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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.

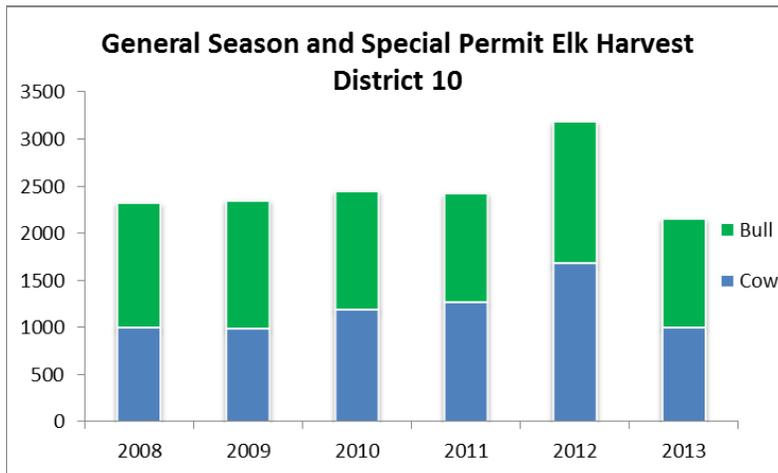
Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10. Major changes to hunting access this year include the requirement to purchase an access permit to hunt on Weyerhaeuser land on their St. Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). Access permits are being sold for \$150. A few select 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.

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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](#).

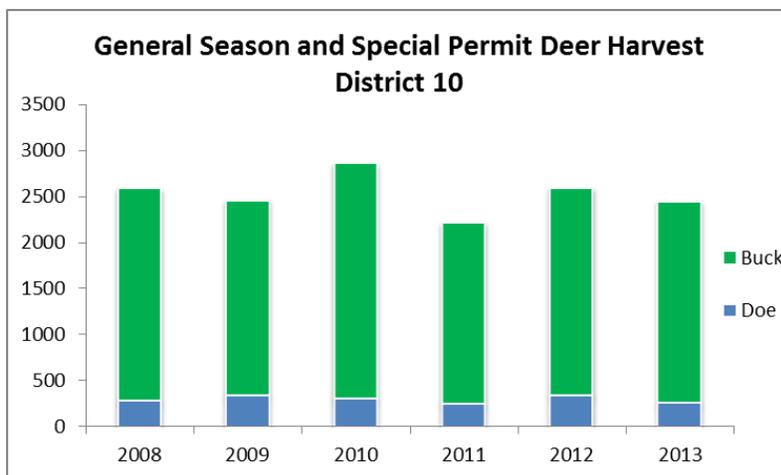
Hunters should be aware to minimize the spread of the disease; the Department has proposed new regulations requiring hunters to leave the hooves of any elk taken in the affected area on site. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission is scheduled to hear public comments and take action on this proposal 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.

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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.

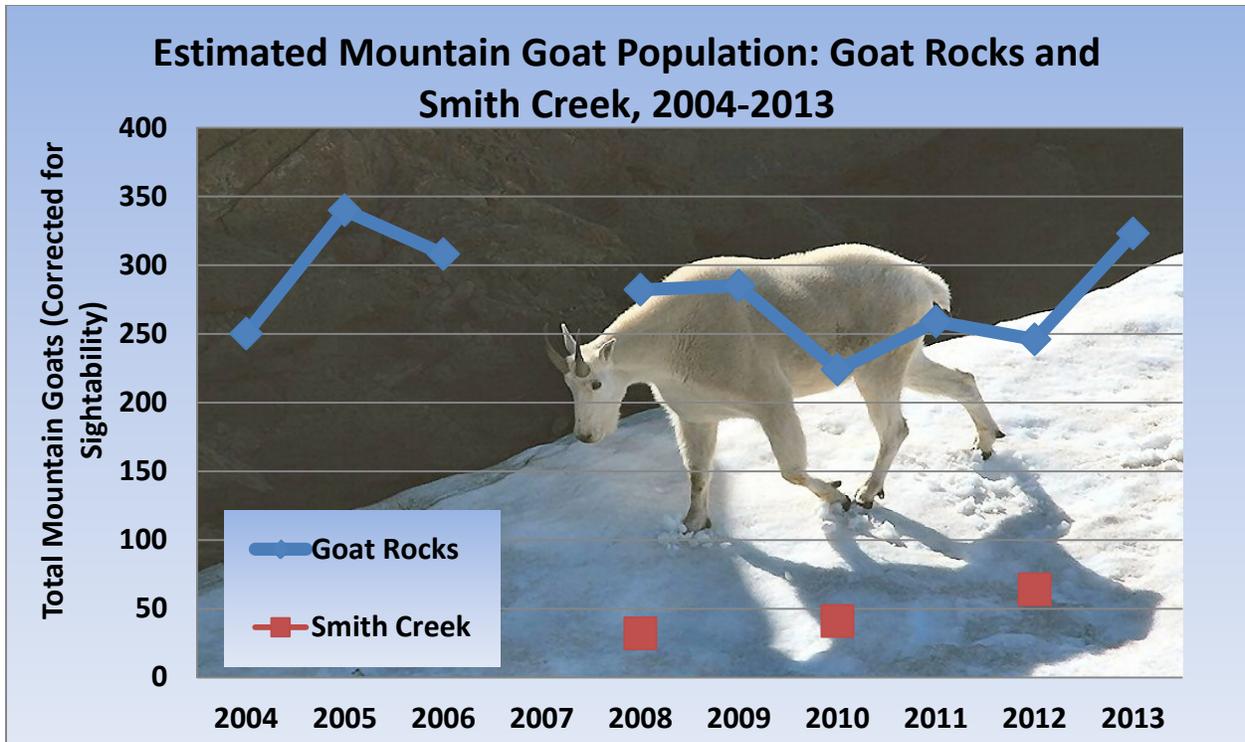
All successful bear hunters must submit the premolar tooth in a tooth envelope—see page 64 of the pamphlet for more details.

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

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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

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- 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