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WILDLIFE**



## **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](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

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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.



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### 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.



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### 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](http://www.sjclandbank.org/images_lopez/LopezHill_map.pdf) and questions can be sent to [timc@rockisland.com](mailto: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](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

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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 51<sup>st</sup> St SE, and pheasants will be released on the west side of the property in addition to the east section. All pheasant release sites on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area 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.



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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

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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/](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).

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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 51<sup>st</sup> St SE.

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