

# 2014

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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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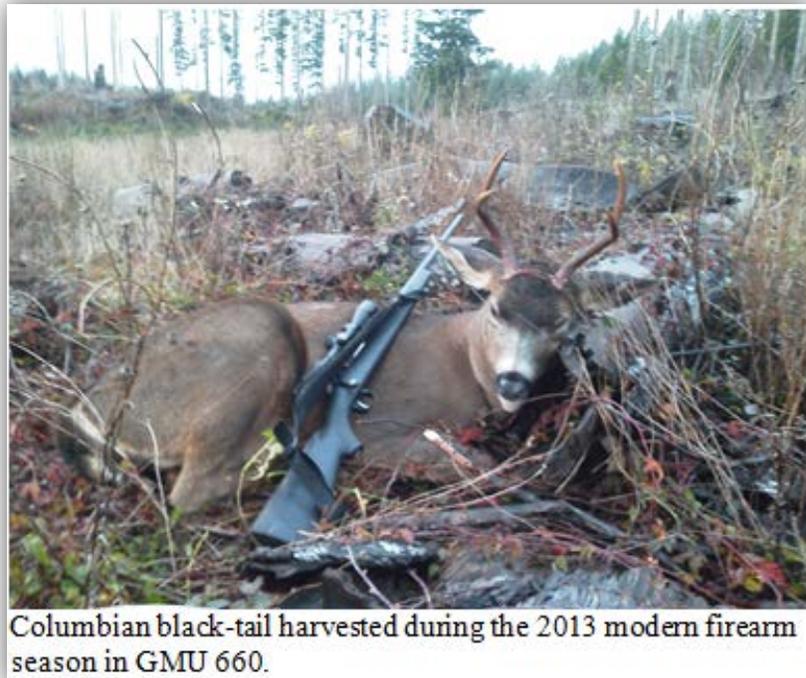
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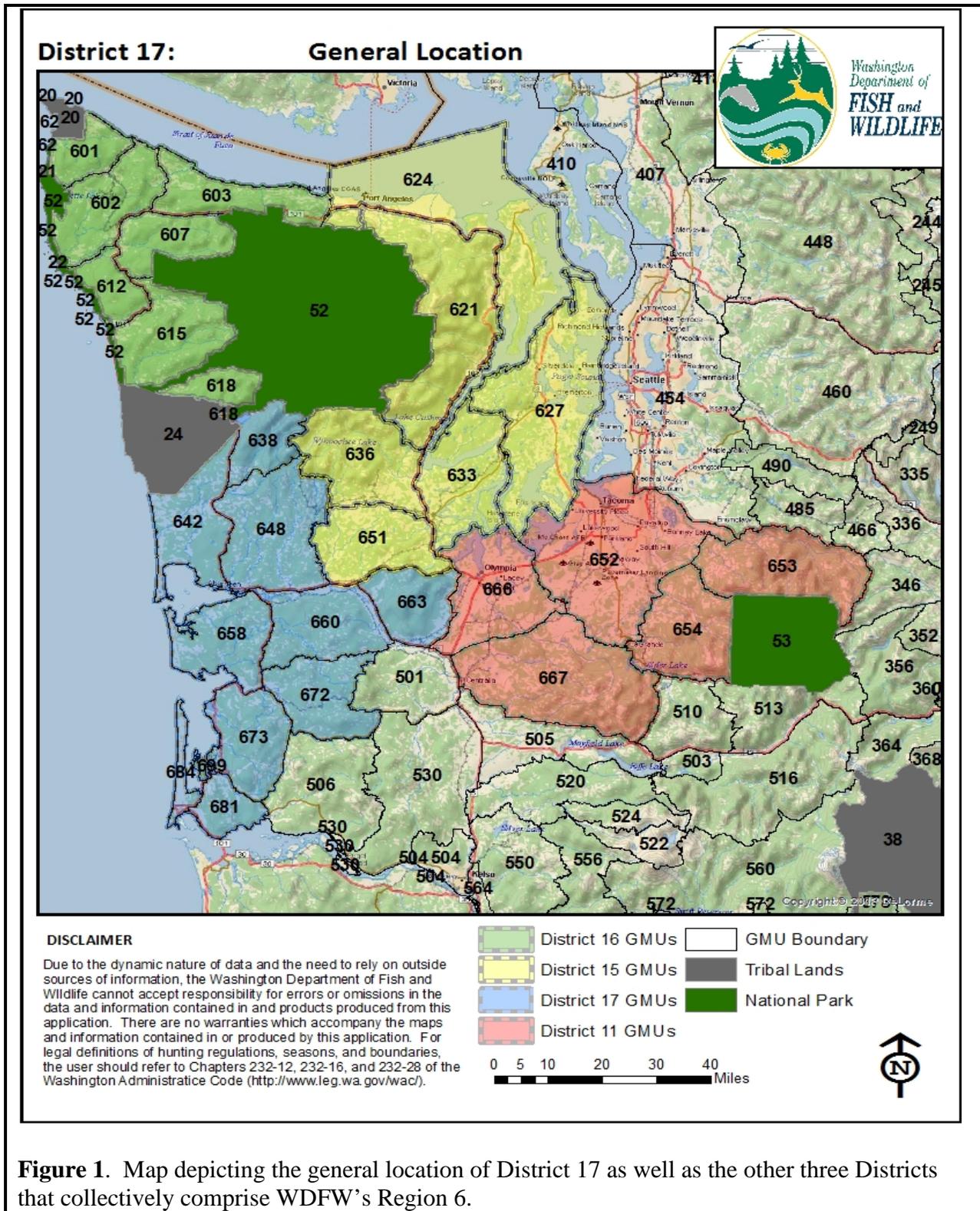
## **DISTRICT 17 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

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](#).

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### **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/mi<sup>2</sup>, 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/mi<sup>2</sup> (bulls and cows), hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed in order of least rank sum to largest. The modern firearm comparisons are the most straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same in each GMU.

For archery seasons you have to consider that antlerless elk may be harvested in six GMUs, and 4 GMUs are open during early and late archery seasons. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs. For muzzleloader comparisons, some seasons are open during the early muzzleloader season and others during the late muzzleloader season. Hunters should keep these differences in mind when comparing and interpreting the information provided in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Rank sum analysis that provides a 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 <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	4	0.078	6	30	0.59	3	13%	2	<b>11</b>
681	109	36	0.330	2	240	2.20	9	15%	1	<b>12</b>
673	266	116	0.436	1	1011	3.80	10	11%	3	<b>14</b>
658	257	62	0.241	3	557	2.17	8	11%	4	<b>15</b>
672	257	34	0.132	4	337	1.31	7	10%	5	<b>16</b>
660	302	27	0.089	5	290	0.96	5	9%	7	<b>17</b>
638	153	10	0.065	7	111	0.73	4	10%	6	<b>17</b>
642	278	6	0.022	9	73	0.26	1	8%	8	<b>18</b>
663	210	2	0.010	10	64	0.30	2	3%	10	<b>22</b>
648	431	17	0.039	8	416	0.97	6	4%	9	<b>23</b>

**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 <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
<b>684</b>	51	14	0.275	1	51	1.00	7	28%	1	<b>9</b>
642	278	3	0.011	6	20	0.07	2	14%	2	<b>10</b>
672	257	9	0.035	3	97	0.38	5	9%	3	<b>11</b>
660	302	10	0.033	4	98	0.32	4	9%	4	<b>12</b>
658	257	11	0.043	2	184	0.72	6	6%	5	<b>13</b>
638	153	2	0.013	5	41	0.27	3	6%	6	<b>14</b>
663	210	1	0.005	7	13	0.06	1	2%	7	<b>15</b>

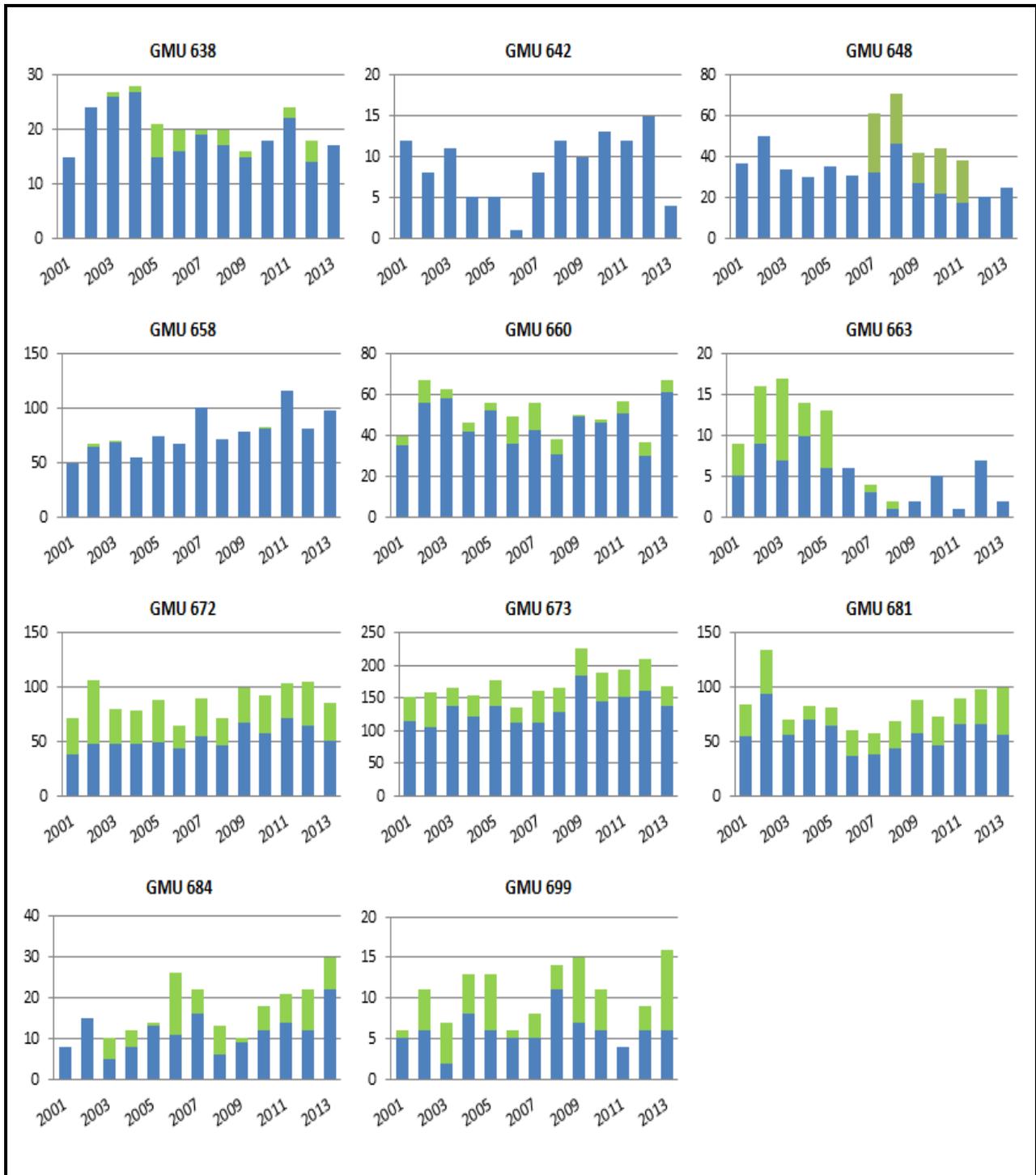
**Table 4.** Rank sum analysis that provides a general comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general archery seasons. GMUs that are bolded are open during early and late archery seasons, while GMUs with an asterisk indicate GMUs that have 3-pt. minimum or antlerless harvest restrictions. Data presented are based on a 5-year running average.

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
658	257	16	0.062	5	111	0.43	5	15%	2	<b>12</b>
673*	266	79	0.297	3	488	1.83	8	16%	1	<b>12</b>
<b>699*</b>	8	11	1.375	1	78	9.75	11	14%	3	<b>15</b>
<b>681*</b>	109	53	0.486	2	377	3.46	10	14%	4	<b>16</b>
638	153	5	0.033	9	53	0.35	3	10%	6	<b>18</b>
<b>672*</b>	257	52	0.202	4	483	1.88	9	11%	5	<b>18</b>
684*	51	2	0.039	7	19	0.37	4	9%	8	<b>19</b>
660*	302	12	0.040	6	135	0.45	6	9%	7	<b>19</b>
642	278	2	0.007	10	20	0.07	1	9%	9	<b>20</b>
663	210	1	0.005	11	27	0.13	2	4%	11	<b>24</b>
<b>648</b>	431	16	0.037	8	283	0.66	7	6%	10	<b>25</b>

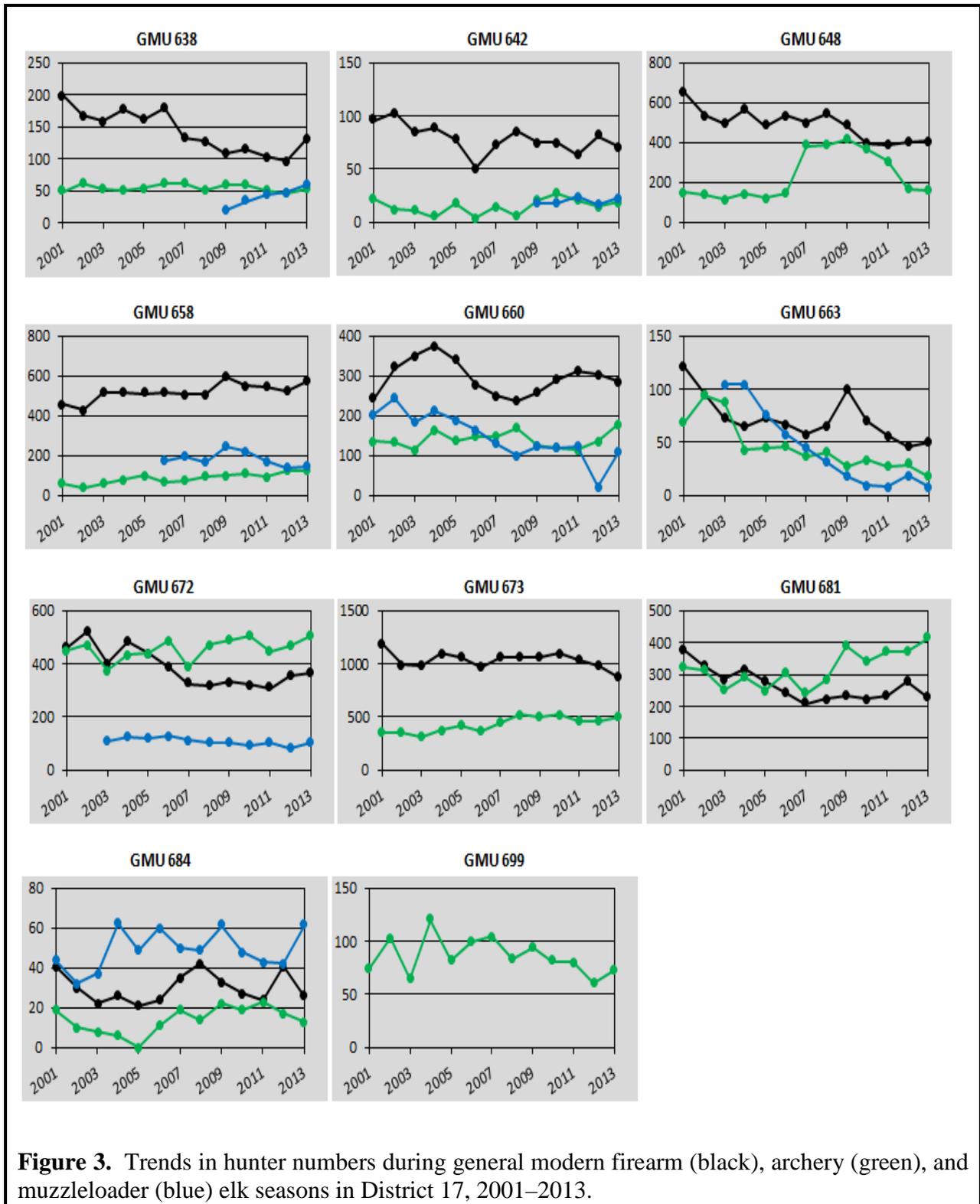
**WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2014 SEASON**

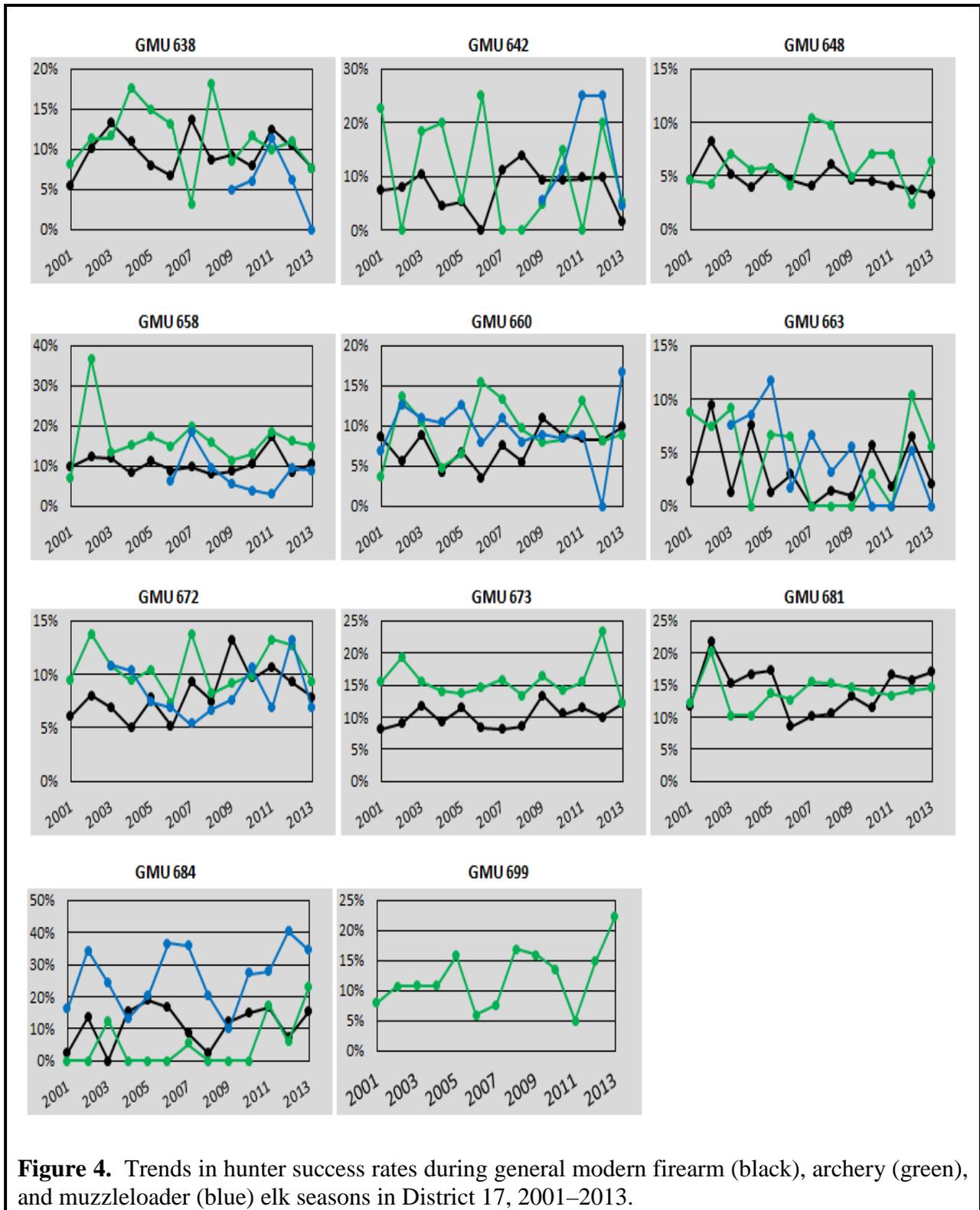
It is typically uncommon for elk populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 17 where severe winter weather conditions that result in large winter die-offs rarely occur. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to 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.





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## HOW TO FIND ELK

When hunting elk in District 17, hunters need to do their homework and spend plenty of time scouting before the season opener because it is often difficult to predict where the elk are going to be, especially after hunting pressure increases. The majority of hunters spend most of their time focusing on clearcuts, which makes a lot of sense because elk often forage in clearcuts and are highly visible when they do. However, there are many elk (especially bulls) that do not frequent clearcuts during daylight hours. Instead, they spend most of their 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.

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### ELK AREAS

There are four Elk Areas that occur in District 17: Elk Area 6010 (Mallis or Raymond), Elk Area 6064 (Quinault Valley), Elk Area 6066 (Grays Harbor), and Elk Area 6067 (North Minot). Nearly all permit opportunities in District 17 are antlerless elk hunts and are associated with these Elk Areas. Elk Areas 6010 and 6067 were established in locations with chronic elk damage problems and their primary intent is to provide antlerless harvest opportunities that help control the growth rate of herds in localized agricultural areas.

Elk Areas 6064 and 6066 were established to help alleviate problems landowners were having with elk hunters. Because of their primary intent, special restrictions apply in each of these Elk Areas. In Elk Area 6064, only Master Hunters are allowed to hunt elk during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. In Elk Area 6066, there is a firearm restriction during the general modern firearm elk season, which makes it unlawful to hunt with centerfire or rimfire rifles.

The intent of Elk Areas 6010 and 6067 is to alleviate elk damage on private agricultural 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.

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### 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.**

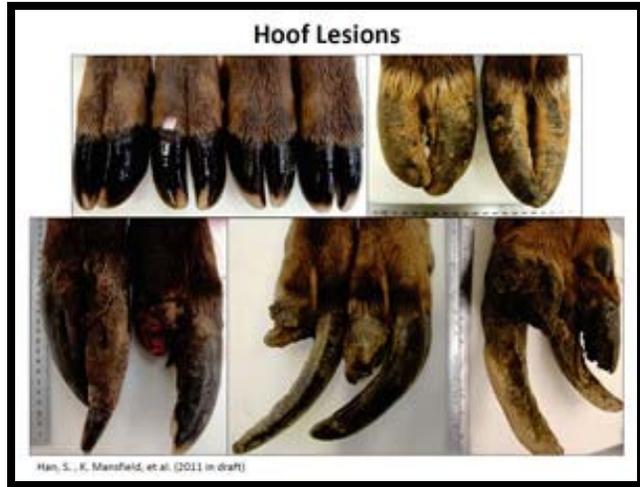
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### BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

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/](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).

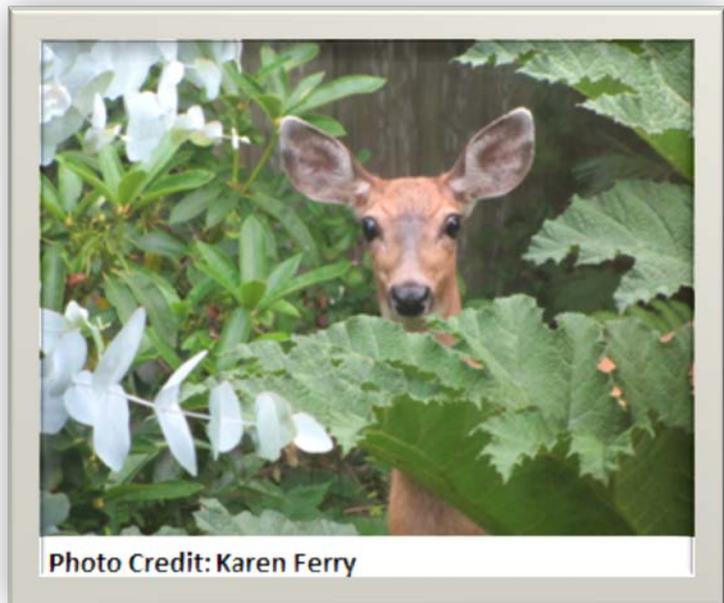
All available harvest data indicates deer populations appear to be stable or slightly declining in all PMUs associated with District 17. For more detailed information related to the status of black-tailed deer in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend 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/mi<sup>2</sup>, 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/mi<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed in order of 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 <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	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 <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
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 <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	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

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### 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.

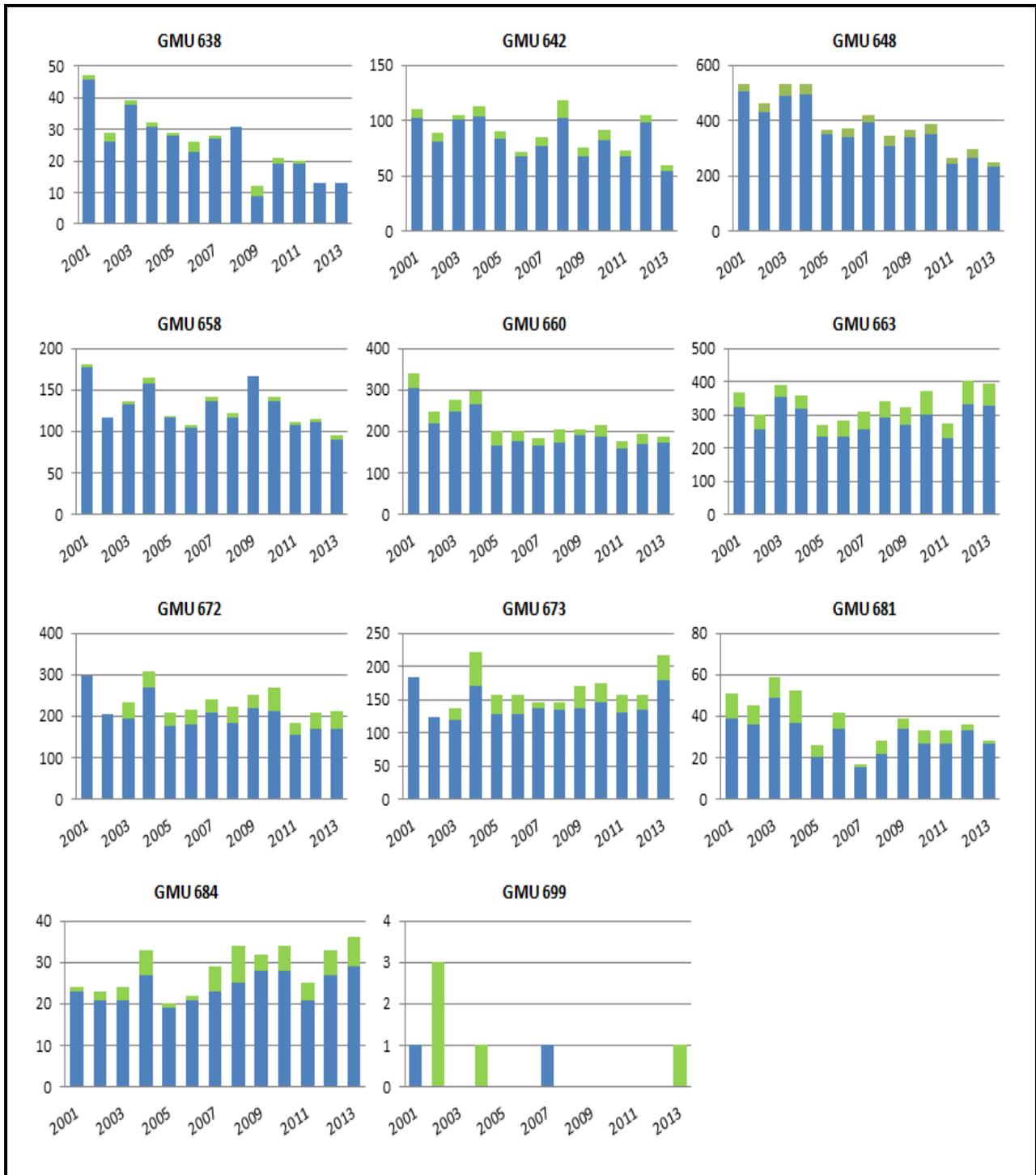
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### HOW TO FIND AND HUNT BLACK-TAILS

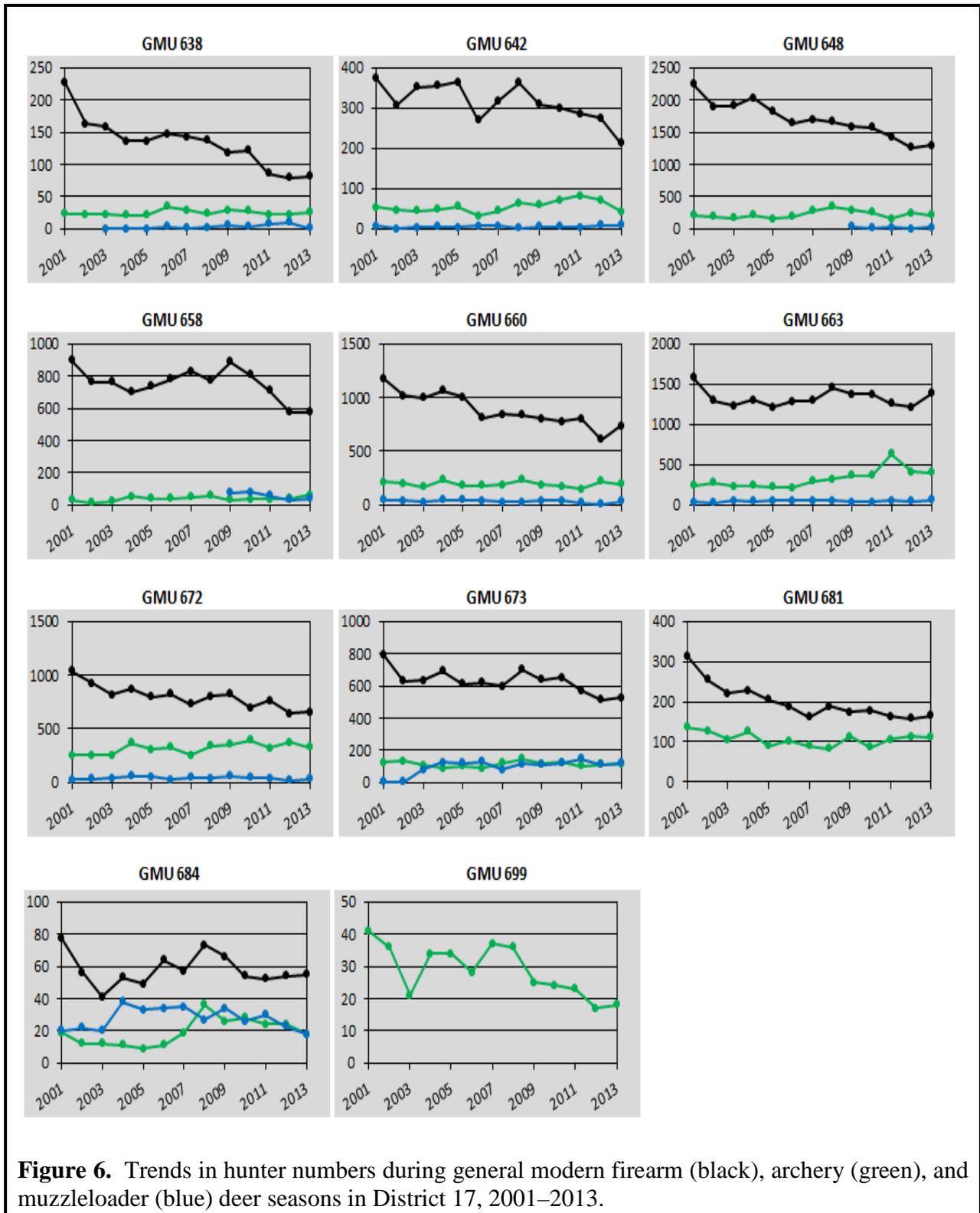
As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a black-tail in District 17 is scouting. Black-tails occur throughout the District and in nearly every habitat type that is present. However, densities do differ among habitat types and the highest deer densities are typically associated with 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.

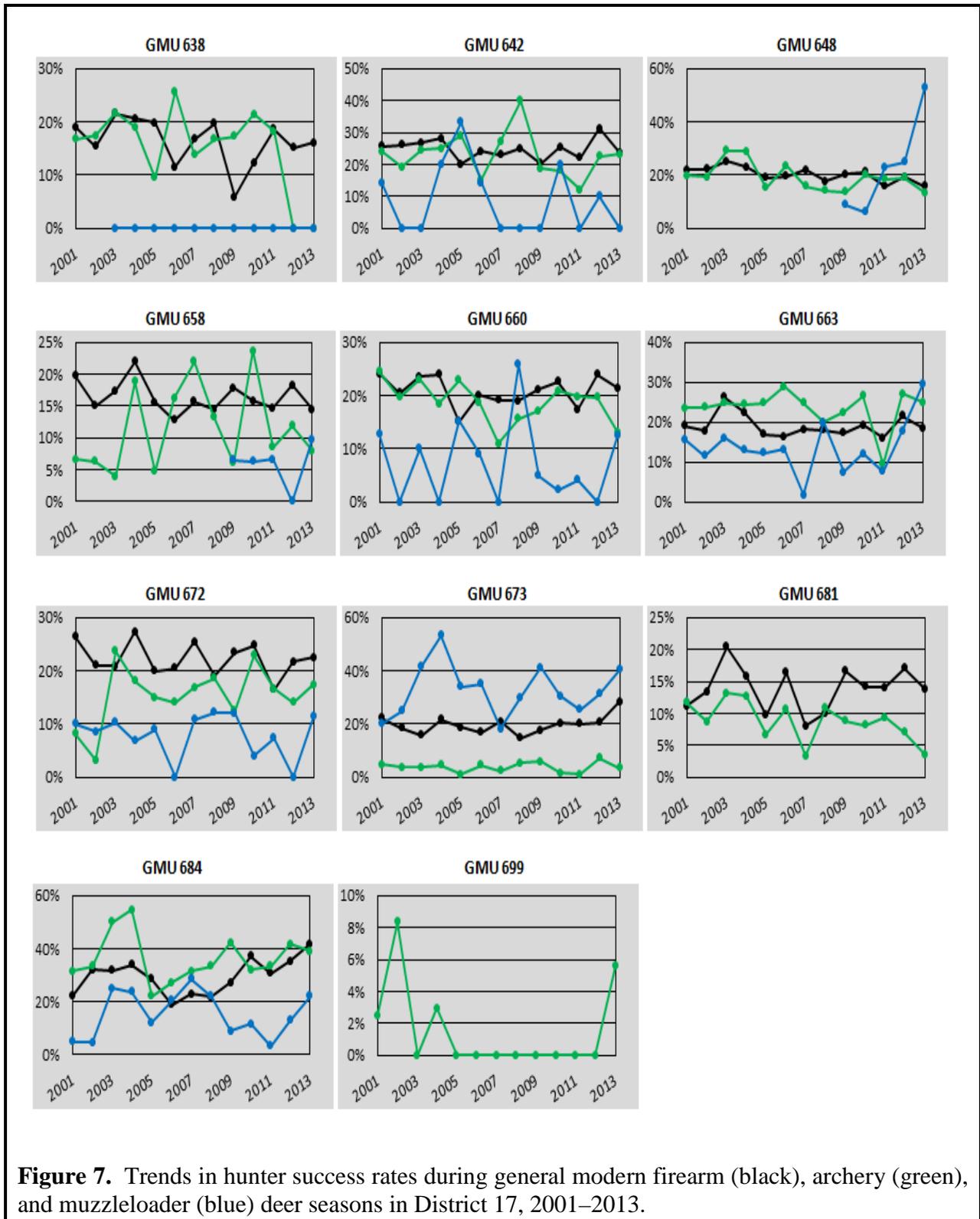




**Figure 5.** Trends in the total number of buck (blue) and antlerless (green) deer harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2001–2013. Harvest totals do not include tribal harvest or harvest that occurred during permit seasons.



**Figure 6.** Trends in hunter numbers during general modern firearm (black), archery (green), and muzzleloader (blue) deer seasons in District 17, 2001–2013.



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 mi<sup>2</sup> (243 acres) and the average home range size was just 0.14 mi<sup>2</sup> (86 acres). In an entire year's time, there were even some deer that used an area no bigger than 45 acres in size. Thus, if a hunter is seeing sign in an area, but isn't seeing deer, then they need to be patient or change their approach.

The traditional approaches to hunting black-tails include still-hunting or sitting patiently in high use areas (clearcuts, highly traveled trails, funnels, etc.) until the deer show up. Although these two approaches are highly effective, there is another technique that is not as well-known or utilized as much as it should be. This includes rattling and grunting to simulate two bucks that are fighting over a "hot" doe. This technique is more common with Midwest and eastern white-tailed deer hunters, but can be effective on black-tails as well. A quick Google search on this topic will yield plenty of evidence to illustrate the effectiveness of this technique when conditions are right.

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## DEER AREAS

There are no Deer Areas in District 17.

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## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

- 1. 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

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## 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

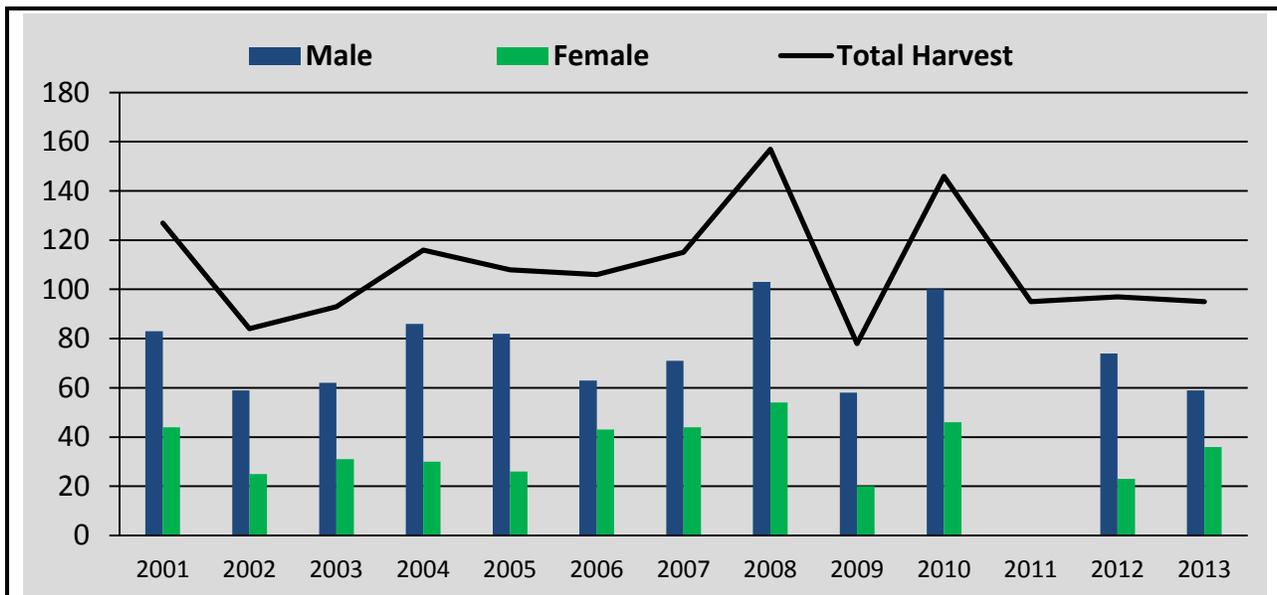
level, which is not expected to result in increased impacts to big game herds. The metrics used to direct black bear harvest include: proportion of harvested bears that were female, median age of harvested females, and median age of harvested males.

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**

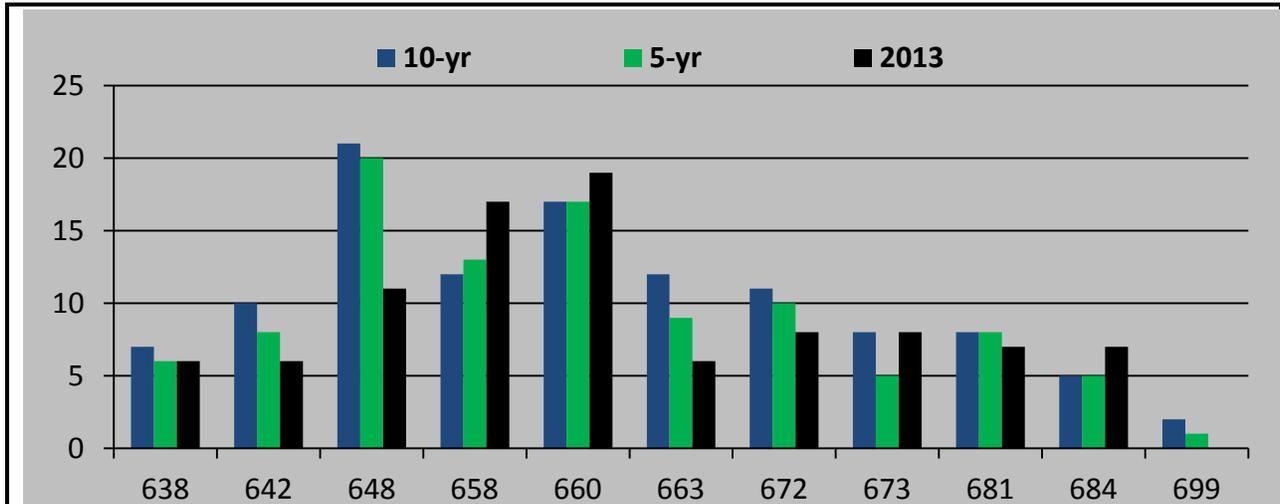
Although there are hunters that specifically target black bears, it is suspected most bears are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest can vary quite a bit from one year to the next and, overall, hunter success is quite low. Since 2001, hunter success 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).

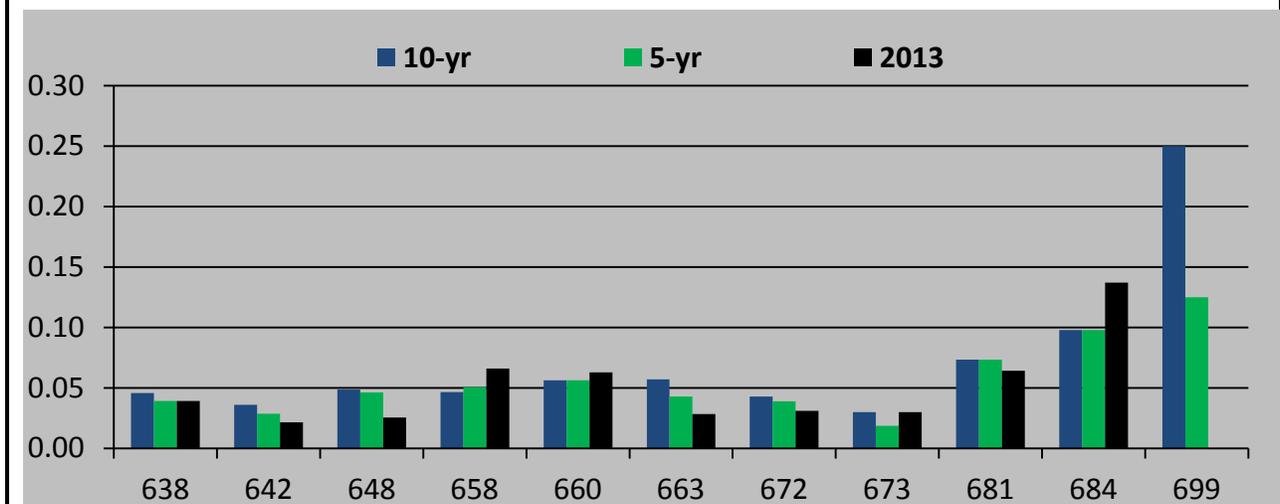


**Figure 8.** Trends in the number of male and female black bears and total number of bears harvested during the general bear season in District 17, 2001–2013. Harvest estimates do not include bears harvested during spring permit seasons in GMU 642 or bears that were removed because of conflict with 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.

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### 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.



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### NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2013 season.

## COUGAR

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### 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.



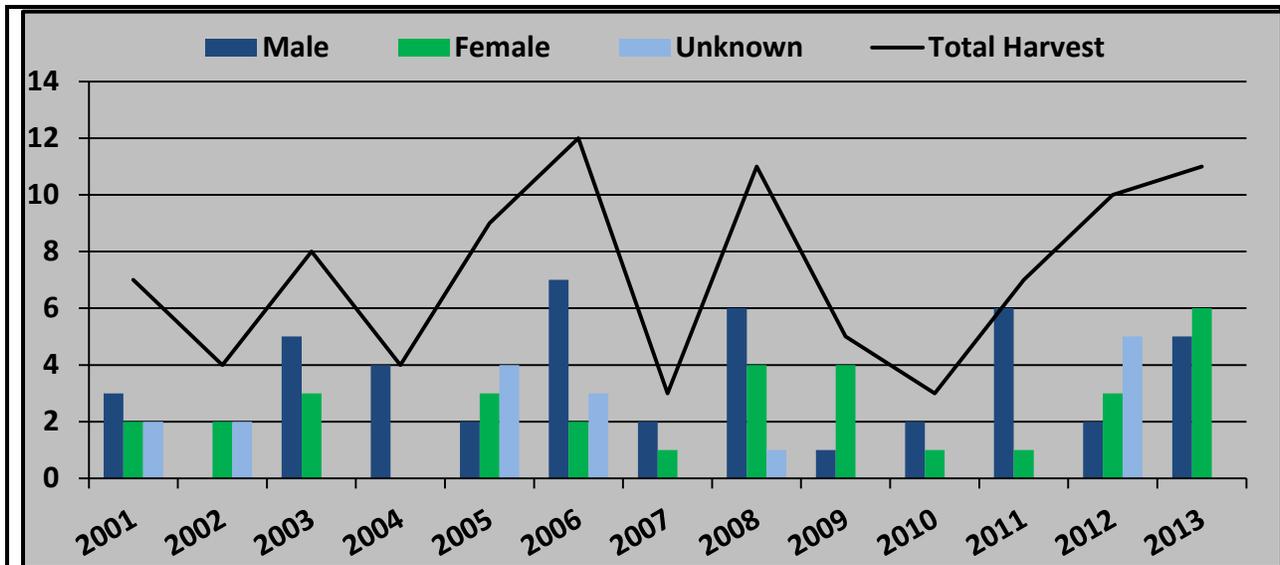
For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the WDFW’s website or [click here](#).

**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.

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### **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.

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### **CONCENTRATION AREAS**

In general, concentration areas include Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and the Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys. Where concentrations occur within these broader areas is dependent on many factors (e.g. hunting pressure, weather, food, etc.) and has the potential to change on a daily basis.

Aerial composition flights were conducted on a bi-weekly basis in Willapa Bay during the 2012 season, and concentration areas occurred in different locations during each of the four flights that were conducted in October and November (Figure 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.

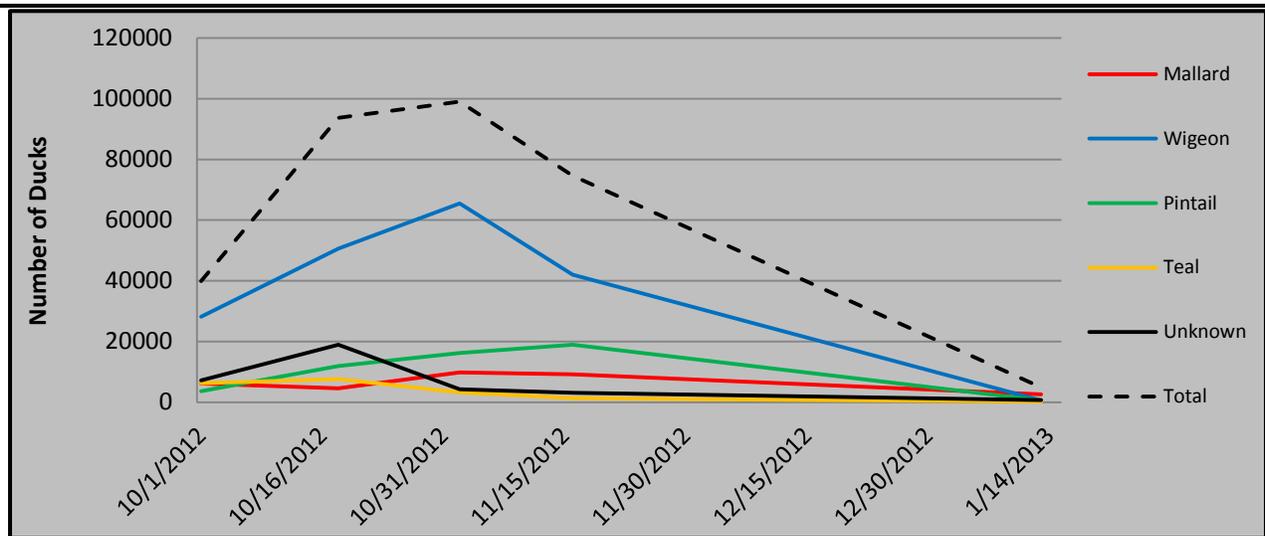


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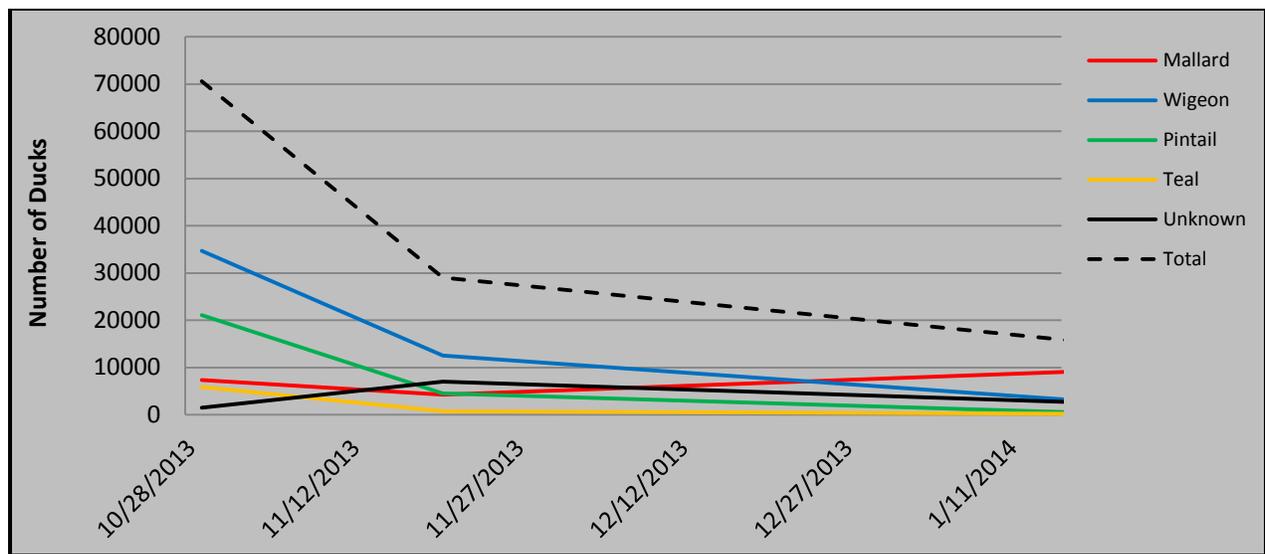
### **POPULATION STATUS**

Breeding duck populations in western Washington were not monitored until 2010 when WDFW developed and began flying established transects in five select areas of western Washington. Surveys are flown during the month of April. One of the selected areas occurs in District 17 and is associated with the Chehalis River Valley. In 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.

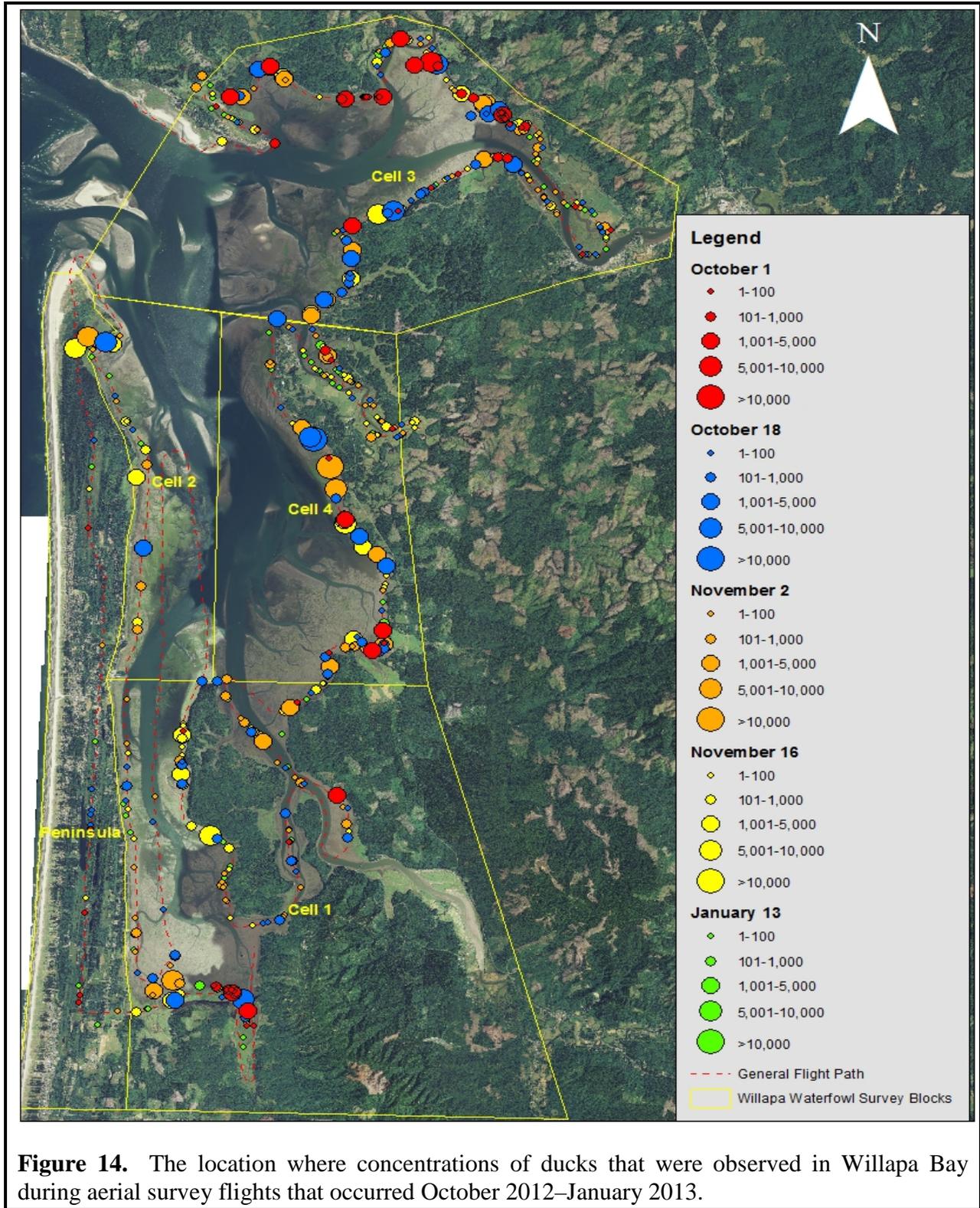
The number of ducks that occur in District 17 during established hunting seasons is most strongly related to the status of breeding duck populations in Alaska. The 2014 breeding population survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 3.5 million ducks which represents a 6% increase from the 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.

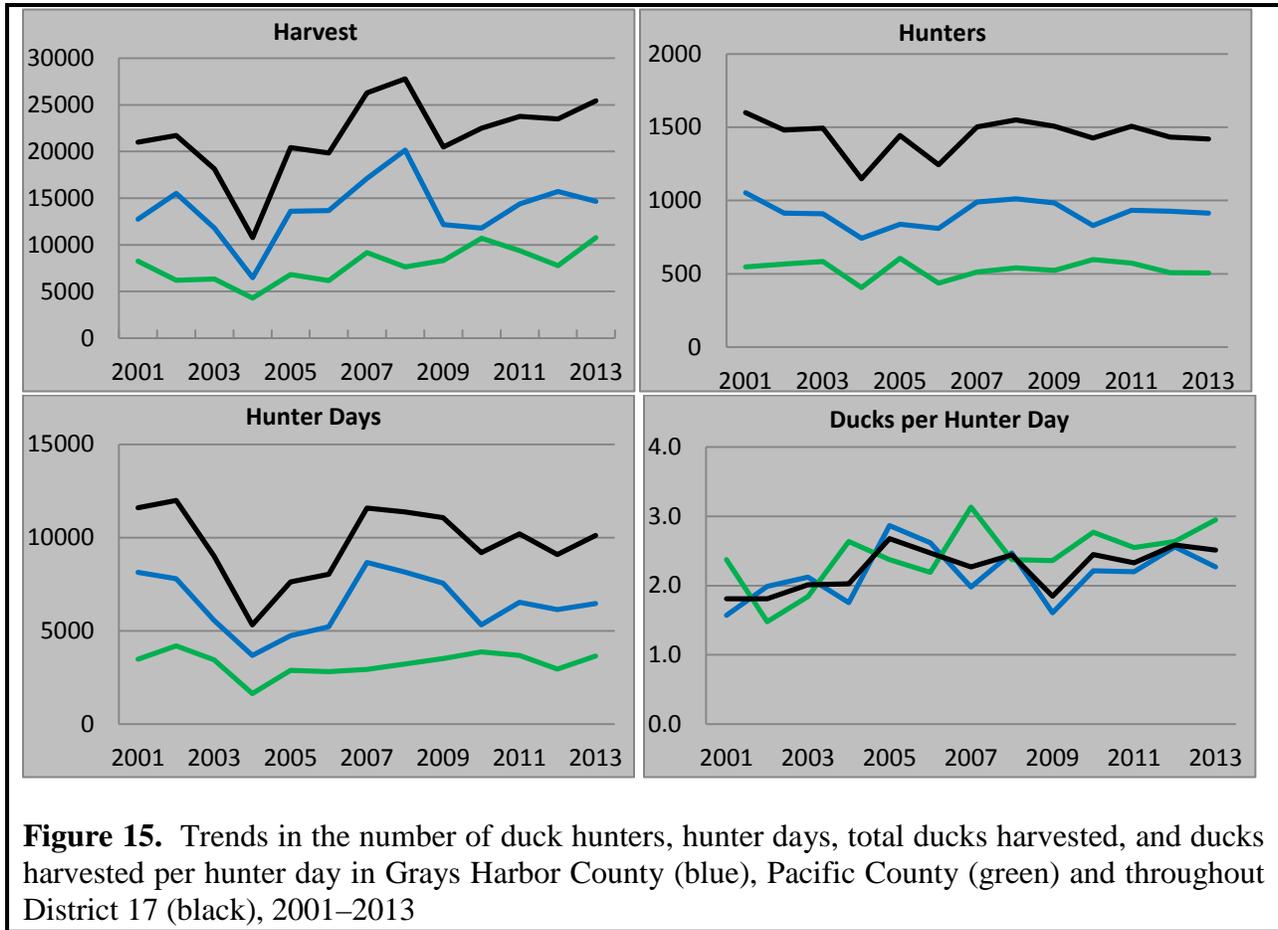


**Figure 13.** Trends in the number of ducks observed during aerial survey flights in Willapa Bay during surveys that were completed October 2013 through January 2014.



**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.

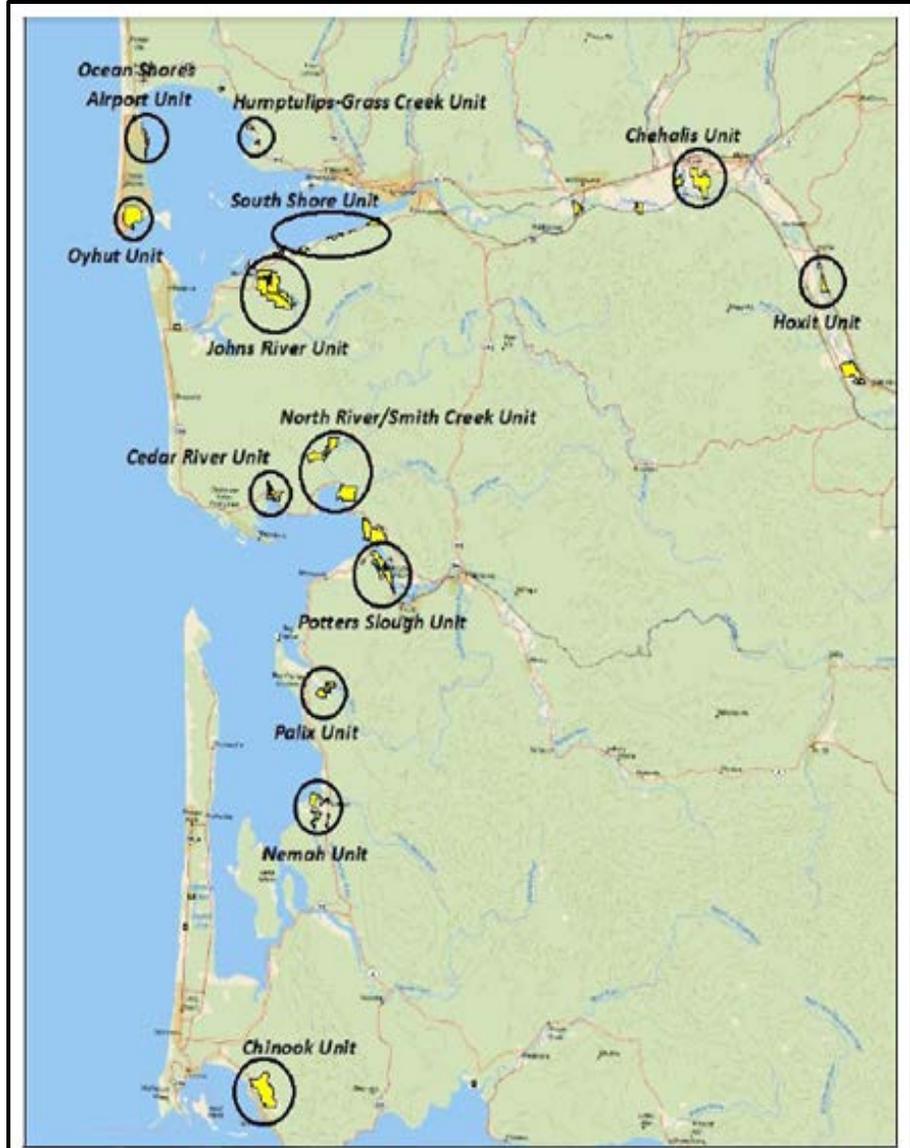


**Figure 15.** Trends in the number of duck hunters, hunter days, total ducks harvested, and ducks harvested per hunter day in Grays Harbor County (blue), Pacific County (green) and throughout District 17 (black), 2001–2013

**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.

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### 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.

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### HUNTING TECHNIQUES

The techniques employed to harvest geese are pretty standard; find agricultural areas where geese are feeding and set up your spread well before daylight in parts of the fields you expect the geese to concentrate. In District 17, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate are almost exclusively in pastures where there are cow-calf or dairy cattle operations. Because of this, most goose hunting opportunities most often occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting.

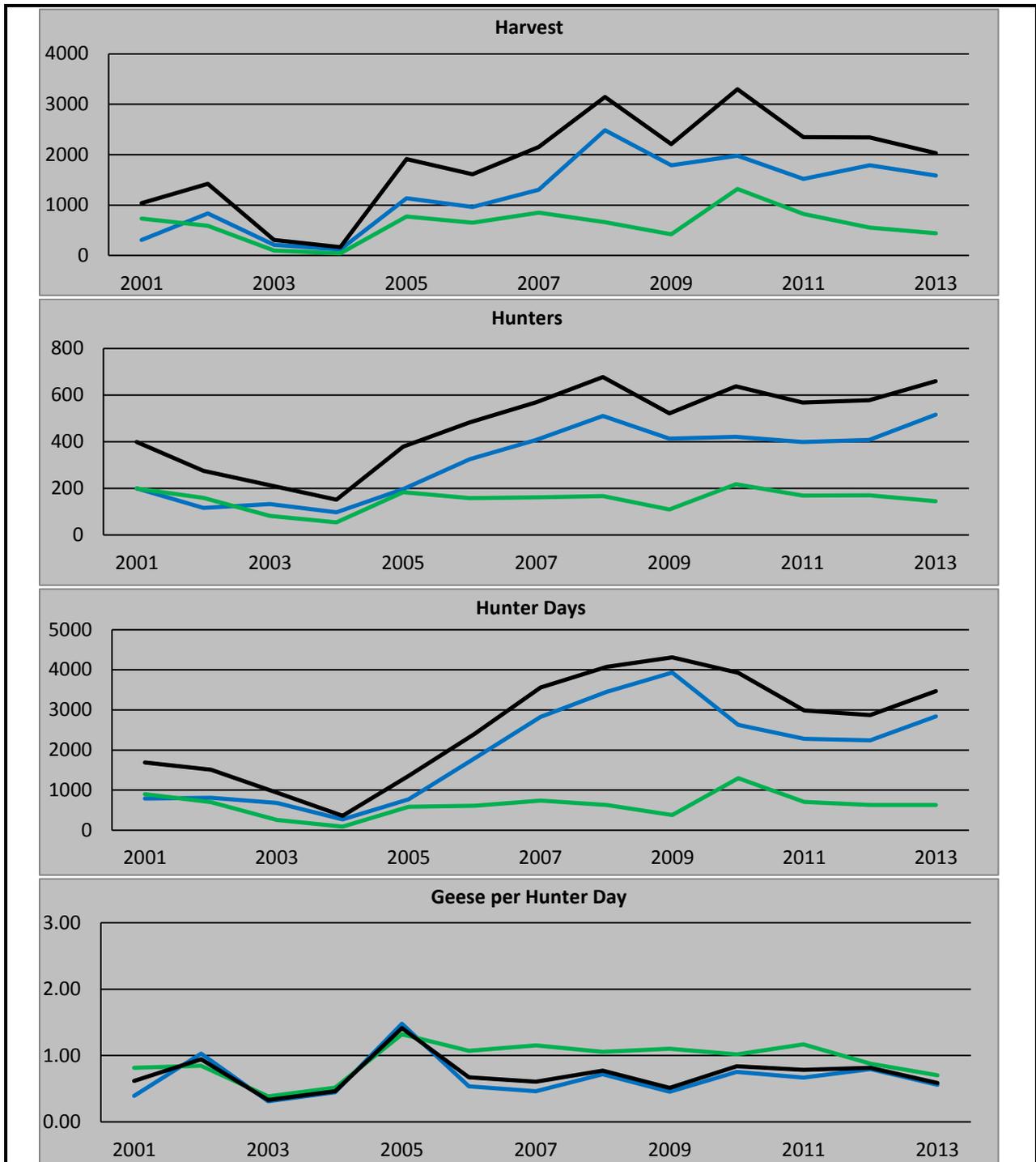
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### SPECIAL REGULATIONS

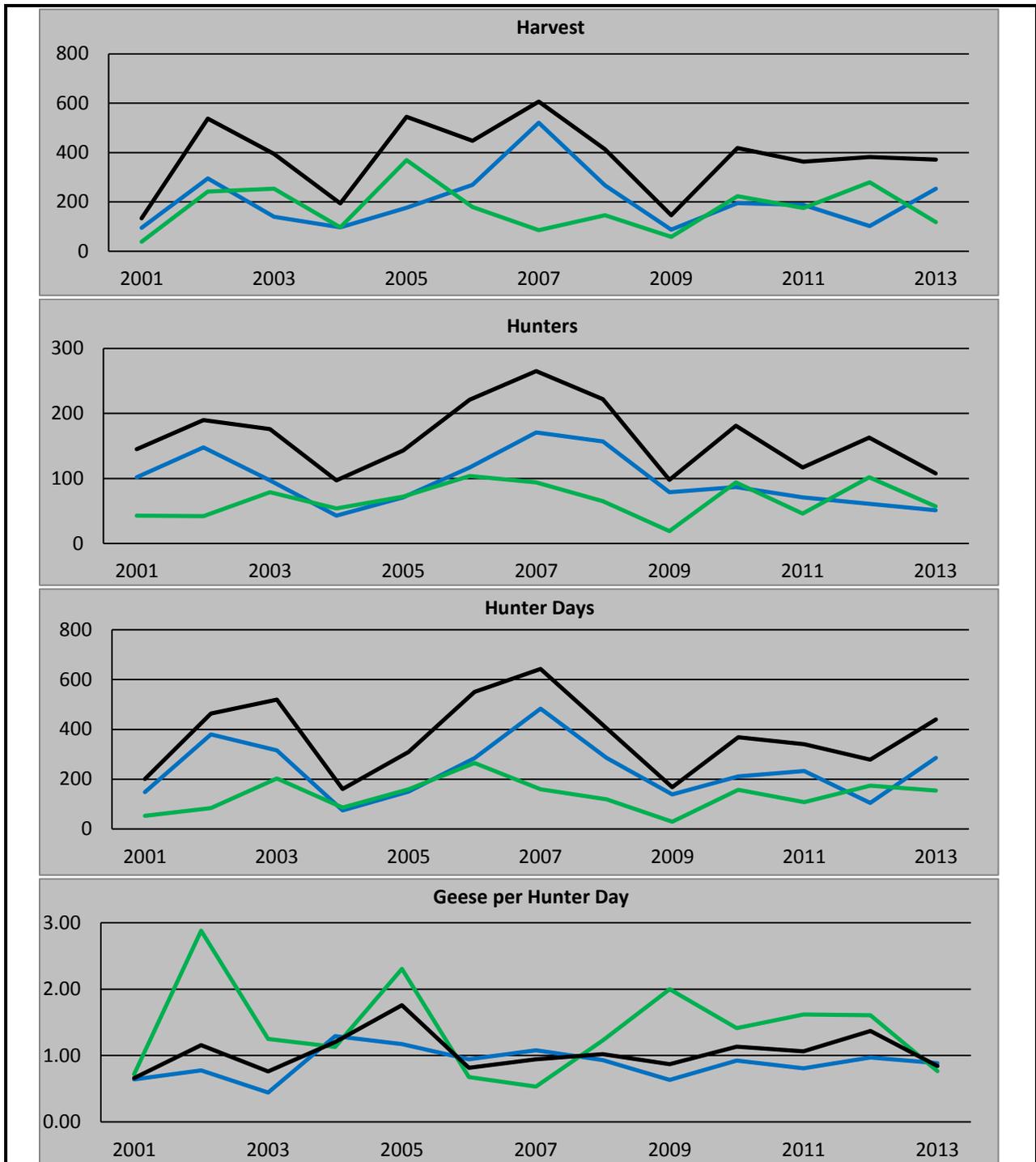
Goose hunting opportunities in District 17 vary by county. Grays Harbor County is part of Goose Management Area (GMA) 3 and Pacific County is part of GMA 2B. In an effort to limit harvest of dusky Canada geese, special regulations apply in GMA 2B which include:

1. Requiring hunters to obtain a special migratory bird hunting authorization which includes passing a goose identification test.
2. Closing the goose season early if total dusky Canada goose harvest in GMAs 2A and 2B collectively exceeds 40 geese.
3. Requiring hunters to record their daily harvest on a harvest card and having their geese tagged at the nearest check station.
4. Legal hunting hours of 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.
5. Not allowing hunters to hunt once they have harvested a dusky goose.

Because these regulations are in place, it is strongly recommended that hunters review the most recent Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet to ensure they are in compliance. Pamphlets are available at any retailer that sells hunting licenses or they can be downloaded from WDFW's website ([click here](#)).



**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.

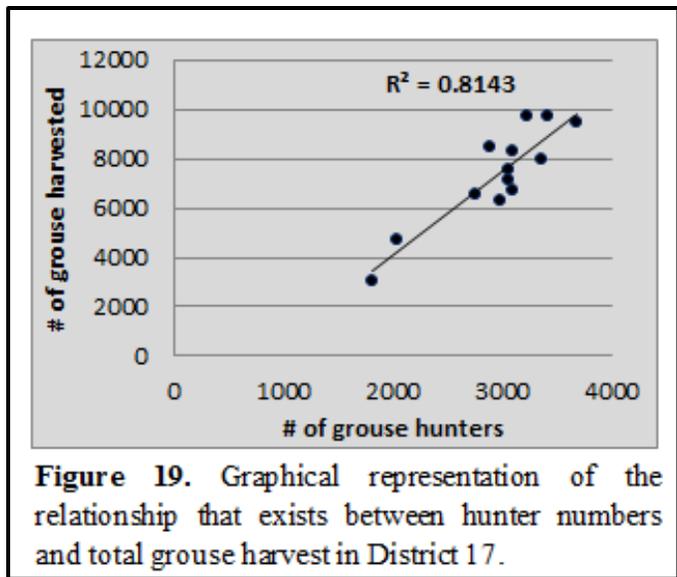
**FOREST GROUSE**

**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.

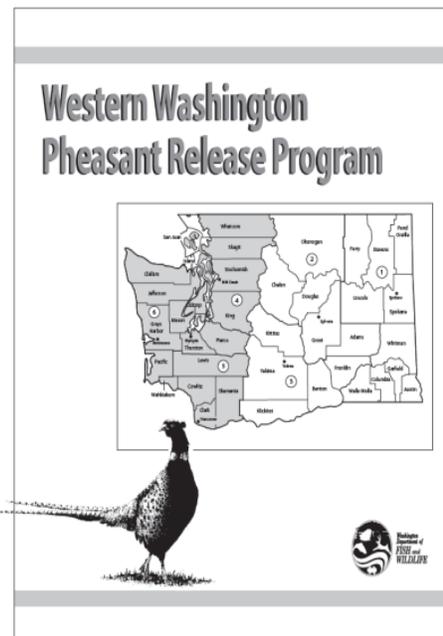
## HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

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

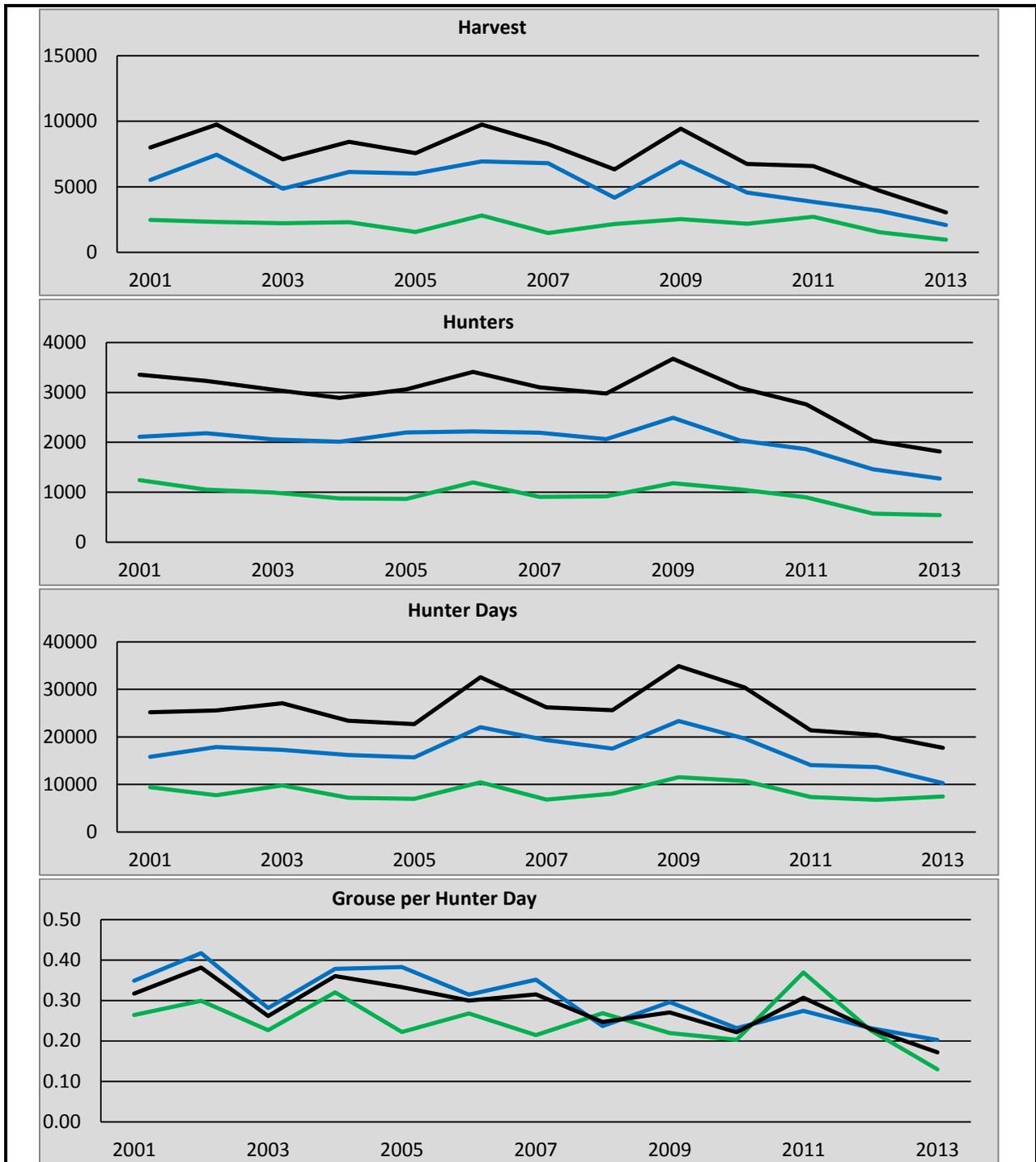
There are no viable populations of wild pheasants in District 17. All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 17 are associated with the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program. The primary intent of this program is to provide an upland bird hunting opportunity and to encourage participation from 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).

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### 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.

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### WHERE AND HOW TO HUNT BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Often times, band-tailed pigeons congregate in areas with red elderberry, which are typically most abundant in 5–10 year old clearcuts. Hunting can be exceptionally good in these areas. The key to harvesting band-tails is scouting because it is hard to predict which clearcuts will be used by band-tails. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites and then sit patiently and wait for pass shooting opportunities as they occur.

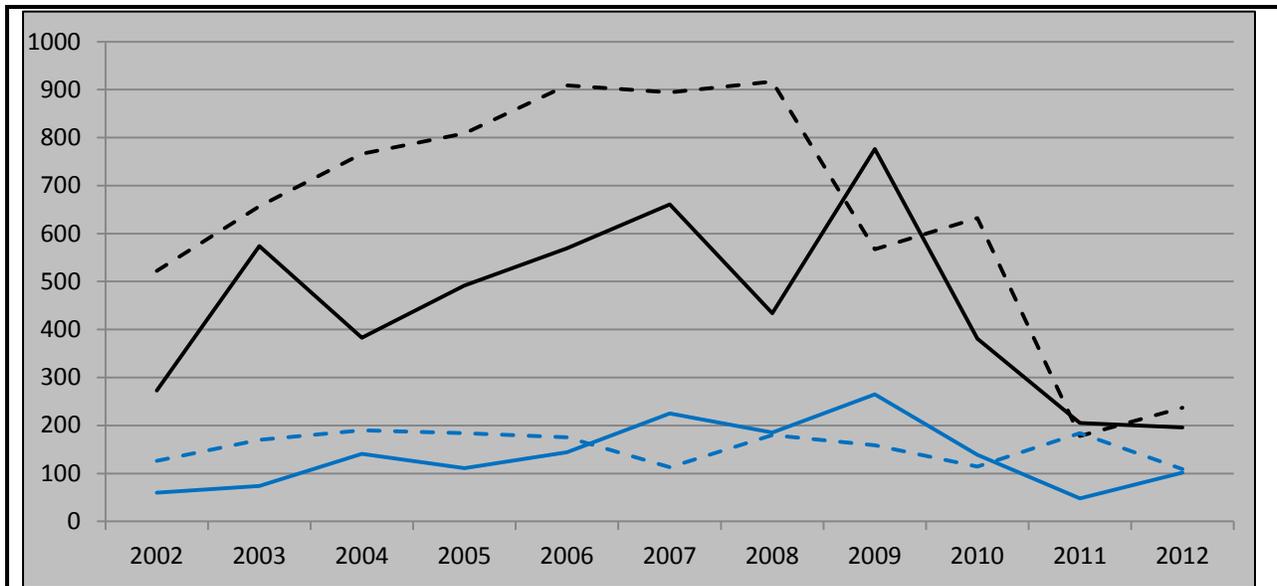


As indicated by the mineral site survey WDFW uses to monitor trends in population size, band-tails often congregate at seeps and mineral sites. In addition, they show strong site fidelity to these locations and often return to the same seeps year after year. However, many of these sites are difficult to find because they are not abundant and occur in obscure areas. If hunters are lucky enough to locate a mineral site where band-tails are congregating, they will likely have success hunting these locations for years to come.

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### SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Since band-tail seasons were re-opened in 2002, hunters have been required to purchase a migratory bird authorization and report their harvest using harvest cards and submit that information to WDFW after the season has closed. These regulations will apply in 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/](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**

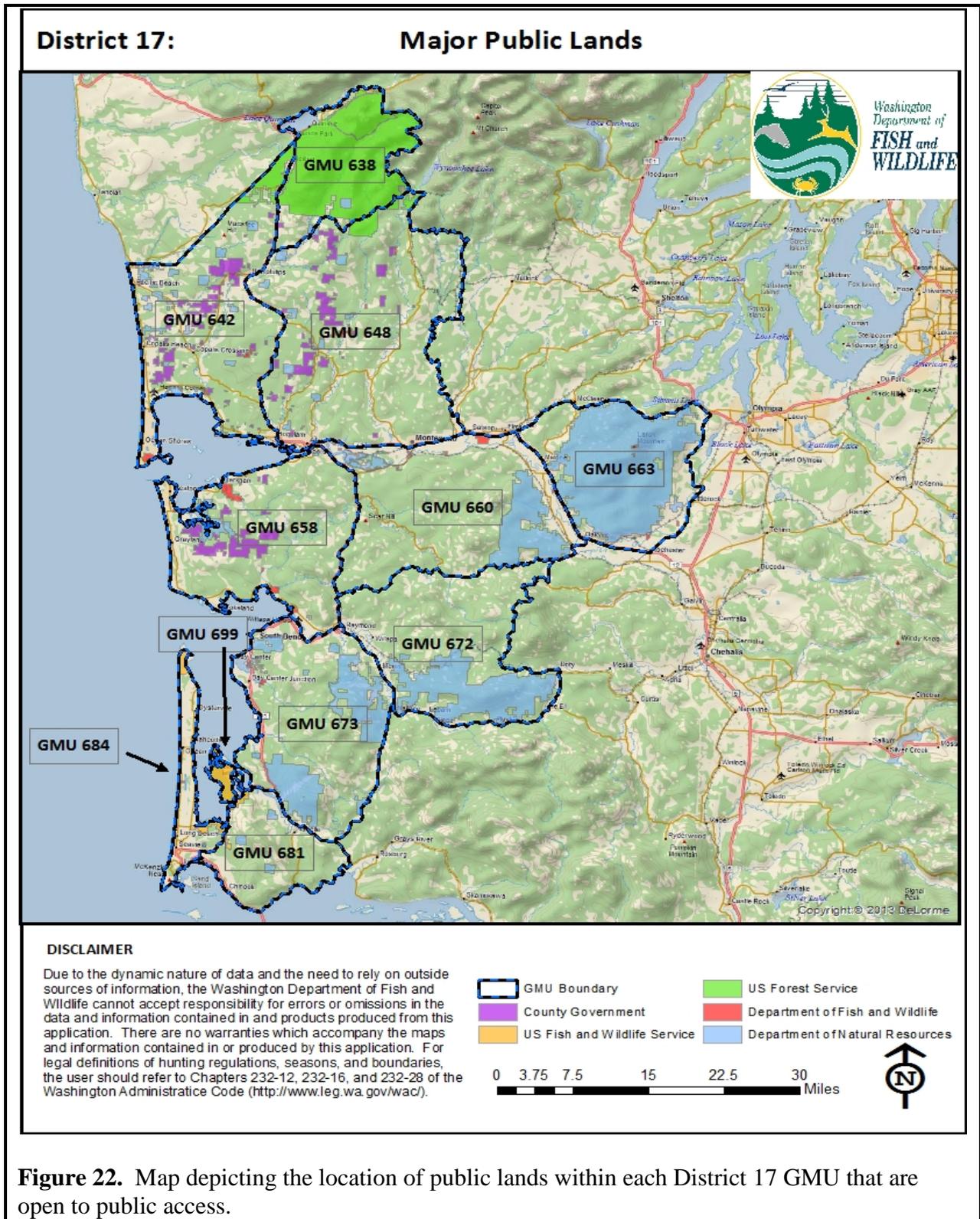
The vast majority of hunting opportunities, especially for big-game and upland birds, occur on private industrial forestlands. Timber companies that own large tracts of land and are the most well-known include Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Hancock, Green Diamond, and Campbell Global. However, hunters should 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.

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**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.

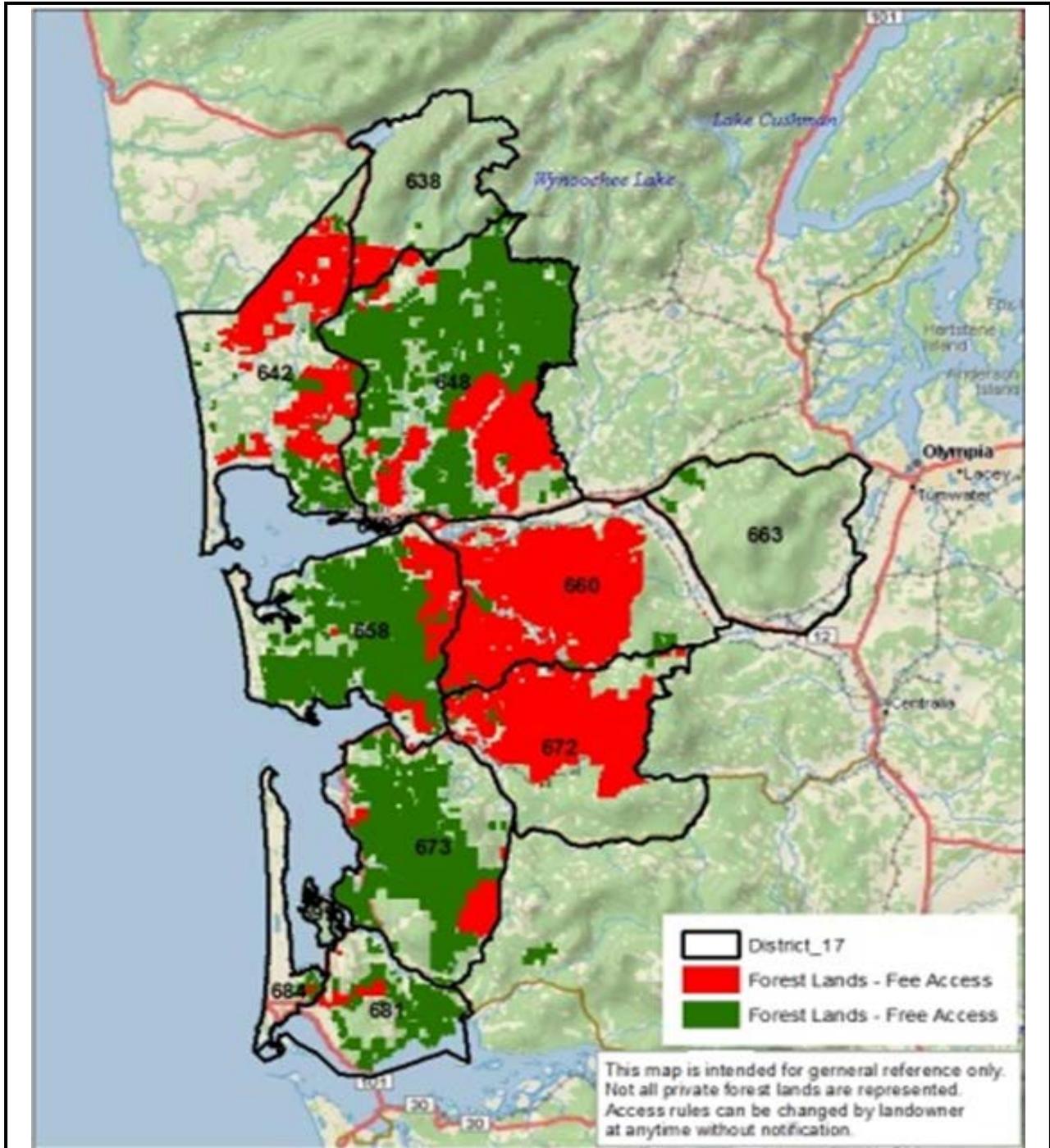
**Permit-Unlimited:** Hunters will be required to purchase an access permit, but there will be an unlimited number of permits available. Only holders of a valid permit will be allowed to recreate in areas associated with the permit. Permit cost is anticipated to be between \$50 and \$100.

**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 1<sup>st</sup>. 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.

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## 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.**

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## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACCESS ALLOWED BY MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

**Hancock**—Hancock industrial forestlands have different levels of access based on management area. 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.

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## HEADS UP FOR ARCHERY AND MUZZLELOADER HUNTERS

Private timber companies have traditionally opened their lands to modern firearm hunters during established seasons. Archery and muzzleloader hunters should be aware they may not have full access, and access levels during their respective seasons varies by year and by landowner. Most often, access is influenced by industrial fire classification issued by DNR. Hunters are urged to respect the landowners by adhering to any access restrictions they have in place.

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## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE "DOT" SYSTEM

The Dot system is used by several timber companies in District 17. Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Green Diamond, and Campbell 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	<a href="https://hancockrecreationnw.com/">https://hancockrecreationnw.com/</a>
Rayonier	All	1-360-533-7000	<a href="http://www.rayonierhunting.com/">http://www.rayonierhunting.com/</a>
Green Diamond	All	1-360-426-3381	<a href="http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/">http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/</a>
Weyerhaeuser	All	1-800-636-6531	<a href="http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/">http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/</a>

**GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU**

One of the most common questions we get from hunters is “What is hunter access like in GMU [enter GMU number]?” Generally, this question is referring to the amount of motorized access and not access in general. It is important to differentiate the two because in general, hunters enjoy a high level of access in all District 17 GMUs. However, type of access varies between motorized and non-motorized access.

The following rating system was developed for District 17 GMUs to give hunters a general idea of what type of access is available in the GMU they are thinking of hunting. For the purposes of this exercise, access ratings are specific to the level of motorized access that is allowed and does not refer to the level of access in general. 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/](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](#).