, especially over the past few years. There can be several reasons for this, but the high cost of gasoline and limited vehicle access has certainly affected hunter participation. Those hunters willing to walk or bicycle behind the industrial timberland gates can still experience some excellent grouse hunting.



PHEASANTS

There are no viable populations of wild pheasants in District 15. All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 15 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. Three of those sites (Hunter Farms, Belfair, and the Sgt. Mak site) occur in District 15.

Release site locations can be found at Go Hunt on the WDFW website or at the Peninsula Birdhunters Association website at <http://birdhunters.homestead.com/>. The new Sgt. Mak release site near Mason Lake will be replacing the Grapeview site in 2014. Maps and information will be available later this summer at the above websites.

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, under power lines, and in tall stands of scotch 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 parcels on the Tahuya Peninsula northwest of Belfair and the industrial timberlands between Shelton, Matlock, and McCleary. Walk-in opportunities are also numerous on timber company clearcuts around Mason Lake. The time to scout is in the spring and early summer when the males are quite vocal.

TURKEYS

The turkeys that can be found in District 15 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 15. Occasionally single birds are spotted but this district cannot be recommended as a place to bag a turkey.

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.



HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

Band-tailed pigeon harvest in District 15, 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 15 occurs mostly in Mason County which averages 48 birds taken per year.

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.

Totals from surveys at mineral spring sites along Hood Canal this July were down slightly from last year but similar to the average over the past decade.

SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Since band-tail seasons were re-opened in 2002, hunters have been required to purchase a migratory bird authorization, report their harvest using harvest cards, and submit that information

to WDFW after the season has closed. These regulations will apply in 2014 as well. At the time of this writing, 2013 harvest and survey data was not available and 2014 seasons had not been set. However, hunters can expect a 9-day season that occurs in mid to late September. Hunters should review the 2014 Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet once it becomes available to confirm season dates and any other regulation changes.

OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species and furbearers that occur in District 15, but were not covered in detail, include eastern cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hares, coyotes, beaver, bobcat, raccoons, river otter, marten, mink, muskrat, and weasels. Additional migratory birds include snipe and coot. Crows are also abundant in District 15.



Photo courtesy of S. Murphie

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Unfortunately, District 15 is not well known for its large amount of public land opportunities. However, public land opportunities do exist on lands administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

New for 2014 is a web application showing the Washington State Public Lands Inventory provided by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. To access this map go to <http://publiclands.smartime.com/#Map>.

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

GENERAL INFORMATION

The vast majority of hunting opportunities, especially for big-game and upland birds, occur on private industrial forestlands. 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. There has been an increasing trend among timber companies to restrict public access or require an access permit to hunt or recreate on their lands. Access may also be restricted due to the risk of fire danger; this predominately affects early season archery and muzzleloader hunters. All hunters are encouraged to check ahead of time to determine if any landowner restrictions apply to the area they plan to hunt.

BASIC ACCESS RULES

Specific rules related to hunter access on private industrial forestlands vary by 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. 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 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. 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.
- ✓ Private forest lands are usually closed to public access during hours of darkness.

Failure to obey landowner rules can result in prosecution for trespass and/or other restrictions from the landowner.

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 15 GMUs. However, type of access varies between motorized and non-motorized access.

The following rating system was developed for District 15 GMUs to give hunters a general idea of what type of access is available in the GMU they are thinking of hunting. Access ratings are specific to the level of motorized access that is allowed and does not refer to the level of access in general. Several GMU’s have some type of fee access areas that grant permit or lease holders a higher level of access. The following ratings are based on a hunter not having a lease or permit. Each GMU was given a rating of excellent, good, or 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. Private timberlands may require an access permit.

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 621 – Olympic Access rating = Good

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. All private agricultural lands require owner permission to hunt.

GMU 624 – Coyle Access rating = Poor

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. 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 = Poor

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, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles except that DNR allows ATV use on designated trails on some of their land in this unit.

GMU 633 – Mason Access rating = Poor

The Mason Unit is best known as an area for deer. DNR has forestland throughout with extensive holdings on the Tahuya Peninsula. However, 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. Whether state or private, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles except that DNR allows ATV use on designated trails on some of their land in this unit.

GMU 636 – Skokomish Access rating = Good

This GMU is a mixture of private timberlands, private lands, and USFS. Elk in this unit are generally found on the lower elevation private agricultural or timberlands. Green Diamond Resources Company is the largest private timberland owner in this unit and they generally open most areas 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 = Good trending to Poor

The primary area accessed by 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. Beginning in 2014, a large portion of their property in this GMU will be open only to those purchasing a recreation access permit. For more information, Green Diamond Resources can be reached at www.greendiamond.com/recreation/ or (360) 427-4737. For other areas behind closed gates, access is by non-motorized means throughout the year.

PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

There are several private landowners in District 15 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 2014 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 on WDFW's Hunter Access website located at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access.

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 15 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. They 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.

Parcel ownership can be accessed in all three counties in District 15 by going to their county assessor's webpage and viewing the parcel maps.

WDFWs 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](#).

2014

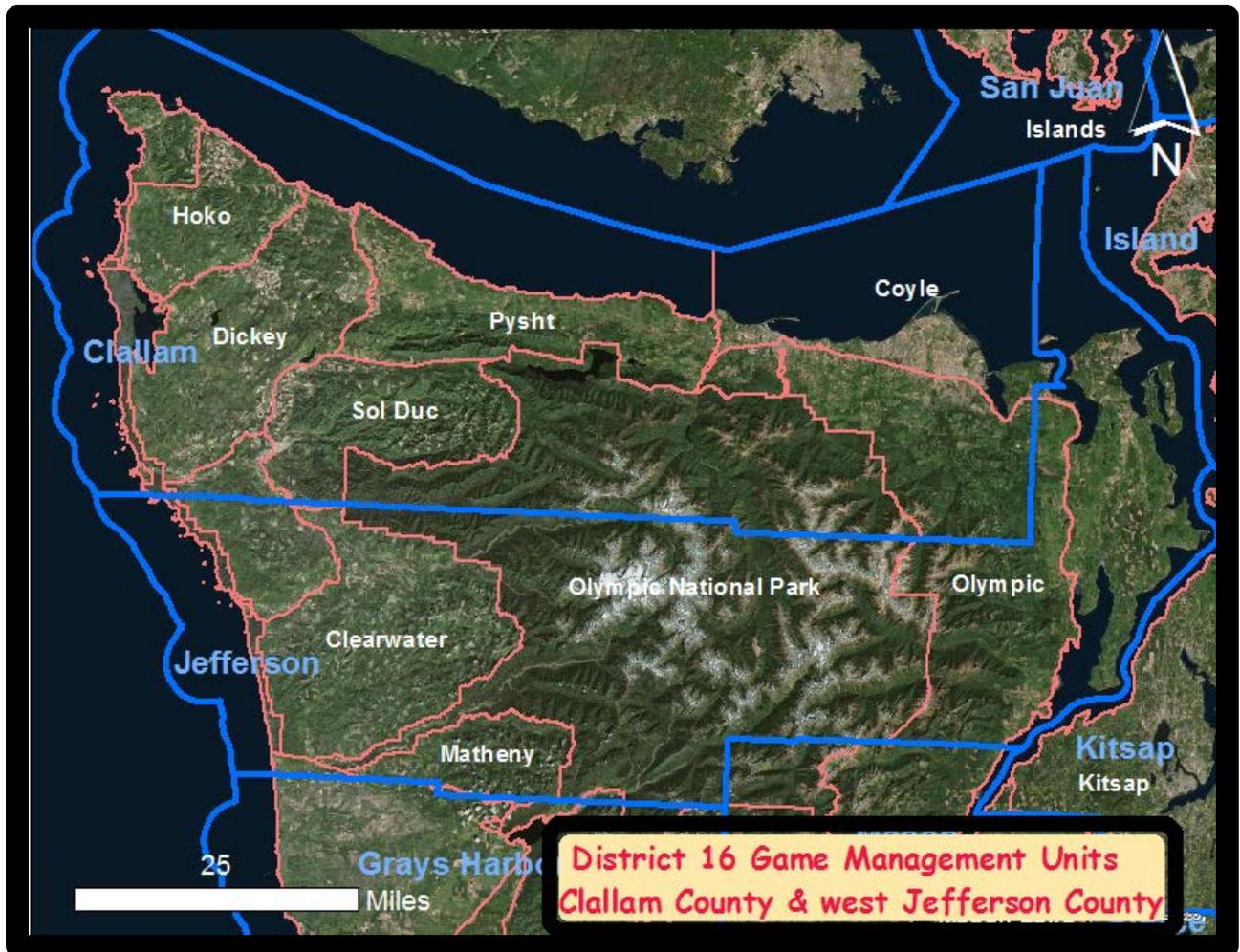
ANITA McMILLAN, District Wildlife Biologist
SHELLY AMENT, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

DISTRICT 16 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Clallam and west Jefferson Counties



WELCOME TO THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA

DISTRICT 16 GENERAL OVERVIEW

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). GMU 624 (Coyle) and GMU 621 (Olympic) extend into District 15 (Mason, Kitsap & East Jefferson County). Here is a link to a [Washington Map of Wildlife Districts with Biologist Contact Information](#). We encourage you to choose District 16 for some or all of your scouting and hunting this season. Please share with us stories and photos of your adventures in District 16 for us to include in future Prospects (anita.mcmillan@dfw.wa.gov)

Each GMU in District 16 has its own unique mix of land ownerships: private residential, private agricultural, private industrial forest, 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 are generally Private industrial forest 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. Various sub-herds of elk are located within District 16. Many elk herds are year around residents that remain in lower elevation habitats. There are some herds that make regular migrations into the higher elevations, typically being within Olympic National Park (ONP) habitat. 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. The eastern portion of the Clearwater (GMU 615) is in DNR ownership and contains higher-elevation areas bordering ONP.

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 private 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.

General Access: With the mixed ownership come the complexities of access rules by various governmental and private entities. Make sure you have acquired the necessary permits to drive on public and private land in the area you have decided to explore.



[Discover Pass](#) for State –DNR & WDFW



[US Forest Service-Interagency Access Pass](#) for US Forest Service.

Keep in mind that many public lands on the Olympic Peninsula are not open to hunting, including Olympic National Park, most all Washington State Parks, & Clallam County Parks. 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. Several other forest industry ownerships have other access systems in place. See more in the [Private Industrial Forestland](#) section. **Hunters are encouraged to scout the areas they are considering hunting and pay close attention to the signs on all roads. Signs are often the landowner’s primary method of informing the public on which areas are open to hunting.**

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. More information can be found on page 83 in [Washington's 2014 Big Game Hunting Seasons & Regulations](#) pamphlet.
- Clallam Co. Code - [Clallam County Firearms Discharge Restrictions](#)
- Jefferson Co. Code - [Jefferson County NO SHOOTING AREAS](#)

BIG GAME

BLACK-TAILED DEER

Black-Tailed Deer: District 16 staff are actively involved in black-tailed deer research. Assignments conducted by District staff for this research includes collaring and tracking of the deer, and locating collared deer mortalities to identify mortality causes. The following links represent some of the collaring in Clallam County:

- [Cliff Rice releasing collared doe.](#)
- [Black-tailed Deer Western Washington Study using GPS collars.](#)

During the capture portion of the study deer were easier to find east of the Elwha. According to Dr. Cliff Rice, the lead Researcher, some of the largest does captured in western Washington were captured east of the Elwha on the lower foothills in a mix of DNR & Private land. Black-tailed deer populations are tracked by evaluating harvest and hunting effort, as well as gathering data on survival, recruitment, and mortality rates using collared deer studies.

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). Biologists, Enforcement Officer Observations, and published reports indicate that deer population numbers and density are generally down throughout the District west of the Elwha. Following is a link to current research in the Hoko GMU: [Black-tailed Deer Research in Hoko GMU](#). “The Makah and Quileute tribes agreed to curtail harvest of antlerless deer in the wake of a study that led biologists to believe that the Olympic Peninsula's black-tailed deer population is declining,” the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission reported.

EASTERN DISTRICT 16: Eastern District 16 includes the northwestern portion of GMU 621 (Olympic) and the northern portion of GMU 624 (Coyle), which extend 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 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 these populations can be observed in groups, especially at low to mid-elevations. In these areas the deer are often perceived to be a nuisance by property owners and agricultural operations, especially in GMU 624 (Coyle). Deer Area 6020 was established years ago to allow harvest of does to help curb the trend of too many deer, encompassing 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 Park land 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.

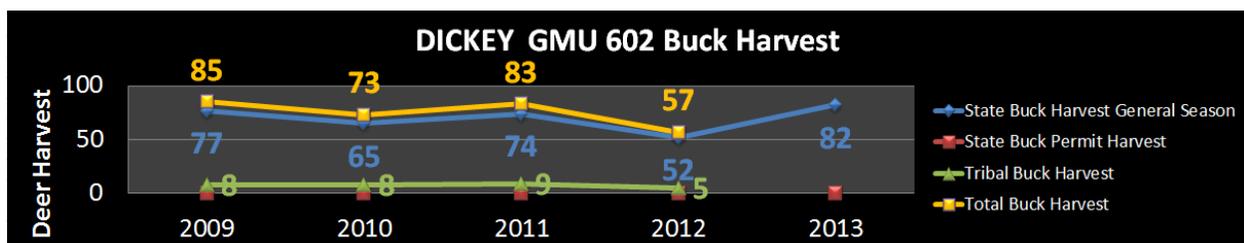
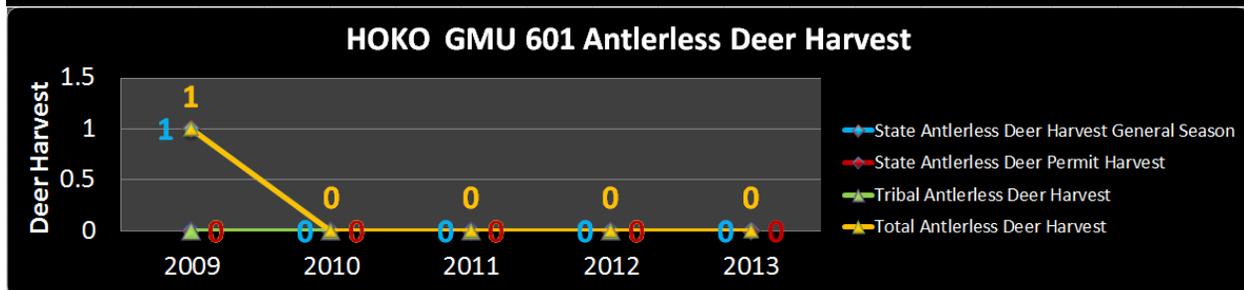
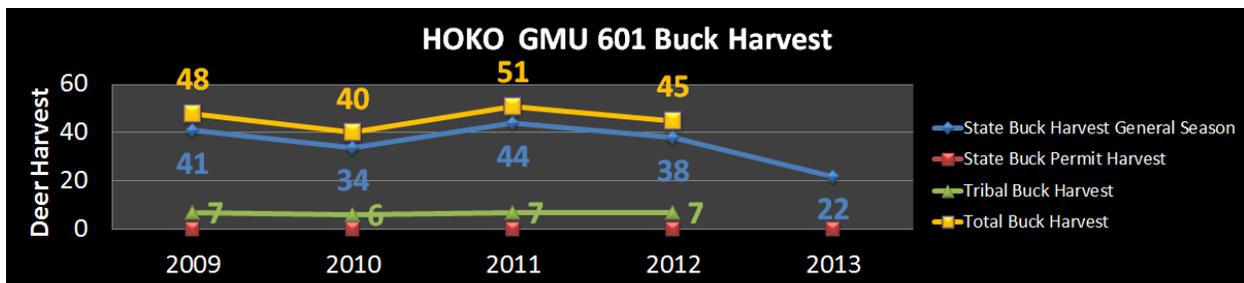
The mid and lower elevations of GMU 621 (Olympic) have high densities of deer as well, with some scattered blocks of DNR ownership that offer hunting on public land. Private industrial timber lands and property managed by DNR are largely gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism, and other problems. 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 or manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

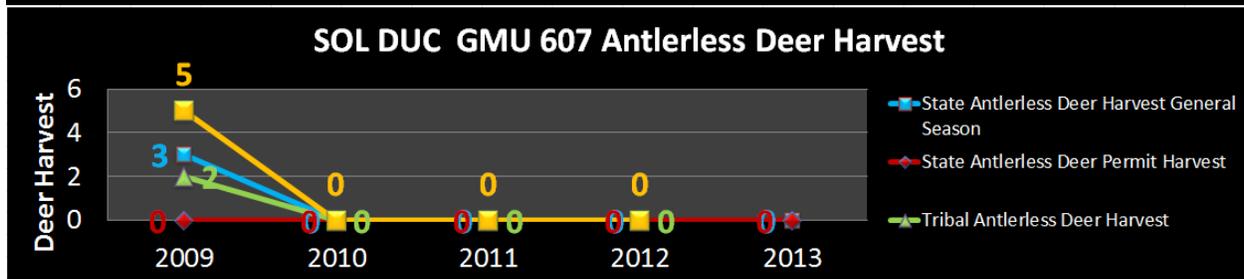
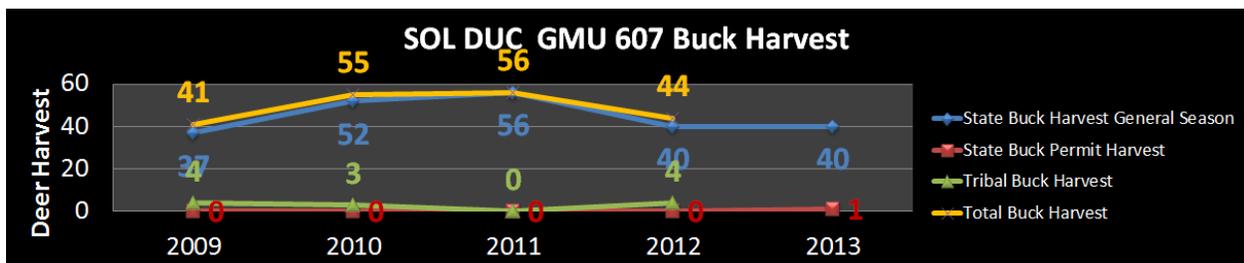
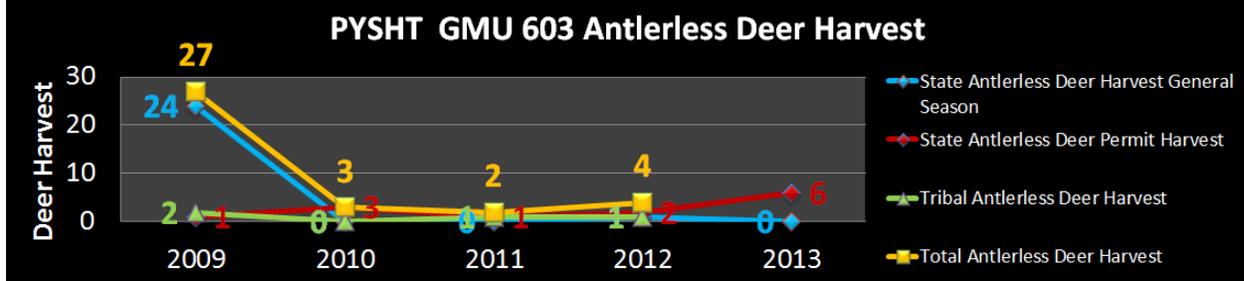
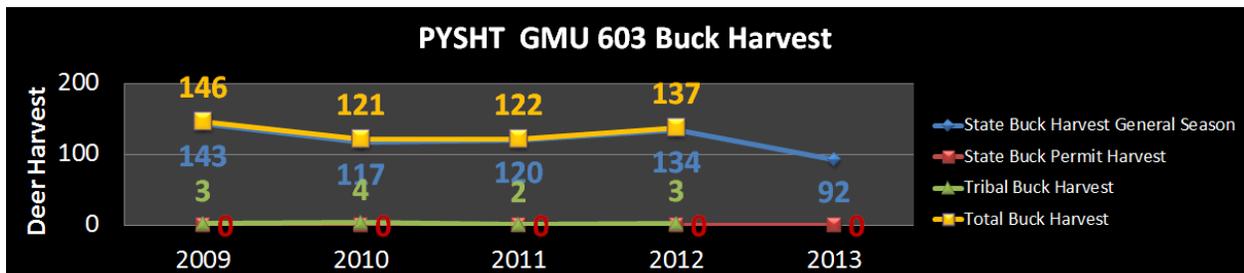
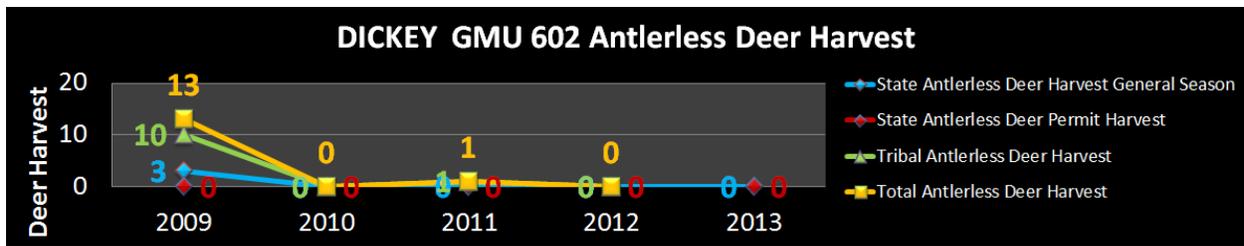
[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.

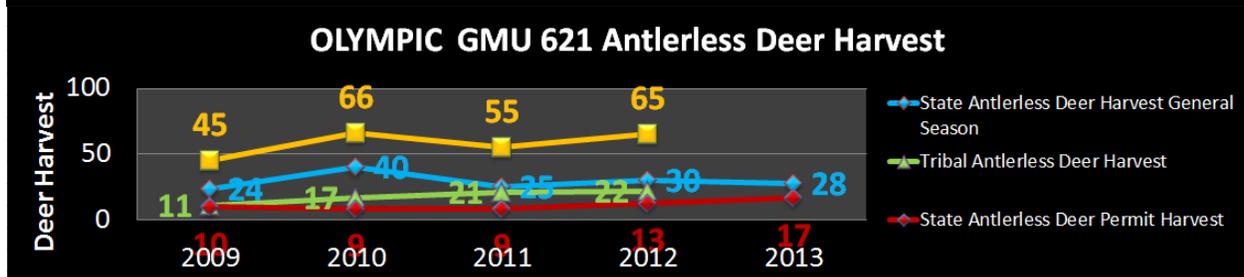
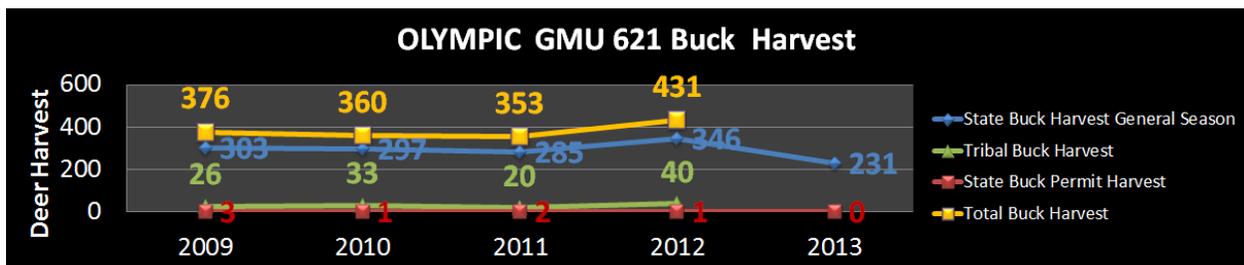
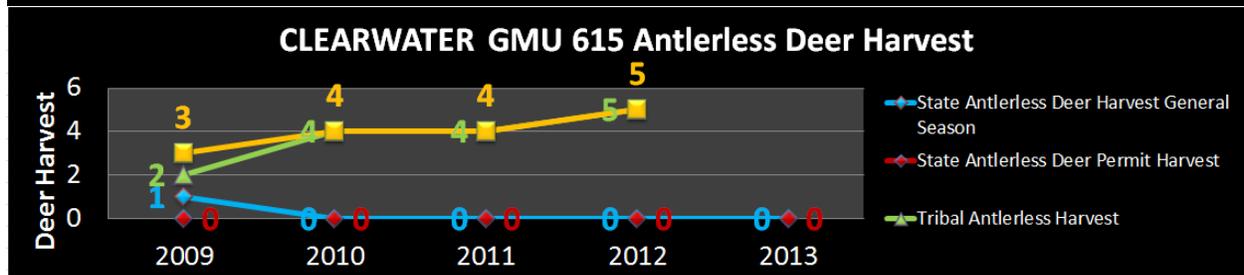
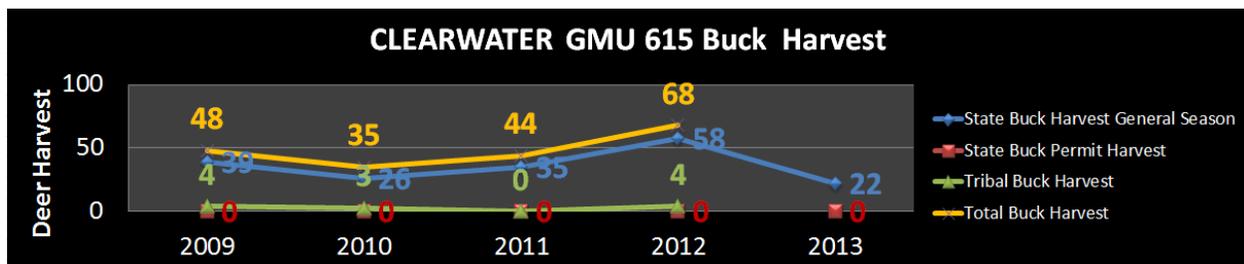
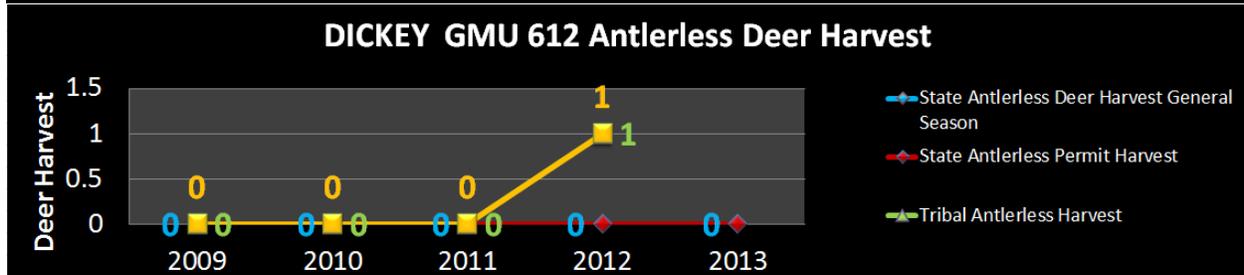
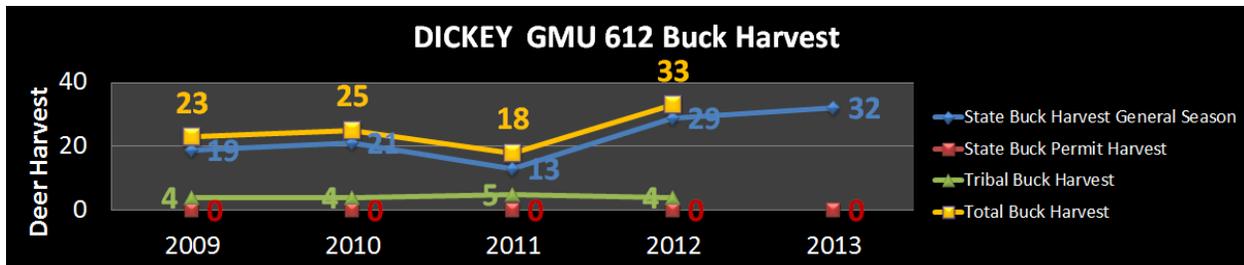
See District 17 Hunting Prospects Deer - Information on Page 13 for an explanation of WDFW's current monitoring of deer population trends.

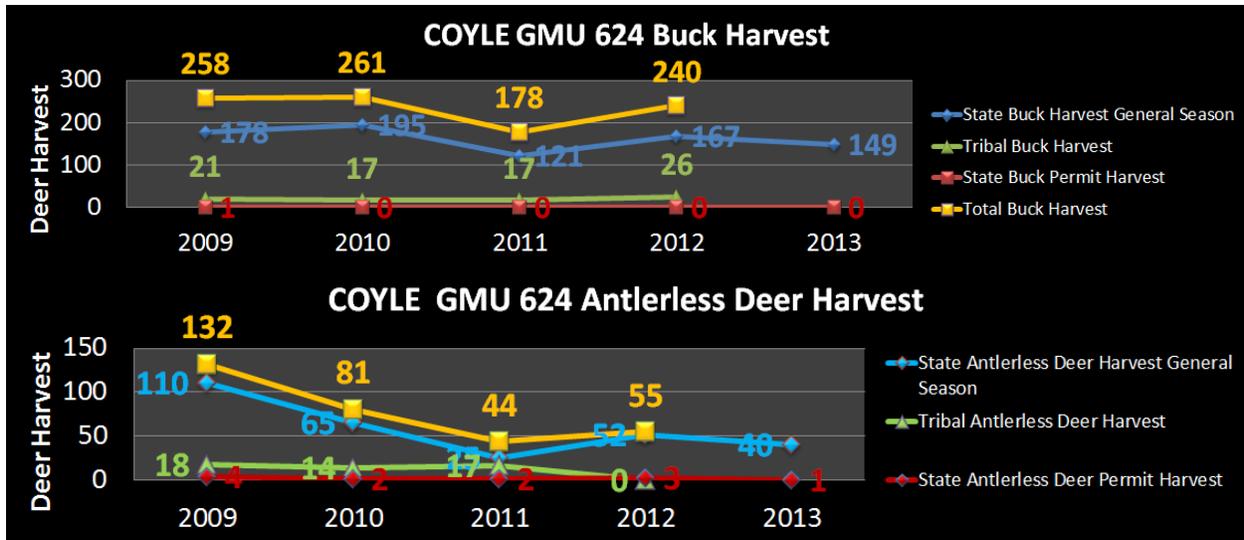
See District 15 Hunting Prospects for more information on GMU 621 (Olympic) and GMU 624 (Coyle).

Following are Harvest Records for GMUs in District 16:









ELK

Elk: The elk within District 16 are Roosevelt elk. There are many cow elk throughout the District with Ear Tags and radio transmitter collars that are used for population monitoring studies. It is possible that you will observe an elk that has a radio collar, and if you see one in an unusual location, or possibly even find a collar, you are encouraged to share that information with the District Biologist.

District 16 contains various sub-herds of the Olympic Elk Herd, one of 10 herds identified in the state. The elk are an important resource that provide significant recreational, aesthetic, cultural, and economic benefits to the people of the state. Based on historical harvest information, elk numbers peaked in the late 1970s with a conservative estimate of about 12,000 elk outside of Olympic National Park. In 2000, the estimated population was approximately 8,600 across all Game Management Units (GMUs) surrounding Olympic National Park. The current estimated population of the Olympic Elk herd is likely lower.

Much of the elk hunting for GMU’s located within the District is restricted to a limited-entry 3pt minimum bull-only harvest. These successfully managed hunts have been producing quality bulls and high hunter success rates. 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 GMU 603 (Pysht) have increased slightly in the past few years.

Hunting seasons have been established to provide recreational opportunity and to be used as a tool for managing elk populations. The eastern District rarely has a report of elk harvest from the general season in GMU 624. Harvest within Elk Area 6071 is limited to Damage Control Hunts using the Master Hunter Elk Hunt Region 6 Special Permits. These hunts are administered by a WDFW designated Hunt Coordinator. Check the [WA Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#) or the

WDFW website for more information. The eastern District elk harvest in GMU 621 (Olympic) is limited to permit and tribal harvest.

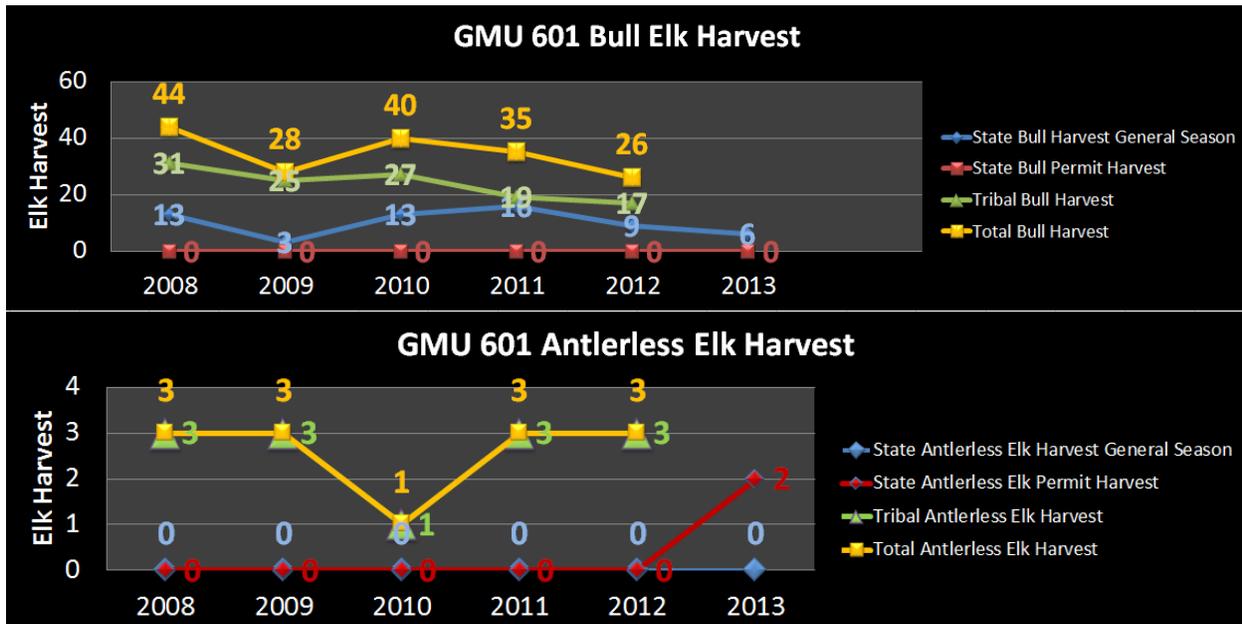
GMU 615 (Clearwater), GMU 602 (Dickey), and GMU 607 (Sol Duc) have the highest elk harvest in District 16. These units contain the largest portion of public land without restricted access.

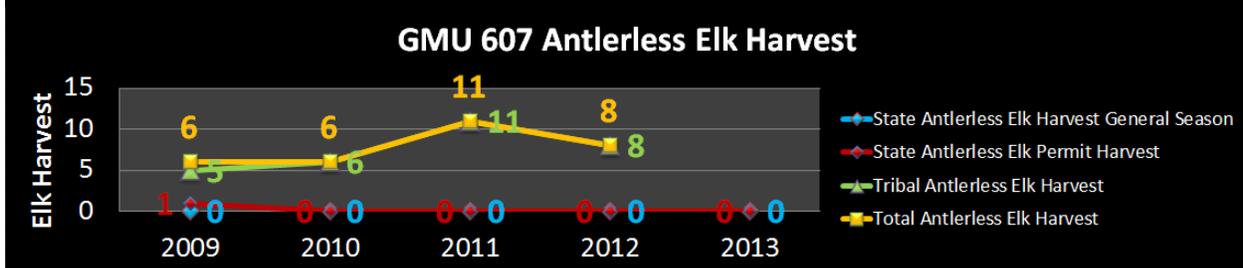
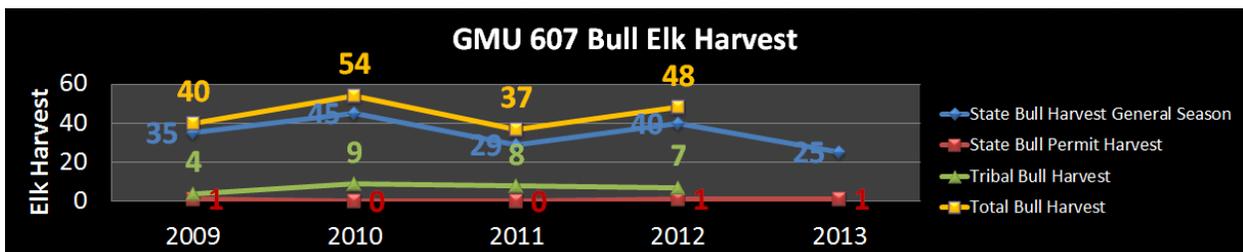
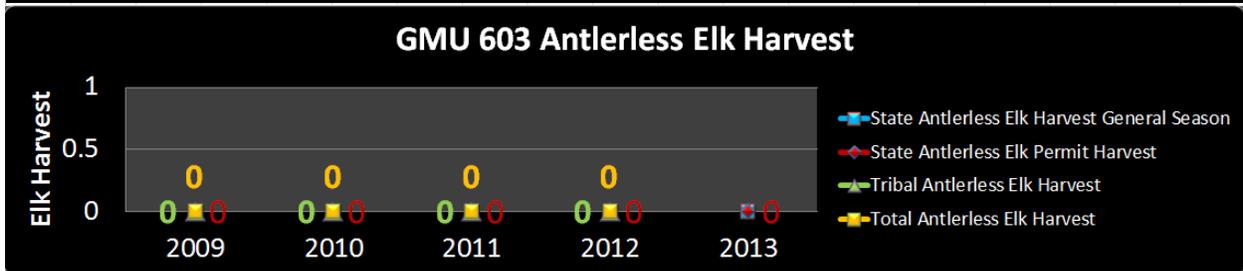
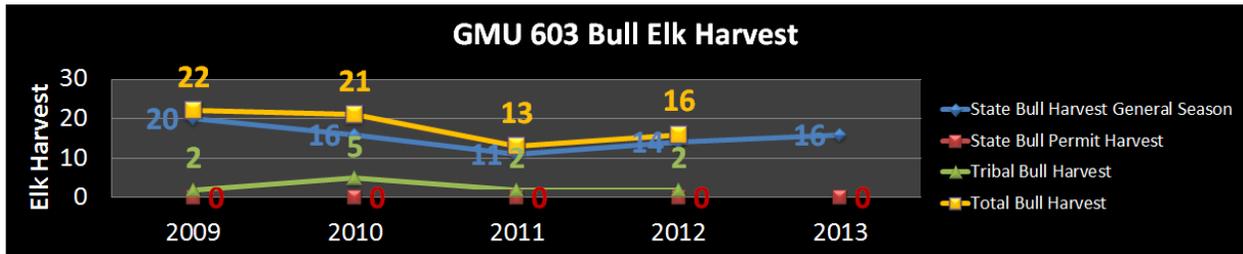
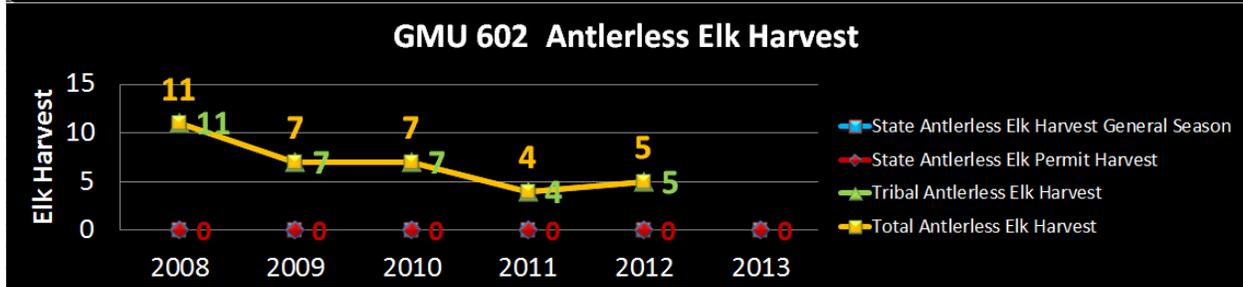
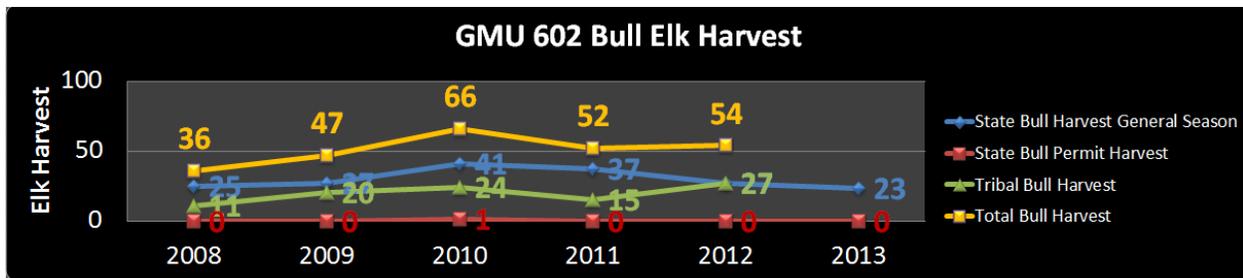
GMU 601(Hoko), GMU 603 (Pysht), and GMU 624 (Coyle) have very limited opportunities for General Season hunters. Most of these units contain private land, and many of the roads on timber lands are gated. Hunting on DNR lands, U.S. Forest Service lands, and private timber lands in other GMU’s within the District can yield good results. However, it is important to note that there are several areas where vehicular access is limited. Hunters would need to obtain permission to hunt on private lands and must obey all posted signs and regulations.

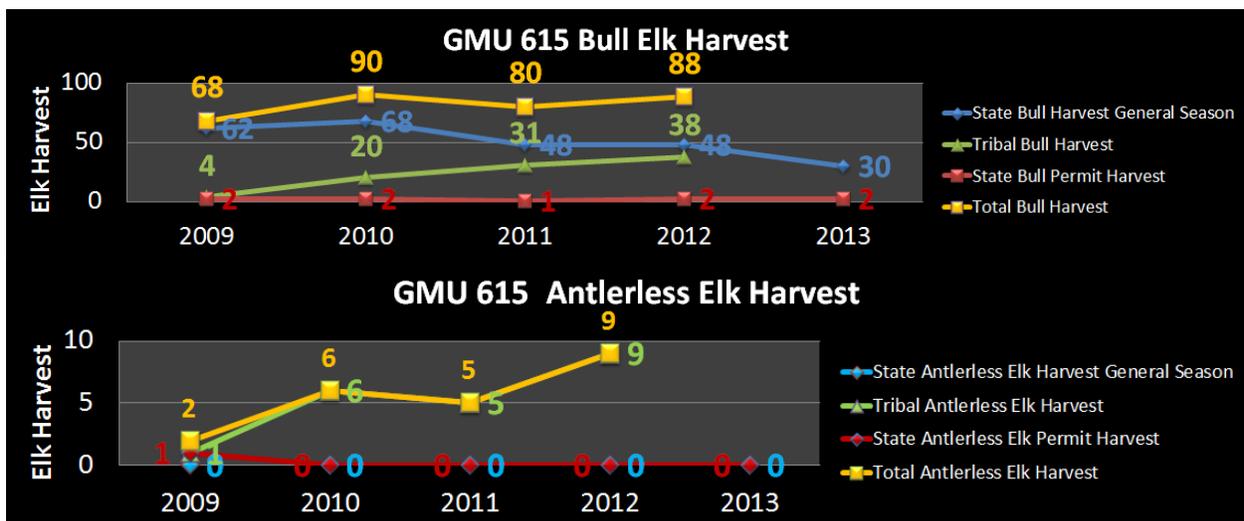
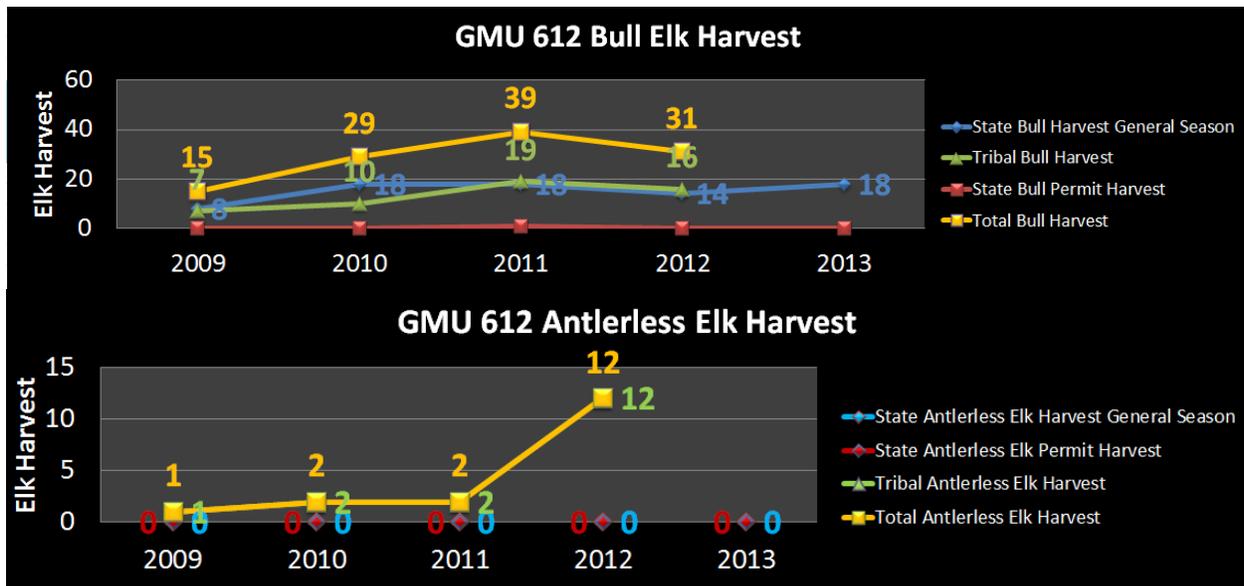
[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for elk based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.

See District 15 Hunting Prospects- Elk information to get information on GMU 621 and GMU 624.

Following are Harvest Records for GMUs in District 16:







BLACK BEAR

Black Bear: District 16 is located nearly entirely within the designated Coastal Black Bear Management Unit. There is, however, a small portion of GMU 624 (Coyle) 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. The 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

Cougar: In 2012, WDFW implemented a change in the cougar hunting season design choosing a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. Cougar seasons will run from September 1 to December 31 for any weapon. After January 1st, 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.

UPLAND BIRDS

PHEASANTS

District 16 does not have viable populations of wild pheasant and there are no longer any pheasant release sites in the District. 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 a suitable release site within District 15 or 16. Please contact [District 15 & 16 Biologists](#) if you have any suggestions. For information on current pheasant release sites check this link to the [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 due to predominately private ownership. Quail, like the deer, thrive in the Dungeness habitats that include a mix of open grass, shrubland, and forest. Some quail hunting opportunities can be found on public lands located in the lower foothills in clearcuts or any early successional habitats. Reported harvest of quail is low in District 16: 24 hunters harvested 167 quail in 2013.

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. Participation in grouse hunting in District 16 has declined since 2009, when Clallam County harvest peaked at 6350 by 1202 hunters and Jefferson County harvest peaked at 3839 grouse by 1502 hunters. Annual harvest totals for Clallam County has increased since 2011 when only 1610 were reported harvested. For 2013, the harvest was 2942 by 887 hunters. Jefferson County harvest continues to drop with 889 harvested by 628 hunters in 2013. Success continues to be fairly stable, as harvest per day hunted remains between 0.4 and 0.5 grouse.

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.

WILD TURKEYS

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

MIGRATORY BIRDS

DOVE

Dove: District 16 has not been a major dove hunting area, although eastern Clallam County has a larger dove population. In the last few years participation has begun to increase with a report of 16 hunters harvesting 176 dove in 2013. Following is a link to the Dove Status Report: [USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status 2014 Report](#)

BAND-TAILED PIGEON

Band-tailed Pigeon: Band-tailed pigeons were abundant in District 16 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 are most prevalent in the district along marine estuaries, shorelines, and 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 a band-tailed pigeons harvest card. It is mandatory to report all harvest to improve management of the species. You can find out more about the population monitoring and harvests in the following [2014 USFWS Band-tailed Pigeon Population Status Report](#).

WATERFOWL

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 several 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. The following link and map show the flyways:

[Four Flyways April 2012 Updated Map](#) :



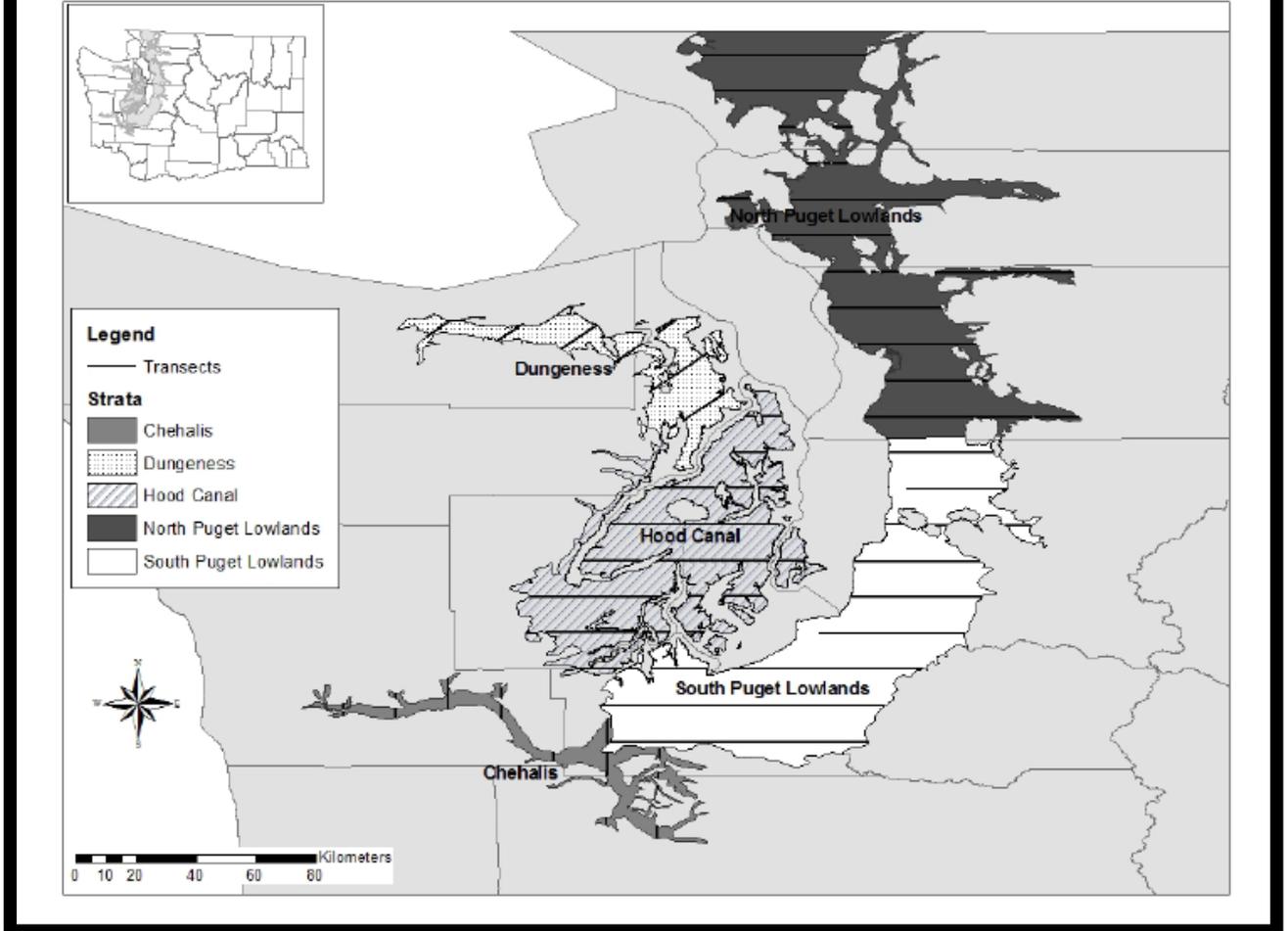
Four North American Migratory Bird Flyways

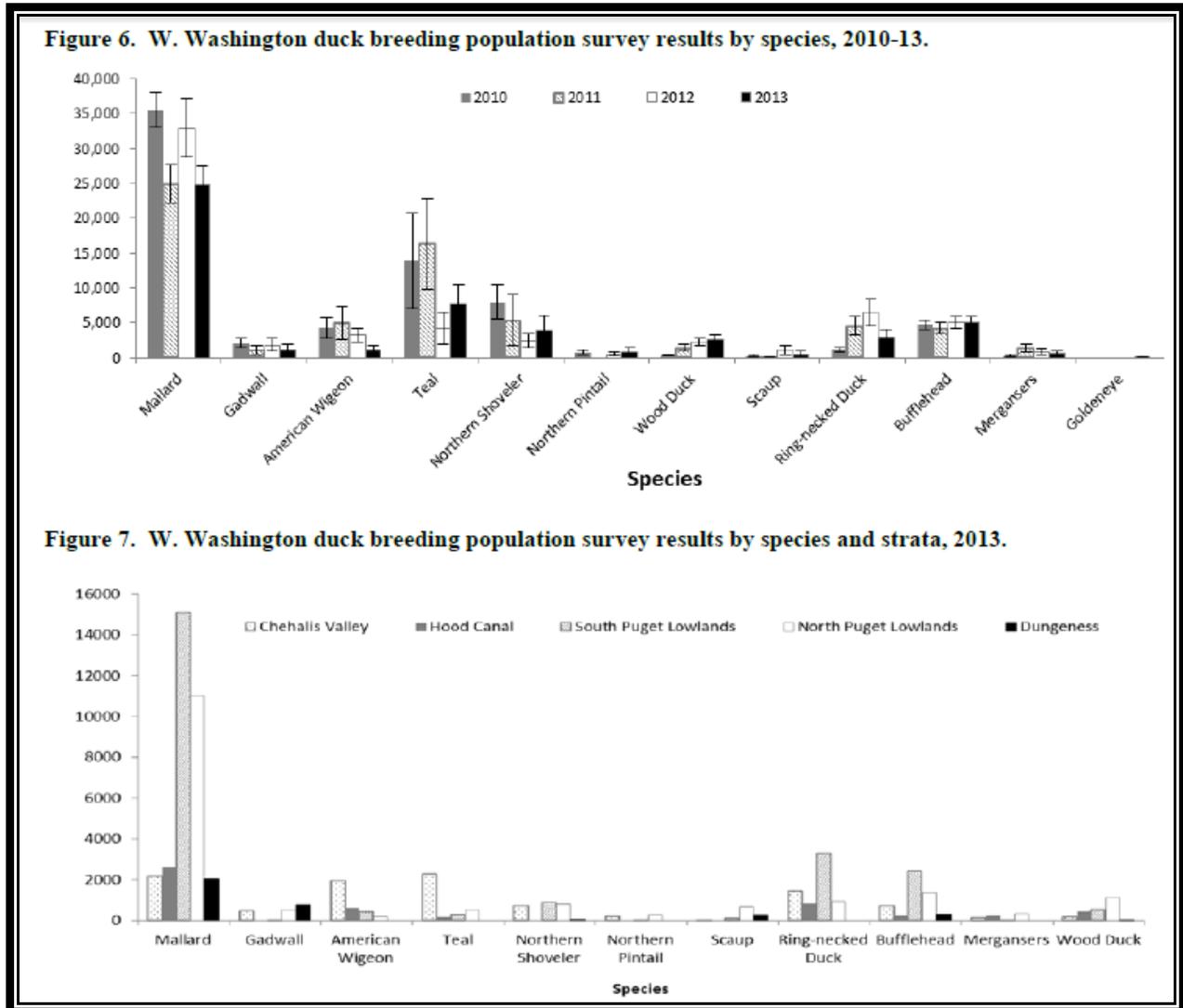
The local Olympic Mountain snowpack was 88 percent of normal for the 2013-2014 winter, which after the trickledown effect will result in fair water levels this fall in the many wetlands used for wintering habitat. The greatest factor influencing brood production in the District continues to be loss of habitat to development at water bodies and human presence. Waterfowl numbers are expected to remain moderate 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 7,775 ducks. The five year average for Jefferson County is 2,790 ducks.

Breeding population trends in Western Washington show some declines in recent years. 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 ([2012 Game Status & Trend Report](#), page 225-226). Washington Breeding Waterfowl population estimates for 2013 are found in [2013 Game Status & Trend Report](#), page 228-229, with these figures demonstrating the transects and data results:

Waterfowl Status and Trend Report 2013 • Wehland

Figure 3. Western Washington aerial breeding waterfowl survey transects flown in 2013.





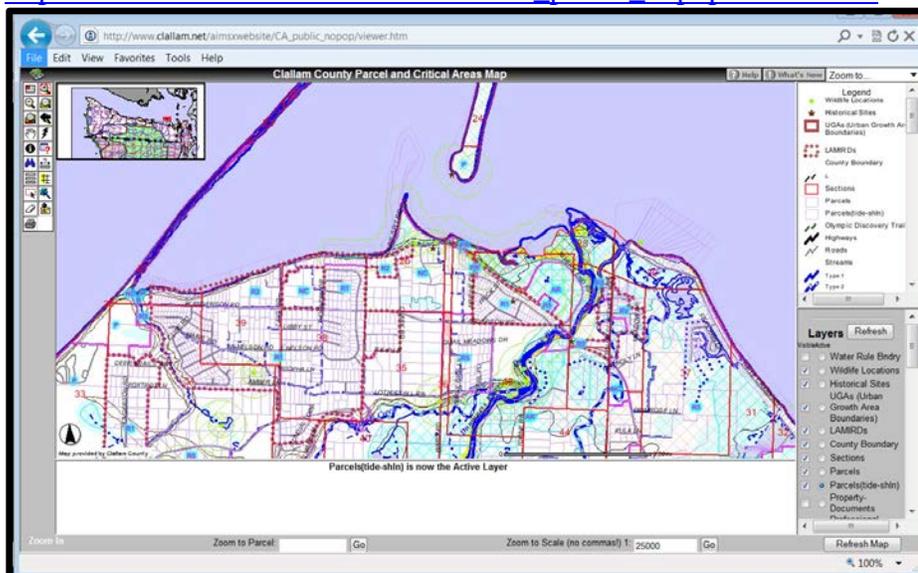
Hunting Opportunities: Most all freshwater waterfowl hunting areas in the Dungeness Basin are on private lands. Public land hunting opportunities include the newly established Lower Dungeness Unit at the mouth of the Dungeness River. Some hunters find hunting opportunities in the near-shore areas of 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 2014 Migratory Waterfowl Regulation Pamphlet](#) for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin, and goldeneye) in Western Washington. The local Seaduck populations have been studied for many years and the Sea Duck Management Strategies publication has just been made available: [Washington Sea Duck Management Strategies. Trends in Duck Breeding Populations 1955-2014](#)
[USFWS Waterfowl Population Status 2014](#)

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.

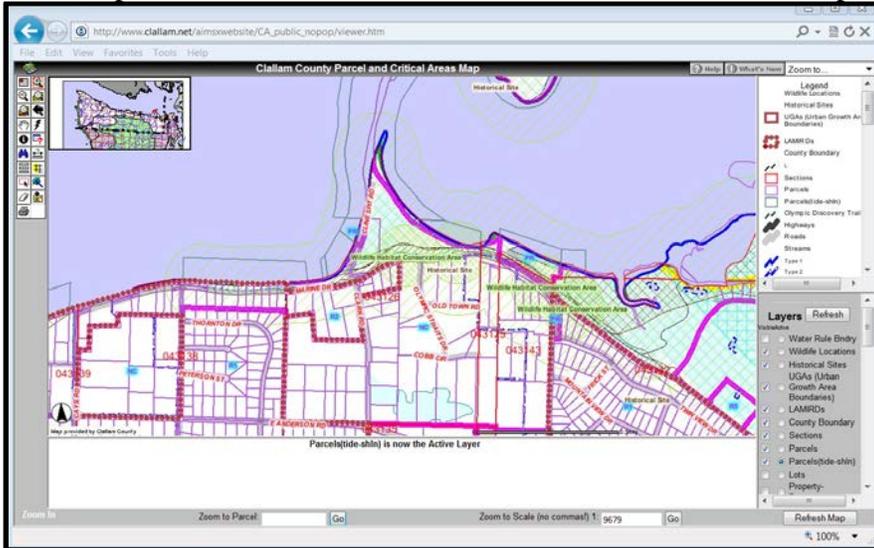
SHORELINE/TIDELANDS - There are some private landowners that allow limited hunting access along the saltwater shoreline. Typically local signage refers to a phone number or contact information, and in some cases the signage spells out the conditions of access. Because these vary from year to year the 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 below. Clallam County tideland ownership can be retrieved, while 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

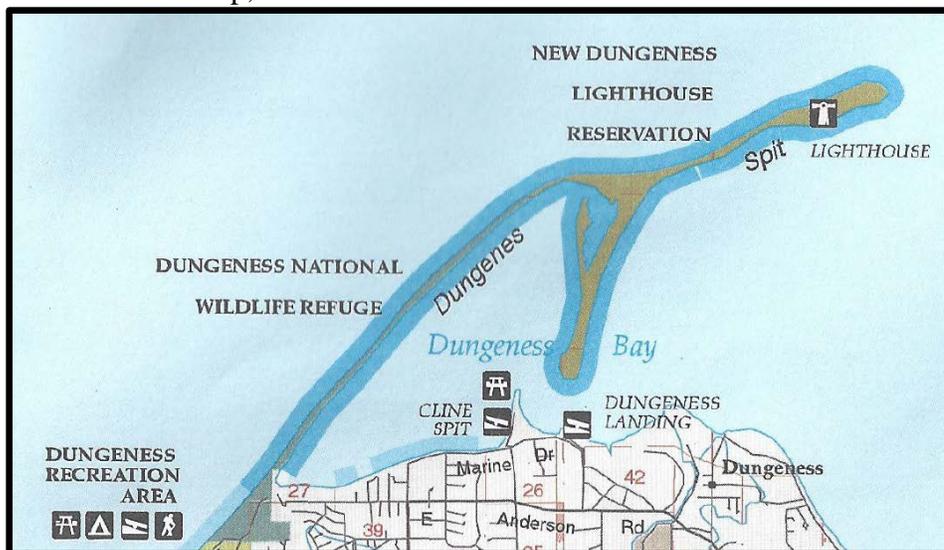


Make sure you have the Parcels(tide-shln) layer checked and Active circle dotted, and scale set at 1 : 25,000 or less.

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.



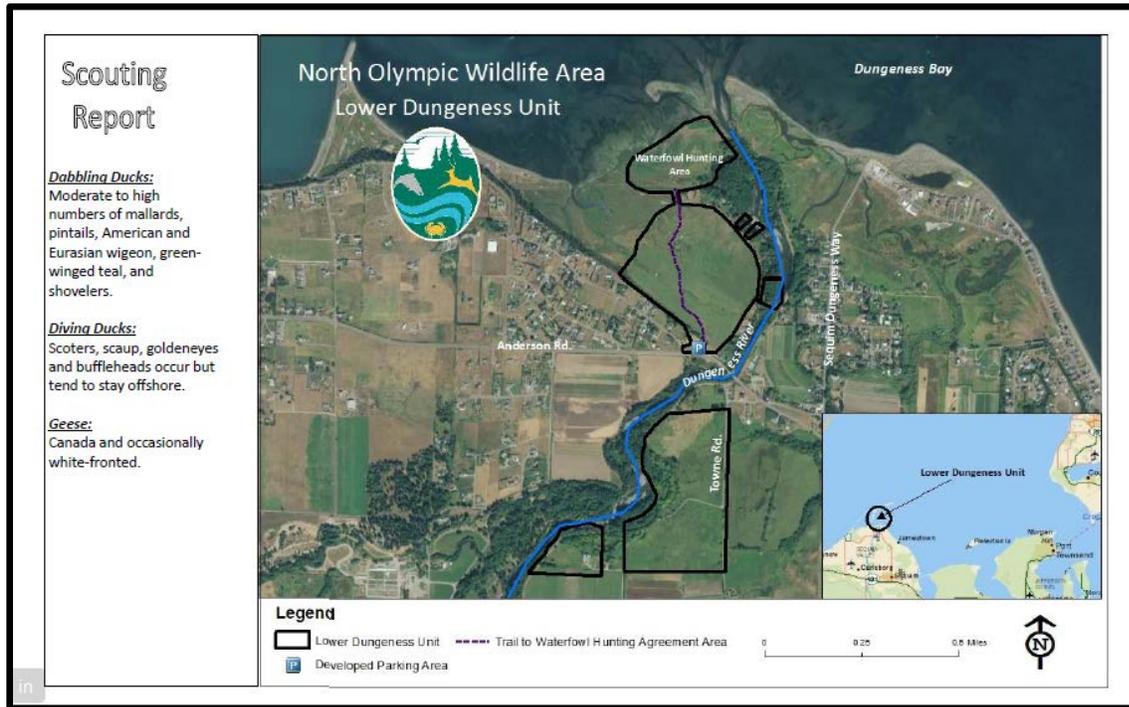
These records along with the DNR maps referenced at the end of this Prospects (example below, where state tidelands are highlighted) can be used to make sure you are aware of the land ownership, whether on the shoreline or in a boat over tidelands.



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 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 ½ 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.



Western Washington - Region 6 Waterfowl Hunting Areas (Lower Dungeness Unit can be found on page 12-13)

The 2014 USFWS Waterfowl Status Report can be used to better understand the waterfowl resource throughout North America: [USFWS Waterfowl Status Report 2014](#)

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: Typical participation of hunting Canada geese in District 16 has been 100-200 hunters. The harvest totaled about 400+ geese. 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 (Coyle) that contain barley. No “pass shooting” is possible. Local hunters were quite successful in previous seasons 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.

OTHER SMALL GAME

SNOWSHOE HARE & COTTONTAIL RABBIT

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. More information on the snowshoe hare can be found at these websites:

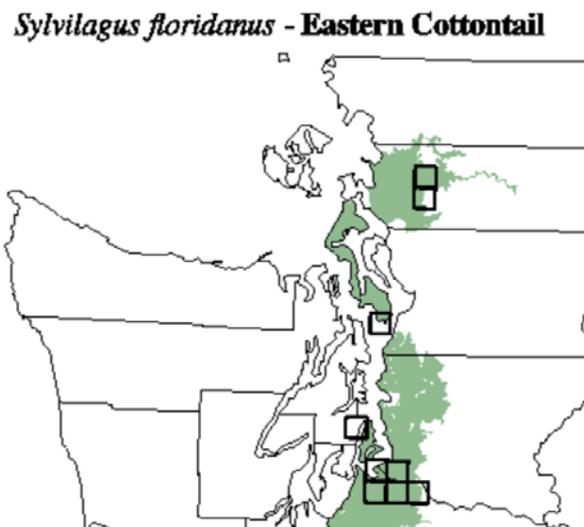
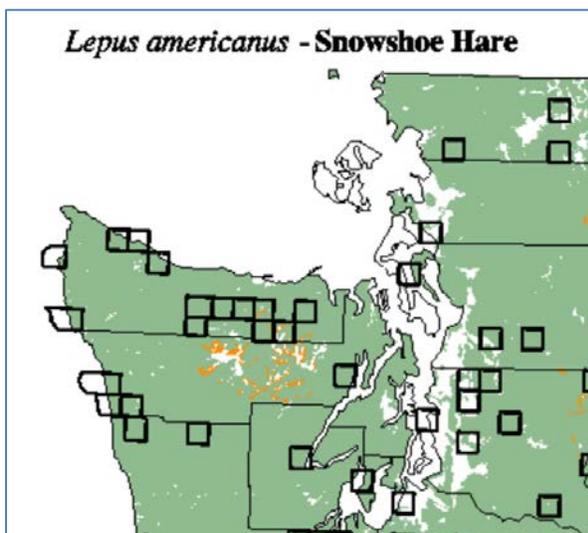
<http://www.hww.ca/en/species/mammals/snowshoe-hare.html>

http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_snowshoe_hare.html

http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_eastern_cottontail.html

http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_european_rabbit.html

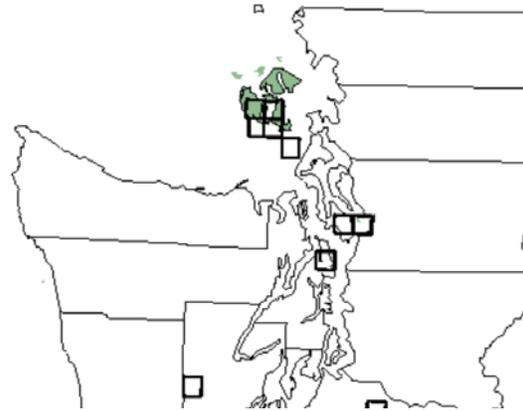
http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_nuttalls_cottontail.html



Oryctolagus cuniculus - European Rabbit

Legend

- Habitats in core zones
- Habitats in peripheral zones
- Township/Range with a record



TRIBAL HUNTING

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.

Tribal big game harvest reports are available at [Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Big Game Harvest Reports](#).

HUNTER ACCESS - PRIVATE & PUBLIC LAND

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLAND

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

Western Washington Rayonier map:

http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_General%20Access_Map.pdf

Pysht GMU 603 – Rayonier ownership Deep Creek:

http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_DeepCreek_Map.pdf

Dickey GMU 602 – Rayonier ownership Dickey

http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_DickeyPermitArea_Map.pdf

Clearwater GMU 615 – Rayonier ownership Kalaloch Ridge:

http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_KalalochRidge_Map.pdf

Information on Access Permits:

<http://property.rayonierhunting.com/Permits/PermitsHome.aspx>

<http://property.rayonierhunting.com/AvailableAreas/FindProperties.aspx>

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

Cascade Timberlands

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

OTHER MAJOR LANDOWNERS

Other Landowner Links

Hoh River Trust

<http://hohrivertrust.publishpath.com//Websites/hohrivertrust/Images/webmap.jpg>

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

WDFW'S GO HUNT TOOL

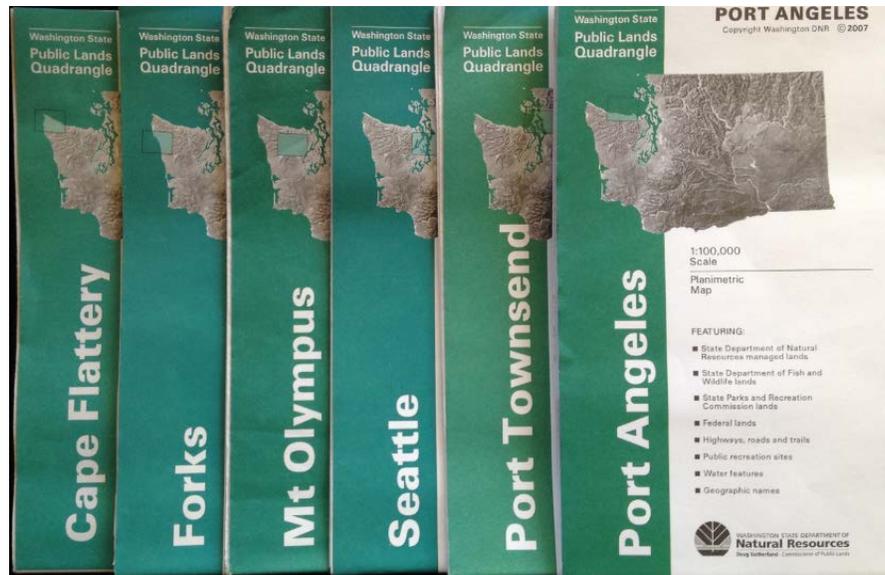


Get started with WDFW’s GoHunt by [clicking here](http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/) or entering <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/>

MAPS

Maps for District 16: Because the land ownership can be very confusing, District Biologist McMillan recommends a set of these DNR maps, which you can order online at:

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public_land_quadrangle_maps.aspx



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://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/rastergateway/states-regions/states_zoom.php?stateID=wa

The 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

2014

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



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



Madison Green with the Columbian black-tail she harvested in GMU 681 during the 2013 season.

DISTRICT 17 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Pacific and Grays Harbor Counties

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Hunting Season Prospects 2014

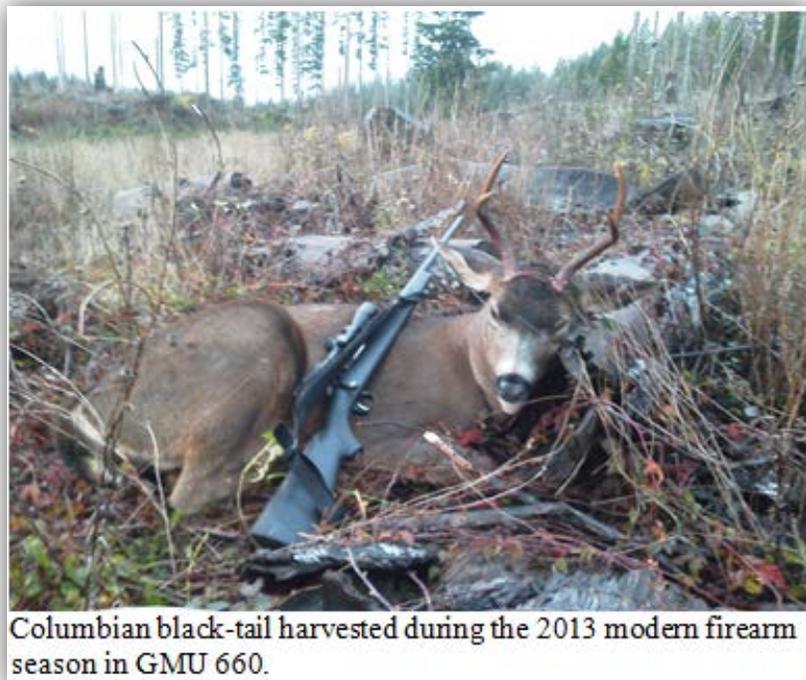
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DISTRICT 17 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 17 is located in southwest Washington and consists of 11 Game Management Units (GMUs): 638 (Quinault Ridge), 642 (Copalis), 648 (Wynoochee), 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 Columbian black-tails, black bears, and grouse. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and catch-per-unit effort (CPUE) for most game species in District 17 during the 2013 hunting season and how those estimates compare to the 2012 season and the 5-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

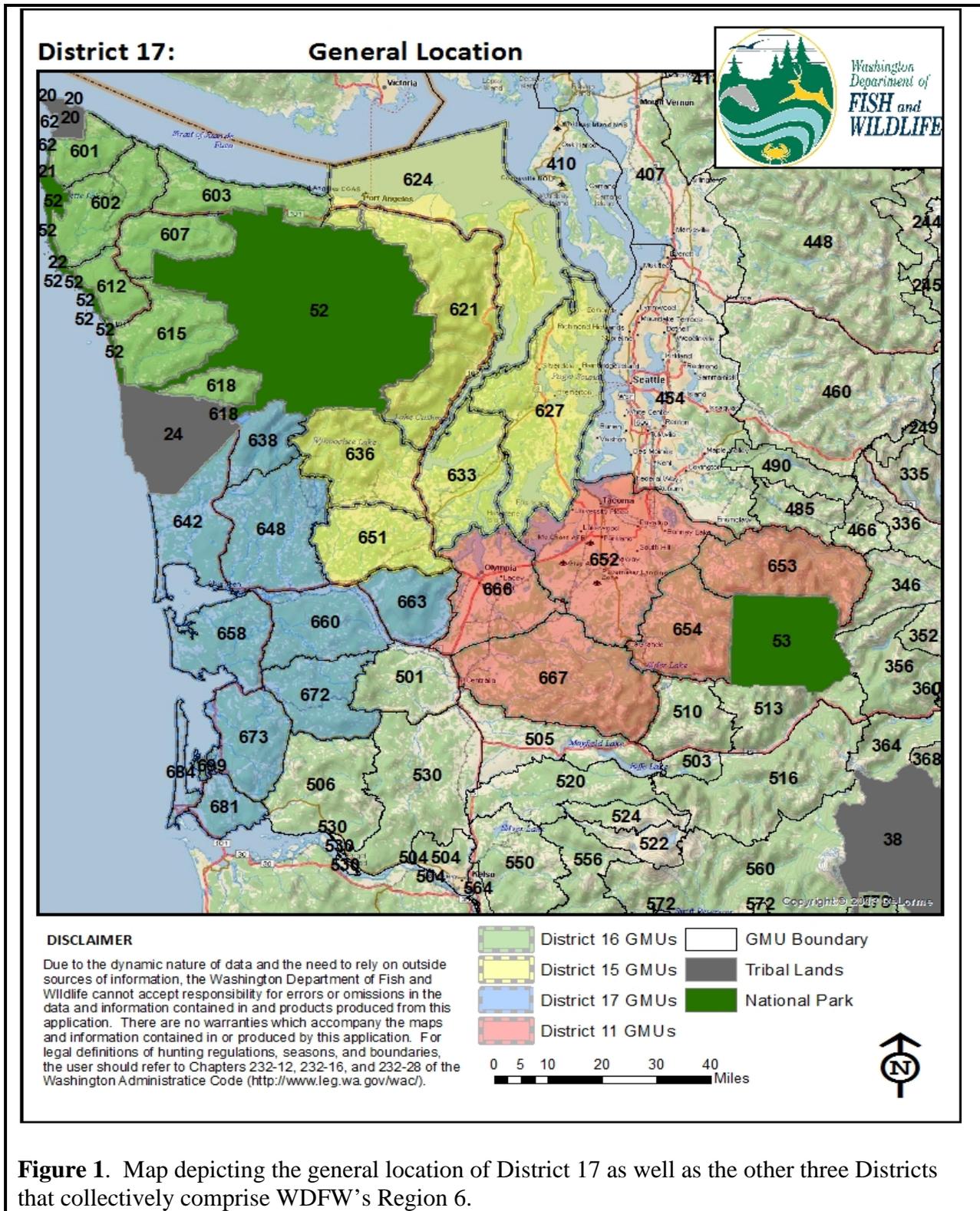


Figure 1. Map depicting the general location of District 17 as well as the other three Districts that collectively comprise WDFW’s Region 6.

Table 1. Estimates of harvest and catch-per-unit effort (CPUE) during the 2012 and 2013 hunting seasons for most game species found in District 17. Also included is a comparison of 2013 harvest and CPUE estimates to estimates from the 2012 season (% 2012) and the 5-year average (% 5yr). Nh = no hunters.

Species	Harvest					CPUE				
	5-yr avg.	2012	2013	% 5yr	% 2012	5-yr avg.	2012	2013	% 5yr	% 2012
Elk	625	622	612	-2%	-2%	0.019	0.02	0.02	5%	-5%
Deer	1,548	1,558	1,489	-4%	-4%	0.032	0.04	0.03	0%	-9%
Bear	102	97	95	-7%	-2%	0.007	0.01	0.01	14%	0%
Cougar	7	11	10	43%	-9%	Not estimated				
Ducks	23,131	23,495	25,426	10%	8%	2.34	2.59	2.51	7%	-3%
Geese (late season)	2,446	2,342	2,030	-17%	-13%	0.71	0.82	0.59	-17%	-28%
Geese (early season)	336	382	371	10%	-3%	1.06	1.37	0.84	-21%	-39%
Forest Grouse	6,102	4,700	3,050	-50%	-35%	0.24	0.23	0.17	-29%	-26%
Mourning Dove	77	0	252	227%	*	2.51	NH	1.66	-34%	**
Quail	114	89	0	-100%	-100%	1.83	1.09	0	-100%	-100%
Band-tailed pigeons	148	139	No Data	*	*	Not estimated				
Rabbits	143	247	77	-46%	-69%	0.19	0.35	0.16	-16%	-54%

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, 642, and 648) and the Willapa Hills elk herd (GMUs 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, and 699). 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 GMUs 658, 672, 673, and 681.

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 (GMUs 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 are used as surrogates to formal indices or estimates. However, WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and has begun developing a monitoring strategy that will be implemented in the Willapa Hills to generate a formal index of population trends and unbiased estimates of age (calf to cow ratios) and sex (bull to cow ratios) ratios. This approach is still being developed, but was implemented in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills) and 530 (Ryderwood) following the 2013 season. Biologists observed 1,273 elk during those surveys with resulting bull:cow and calf:cow ratios of 16:100 and 38:100, respectively. Bull:cow ratios indicate WDFW is meeting its management objective of maintaining post-season populations with a minimum of 12 bulls:100 cows, while calf:cow ratios indicate that productivity and recruitment of elk calves for that portion of the Willapa Hills elk herd was quite good. GMUs 506 and 530 are very similar to GMUs 672, 673, and 681, and have similar harvest levels, so it is probably appropriate to assume age and sex ratios among the GMUs were also similar. This same monitoring strategy will be implemented in Region 6 GMUs following the 2014 season.

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?

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt?" 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 an 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 producing 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 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 since 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 and 673 has been 36 and 116 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/mi², we come up with an estimate of 0.436 in GMU 673 and 0.330 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/mi² (bulls and cows), hunters/mi², 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 general comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern firearm seasons. Data presented are based on a 5-year running average.

MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	4	0.078	6	30	0.59	3	13%	2	11
681	109	36	0.330	2	240	2.20	9	15%	1	12
673	266	116	0.436	1	1011	3.80	10	11%	3	14
658	257	62	0.241	3	557	2.17	8	11%	4	15
672	257	34	0.132	4	337	1.31	7	10%	5	16
660	302	27	0.089	5	290	0.96	5	9%	7	17
638	153	10	0.065	7	111	0.73	4	10%	6	17
642	278	6	0.022	9	73	0.26	1	8%	8	18
663	210	2	0.010	10	64	0.30	2	3%	10	22
648	431	17	0.039	8	416	0.97	6	4%	9	23

Table 3. Rank sum analysis that provides a general comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general muzzleloader seasons. GMUs that are bolded are open during early and late seasons and have an Any Elk bag limit. Data presented are based on a 5-year running average.

MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	14	0.275	1	51	1.00	7	28%	1	9
642	278	3	0.011	6	20	0.07	2	14%	2	10
672	257	9	0.035	3	97	0.38	5	9%	3	11
660	302	10	0.033	4	98	0.32	4	9%	4	12
658	257	11	0.043	2	184	0.72	6	6%	5	13
638	153	2	0.013	5	41	0.27	3	6%	6	14
663	210	1	0.005	7	13	0.06	1	2%	7	15

Table 4. Rank sum analysis that provides a general comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general archery seasons. GMUs that are bolded are open during early and late 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.

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
658	257	16	0.062	5	111	0.43	5	15%	2	12
673*	266	79	0.297	3	488	1.83	8	16%	1	12
699*	8	11	1.375	1	78	9.75	11	14%	3	15
681*	109	53	0.486	2	377	3.46	10	14%	4	16
638	153	5	0.033	9	53	0.35	3	10%	6	18
672*	257	52	0.202	4	483	1.88	9	11%	5	18
684*	51	2	0.039	7	19	0.37	4	9%	8	19
660*	302	12	0.040	6	135	0.45	6	9%	7	19
642	278	2	0.007	10	20	0.07	1	9%	9	20
663	210	1	0.005	11	27	0.13	2	4%	11	24
648	431	16	0.037	8	283	0.66	7	6%	10	25

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

It is typically uncommon for elk populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 17 where severe winter weather conditions that result in large winter die-offs rarely occur. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2013 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 their lands 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 recent trends in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Figures 2 through 4 provide trend data for each of these statistics for each District 17 GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where they want to hunt.

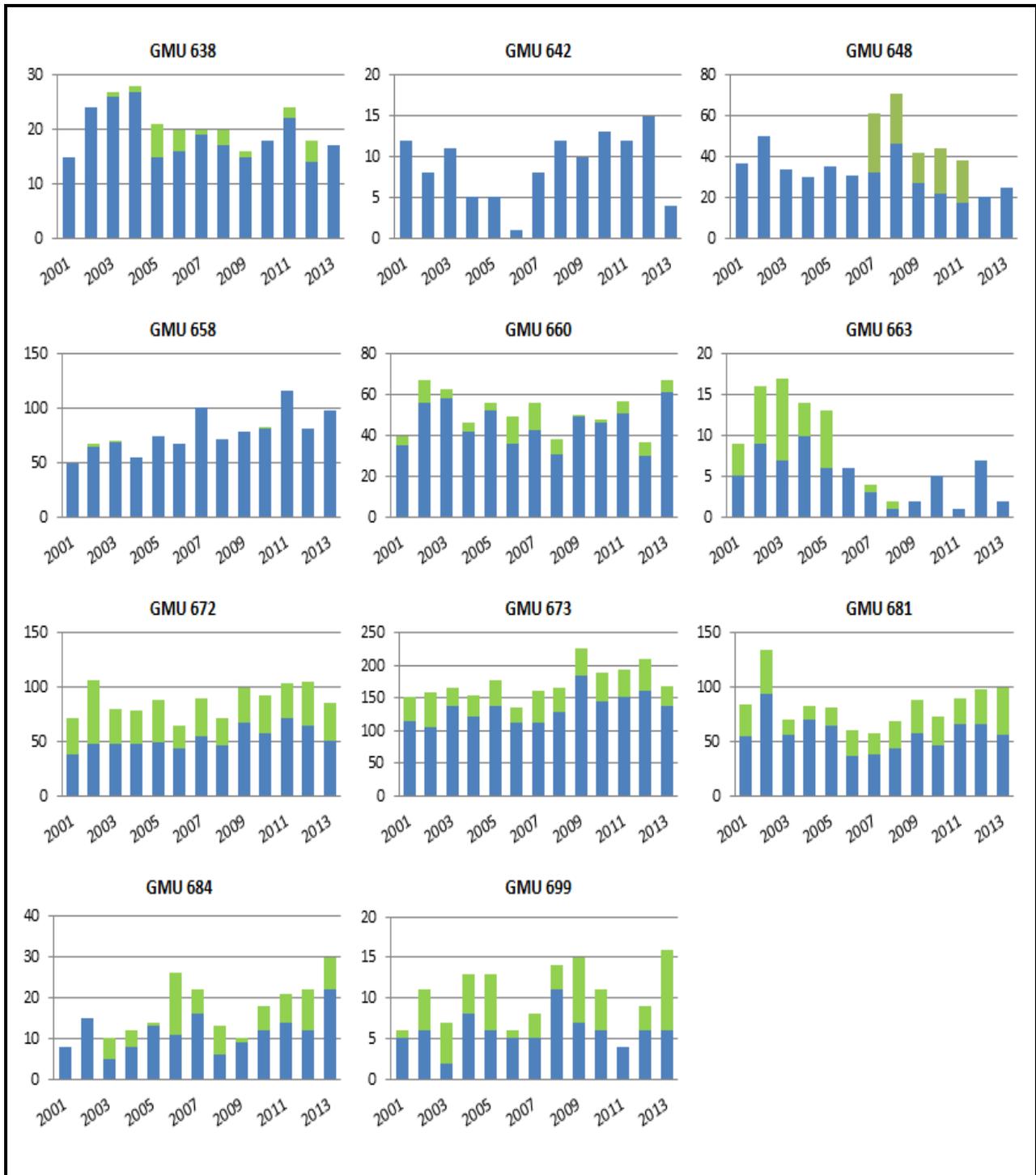
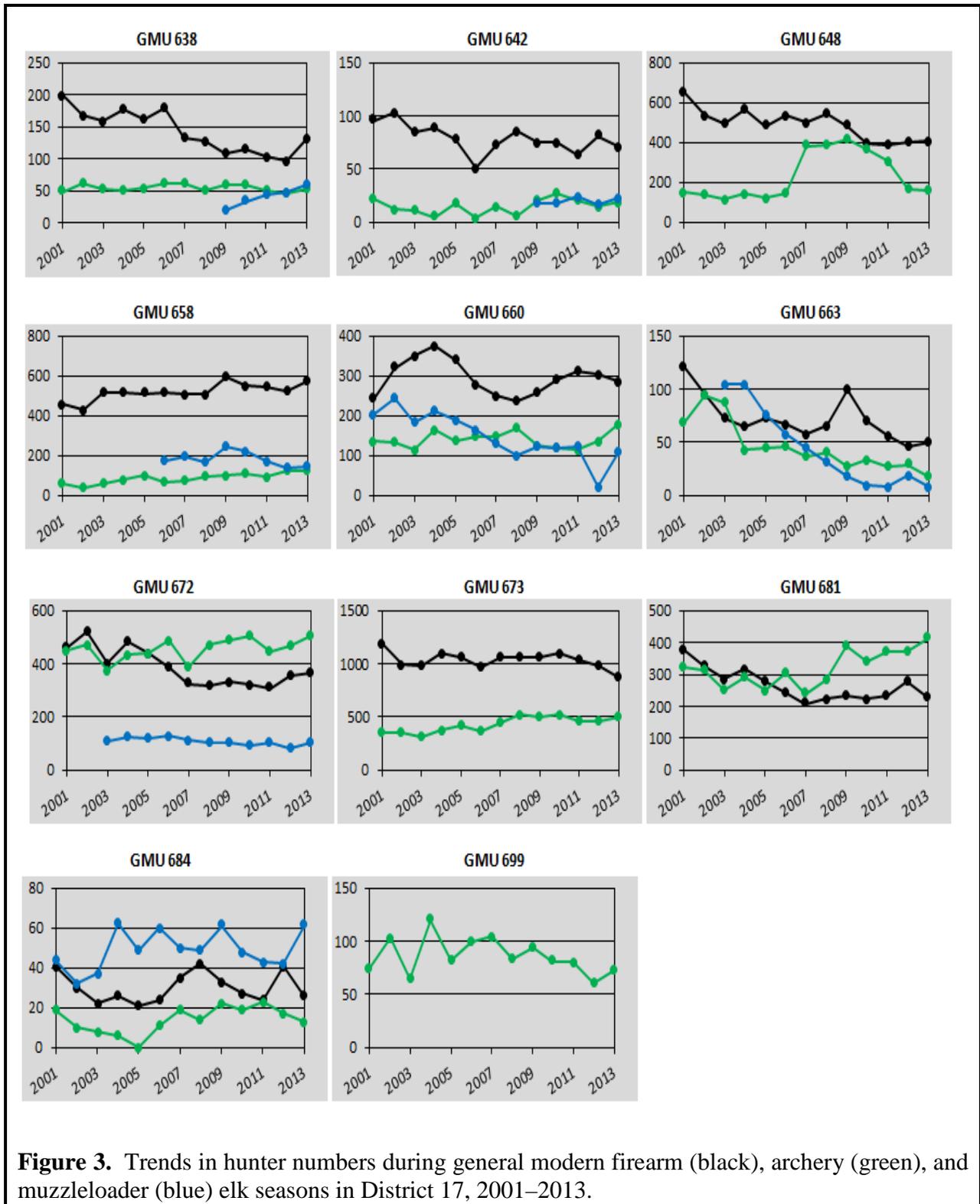
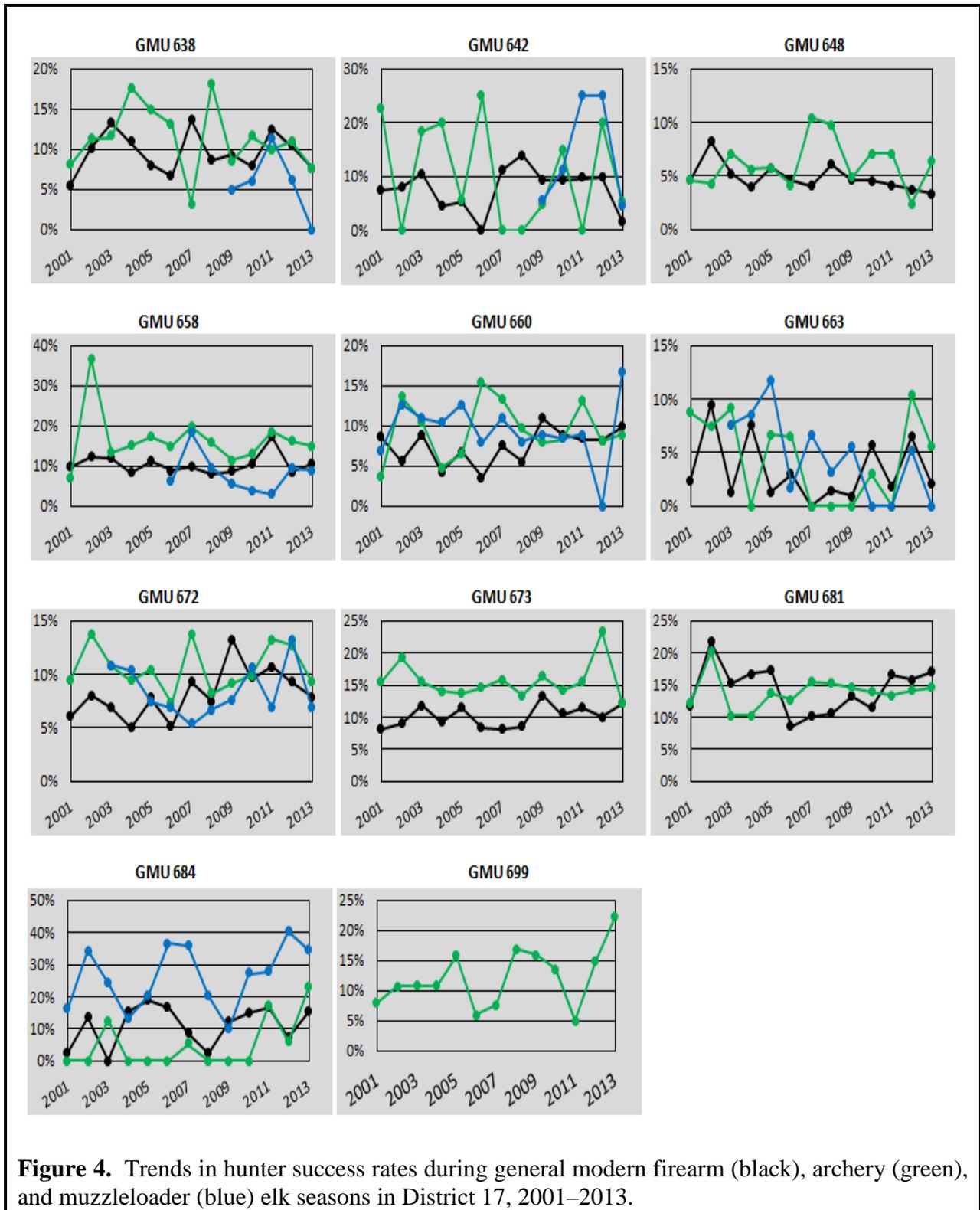


Figure 2. Trends in the total number of bull (blue) and antlerless (green) elk harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2001–2013. Harvest totals do not include tribal harvest or harvest that occurred during permit seasons.





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 day in closed canopy forests, swamps, or regeneration stands (aka “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.

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 lands. 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 ext.234) because he may be able to put them in touch with a landowner that is having problems with elk.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

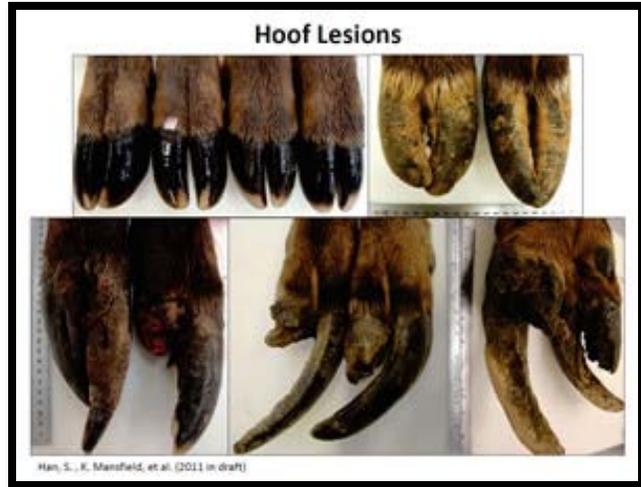
1. There were 4 new elk permit opportunities (2 archery and 2 muzzleloader) established on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). These opportunities represent a collaborative effort between WDFW and Willapa NWR to limit the growth of a local elk herd that is repeatedly causing damage to cranberry bogs that are located adjacent to Willapa NWR.
2. **Several private timber companies in District 17 are going to fee access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Hunters should be aware of these changes and are advised to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the company's current policy. See private lands access section below for more information.**

BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

The number of reports received by WDFW 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 is believed to be associated with infectious treponeme bacteria, which have been linked to digital dermatitis in domestic sheep and cattle. 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).

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, 672, and 673). In response to the increasing trend of reports of elk with hoof disease, 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/) or by [clicking here](#).



DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Columbian black-tails (“black-tails” or black-tailed deer) are the only species of deer that occur in District 17. 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, 648, 672, and 660.

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 populations while also minimizing negative deer-human interactions. Additional management objectives include maintaining deer populations 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 are used as surrogates to a formal index or estimate of population size. 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 challenge 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 value for monitoring population trend or demographics (e.g. buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios).

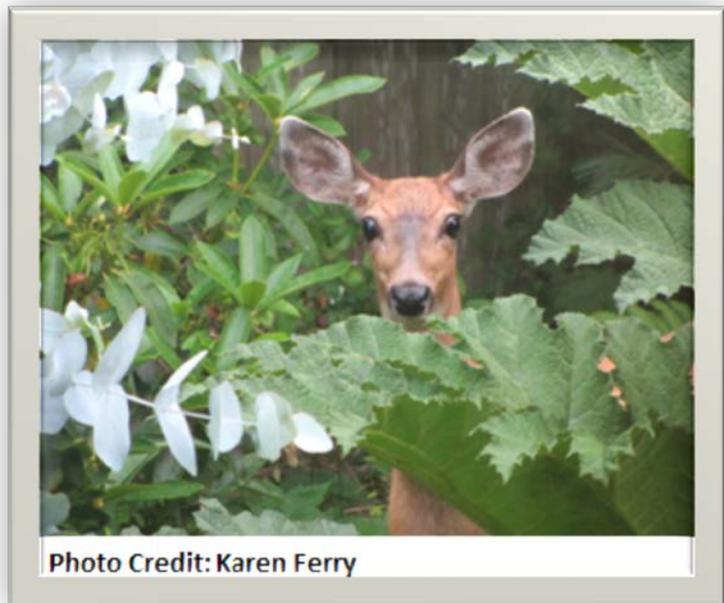
All available harvest data indicates deer populations appear to be stable or slightly declining in all PMUs associated with District 17. For more detailed information related to the status of black-tailed deer in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report which is available for download on the Department's website or by [clicking here](#).

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt?" 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 Tables 5 through 7 provides a 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 and 648 has been 245 and 266 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/mi², we come up with an estimate of 1.167 in GMU 663 and 0.617 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/mi², hunters/mi², and hunter success rates. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed in order of lowest rank 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 a bag limit of any buck during the general archery season, while all other GMUs (except 681) have a bag limit of Any Deer.

Table 5. Rank sum analysis that provides a comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern firearm deer seasons. Data presented are based on a 5-year running average.

MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	19	0.373	7	56	1.10	3	34%	1	11
642	278	68	0.245	8	276	0.99	2	25%	2	12
660	302	158	0.523	4	746	2.47	6	21%	4	14
672	257	155	0.603	3	715	2.78	8	22%	3	14
673	266	123	0.462	5	579	2.18	5	21%	5	15
663	210	245	1.167	1	1321	6.29	10	19%	6	17
648	431	266	0.617	2	1426	3.31	9	19%	7	18
638	153	13	0.085	10	97	0.63	1	14%	10	21
658	257	116	0.451	6	710	2.76	7	16%	8	21
681	109	25	0.229	9	168	1.54	4	15%	9	22

Table 6. Rank sum analysis that provides a comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general muzzleloader deer seasons. Data presented are based on a 5-year running average.

MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
673	266	41	0.154	1	123	0.46	8	34%	1	10
648	431	4	0.009	6	20	0.05	3	23%	2	11
663	210	8	0.038	3	48	0.23	7	15%	3	13
672	257	3	0.012	5	40	0.16	5	7%	5	15
684	51	3	0.059	2	26	0.51	9	12%	4	15
642	278	1	0.004	8	7	0.03	1	6%	7	16
658	257	4	0.016	4	58	0.23	6	6%	6	16
660	302	2	0.007	7	29	0.10	4	5%	8	19
638	153	0	0.000	9	6	0.04	2	0%	9	20

Table 7. Rank sum analysis that provides a comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general archery deer seasons. Data presented are based on a 5-year running average.

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	9	0.176	3	24	0.47	5	38%	1	9
663	210	90	0.429	1	435	2.07	10	22%	2	13
642	278	12	0.043	8	66	0.24	3	19%	3	14
672	257	60	0.233	2	355	1.38	9	17%	5	16
660	302	34	0.113	5	186	0.62	7	18%	4	16
638	153	3	0.020	9	25	0.16	1	11%	8	18
648	431	39	0.090	6	234	0.54	6	17%	6	18
658	257	5	0.019	10	42	0.16	2	12%	7	19
681	109	8	0.073	7	106	0.97	8	7%	9	24
673	266	4	0.015	11	114	0.43	4	4%	10	25
699	8	1	0.125	4	21	2.63	11	1%	11	26

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

It is typically uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 17 where severe winter weather conditions that result in large winter die-offs rarely occur. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2013 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.

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 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.



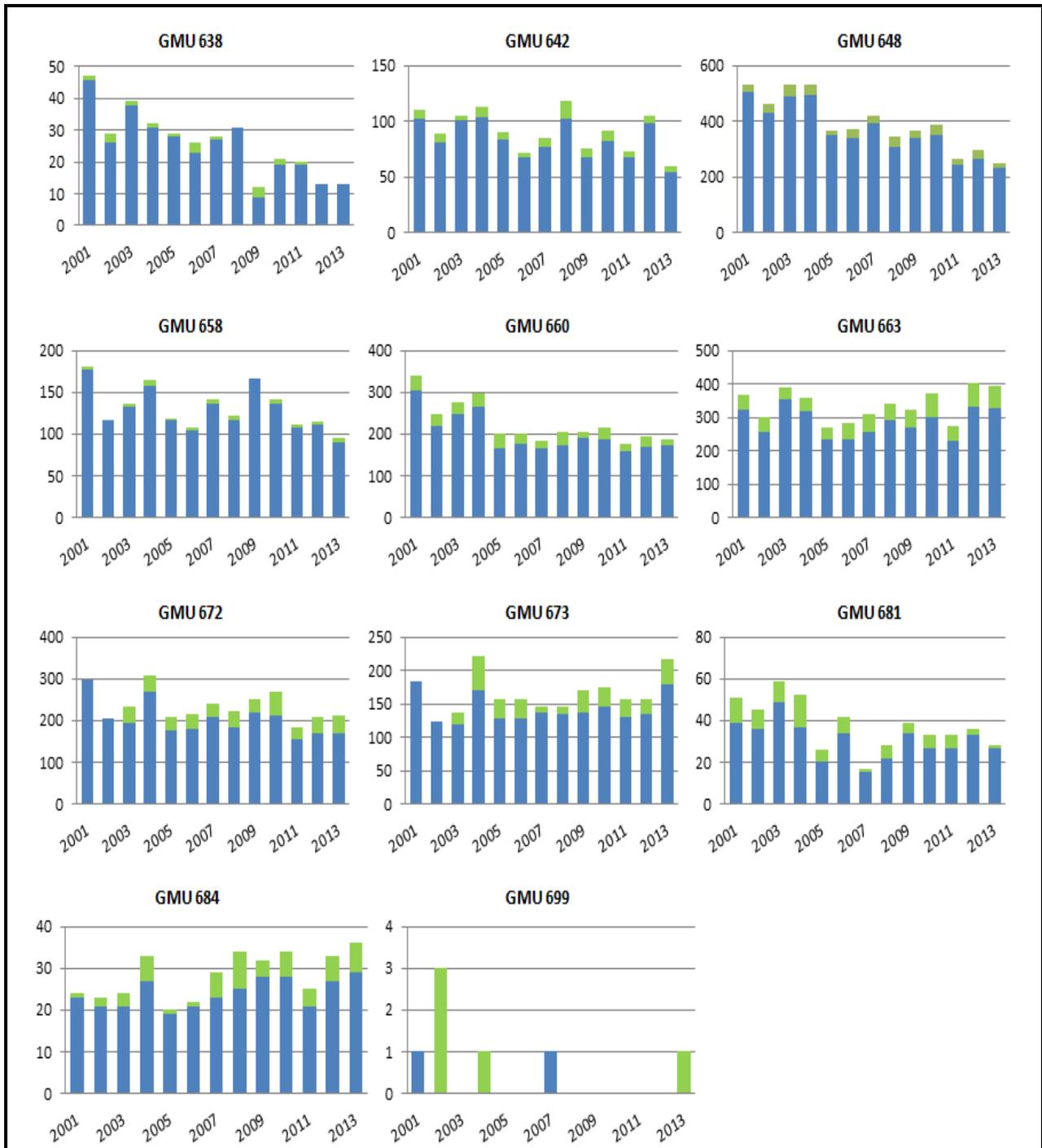


Figure 5. Trends in the total number of buck (blue) and antlerless (green) deer harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2001–2013. Harvest totals do not include tribal harvest or harvest that occurred during permit seasons.

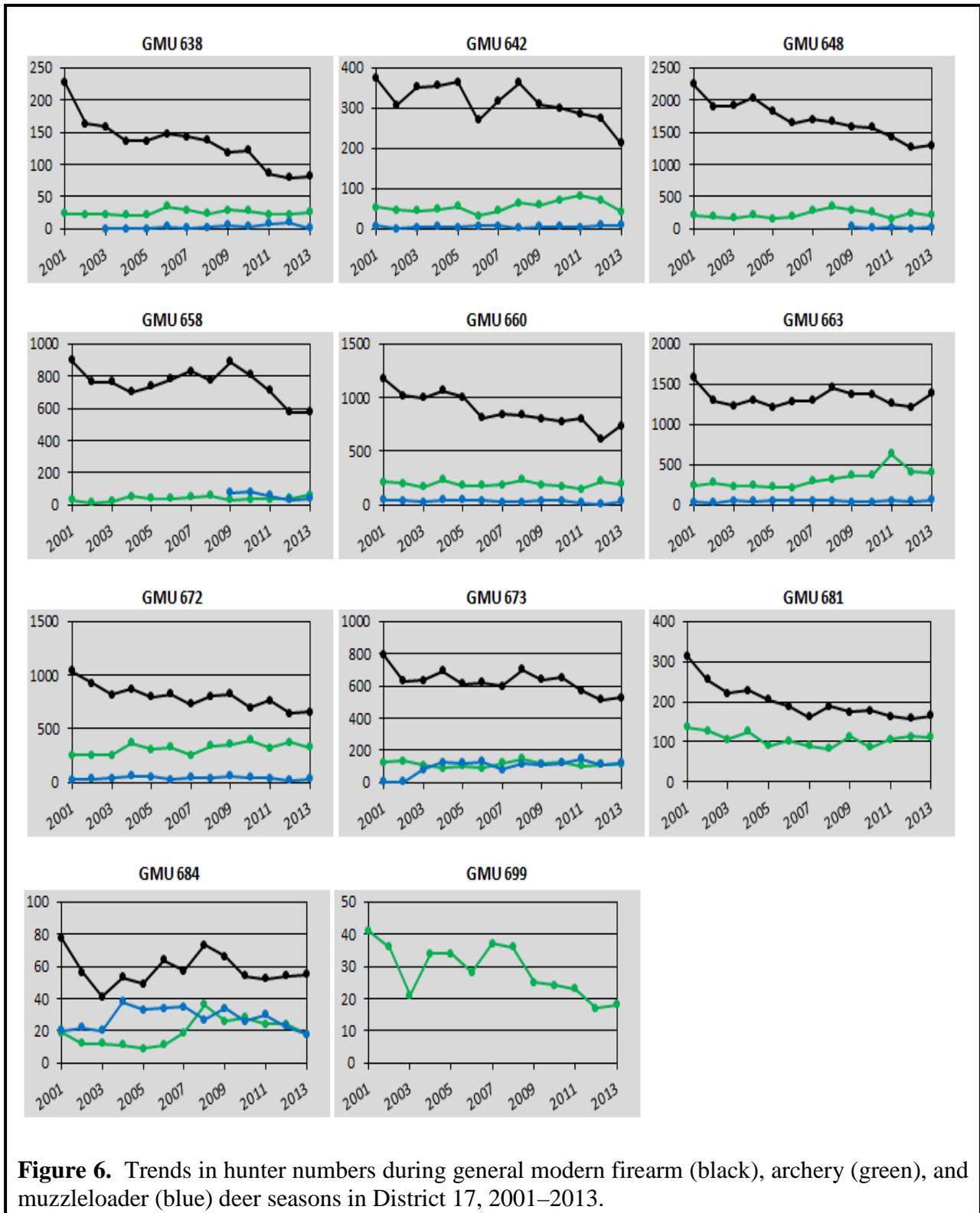


Figure 6. Trends in hunter numbers during general modern firearm (black), archery (green), and muzzleloader (blue) deer seasons in District 17, 2001–2013.

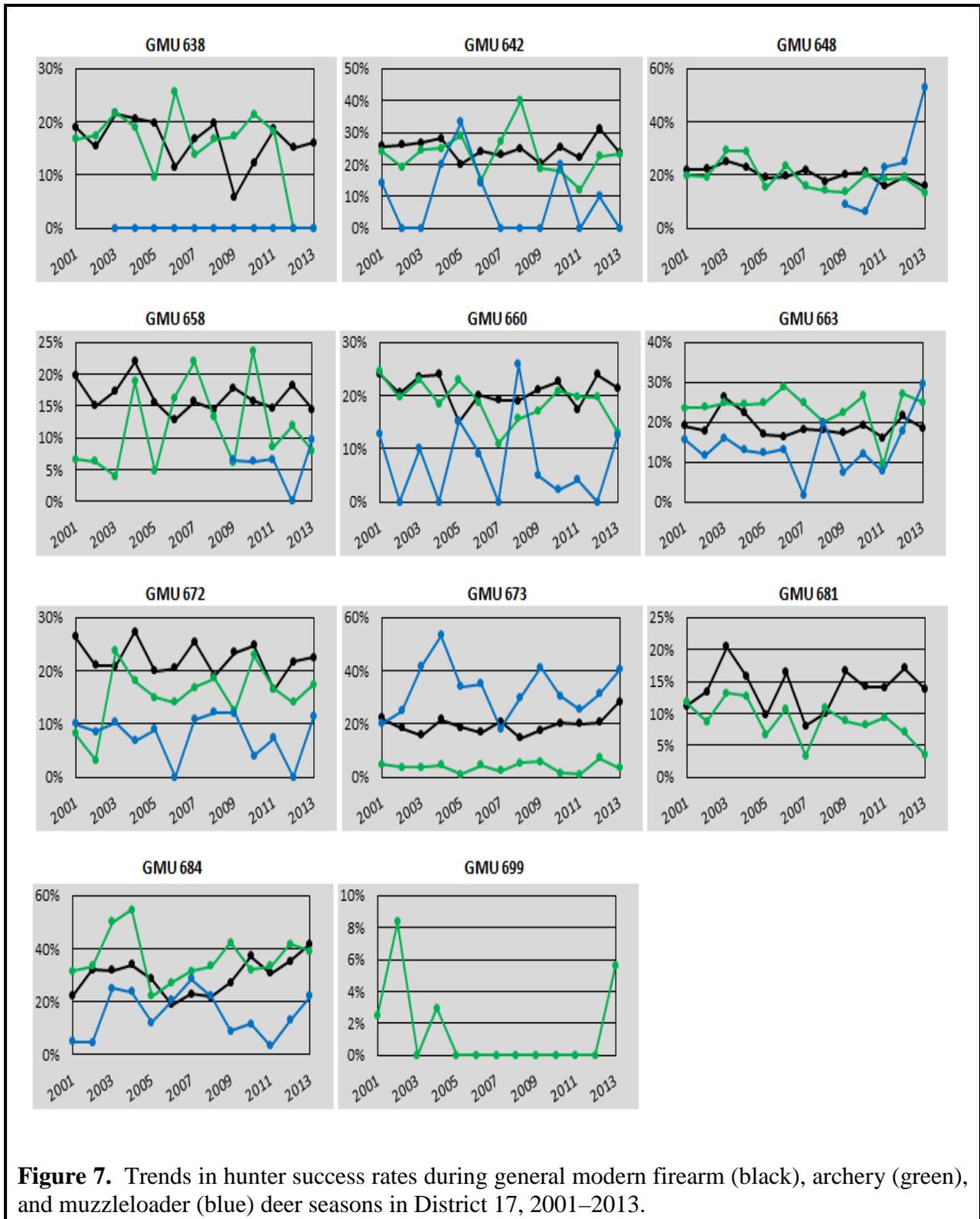


Figure 7. Trends in hunter success rates during general modern firearm (black), archery (green), and muzzleloader (blue) deer seasons in District 17, 2001–2013.

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 several years, there have been deer in Capitol Forest (GMU 663) that were fitted with GPS collars as part of a larger study throughout western Washington to better understand the effects timber management practices are having on deer survival and productivity. The GPS collars automatically download the deer's location several times throughout the day, which gives biologists a very in-depth look at their habitat use patterns.

During that time, no deer has used an area larger than 0.38 mi² (243 acres) and the average home range size was just 0.14 mi² (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 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.

DEER AREAS

There are no Deer Areas in District 17.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

- 1. Several private timber companies in District 17 are going to fee access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Hunters should be aware of these changes and are advised to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the company's current policy. See private lands access section below for more information.**

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 658, 660, and 681.

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 2014 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 just 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 has been mostly unchanged since 2011 (Figure 8).

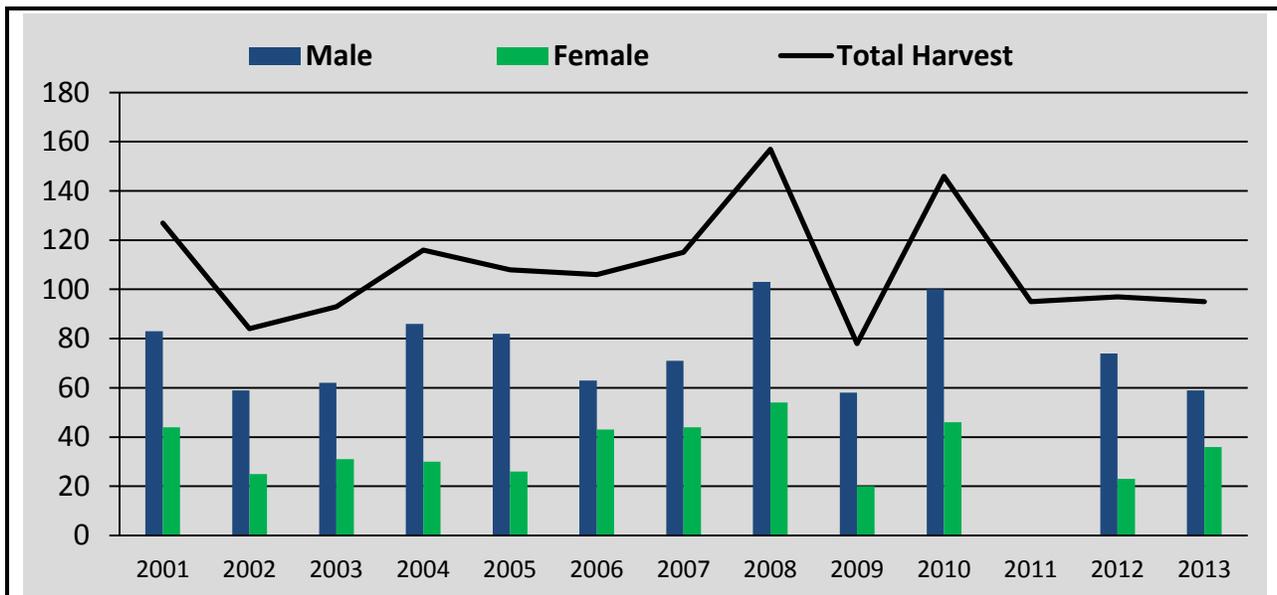


Figure 8. Trends in the number of male and female black bears and total number of bears harvested during the general bear season in District 17, 2001–2013. Harvest estimates do not include bears harvested during spring permit seasons in GMU 642 or bears that were removed because of conflict with people. The sex of harvested bears is not available for 2011.

At the GMU level, most bears will be harvested in GMUs 648, 658, and 660 (Figure 9). However, expressing harvest as the number of bears harvested per square mile suggests bear densities, or at least harvest density, is greatest in GMUs 681, 684, 658, and 660. Harvest numbers during the 2013 season compared to long-term (10-year) and short-term (5-year) averages suggests bear harvest has been increasing in GMUs 658, 660, and 684 (Figures 9 and 10). Hunters should expect similar harvest and success rates during the 2013 season.

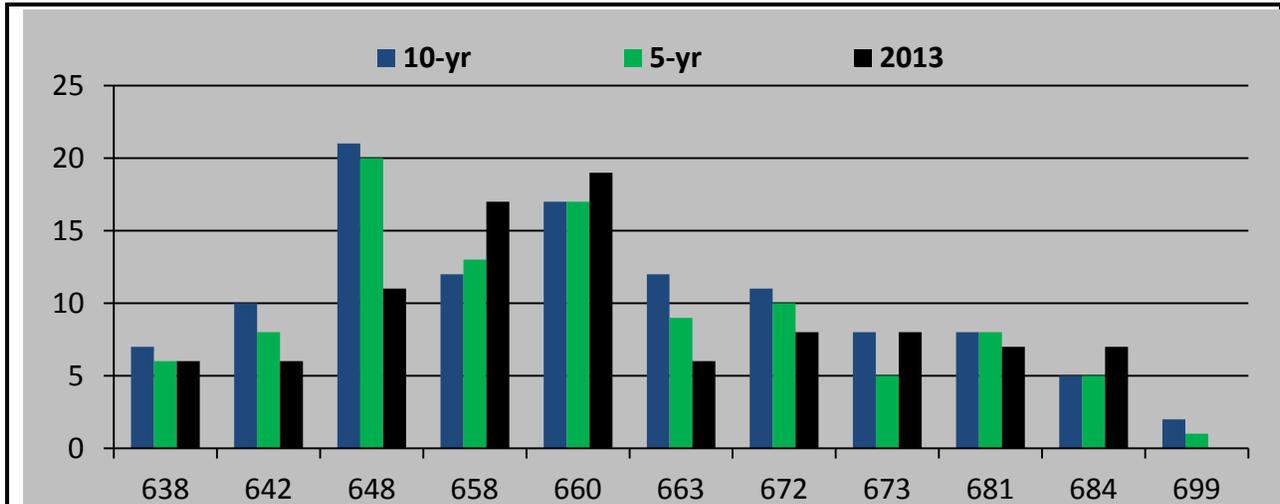


Figure 9. The number of bears harvested in each GMU during the 2013 season in District 17. Also included is the 10-year and 5-year average for total number of bears harvested in each GMU.

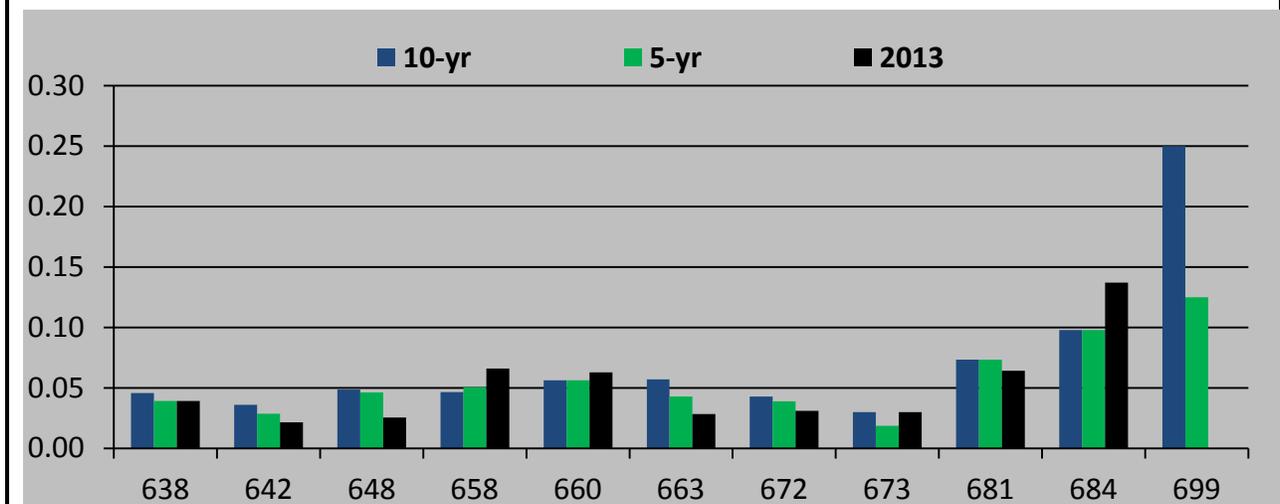


Figure 10. The number of bears harvested per square mile in each GMU during the 2013 season in District 17. Also included is the 10-year and 5-year average for total number of bears harvested per square mile in each GMU.

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. However, 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.

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 WDFW shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougars harvested, and instead using 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 8.



For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the WDFW’s website or [click here](#).

Table 8. Harvest guidelines and 2013 harvest levels for the 3 cougar hunt areas located in District 17.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	2012-2013 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	4
642, 648, 651	6-8	8
658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, 699	9-12	1

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON

Cougar harvest in District 17 is quite variable from year to year (Figure 11). 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.

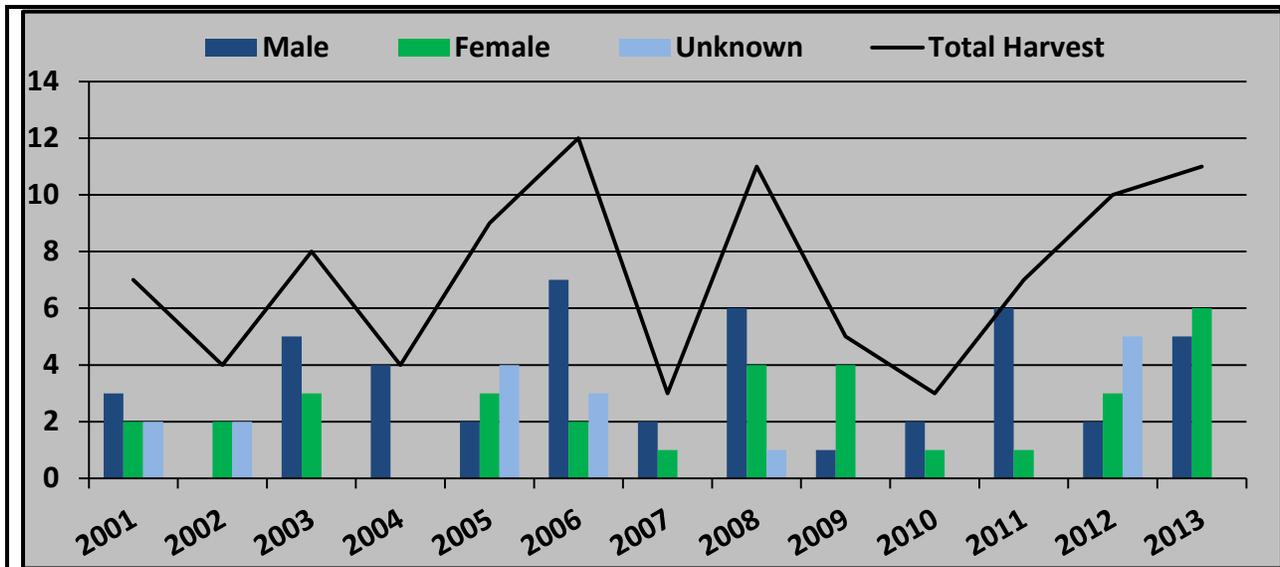


Figure 11. The estimated number of cougars harvested in District 17, 2001–2013.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2013 season.

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 early in the season and can provide a unique hunting opportunity. Sea ducks including scoters and long-tailed ducks occur in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor, but they are only seen occasionally.

Mallards are the most abundant species of duck in Washington and constitute the vast majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically $\geq 50\%$). The most abundance species of duck in District 17 is American wigeon. During aerial survey flights of Willapa Bay during the 2012 and 2013 seasons, American wigeon constituted 50%–60% of the ducks observed, 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.

MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY

There are very few ducks 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 at the end of October (see Figures 12 and 13). 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.

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 14). 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.



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 2014, the breeding population in the Chehalis River Valley was estimated at 5,550 ducks, which represents a 21% increase from the 2013 breeding population estimate of 4,569 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 2014 breeding population survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 3.5 million ducks which represents a 6% increase from the 2013 estimate of 3.3 million and 5% below the long-term average of 3.7 million.

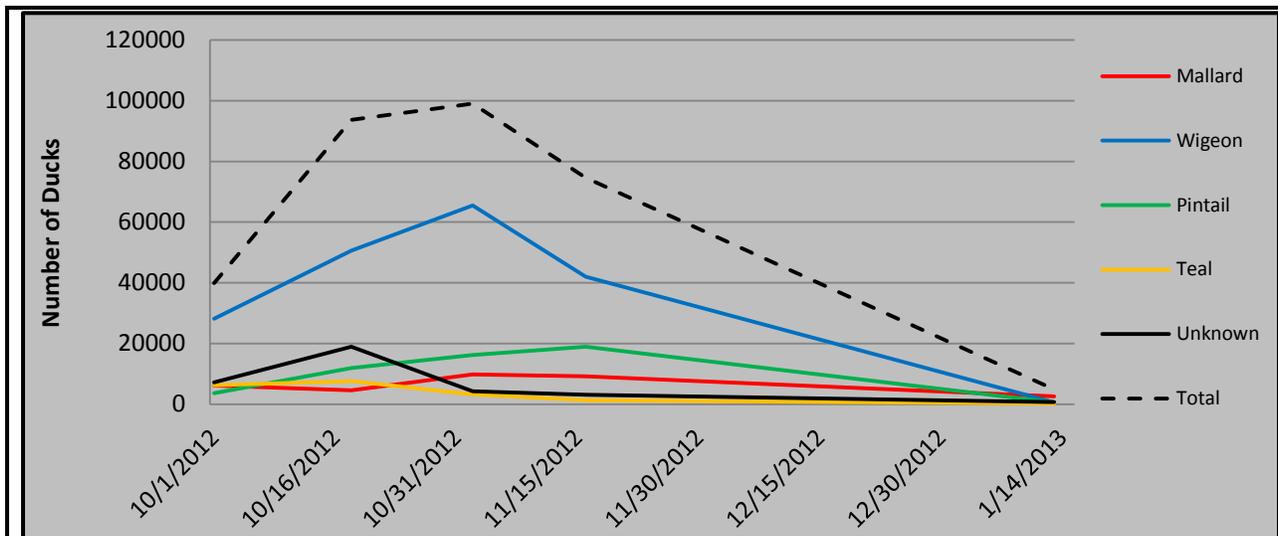


Figure 12. Trends in the number of ducks observed during aerial survey flights in Willapa Bay during surveys that were completed October 2012 through January 2013.

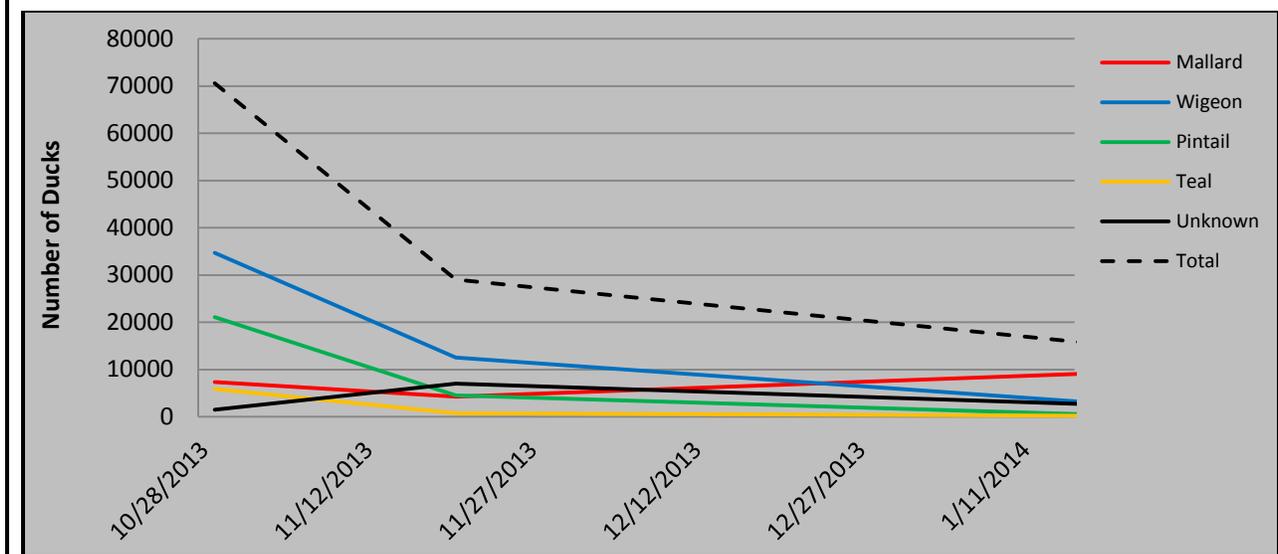


Figure 13. Trends in the number of ducks observed during aerial survey flights in Willapa Bay during surveys that were completed October 2013 through January 2014.

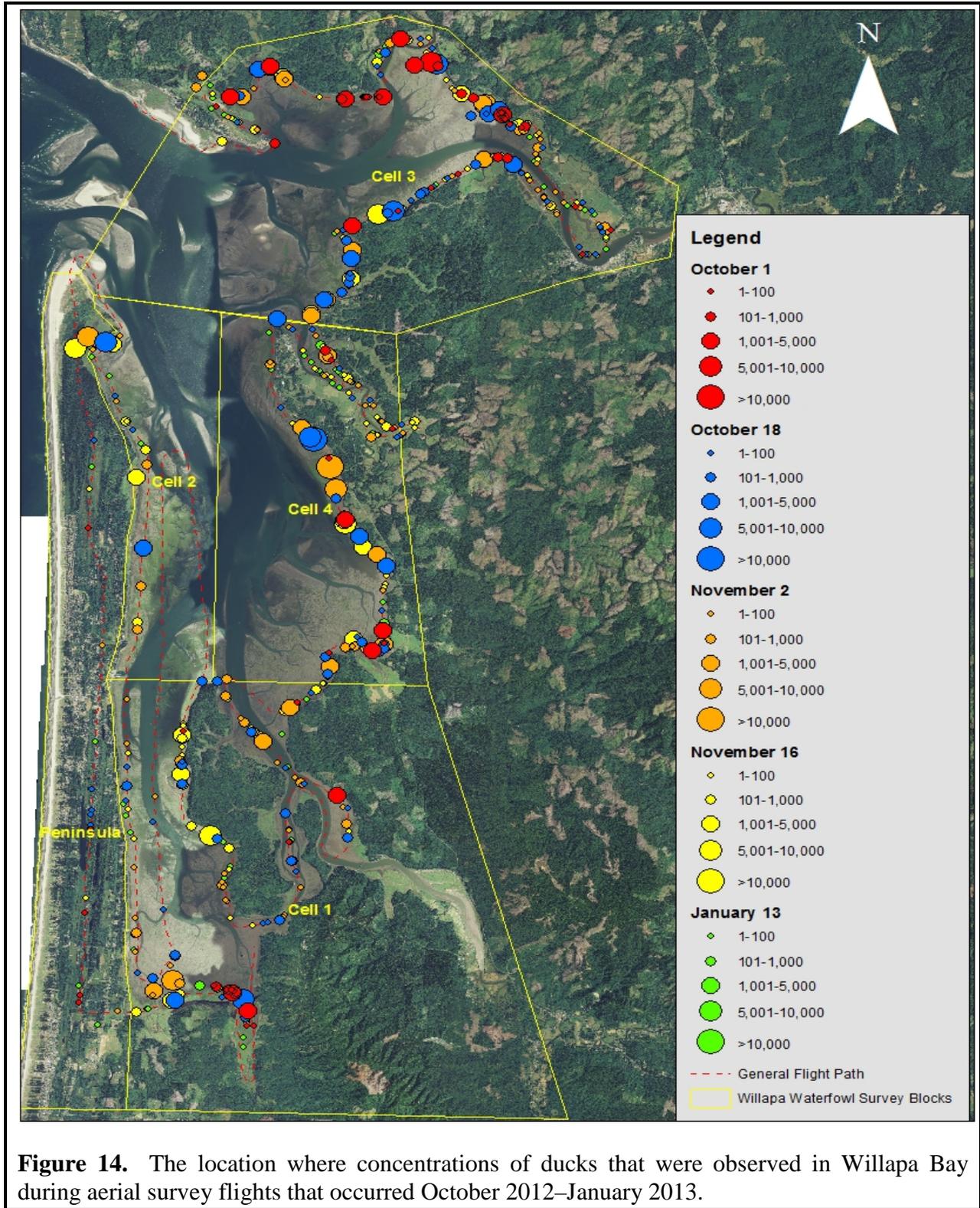
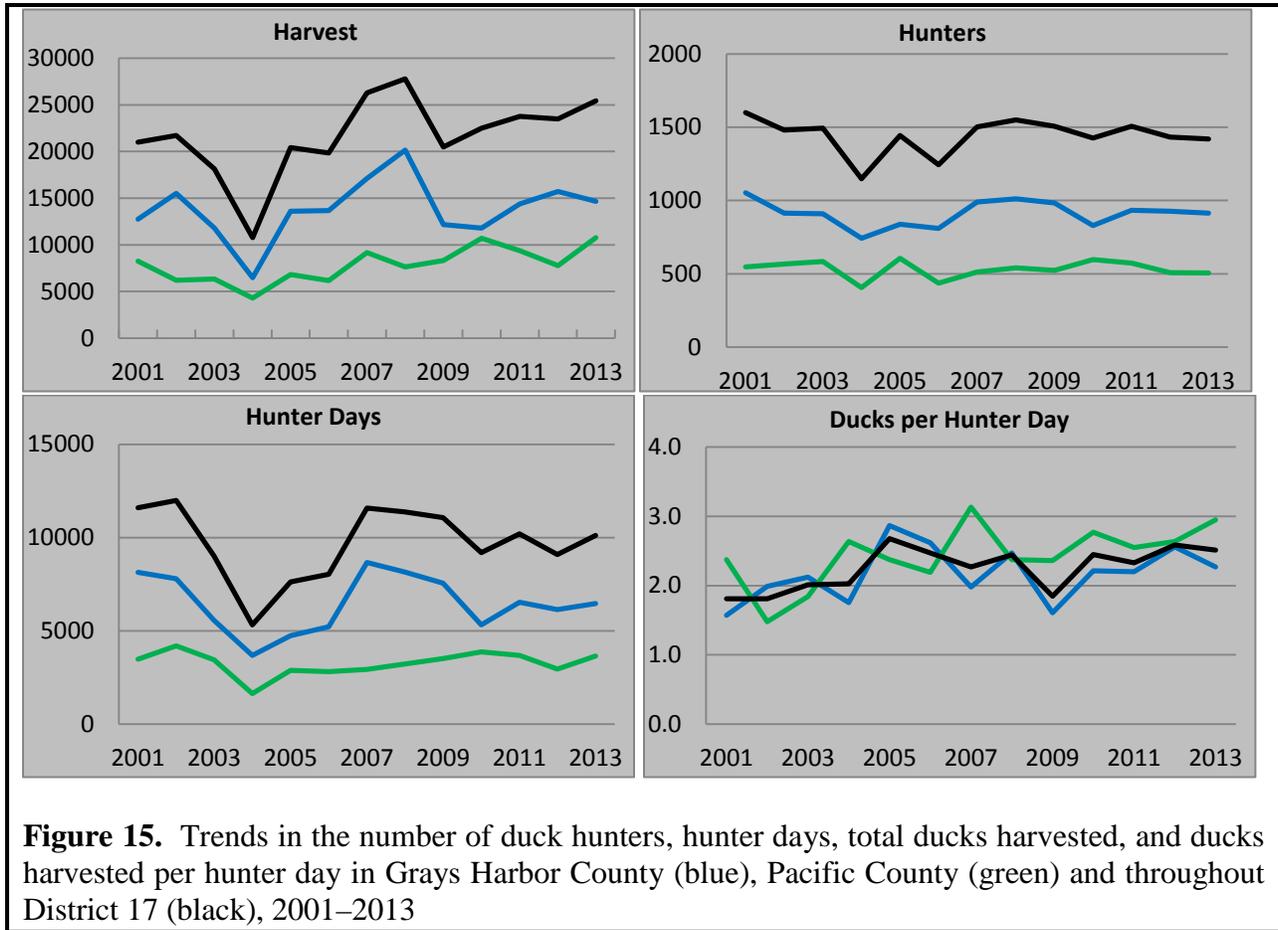


Figure 14. The location where concentrations of ducks that were observed in Willapa Bay during aerial survey flights that occurred October 2012–January 2013.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 PROSPECTS

With an increase in the breeding population in Alaska, hunters should expect great hunting opportunities in District 17 during the 2014 season. In addition, 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 15). 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.



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.”](#)

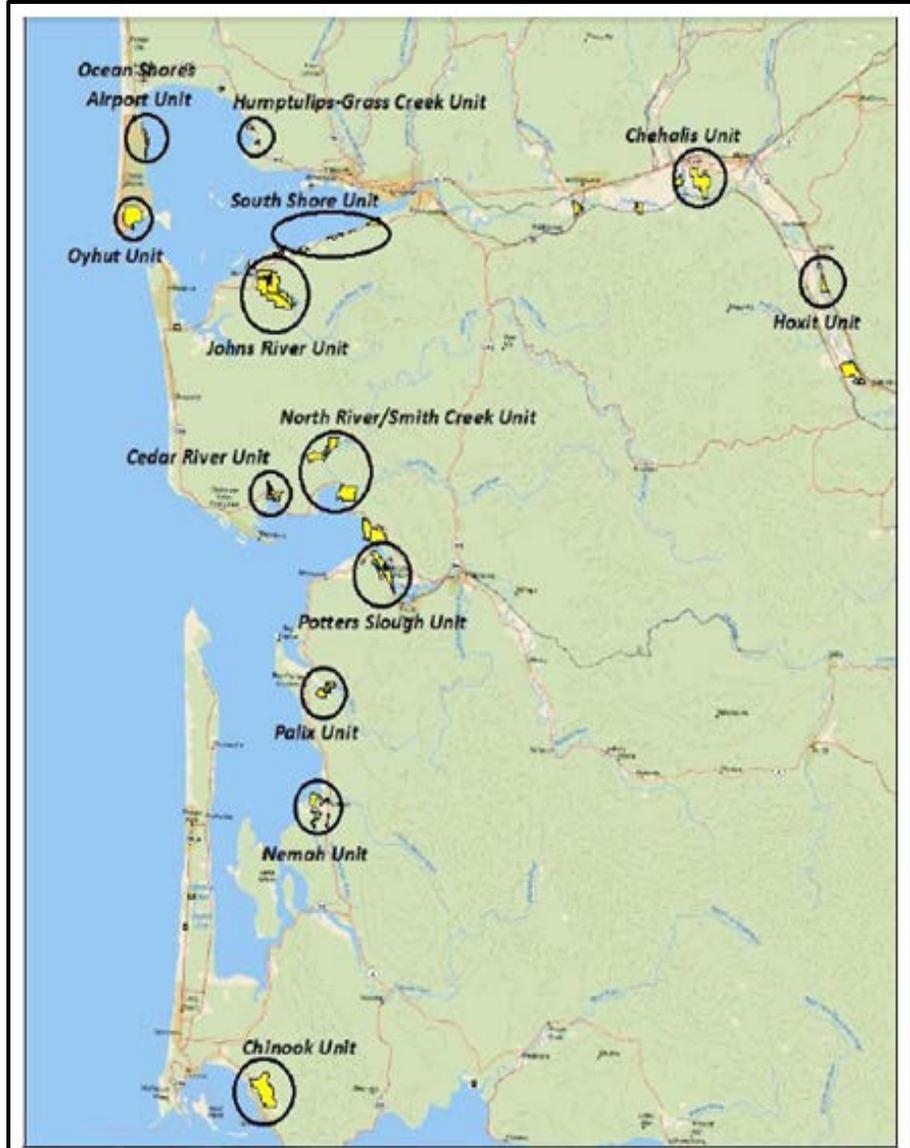


Figure 16. Map depicting the location of WDFW wildlife areas that offer waterfowl hunting opportunities in District 17.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of WDFW Wildlife Areas in District 17 that offer good waterfowl hunting opportunities. Figure 16 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](#).

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 District 17 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.



Local resident dark goose captured and fitted with a satellite transmitter on Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

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 surveys has been relatively stable since the early 2000s.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 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 regular season (Figures 17 and 18). Hunters should expect to harvest approximately 1 goose during each day hunted. Hunter numbers during the regular season have been relatively stable since 2007 and relatively stable during the early season since 2010 (Figures 17 and 18). There is no reason to anticipate a change in hunter numbers during the 2014 season.

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.

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](#)).

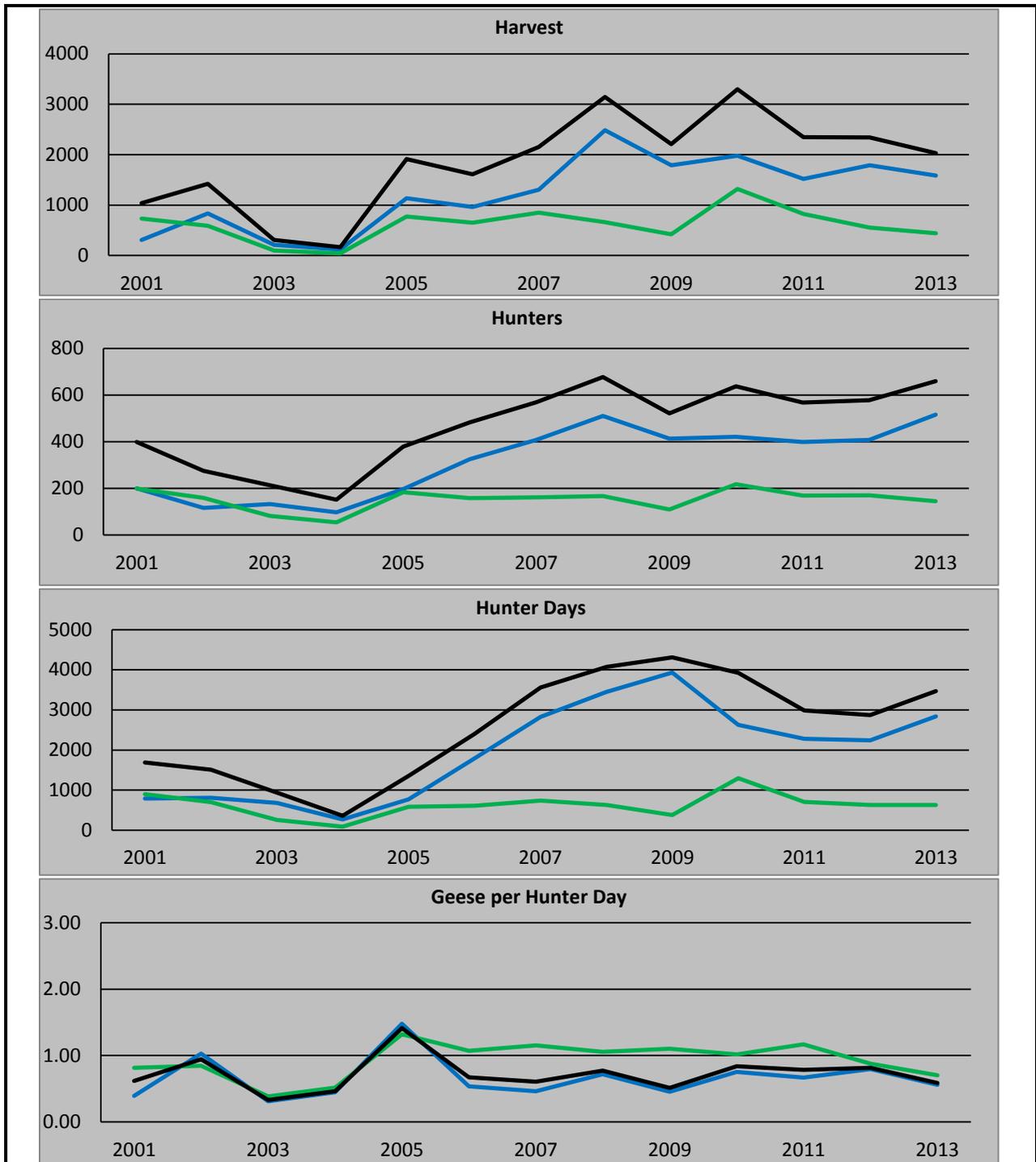


Figure 17. Trends in total harvest, hunter numbers, hunter days, and geese harvested per hunter day during regular goose seasons in Grays Harbor County (blue), Pacific County (green) and throughout District 17, 2001–2013.

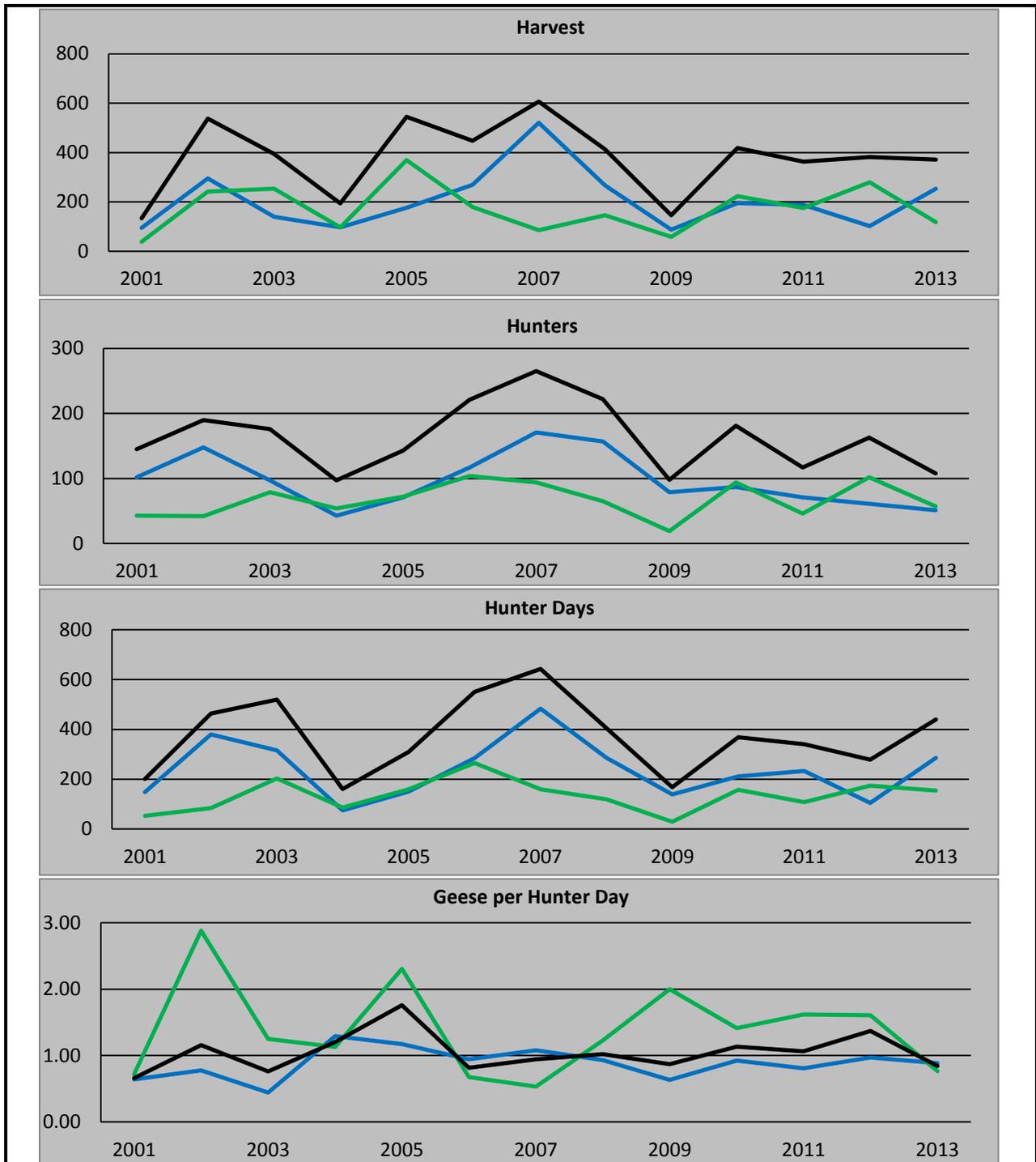


Figure 18. Trends in total harvest, hunter numbers, hunter days, and geese harvested per hunter day during early goose seasons in Grays Harbor County (blue), Pacific County (green) and throughout District 17, 2001–2013.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of Wildlife Areas in District 17 that provide goose hunting opportunities. Please refer to Figure 16 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.

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 or formal 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 (Figure 19) so CPUE 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 0.17 birds per hunter day during the 2013 season (Figure 20).

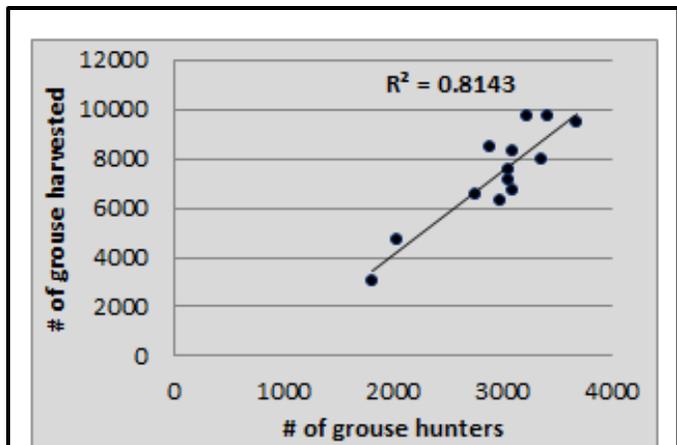


Figure 19. Graphical representation of the relationship that exists between hunter numbers and total grouse harvest in District 17.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 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 in Grays Harbor County because harvest in Pacific County

has been much less variable 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.

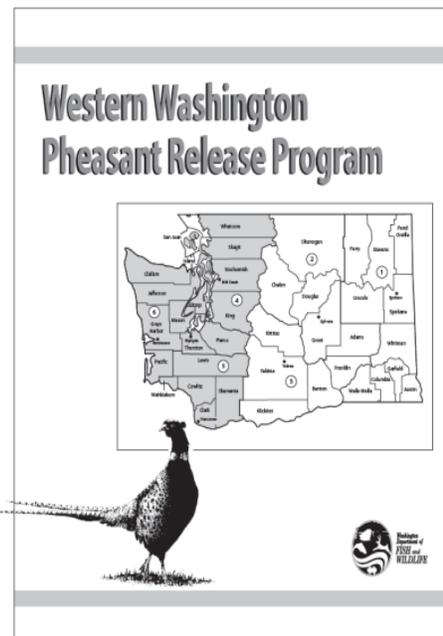
HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

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](#).

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.

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 89 birds and 25 hunters.

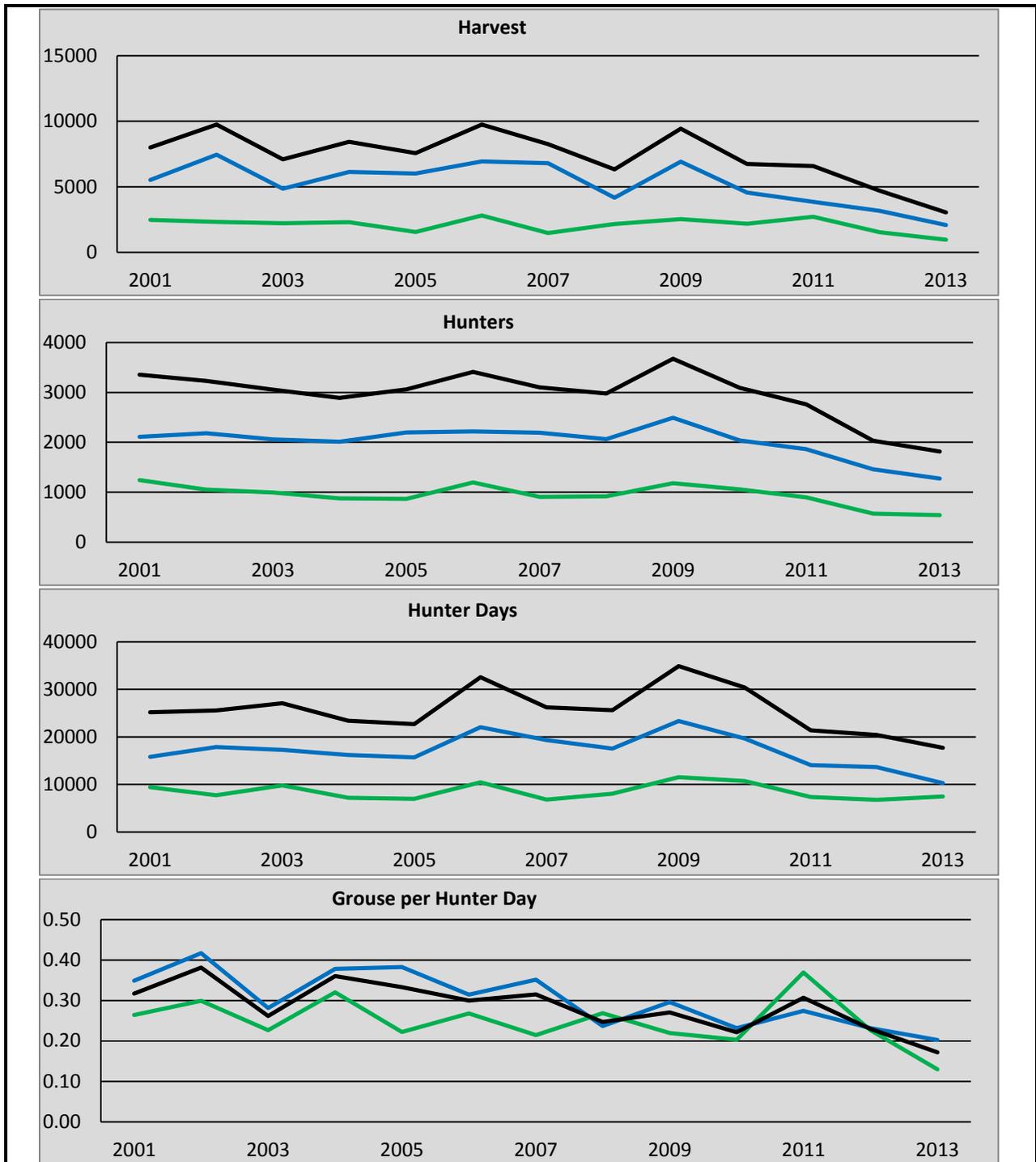


Figure 20. Trends in total harvest, hunter numbers, hunter days, and grouse harvested per hunter day in Grays Harbor County (blue), Pacific County (green) and throughout District 17 (black), 2001–2013.

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, 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, 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. 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.

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 21).

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2014 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.

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.

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 2014 as well. At the time of this writing, 2013 harvest and survey data was not available and 2014 seasons had not been set. However, hunters can expect a 9-day season that occurs in mid to late September. Hunters should review the 2014 Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet once it becomes available to confirm season dates and any other regulation changes.

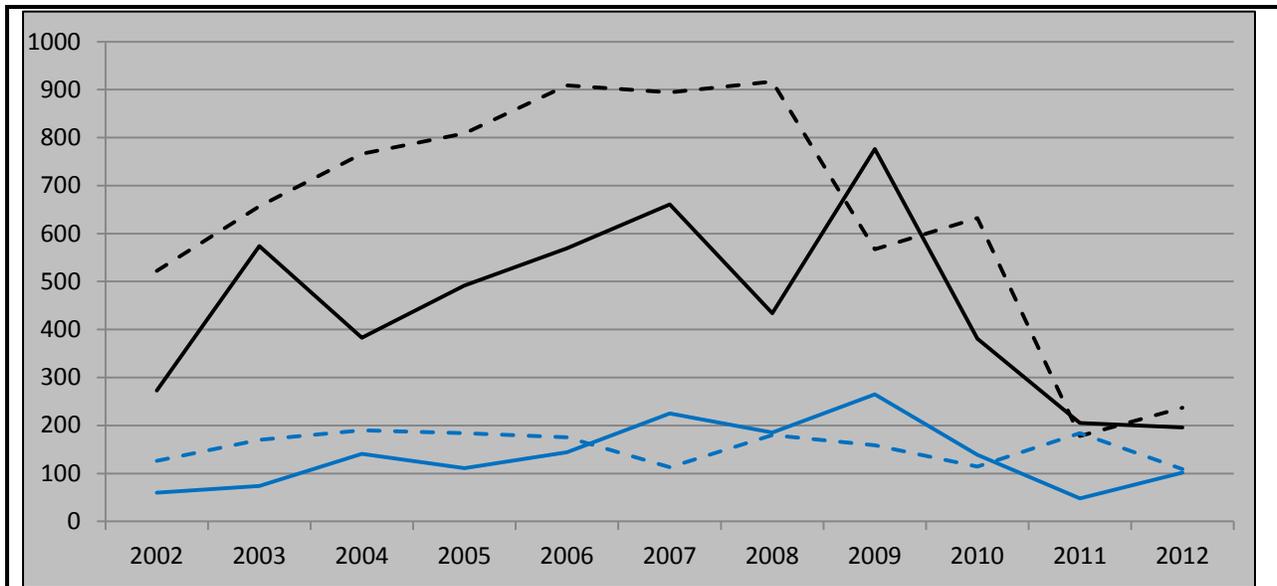


Figure 21. Band-tailed pigeon harvest trends in District 17 (solid blue) and statewide (solid black) since 2002. Also included is the number of hunters (dashed black) and the mean number of band-tailed pigeons observed at each of the mineral sites visited during standardized surveys (dashed blue), 2002–2012. Neither survey data nor harvest data were available for 2013.

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 County.

GMUs with the greatest amount of public land include GMU 638 and GMU 663 (Figure 22). Large tracts of DNR lands also occur in GMUs 660, 672, and 673. The USFWS Willapa National Wildlife Refuge occurs in portions of GMUs 681 and 684. GMU 699 is what its name implies, an island, and the entire GMU is part of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge (Figure 22).

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 16 and visit WDFW's hunting access website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/ or by [clicking here](#).

New for 2014 is a web application showing the Washington State Public Lands Inventory provided by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. To access this map go to <http://publiclands.smartime.com/#Map> or [click here](#).

For more information on resources available to locate public lands please see the Online Tools and Maps section below.

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, and Campbell Global. 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**

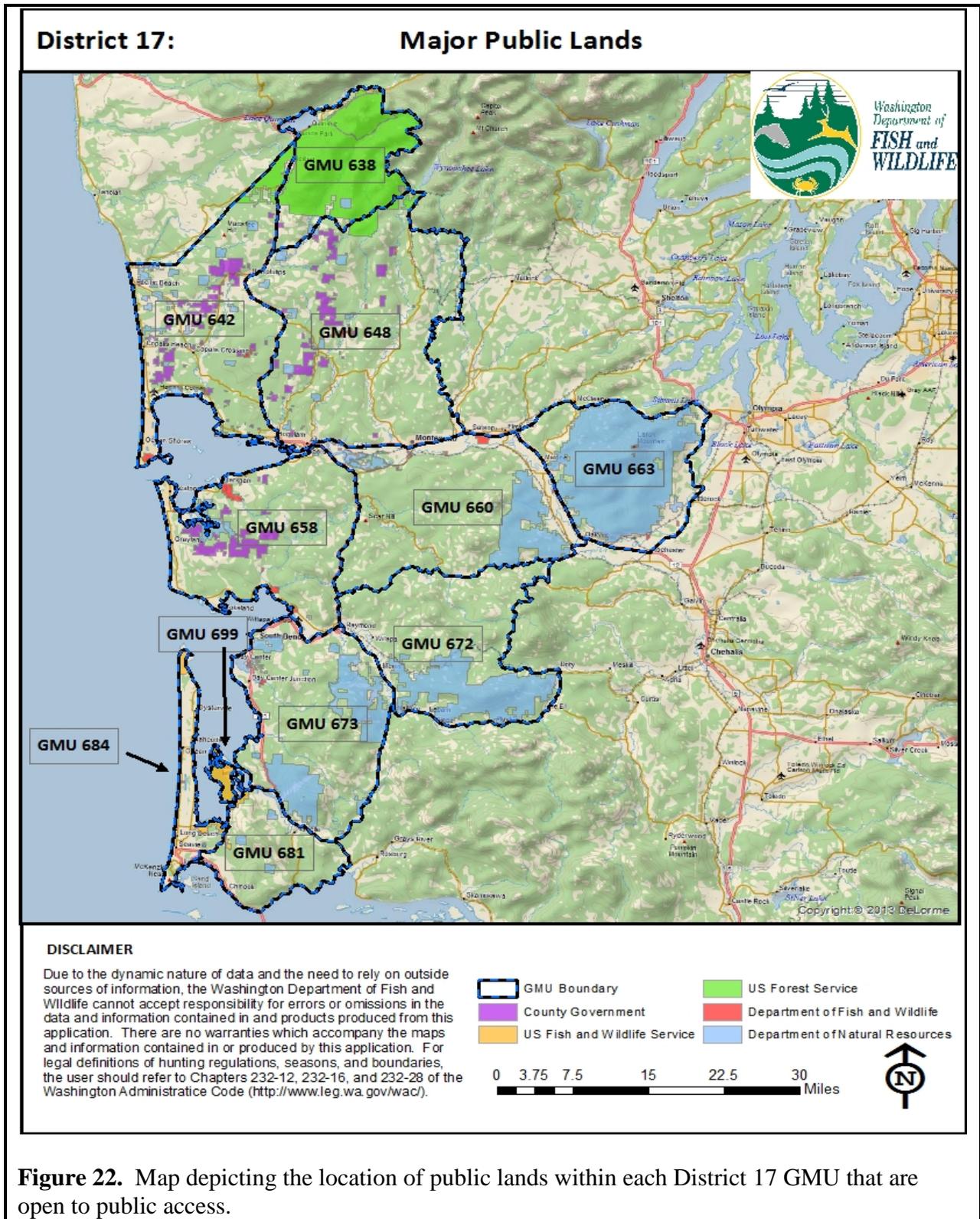


Figure 22. Map depicting the location of public lands within each District 17 GMU that are open to public access.

IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR THE 2014 SEASON

The 2014 season marks the first year that several timber companies will be charging hunters to access their lands. These fees will also apply to all other outdoor recreational activities including hiking, camping, mountain biking, fishing, etc. There are a variety of fee access programs that are being implemented and they vary by area and by company. However, all programs that WDFW is aware of, at the time of this writing, fall into the three general categories which include Permit-Unlimited, Permit-Limited, and Leases. General descriptions of these three programs are as follows.

Permit-Unlimited: Hunters will be required to purchase an access permit, but there will be an unlimited number of permits available. Only holders of a valid permit will be allowed to recreate in areas associated with the permit. Permit cost is anticipated to be between \$50 and \$100.

Permit-Limited: There will be a set number of permits available on a first come, first served basis. Only people who have secured one of the limited permits will be allowed to recreate in areas associated with that permit. Permit cost is anticipated to be several hundred dollars. This type of system was implemented by Weyerhaeuser in their Pe Ell unit (GMUs 672 and 506) during the 2013 season.

Leases: Designated tracts of land are leased to an individual, or groups of individuals, and only the lessee and their families are allowed to access that particular track of land. The cost of a lease can be several thousand dollars.

Hunters need to be aware that many timber companies are charging these access fees in areas where they have historically offered free access. Consequently, it is very important that hunters take the time to contact landowners in areas where they plan to hunt so they know whether or not the company's access policy for that area has changed.

Figure 23 represents areas in District 17 where WDFW knows timber companies will be requiring a fee to recreate on their property. However, the broad implementation of access programs by several timber companies since the 2013 season has been a very dynamic process that always seems to be changing. So, it is important to highlight that Figure 23 represents what has been presented to WDFW as of July 1st. It is very possible that some of the areas presented as "free access" (green) could very well become "fee access" (red) areas by the time hunting seasons begin on September 1. Thus, hunters should use this map as a general reference and should understand it is ultimately their responsibility to contact the appropriate timber company to determine how hunter access will be managed in the areas they plan to hunt.

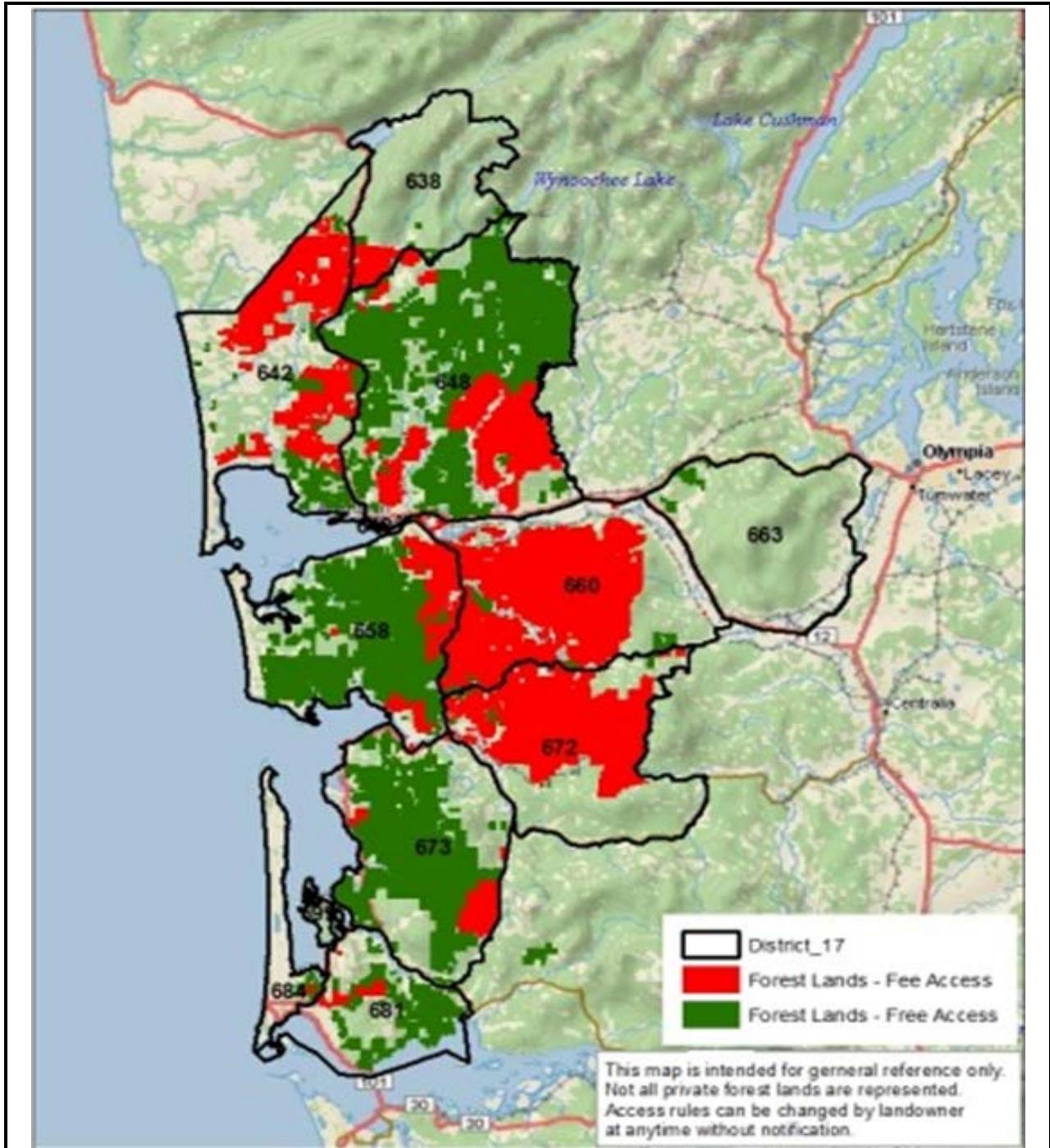


Figure 23. Map depicting areas where private timber companies will be implementing fee access programs during the 2014 season and where timber companies will still be allowing free access. This map represents data that was available as of July 1, 2014 and is subject to change at any time.

BASIC ACCESS RULES

Specific rules related to hunter access on private industrial forestlands vary by 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. 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.
- ✓ Private forest lands are usually closed to public access during hours of darkness.

All users of private forest lands need to be aware that failure to obey landowner rules can result in prosecution for trespass and or receive a *Persona nongrata* from the landowner.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACCESS ALLOWED BY MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

Hancock—Hancock industrial forestlands have different levels of access based on management area. All Hancock industrial forestlands in GMUs 658, 673, and 681 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: seasonal permit, recreational lease, and general access. For seasonal permit and recreational lease areas, access is only allowed for the permit and or lease holders and is subject to access rules established by Rayonier. Areas open for general access are managed under the dot system. They will green dot some of the red dot roads for hunting seasons. District 17 GMU's that have Rayonier lands include 638, 642, 648, 658, 673, and 681. Maps and other information are available on their web site.

Green Diamond—Green Diamond manages hunter access using the dot system and posts access rules at their gates. All of their lands in district 17 are currently open to non-motorized public access. As hunting seasons approach they will usually begin opening additional roads to public access if fire danger is low.

Campbell Global—Campbell Global uses the dot system to manage hunter access and posts access rules at their gates. As hunting season approaches they will normally open some roads to motorized access for the hunting seasons if fire danger is low.

Weyerhaeuser—Weyerhaeuser currently has four levels of access in district 17: general access permit areas, enhanced permit areas, lease areas, and free access areas. For permit and lease areas, access is only allowed for the permit and or lease holders and is subject to rules established by Weyerhaeuser. District 17 GMU's with Weyerhaeuser ownership are 648, 658, 660, and 672. For more information and to view maps go the Weyerhaeuser's website at <http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/> or [click here](#). Areas open for public use are managed under the dot system.

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.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE "DOT" SYSTEM

The Dot system is used by several timber companies in District 17. Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Green Diamond, and Campbell Global 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 hotlines and/or web sites where hunters 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	No website
Hancock	All other GMUs	1-800-782-1493	https://hancockrecreationnw.com/
Rayonier	All	1-360-533-7000	http://www.rayonierhunting.com/
Green Diamond	All	1-360-426-3381	http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/
Weyerhaeuser	All	1-800-636-6531	http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/

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. Several GMU’s have some type of fee access areas that grant the permit or lease holders a higher level of access. The following ratings are based on a hunter not having a lease or permit. 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 Ridge) **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 recreational lease areas that are signed.

GMU 642 (Copalis) **Access rating = Poor**

The primary landowner in this GMU is Rayonier. They have recreational lease, seasonal permit, and general 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 Global. 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 has a few leased access areas in this GMU that are signed. The majority of Rayonier lands in this GMU are managed under their general access program.

GMU 658 (North River) **Access rating = Good**

Primary land owners are Hancock, Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Grays Harbor County, Campbell Global, 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. Many of the landowners that surround the public lands will open gates for reasonable access to public lands for hunting seasons once fire seasons are over. Rayonier has some recreation leases and general access areas in this GMU. Access to Weyerhaeuser lands in this GMU is restricted to permit and lease holders.

GMU 660 (Minot Peak) **Access rating = Poor**

The primary landowner in GMU 660 is Weyerhaeuser. All of their lands in this GMU are managed under their general access permit program. A small portion of this GMU is owned by DNR. To prevent elk from being pressured on to Chehalis valley farms lands motorized access is limited on DNR lands.

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. All Weyerhaeuser lands in this GMU are only accessible to permits holders.

GMU 673 (Williams Creek) **Access rating = Poor**

Access in this GMU is quite variable and depends on the landowners. Primary private timberland owners are Hancock, Rayonier, and Campbell Global. 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 recreational lease, seasonal permit, and general access areas in this GMU.

GMU 681 (Bear River) **Access rating = Good**

Hunters can expect a little lower level of access than in the past. 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 of 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 2014 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/ or [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](#).