

2015

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*Washington
Department of*
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 5 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Grant and Adams Counties

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DISTRICT 5 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Ephrata District offers a variety of hunting opportunities, but is most recognized for waterfowl hunting throughout Grant and western Adams counties and mule deer hunting within the Desert Unit (GMU 290). Pheasant, quail, and mourning dove hunting is popular within the Desert, Potholes, Goose Lakes, Lower Crab Creek, Banks Lake, and Quincy Lake units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (CBWA; [FIGURE 1](#)). Other opportunities within the district include bobcat, cougar, chukar, gray partridge, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and both general season and permit opportunities for mule deer. Elk are occasionally harvested, but resident populations do not occur in this district.

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

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

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

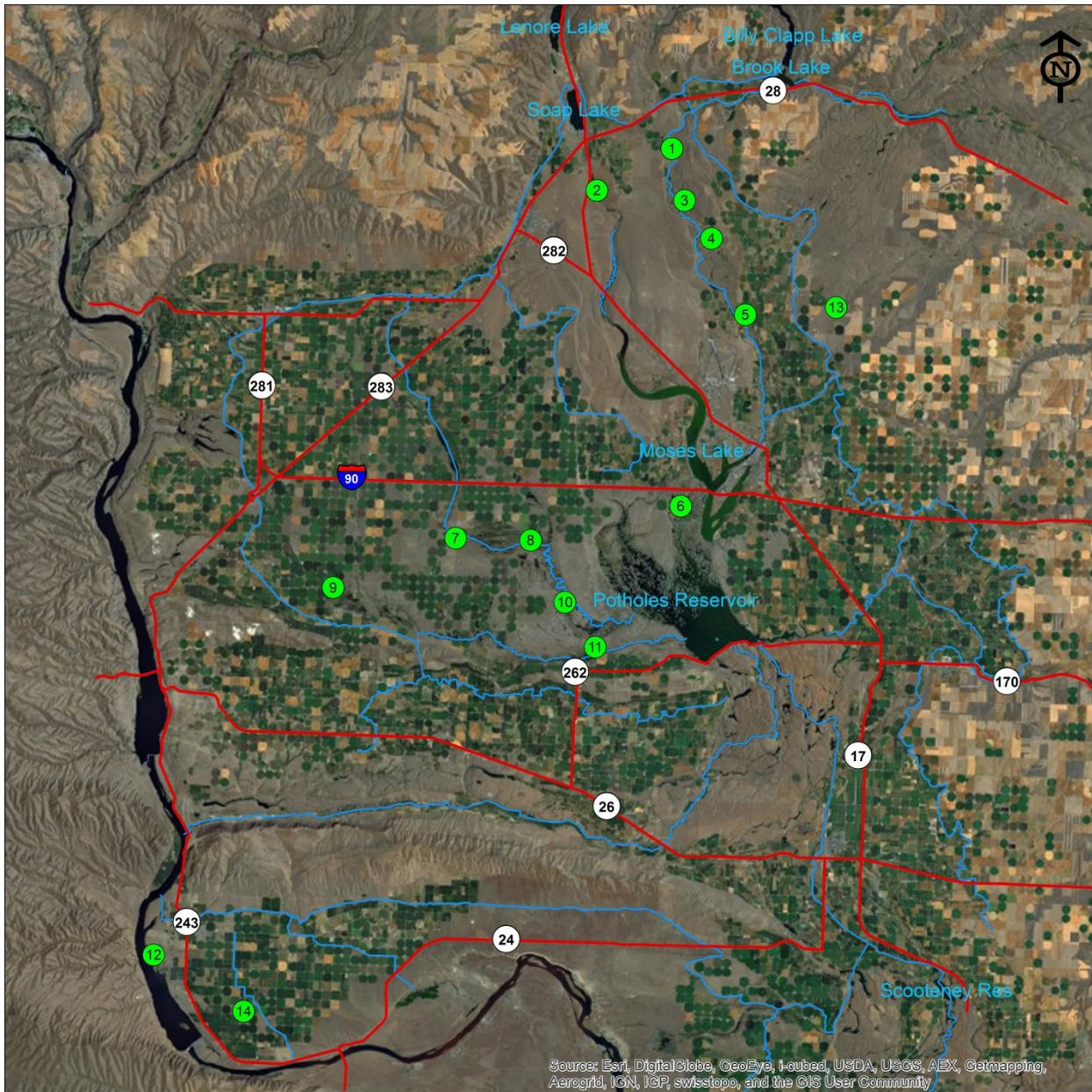


FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF WATERFOWL-RELATED WORK IN EPHRATA DISTRICT. GREEN CIRCLES REPRESENT PROJECT AREAS.

Waterfowl-related work in the Ephrata District includes:

- 1) **Gloyd Road 20 Sharecropping:** grain crops are sharecropped at this site to provide food for pheasants and quail. A sunflower plot was established about one half mile south of this area through an agreement with a private landowner.
- 2) **Ephrata Lake Acquisitions:** to date, WDFW has purchased 120 acres of land around Ephrata Lake. This lake is an important staging area for waterfowl during migration and is

also important during the breeding season. WDFW is currently considering rehabbing (i.e. removing fish) this lake to improve migratory bird habitat.

- 3) **Middle Crab Creek Habitat Enhancement:** emphasis is being placed on opportunities to improve waterfowl nesting habitat in the Gloyd Seeps Unit to supplement an increase in wetland acreage stemming from irrigation operations. Approximately 200 acres are currently being restored to native grassland, but the process is expected to take several years (FIGURE 2, 3).

Wetland enhancement projects at the Spud Field and Flood Flat are completed (though some additional work will occur at the Spud Field this September). Whether additional water from the [Supplemental Feed Route](#) will be available for the projects this season is currently not known, but the Spud Field site is influenced by springs and should be flooded for the 2015-16 hunting season.



FIGURE 3. ISLANDS BEING CONSTRUCTED ON THE SPUD FIELD FLOODPLAIN FOR BENEFIT OF NESTING WATERFOWL AND HUNTING OPPORTUNITY.

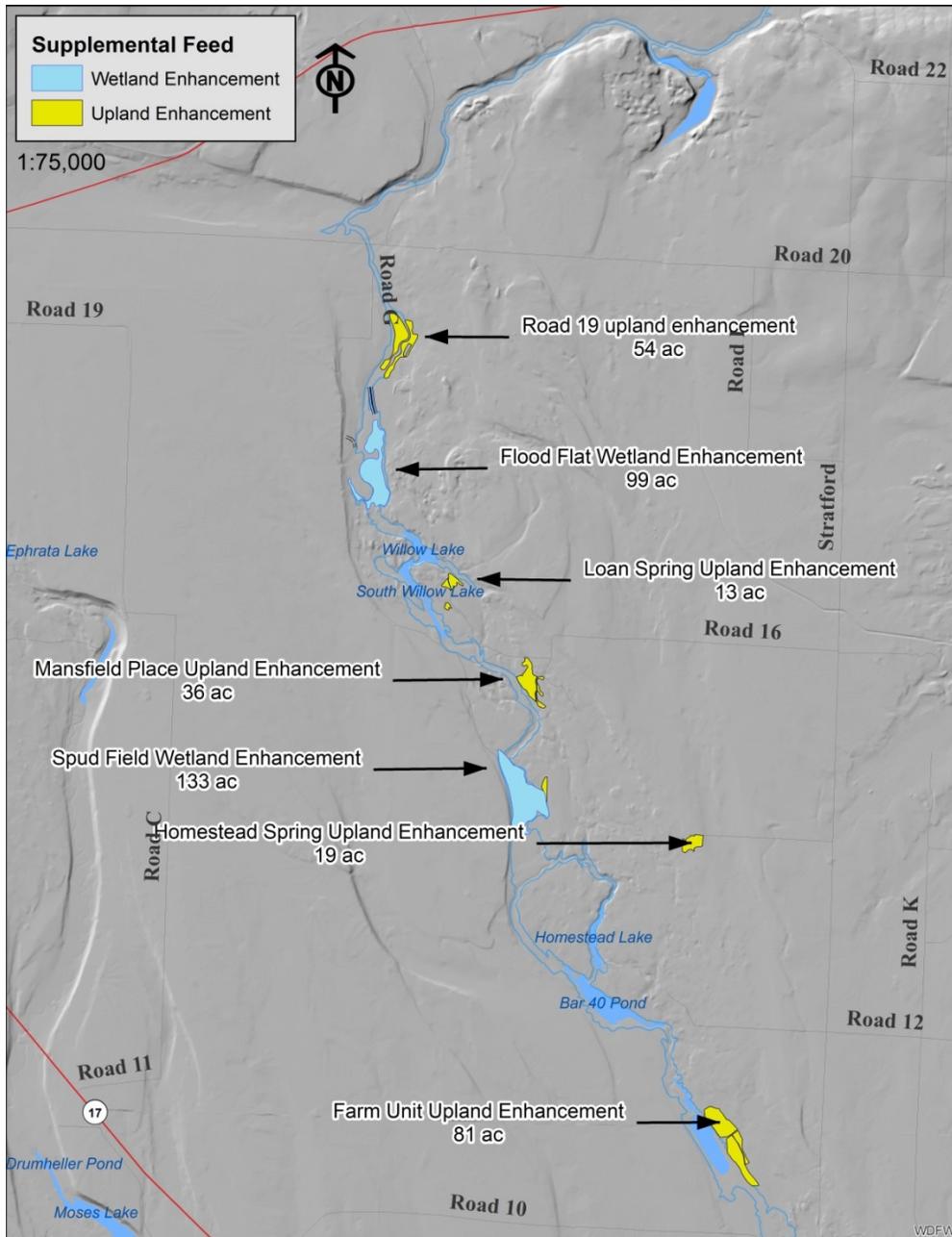


FIGURE 4. LOCATION OF WETLAND AND UPLAND ENHANCEMENTS IN THE GLOYD UNIT OF COLUMBIA BASIN WILDLIFE AREA.

- 4) **Mansfield Pond Recovery and Maintenance:** efforts are underway to reduce tall emergent vegetation by mowing, burning, and spraying, particularly along wetland edges, to allow for hunting opportunity and to increase habitat value. This will be a slow process, but will ultimately result in improved hunting opportunities in this area. We've observed a considerable response by smartweed (*Polygonum* spp.) in the area when tall emergents such

as common reed (*Phragmites australis*) are removed. This site continues to improve every year and we expect 2015 to be the best season yet for this project area.

- 5) **Road 10 Gloyd Farm Unit Wetland Enhancement:** enhancement of a small pond to improve forage productivity for waterfowl and hunting opportunity. Smartweed production in this wetland complex has increased tremendously as a result of these management actions.
- 6) **Westlake Vegetation Control:** vegetation management, primarily aimed at improving northern leopard frog habitat, has the added benefit of improving waterfowl habitat by opening up wetlands from dominance by tall emergent vegetation.
- 7) **Winchester Restricted Access Area Management:** emphasis on mowing vegetation for hunting access.
- 8) **Common Reed Control:** many acres of common reed are controlled along Winchester Wasteway (Dodson to Potholes Reservoir) and throughout North Potholes. WDFW has received considerable positive feedback with regards to the “opening” of previously “closed-in” wetlands.
- 9) **239 Drain Project Recovery:** there has been herbicide treatment of common reed to recover shallow excavated wetland basins.
- 10) **Harris Ponds Maintenance:** there has been regular maintenance to maintain open water within shallow excavated wetlands.
- 11) **Frenchmen Restricted Access Area Management:** Two ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) blinds were constructed at this project area, which will be available for use during the 2015-16 season (FIGURE 5). Contact the Ephrata Regional Office at (509) 754-4624 for a key.



FIGURE 5. AN ADA BLIND JUST AFTER INSTALLATION AT THE FRENCHMEN REGULATED ACCESS AREA.

- 12) **Buckshot Goose Field:** this alfalfa field has an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) access pit blind. Contact the Ephrata Regional Office at (509) 754-4624 for a key.
- 13) **Artesian and Black Lakes:** WDFW is wrapping up the feasibility stage of this project. Unfortunately, seepage rates of the lake beds are excessive and the department does not have access to enough water to make this a viable project at this time. Additional options are currently being explored.
- 14) **Sharecrop Field:** this area provides field hunting opportunities for waterfowl.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Elk are extremely rare and have not historically been a management priority in District 5. Resident elk herds do not exist in GMU 272, GMU 278, or GMU 290. These trends are not expected to change in the near future. Because of the significant potential for crop depredation issues, WDFW does not encourage the establishment of elk herds in District 5. WDFW keeps elk herd numbers low by providing any elk opportunities during the general archery and modern firearm seasons.

In the Ephrata District, hunters killed seven elk last season, all of which were taken by modern firearm hunters in GMU 284. Because harvest levels are extremely low in this district, biologists do not conduct annual surveys for elk. Elk that are harvested in GMU 284 are most likely part of a herd that is known to occur at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Consequently, harvest in GMU 284 is probably dependent on whether or not elk migrate into GMU 284 during the hunting season rather than a function of population size and growth. Occasionally, elk are harvested in GMU 278.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

If hunters wish to hunt elk in District 5 during the 2015 season, they are most likely to be successful in GMU 284. However, the majority of this GMU consists of agricultural and other private lands, so access may be difficult. It is challenging to predict elk harvest levels in GMU 284 during the 2015 season because WDFW does not conduct surveys to monitor population trends for this herd.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

GMU 272 includes 53,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex (Gloyd Seeps, Banks Lake, Sun Lakes, Billy Clapp, and Quincy Lakes units) most of which is open to hunting. The number of deer hunters hunting within GMU 272 ranges from about 1,200 to 1,600, with recent years hosting approximately 1,400 hunters. Success rates in GMU 272 range from about 20-30% with a long-term average of 25%. Muzzleloader hunters experience the highest success rates (30%), followed by modern firearm (23%) and archery (20%). Permit hunters in the Lakeview Unit typically see 50-70% success rates, but the 2015 season success rate was about 37%, probably due to the mild winter which allowed mule deer to utilize winter wheat in the Beezley Hills rather than the orchards that this hunt is intended to protect.

GMU 278 includes 36,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex (Lower Crab Creek Unit), which is open to hunting. Harvest in this unit falls between 20 and 70 deer, with hunters harvesting approximately 60 deer in recent years. Hunter numbers range from about 150 to 300, with recent years hosting close to the long-term average of 225 hunters. Success rates for

this unit range from about 10-25% with a long-term average of 19%. Muzzleloader hunters experience the highest success rates (22%), followed by modern firearm (18%) and archery (11%).

GMU 284 is dominated by private property. Hunters should plan to seek permission to access private lands and/or plan on hunting lands enrolled in the WDFW Access Program, as little wildlife area land (~1,600 acres) is available in this unit. The number of deer hunters within GMU 284 ranges from about 650-1,100, with recent years hosting about 850-900 hunters. General season success rates in GMU 284 average 37%, 28%, and 28% for modern firearm, muzzleloader, and archery, respectively. Permit hunters experience the highest success rates, ranging from 60-81%, with a long-term average of 71%.

GMU 290 is a permit only unit, thus all hunting opportunities in GMU 290 (Desert Unit) are issued through the public draw. With average post-hunt ratios of 45 bucks:100 does, and 60% of bucks being classified as >2.5 years old, high success rates are expected to continue in 2015. Forty-one percent of land in GMU 290 is managed by the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, thus public opportunity is widely available. Public land in this unit consists of riparian areas that are associated with the Winchester and Frenchmen Wasteways, and is surrounded by rolling, sandy dunes with varying densities of shrub cover. The majority of the private agricultural land in this unit occurs throughout the western half.

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

With the exception of the Desert (GMU 290) and Wahluke (GMU 278) units, mule deer in the Ephrata District are largely migratory. Historically, radio-marked mule deer exhibited movements from neighboring GMUs into the Ephrata District (FIGURE 6). These movements are largely weather dependent, with snowfall likely having the largest effect on fall and winter movements. Mule deer will reverse this migration and return to fawning grounds during spring. South and east movements of mule deer into GMU 272 from neighboring GMUs such as Big Bend, Saint Andrews, and Moses Coulee are also believed to occur, but these movements are not as well understood.

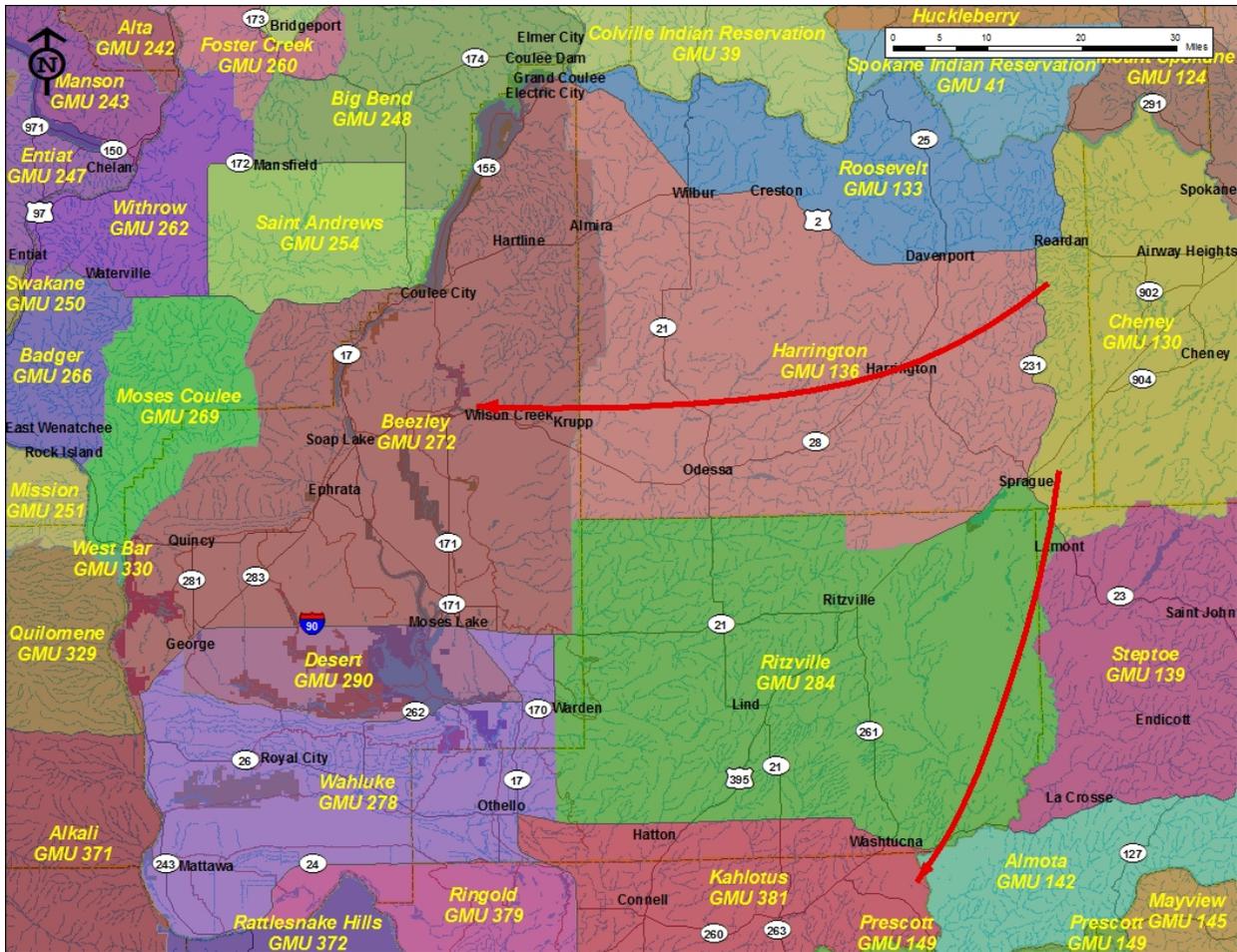


FIGURE 6. GENERALIZED PATTERNS OF FALL AND WINTER MULE DEER MIGRATION INTO THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Most deer harvest occurs in GMUs 272 (Beezley) and 284 (Ritzville), where post-hunt buck:doe ratios typically range between 20–30:100. WDFW observed 25B:100D (51% mature) and 33B:100D (38% mature) during the 2014 post-hunt survey ground counts for GMUs 272 and 284, respectively, which suggests that buck harvest should be good for the 2015 season. The 2014-15 winter conditions were favorable for mule deer survival. Snow cover was minimal and the basin experienced a fall green-up of cool season grasses (Sandberg’s bluegrass and cheatgrass) which provided forage through the winter months. These signs all point towards a good deer season for 2015 in the Ephrata District.

DEER AREAS

There are localized areas in District 5 where deer congregate during harsh or prolonged winters and have the potential to cause crop damage. To address this issue, WDFW provides limited permit only opportunities to harvest antlerless deer that occur in close proximity to these areas.

WDFW defines such areas as “Deer Areas.” By providing these opportunities, WDFW hopes to minimize crop depredation by deterring mule deer from congregating in Deer Areas. Deer Areas that occur in District 5 include Deer Area 2010 (Lakeview; FIGURE 7) located in GMU 272 and Deer Area 2011 (Benge; FIGURE 8) located in GMU 284. See the most recent [Big Game Hunting Seasons & Regulations Pamphlet](#) for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions.

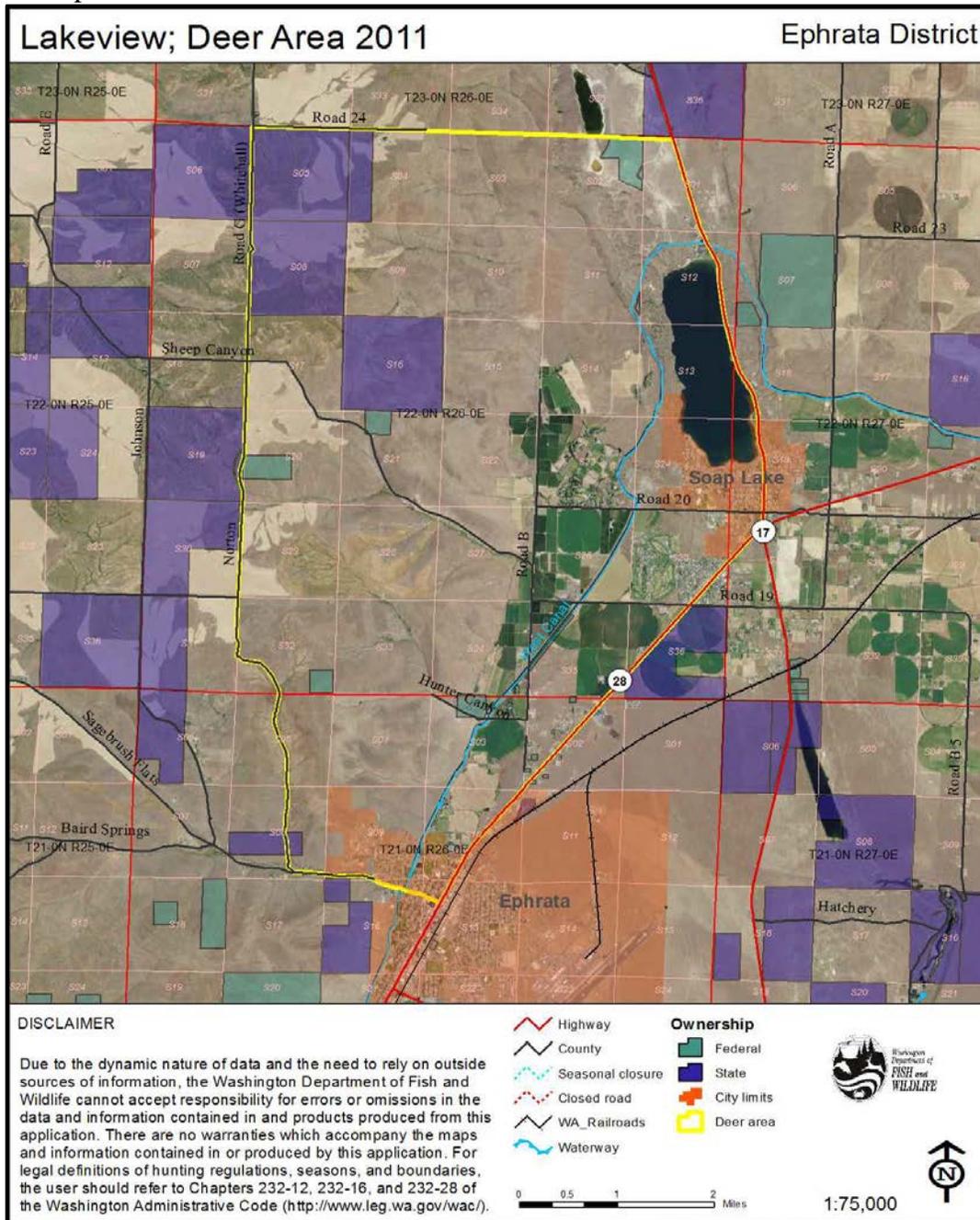
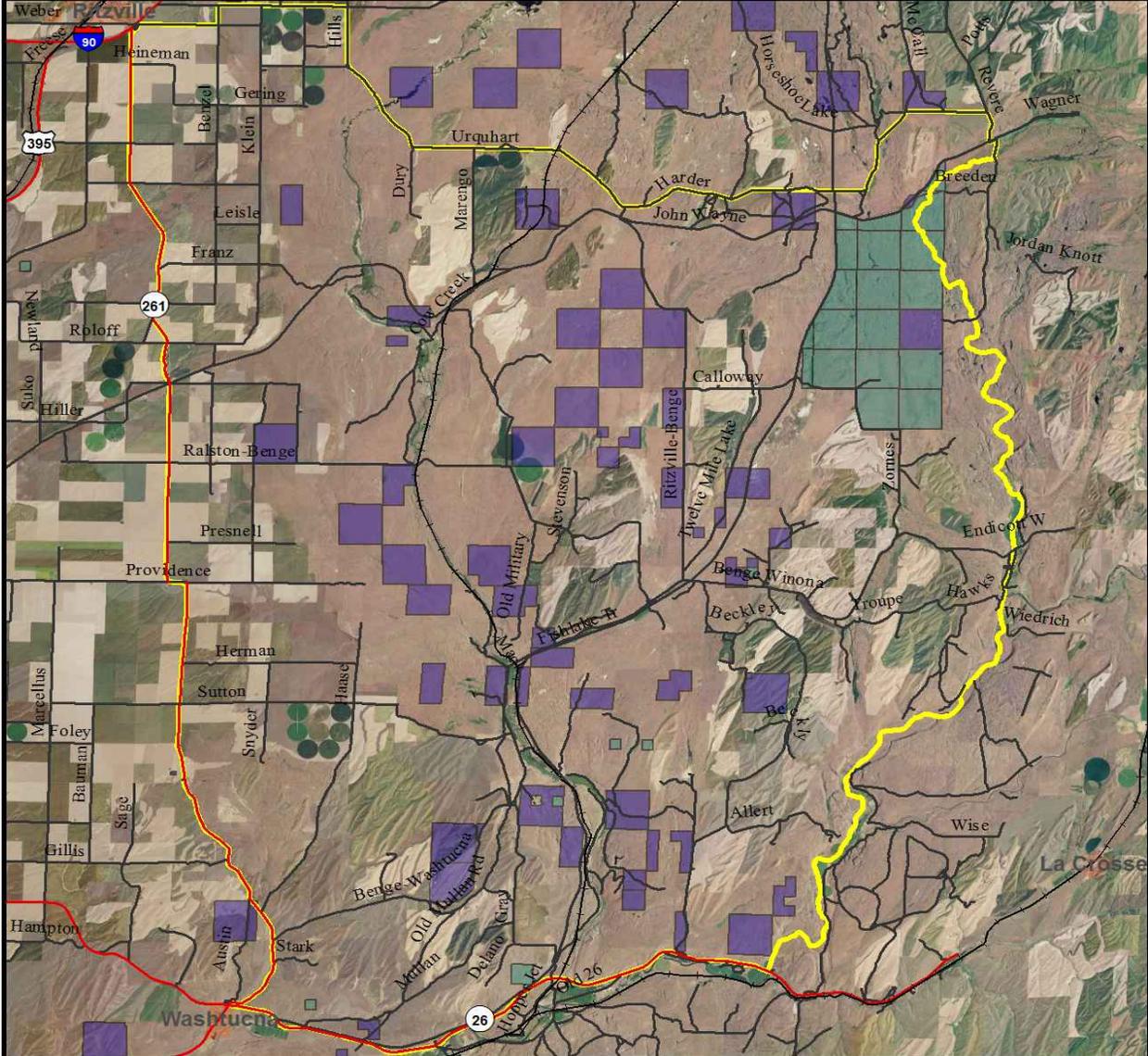


FIGURE 7. LAKEVIEW DEER AREA MAP.

Benge; Deer Area 2010

Ephrata District



DISCLAIMER

Due to the dynamic nature of data and the need to rely on outside sources of information, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions in the data and information contained in and products produced from this application. There are no warranties which accompany the maps and information contained in or produced by this application. For legal definitions of hunting regulations, seasons, and boundaries, the user should refer to Chapters 232-12, 232-16, and 232-28 of the Washington Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

- WA_Railroads
- Highway
- County
- Seasonal closure
- Closed road
- City limits
- Deer area
- Ownership**
- Federal
- State



1:200,000



FIGURE 8. BENGE DEER AREA MAP.

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

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

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The Ephrata District is not an optimal area to target black bears. An occasional bear may disperse through this district and the most likely places to encounter these dispersers are the Beezley Hills and Moses Coulee.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

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

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The Ephrata District is not an optimal area to target cougar. The most likely places to encounter these cats are the Beezley Hills, Moses Coulee, and adjacent to the Crab Creek drainage upstream from the town of Stratford.

PHEASANT

Grant County was Washington's top pheasant producing county in 2014. Hunters bagged 9,179 roosters in Grant County and 1,995 in Adams County for a total harvest of 11,174 pheasants in District 5, which was a 13% increase from the 2013 harvest.

The largest wild populations of pheasants on WDFW lands in the Ephrata district are likely to be found within the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George (FIGURE 9). Mixed bags of wild and released birds are also likely to be had in the Lower Crab Creek, Gloyd Seeps, Quincy, and Dry Falls units. For wild birds, dense thickets of Russian olive and cattail associated with Frenchmen and Winchester Wasteways and ponds are likely to hold pheasants. Hunters will increase their odds greatly with a well-trained dog to both flush and retrieve the birds in dense cover. Pheasants are strong runners, so moving quickly and quietly can improve the odds of getting a close shot.

Conditions have been favorable for pheasant production, beginning with a mild winter with little snow cover, which allowed birds to survive winter in good condition. Spring conditions were very dry and lacked heavy showers that often result in mortality for young broods. However, dry

conditions also limit productivity of invertebrates, which are a critical dietary component of young pheasant chicks. Thus, pheasant production in the irrigated portions of the district should be better than average, while production in the dryland areas is likely to be slightly below average. Hunters can expect similar to slightly increased numbers of wild pheasants as was observed during the 2014 season. Most hunters who invest considerable effort and cover a lot of ground will cross paths with a few wild birds and can increase their chances for a productive hunt by selecting non-toxic shot and diversifying the bag with waterfowl. Hunters may also choose to seek out pheasant release sites. See the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) for details. Non-toxic shot is required at all pheasant release sites.

QUAIL

Grant County was Washington's second highest producing county in 2014, while Adams County is not a destination quail hunting county. Hunters bagged 14,161 quail in District 5 in 2014 (12,154 in Grant County and 2,007 in Adams County), which was a 16% increase from the 2013 harvest.

Traditional quail hunting areas on WDFW lands in the Ephrata district include the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George, Lower Crab Creek between Corfu and the Columbia River, Gloyd Seeps between Stratford and Moses Lake, the Quincy unit near the town of Quincy, and the Dry Falls unit at the south end of Banks Lake (FIGURE 9). Hunters will increase their odds greatly with a well-trained dog to either flush or point, and retrieve the birds.

Large coveys are difficult to find by mid-season on public lands and successful hunters will attempt to identify multiple coveys to pursue throughout the season. Riparian areas will offer the best hunting and hunters can increase their chances by securing access to private lands, where pressure can be considerably lower. If pressure is high, some coveys can be found settling into shrub cover a considerable distance from heavily hunted areas. Hunters with wide ranging pointing breeds can be most successful at targeting these coveys.

Quail hunting is expected to be abundant this year. Winter temperatures were not far from the norm and the area lacked long periods of snow crust that can result in low overwinter survival. Summer conditions were good for brood survival.

CHUKAR AND PARTRIDGE

During the 2014 season, hunters harvested 457 chukar and 320 gray partridge in District 5; a 34% and 2% increase from 2013, respectively. The vast majority of the harvest for both species was from Grant County. The Ephrata District is not a popular destination for chukar/partridge hunters, but a few birds can be found. Most chukar hunting in the Ephrata District occurs in the Coulee Corridor areas around Banks and Lenore Lakes, and also along the Columbia River breaks north of Vantage (FIGURE 9). Chukar is a challenging but rewarding game bird to pursue. Though the Ephrata District has some chukar hunting opportunities, there are much better areas of the state to focus efforts. Gray partridge occur in low densities in the basin but are rarely targeted by hunters; instead they are taken incidentally while hunting chukar, quail, or

pheasant. Most gray partridge will occur on private farm fields, particularly in the dryland wheat portions of Adams and, to a lesser degree, Grant counties. Chukar and gray partridge are resilient birds and thus likely fared well through the winter, which had very little snow cover. Spring conditions were favorable, but the extreme drought may have affected some populations where water is limited.

DOVE

Grant County was Washington's top dove producing county in 2014. Dove hunters harvested 17,671 doves, up 10% from the 2013 harvest. Grant County recorded the highest dove harvest, with hunters bagging 15,744. Hunters harvested 1,927 doves in Adams County.

With an extra month of season and an increase to a 15 bird limit, dove hunting is expected to be very good in 2015. If conditions are stable, the birds found during scouting should be around during the hunt, but unstable conditions often redistribute birds significantly. Hunters may improve their success by securing access to wheat fields for the morning hunt. Evening hunts can be productive in wheat fields or in traditional roosting areas. Look for large stands of trees (preferably with dead limbs) adjacent to water and surrounded by agriculture for the best roost hunt results. Roost site hunting can be found along the north and west sides of Potholes Reservoir, the east side of Winchester Lake, and throughout the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex.

Ephrata biologists planted four food plots to increase dove use and hunter opportunity for the 2015 hunting season. Fields were planted in sunflower, millet, and barley, and total approximately 20 acres. Two fields are located on the LCA Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area just southeast of Moses Lake at the junction of Road 3 SE and Road X NE. The other two are located on the Royal Slope and are part of the [Hunt by Reservation Program](#) (Rd 15, Rd 13 south of Hwy 26). Fields will be mowed prior to and during the hunting season to provide a consistent food source that will attract doves and increase shooting opportunities.

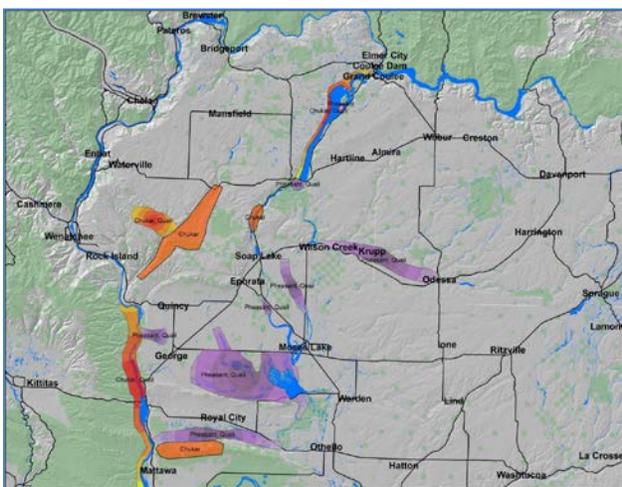


FIGURE 9. GENERALIZED UPLAND BIRD CONCENTRATIONS (PHEASANT, QUAIL, AND CHUKAR) THROUGHOUT THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

UPLAND BIRD MANAGEMENT

Upland bird management in the Ephrata District consists primarily of sharecropping and strategic use of bird feeders to increase over-winter survival. However, efforts are underway to enhance nesting cover throughout the Gloyd Seeps Unit of the CBWA. Wildlife area staff are currently working to establish over 200 acres of nesting cover. These fields required a fallow period to reduce the seedbed of noxious weeds and invasive vegetation, which is now completed. Seeding of native perennial grasses occurred during winter of 2014. The site should continue to mature and improve over the next few years.

WATERFOWL

Ducks – Grant County is consistently Washington’s top duck producing county and 2014 was no different. Last year, hunters harvested 65,332 ducks in Grant County. Adams County hunters added 11,403 ducks for a district total of 76,735, an 18% increase over the 2013 harvest for the district.

Geese – Grant County was Washington’s top goose producing county in 2014. Last year, hunters harvested 15,127 geese in Grant County. Adams County hunters added 2,625 geese for a district total of 17,752, a 17% increase over the 2013 harvest for the district.

WATERFOWL POPULATION STATUS

The Washington Breeding Population Survey (BPOP), conducted in May, has been occurring since 2009. This survey is an indicator of breeding effort, as it estimates the number of waterfowl present during the breeding season. These data may best represent prospects for the earlier part of the season (opening weekend through mid-November), since most of our migratory mallards have not yet arrived. However, this information must be used cautiously, as molt migration will redistribute these birds to some degree depending on local conditions.

In summary, the mallard estimate for eastern Washington did not differ from the long-term average. Gadwall and American wigeon, species that occur in abundance during opening weekend, increased by 20% and 23% over the long-term average, respectively. And, perhaps most encouraging, green-winged teal, which also represent a significant portion of the bag during the early season, increased by 110% above the long-term average. These results suggest that opening weekend and the early parts of the season will be significantly better than the last five years. Of the diving duck species, results were mixed, with considerable increases for canvasback (up 107%) and ring-necked ducks (up 100%), but significant declines for scaup (down 84%) and to a lesser degree redheads (down 34%).

In addition to the BPOP survey, WDFW also conducts regular brood routes throughout eastern Washington. Routes in the Ephrata District include the East Low Canal, West Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake. The total numbers are presented in [FIGURE 10](#) for 2007-2015.

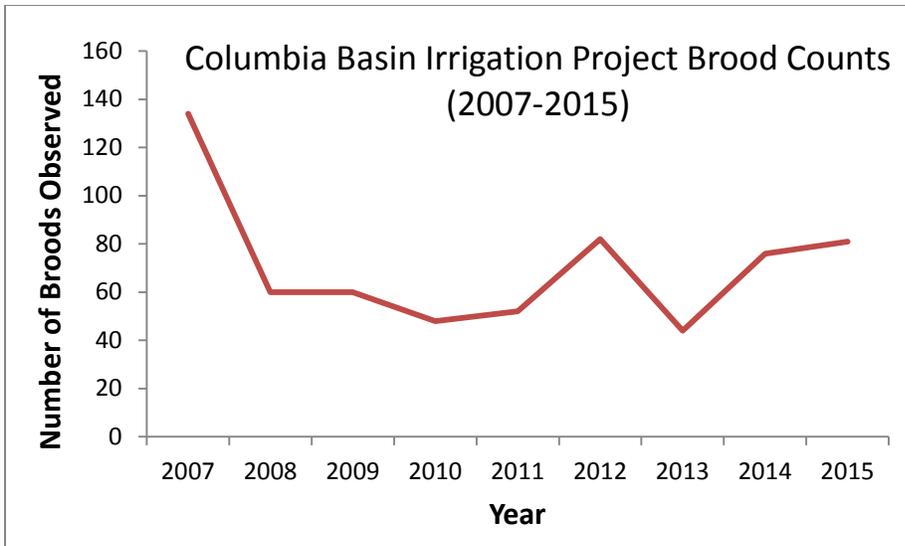


FIGURE 10. DUCK BROOD COUNT TOTALS FOR EPHRATA DISTRICT STRATA INCLUDING WEST CANAL, EAST CANAL, WINCHESTER DITCH, AND EPHRATA LAKE.

Winter Waterfowl Surveys, including the USFWS Midwinter Survey conducted during the first week of January, can be located at the link listed below. Areas covered during this survey are shown in FIGURE 11.

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



FIGURE 11. SURVEY STRATA USED DURING WINTER WATERFOWL SURVEYS. THESE AREAS REPRESENT LOCATIONS OF POTENTIAL WATERFOWL CONCENTRATIONS.

WATERFOWL MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

Migration (which peaks in November) will bring the best waterfowl hunting in the basin (FIGURE 12), as large numbers of mallards, wigeon, gadwalls, teal, scaup, redheads, and canvasbacks arrive from northern breeding grounds. Until this time, hunters must rely on locally

produced birds and early season migrants, such as American wigeon and green-winged teal. December typically provides the peak of mallards, ringnecks, and canvasbacks, while other dabbling and diving species continue their journey south. Goose hunting will typically improve in November when early season migrant Canada geese (Lesser and Taverner's) begin to scatter from their initial staging area at Stratford Lake to alfalfa or grain fields within feeding distance from Moses Lake and the Columbia River.

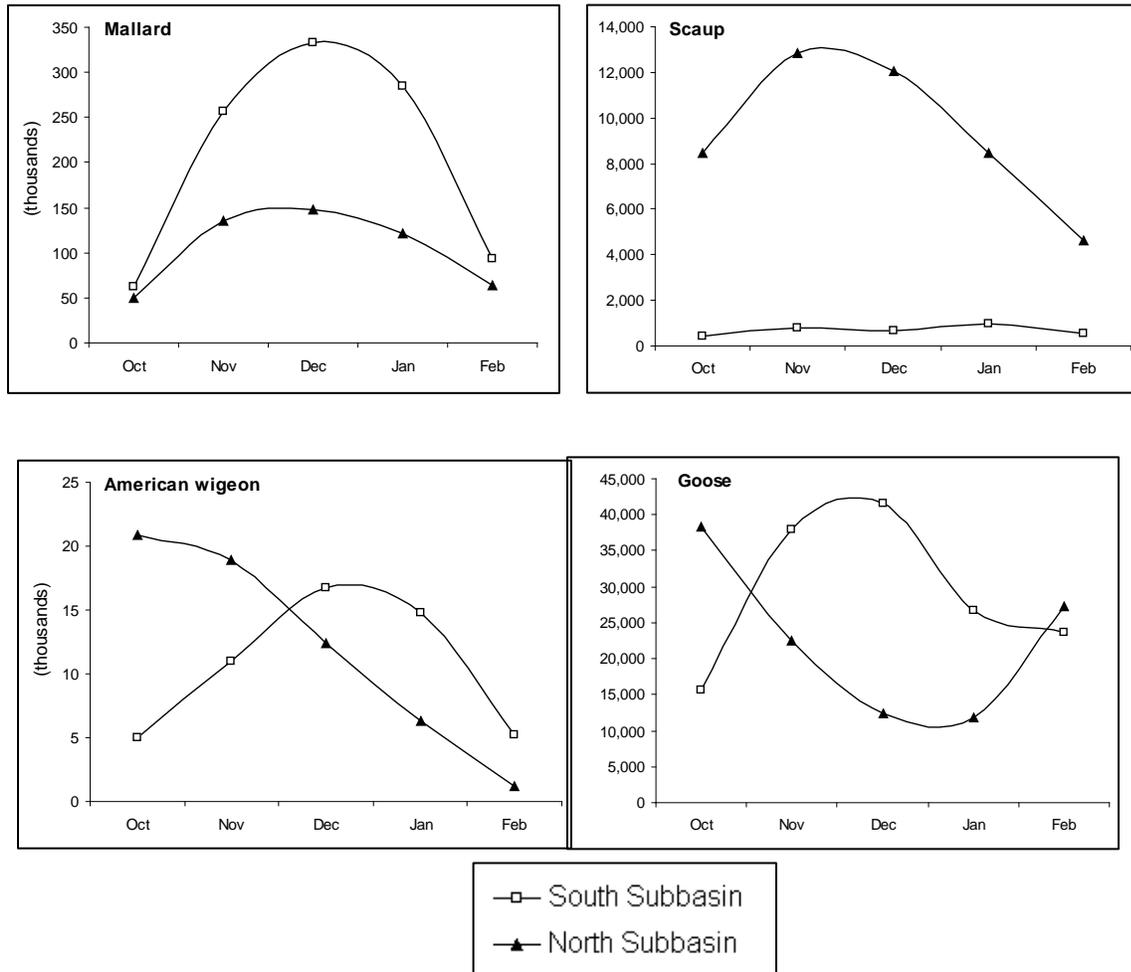


FIGURE 12. MIGRATION CURVES FOR SEVERAL SPECIES WHICH WINTER IN LARGE NUMBERS ON THE COLUMBIA PLATEAU. REFER TO FIGURE 11 ABOVE FOR A MAP OF SUBBASIN BOUNDARIES.

UNDERSTANDING WATERFOWL MIGRATION

The waterfowl hunting season in the Ephrata District is largely dependent upon bird production in Alberta, but locally produced birds remain important. Hunters must use caution when interpreting the spring habitat conditions reports. The first step in understanding the relationship between breeding conditions and the expected harvest is to understand where the Columbia

Plateau wintering birds are produced. Munro and Kimball (1982) report that the Northern Pacific breeding area (includes: Alaska, British Columbia, and Yukon-west Mackenzie minor reference area) provides the bulk of the mallards harvested in Washington State (FIGURE 13).

The second most important breeding area contributing to Washington State harvest is Northern Alberta, followed by Southwest Alberta, and lastly by locally produced birds in Washington and Oregon (Figure 10). Band recoveries of locally banded birds harvested in Washington exhibit a similar pattern, although over time, these patterns may change as these band recoveries represent a long-term dataset (1949-2012, Figure 14).

Of additional consideration, Rabenberg (1982) reports that “breeding pair and production indices from southwestern Alberta were negatively correlated with Basin¹ mid-winter mallard populations.” Thus, the degree to which birds produced in southwestern Alberta migrate through the basin may be variable or may not be fully understood. Perhaps the important consideration is that poor breeding conditions on the prairie parklands has been shown to displace birds to the north-northwest to northern Alberta, Alaska, and the Northwest Territories (Buller 1975, Rabenberg 1982). Birds that are displaced to these areas have a higher likelihood of migrating through the basin during fall and winter. This is evidenced by the peak of mid-winter populations in the basin following severe drought across southern Canada and the Dakotas during the early 60s.

¹ Basin includes all important waterfowl wintering areas adjacent to, or in-between, Moses Lake, Washington and Hermiston, Oregon.

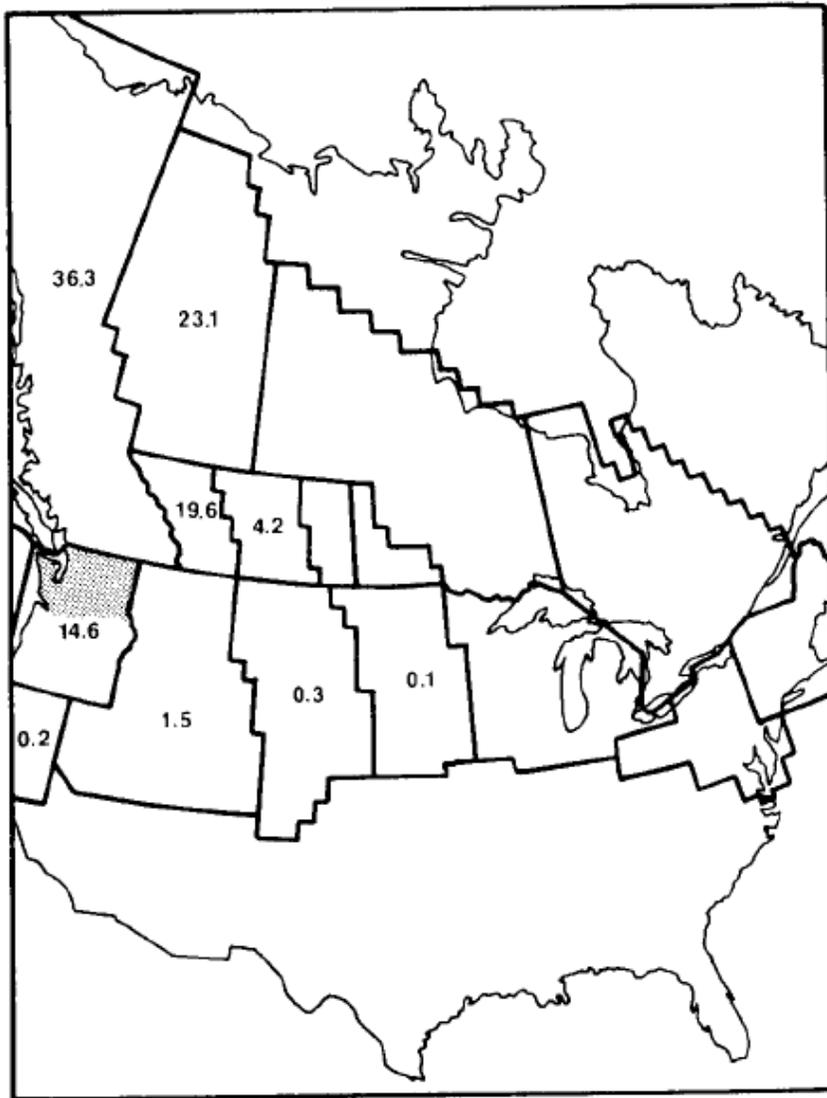


Fig. D-11. Percent derivation of the mallard harvest in *Washington* (shaded) from major breeding reference areas.

FIGURE 13. FROM MUNRO AND KIMBALL 1982 – POPULATION ECOLOGY OF THE MALLARD. VII. DISTRIBUTION AND DERIVATION OF THE HARVEST. THESE PERCENTAGES DESCRIBE WHERE THE DUCKS HARVESTED IN WASHINGTON STATE ARE COMING FROM. NOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF NORTHERN AND SOUTHWESTERN ALBERTA, AND BRITISH COLUMBIA.

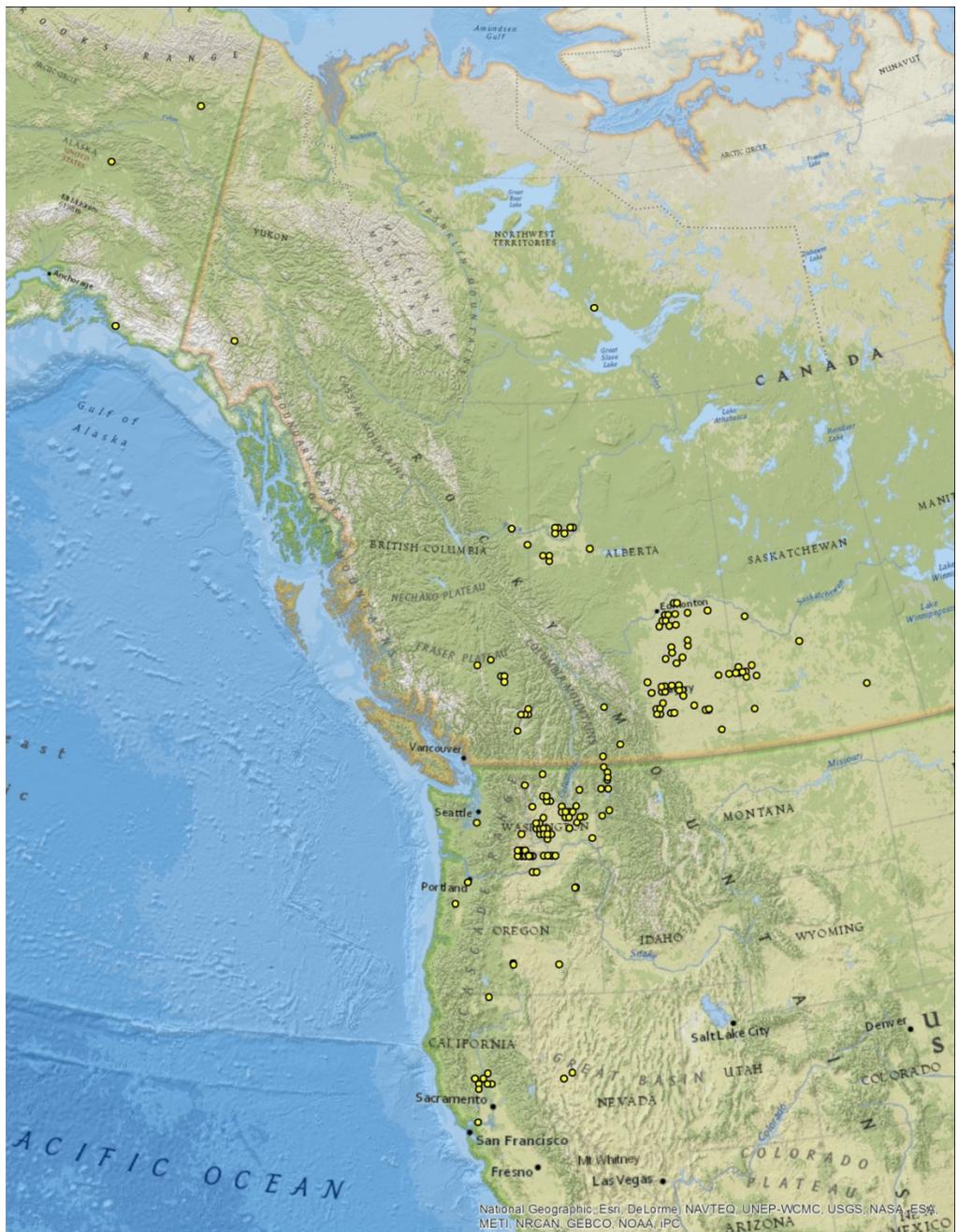


FIGURE 14. LOCATIONS (YELLOW DOTS) WHERE LOCAL MALLARDS (DUCKLINGS) WERE BANDED PRIOR TO BEING HARVESTED IN WASHINGTON STATE. BASED ON BANDING EFFORTS FROM 1949-2012.

Based on Mallard Breeding Population Estimates and 2015 breeding habitat conditions from USFWS Trends in Duck Breeding Populations; 1955-2015 (TABLE 1; FIGURE 12), waterfowl hunting in the Columbia Plateau should be good this year, but likely not quite as good as the 2014 season. Perhaps the most compelling reasons to expect a good season in the Ephrata District is the 13% increase in mallard numbers in the ‘Central and Northern Alberta – NE British Columbia – NW Territories strata.’ However, conversely, there was a 4% decrease in the ‘Southern Alberta strata.’ Hunters must be aware, however, that weather conditions can be as responsible for waterfowl harvest as bird numbers, so hope for unstable weather patterns bringing short-lived winter storms followed by warming trends.

Region	2015	2014	Change from 2014		Change from LTA		
			%	P	LTA ^a	%	P
Alaska–Yukon Territory–							
Old Crow Flats	471	501	–6	0.696	379	+24	0.071
C. & N. Alberta–N.E. British							
Columbia–NWT	1,981	1,757	+13	0.328	1,095	+81	<0.001
N. Saskatchewan–							
N. Manitoba–W. Ontario	1,728	1,126	+53	0.028	1,130	+53	0.003
S. Alberta	1,392	1,444	–4	0.715	1,080	+29	0.005
S. Saskatchewan	3,068	2,553	+20	0.012	2,081	+47	<0.001
S. Manitoba	538	602	–11	0.488	388	+39	0.057
Montana & Western Dakotas	767	1,014	–24	0.044	525	+46	0.001
Eastern Dakotas	1,698	1,903	–11	0.256	1,049	+62	<0.001
Total	11,643	10,900	+7	0.138	7,726	+51	<0.001

^a Long-term average, 1955–2014.

TABLE 1. MALLARD BREEDING POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR REGIONS IN THE TRADITIONAL SURVEY AREA.

Source: USFWS Trends in Duck Breeding Populations; 1955-2015

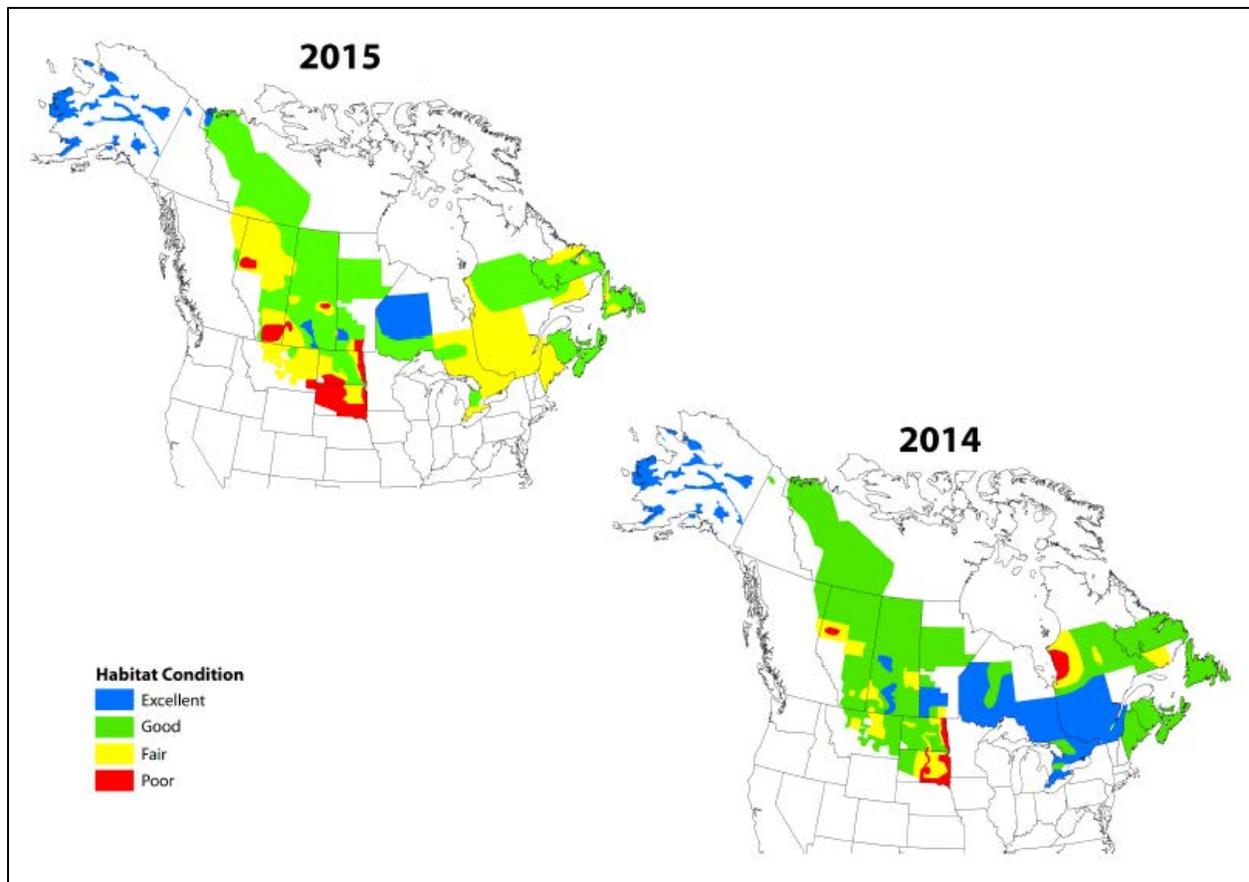


FIGURE 15. IMAGE SHOWING BREEDING AREA CONDITIONS DURING 2014 AND 2015.

Source: *USFWS Trends in Duck Breeding Populations; 1955-2015*

HUNTING

Scouting is often the key to successful waterfowl hunting. Ample opportunity exists for public waterfowl hunts, but hunters should first identify where birds are feeding and roosting. Feeding flights for ducks typically occur very early in the morning and late in the evening, and last for an hour or so. There is always good opportunity to harvest waterfowl during opening weekend in the Columbia Basin. A harvest rate of slightly above three ducks per person is common from year to year for the first weekend of the general waterfowl season. Mallard, teal, American wigeon, and gadwall are among the species most commonly encountered. Also, wood ducks can be found in fair numbers concentrating in stands of flooded Russian olive trees (typically associated with the Winchester and Frenchmen wasteways) in the early season. Late in the season, when snow is on the ground and conditions are harsh, ducks are likely to feed more during the day while the snow is soft, or will seek out fields that are grazed by cattle, so they can access the snow-buried corn kernels. Knowing when and where ducks are feeding and which

direction they depart will help hunters determine the best locations to intercept the duck traffic with a spread of decoys.

Select areas to hunt based on the species you want to target. Diving ducks are typically hunted along the Columbia River, particularly at Wells Pool, Wanapum Pool, and Priest Rapids Pool.

They forage over beds of submerged aquatic vegetation such as pondweeds and milfoil.

American wigeon will associate with diving ducks because they are *kleptoparasites*, meaning they wait for the diving ducks or coots to bring up a bill-full of vegetation, and then quickly rush in to steal their meal. Dabbling ducks are more commonly targeted on the plateau where grain corn and wheat fields attract mallards and pintail and shallow wetlands attract teal, American wigeon, and gadwall. Canada geese feed primarily in wheat and alfalfa fields, so requesting permission from private landowners is often necessary to secure good goose hunting.

Setting up a decoy spread on a pond between the feeding and roosting sites will generally result in some good shooting, particularly when conditions are favorable (e.g. wind, snow, fog).

Typically the larger roosting sites will be the Wanapum Closure (Columbia River), Winchester Reserve, Potholes Reserve, and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Marsh units (Figure 13).

Hunters should be mindful that water (and muck) depths are highly variable and it takes a lot of trial and error to learn where you can and cannot set out decoys. For some areas, boat access is a must. Winchester and Frenchmen Wasteways (the two major drainages entering the west side of Potholes Reservoir) are crossable in some areas with chest waders but use caution as deep holes do exist and patches of muck can be difficult to exit, particularly when packing decoys.

One of the more popular waterfowl hunting areas is Potholes Reservoir. The abundance of small sand dune islands (Figure 14), where hunters find cover, makes this an attractive area to many hunters. Most hunters use the northern portion of the reservoir where they find shallower water and numerous islands. Hunting pressure and competition for the best locations on Potholes Reservoir is high. Hunters that are new to the reservoir should be aware that potholes reservoir water levels do increase dramatically through the hunting season (Figure 15).

Winchester Lake is another location where hunters can expect to see good numbers of waterfowl, but hunting pressure is relatively high. Winchester Lake sits in a prime location to get traffic from mallards that feed on grain corn in the surrounding area. Ducks typically come from Winchester Reserve, Potholes Reserve, Moses Lake, and/or the Wanapum Closure to feed in fields and they occasionally attempt to shorten their commute to the roost by stopping at Winchester Lake instead. This area can be very good at times.

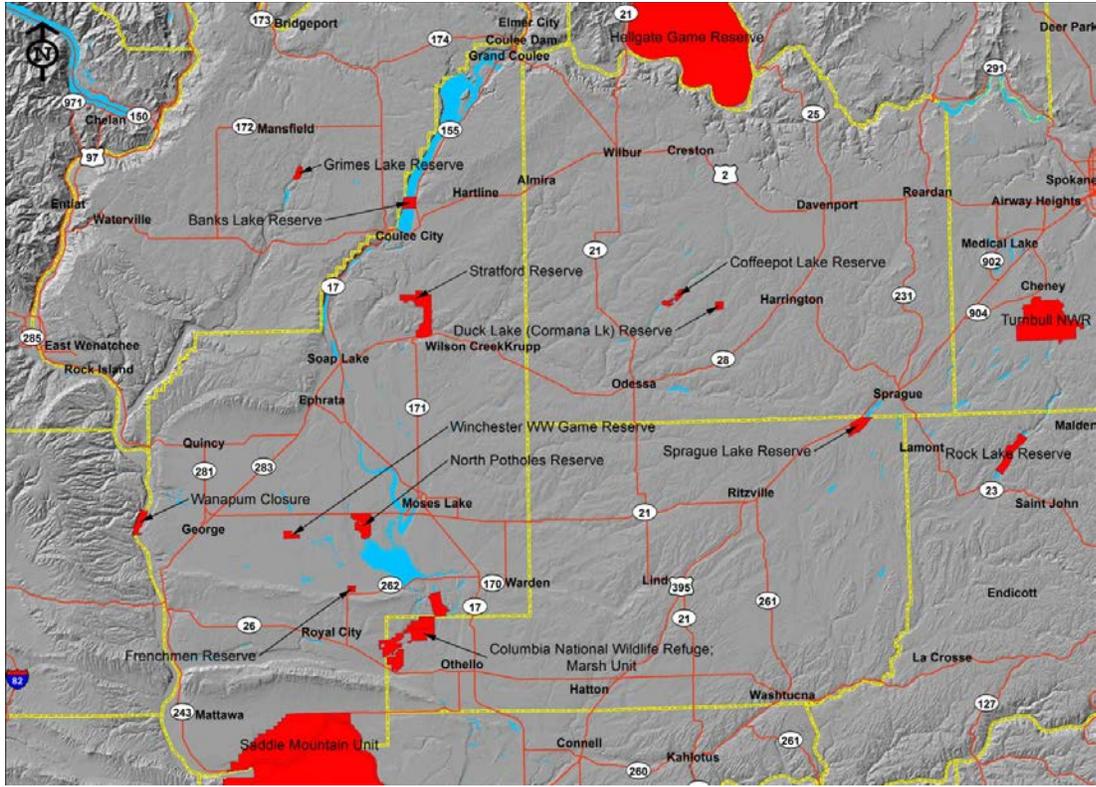


FIGURE 16. LOCATION OF WILDLIFE RESERVES AND CLOSED FEDERAL REFUGE UNITS (IN RED) THROUGHOUT AND ADJACENT TO THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.



FIGURE 17. AERIAL IMAGERY SHOWING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIGH WATER (JUNE) AND LOW WATER (SEPTEMBER) LEVELS ON POTHOLES RESERVOIR.

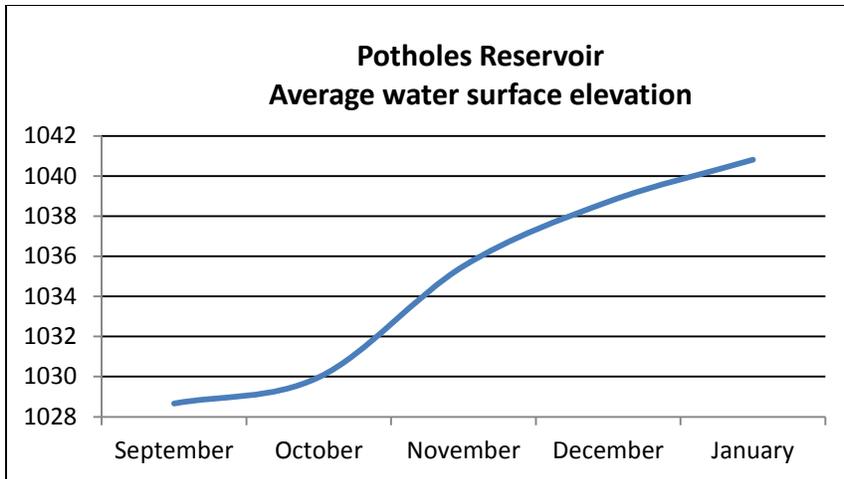


FIGURE 18. POTHOLE RESERVOIR WATER SURFACE ELEVATION (IN FEET) DURING WATERFOWL SEASON. NOTE THAT WATER SURFACE ELEVATION IS MEASURED AT O’SULLIVAN DAM AND SOME LAG IN FLOODING WILL OCCUR IN THE UPPER PORTIONS OF THE RESERVOIR.

Dogs are often an absolute necessity for retrieving throughout most of the Ephrata District, but Regulated Access Areas (RAA) have some shallow ponds which could be hunted with a pair of chest waders. Hunters frequenting the Winchester RAA should use caution on pintails, which can be abundant, making it easy to exceed bag limits. Time restrictions and the number of vehicles allowed for the RAA can be found in the hunting pamphlet. These sites are now ‘Register to Hunt,’ so be sure to register at the box provided in the parking area. See Figure 19 below for a map of RAAs.

Waterfowl hunters should also be aware of private land grain fields enrolled in the Hunter Access Program. This program is intended to provide public field hunting opportunity for ducks and geese but also may provide opportunity to harvest pheasants and occasionally gray partridge. Fields are typically identified and enrolled during November, after the fields are harvested. The timing of enrollment and field locations will vary annually. Call or visit the Ephrata regional office at (509) 754-4624 for details about this program and the Regulated Access Areas.

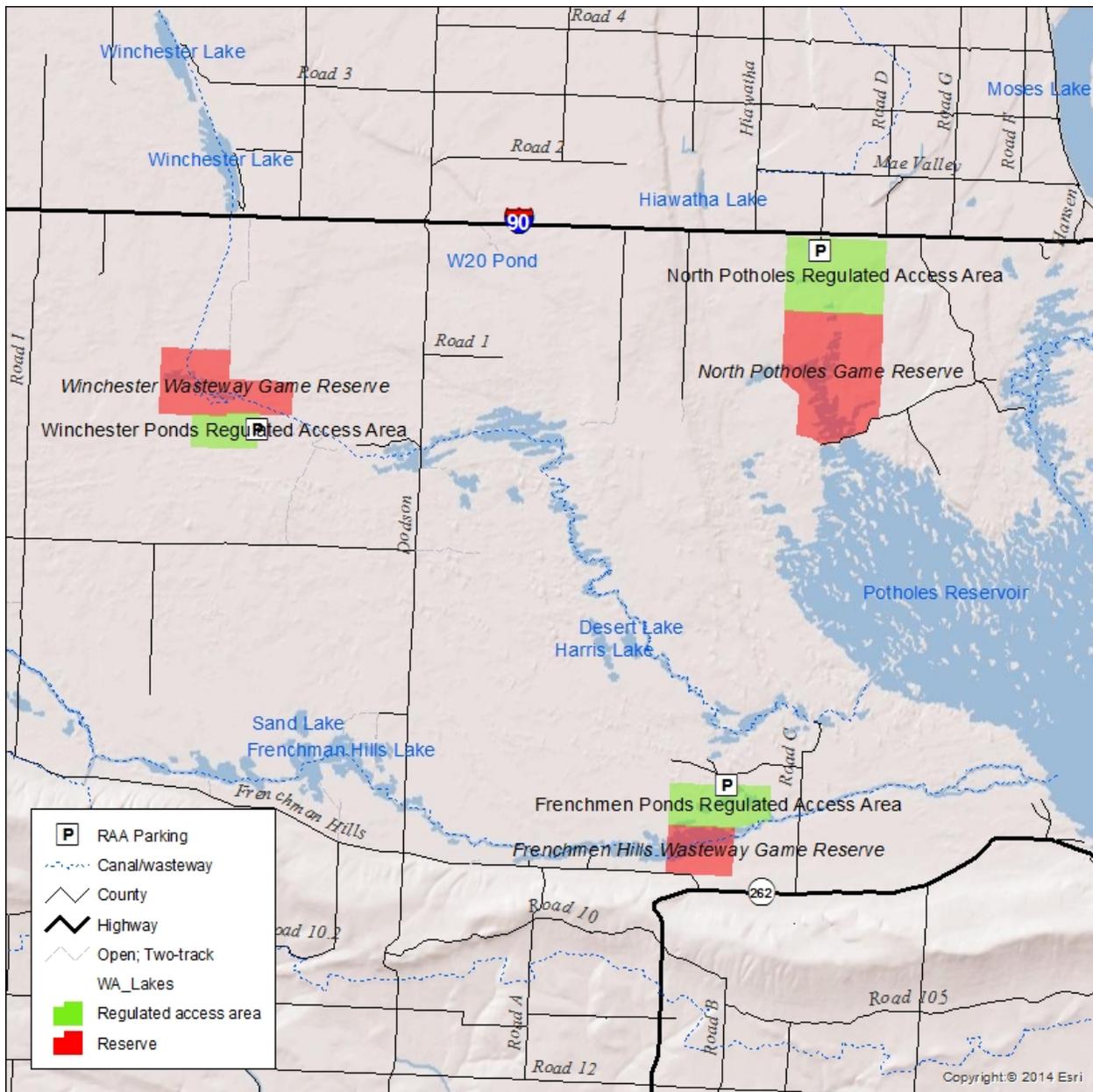


FIGURE 19. REGULATED ACCESS AREA LOCATIONS.

REGULATED ACCESS AREAS

Regulated Access Area	Parking Spots	Register to Hunt	Hunt Days	Reservation Required ²
Winchester Ponds	5	Register on site	Wed, Sat, Sun and Mgmt Area 4 goose hunting days	No
Frenchmen Ponds	5 + 2 ADA	Register on site	Wed, Sat, Sun and Mgmt Area 4 goose hunting days	No
North Potholes ³	5	Register on site	Wed, Sat, Sun and Mgmt Area 4 goose hunting days	During youth hunt and from opening day through November; drop-in's allowed after 9 am.

Winchester Ponds RAA (Figure 16) is the most popular RAA in the district and it consistently produces birds. Harvest has been increasing at this project area, as over 1,000 ducks were taken during the 2014-15 season. Five blinds are distributed throughout the access area and are available on a first-come basis, but hunters are not required to hunt from blinds, as the area is open to free-roam. All five parking spots are often filled as soon as access is allowed at 4 a.m. This area is not recommended to late risers. **Hunting of the Winchester RAA will no longer be managed through an online reservation system.**

² http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/type/56/

³ New opportunity created for the 2015-16 season, requires registration and in some cases online reservation.

Frenchmen Ponds RAA is not as productive as the Winchester Ponds RAA, likely because the adjacent Frenchmen Reserve typically supports a fraction of the mallards that use the Winchester Reserve. As a result, this area receives less attention and hunters are likely to get a spot here, even if showing up late in the morning. The area is open to free-roam. Two wheel-chair accessible hunting blinds have been provided by the Washington Waterfowl Association through an Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant and are available to all hunters. However, they must be forfeited by non-disabled hunters in the event that a disabled hunter requests the site. Disabled hunters may check out a key from the Ephrata Regional Office and will be able to drive to the blinds and park relatively close by. Call the Regional Office at 509-754-4624 for details.

North Potholes RAA is a new area as of the 2015-16 season. Because this site is new, and because Potholes Reservoir water levels fluctuate considerably, identified hunt sites could be dry early in the season. Consider scouting prior to opening weekend to ensure huntable water exists. Reservations will be required to use a parking spot prior to 9 a.m. starting from opening day and lasting through November. Reservation holders not arriving by 9 a.m. will forfeit their reservation, no exceptions. Drop-ins will be allowed after 9 a.m. if a parking spot is available. Parking spots correspond to specific hunt sites. Hunters will be required to hunt within a specified distance of hunt sites identified in the field. Hunters must not hunt waterfowl away from their designated hunt site, but may pursue other game, such as upland birds, mule deer, coyote, and cottontail rabbits, on a free-roam basis. Hunters pursuing species other than waterfowl are strongly encouraged to stay at least 400 meters (1/4 mile) from designated waterfowl hunt sites.

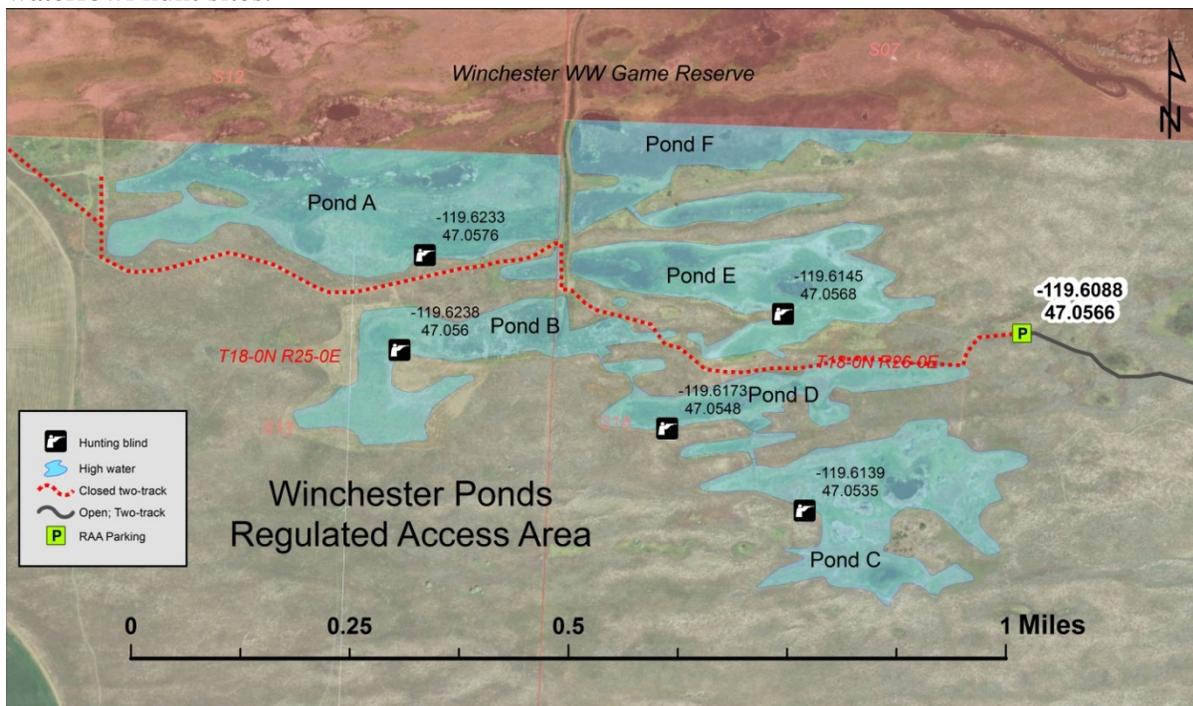


FIGURE 20. WINCHESTER PONDS REGULATED ACCESS AREA.

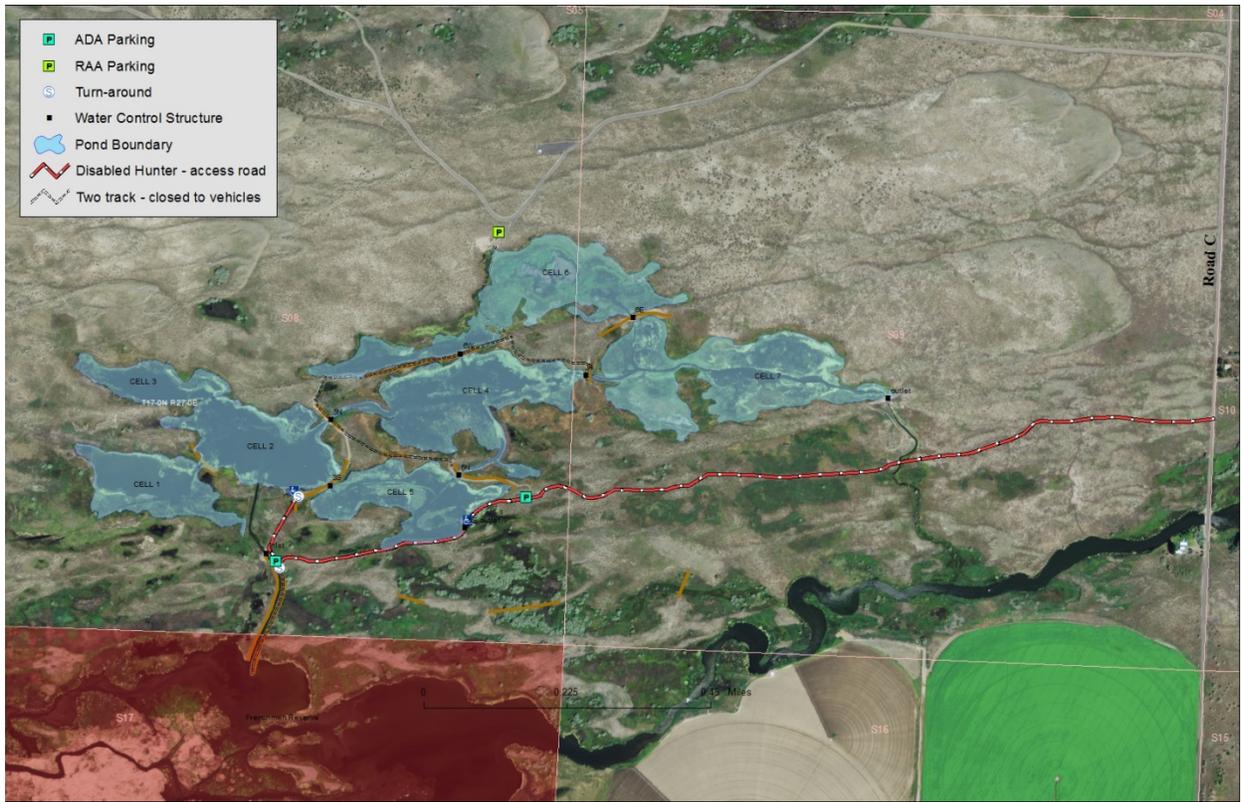


FIGURE 21. FRENCHMEN PONDS REGULATED ACCESS AREA.

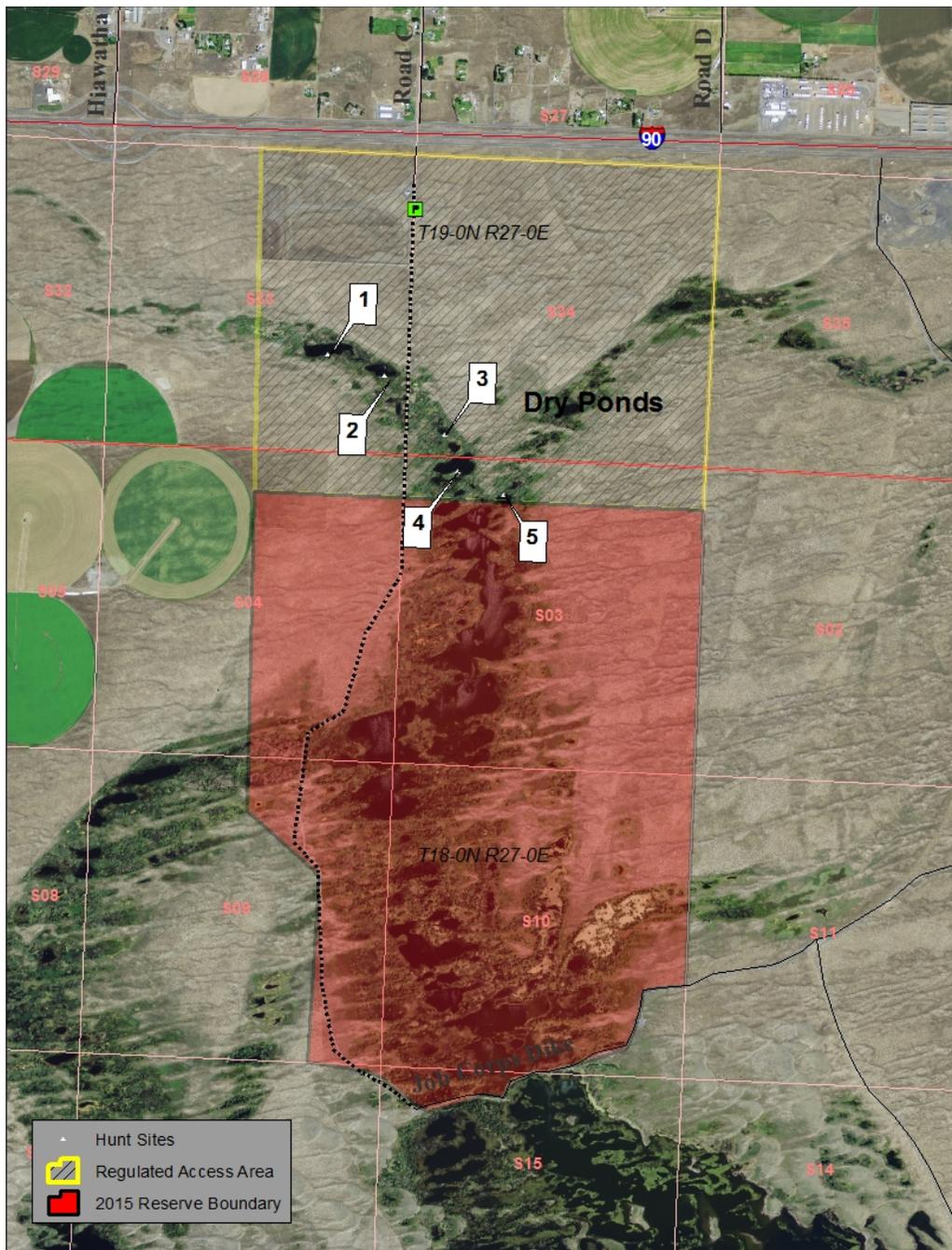


FIGURE 22. NORTH POTHOLES REGULATED ACCESS AREA.

When targeting mallards, as most waterfowl hunters do, it pays to understand where the grain corn is likely to be found. FIGURE 23 below was created using the USDA NASS Cropland Data layers for corn (2006-2012). These data layers display where corn was grown during a given year. The layers are stacked and displayed at 75% transparency, so corn fields only planted once during the 2006-2012 time period would display as dull yellow, whereas corn fields

planted many times during the 2006-2012 time period would display as bright yellow. Unfortunately, the data layers do not discriminate between corn varieties (sweet, silage, grain), but this map does show some important waterfowl foraging areas having a preponderance of bright yellow and may prove to be a useful tool when scouting.

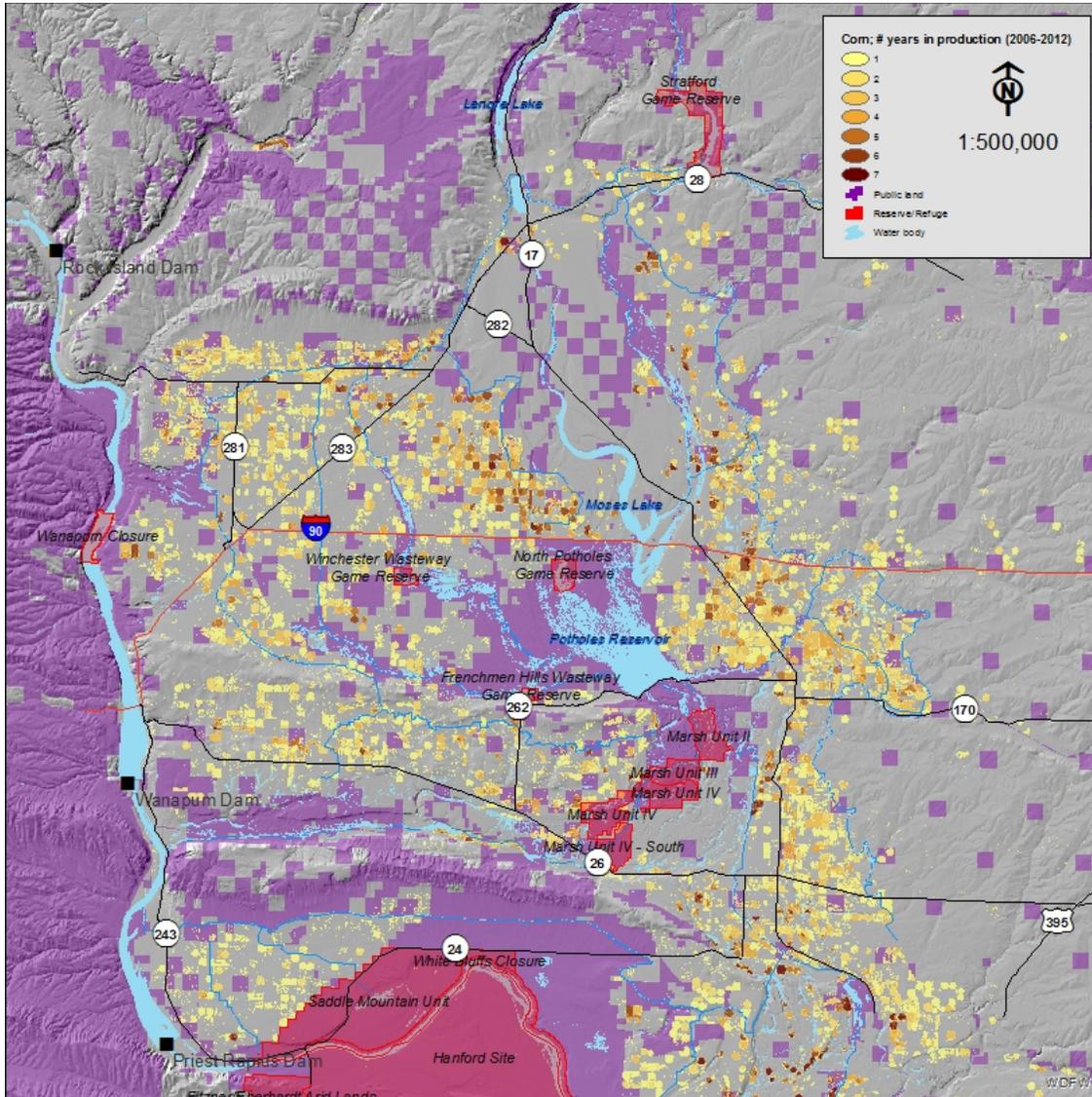


FIGURE 23. JUXTAPOSITION OF CORN PLANTING RELATIVE TO WATERFOWL SANCTUARY AREAS.

SMALL GAME

DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION STATUS

Small game in the Ephrata District consists primarily of bobcat, raccoon, fox, crows, coyotes, and cottontail rabbits. There are no sizeable populations of forest grouse or wild turkey in this district. Formal surveys to assess population status of small game species are not conducted in the Ephrata District. Bobcats occur in the Ephrata District, but harvest is relatively low. Raccoons occur in fair numbers in association with wetlands and residential developments when adequate native habitat exists. Fox farms occurred adjacent to the Columbia Plateau during the early 1900s, but declines in fur prices during the 1950s resulted in fox being released into the wild. A few descendants of these individuals occur within the Ephrata District today, however these introduced fox are still considered uncommon. Crows are typically hunted in areas where damage occurs, such as orchards (typically nuts), thus hunting opportunities for crows within the Ephrata district are limited. There is much opportunity for coyote hunting throughout most of the Ephrata District. Yellow-bellied marmots can be hunted, but most hunting opportunity occurs on private lands where rock piles and agriculture are in close proximity. Hunters should also be aware that Washington ground squirrels are protected and they can occur in large numbers in the Ephrata District.

Cottontail rabbit hunting can help hunters hone their shooting skills while staying in shape for other hunting opportunities. Cottontails are widespread and abundant throughout District 5 in areas of optimal habitat. In native landscapes, hunters should look to rock outcrops, greasewood patches, or other thickets where suitable escape cover occurs. These rabbits are often found along habitat edges. Therefore, focusing efforts in areas where two or more of their preferred habitats occur will produce the best results, particularly if green forage is nearby. On private lands, cottontails can be found within and around equipment storage areas or rock piles. To be successful hunting rabbits, hunters should cover lots of ground while kicking brush. Stopping periodically will cause nearby rabbits to become nervous and they will oftentimes flee when you resume walking, providing only a brief shooting window. Another popular way to hunt rabbits is through the use of trained beagles. Using their noses, beagles will find and jump a rabbit, at which point, the rabbit will outrun the beagle as the dog works to unlock the scent trail. The cottontails typically run a large circle and reappear near the area in which it was first jumped. The hunter must correctly predict what path the rabbit will take as it circles around ahead of the beagle and harvest it before it runs into a hole. Hunters targeting cottontails should be aware of the endangered pygmy rabbit, which looks similar to cottontails and is found in shrub-steppe habitat.

PUBLIC LANDS

WDFW MANAGED LAND

Wildlife Areas – The Columbia Basin Wildlife Area contains about 192,000 acres and provides habitat for a multitude of species. For more information on this wildlife area, please visit the

WDFW Lands [website](#). Visitors to the wildlife area need to be aware that a Discover Pass is required to access all WDFW lands.

Release Sites – The Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program was designed to help supplement harvest and maintain hunter opportunity in Washington. Several pheasant release sites are found in the Ephrata District. For more information on this program and release sites in this district, please visit the Enhancement Program’s [website](#).

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Washington Department of Natural Resources maintains land that is open to the public for recreational purposes. Visitors to DNR land should be aware that a [Discover Pass](#) is required for access. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on DNR land can be found [here](#).

NATIONAL FOREST

There is no national forest in the Ephrata District.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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

OTHER

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

ADA ACCESS

The Ephrata District maintains some access for Americans with disabilities. These sites occur at Rocky Ford Creek (Drumheller Pond) and Buckshot Ranch. Hunters must have a Disabled Hunter Permit (and in most cases permits from the land managers) in order to access hunting areas behind locked gates by driving on the roads that are normally open only to walk-ins. For additional information, please call or write to Dolores Noyes, WDFW, 360-902-2349, FAX: 360-902-2392 or Email: Dolores.Noyes@dfw.wa.gov.

Rocky Ford Creek – Travel south from Ephrata on SR 282 for 7.2 miles. Turn right onto Neppel Road (Old Moses Lake Hwy). Go 0.1 miles and turn right at the public fishing sign. Continue 0.5 miles to the access site. The access duck blind is on a small pond off the creek. A vehicle can be used to drop off a disabled hunter next to the blind. The ground around the blind is rough and access into the water is best with a small hand launch boat or raft. An accessible vault toilet is in

the parking lot located nearby for the walk-in fishers. Use of the blind is by reservation only. Hunter can obtain a key from the Ephrata Regional Office, 509-754-4624.

Buckshot Ranch – Drive south on SR 243 along the Columbia River from Vantage toward Mattawa. Turn right (west) onto Road 26 SW and go about one mile to the Priest Rapids/Buckshot Wildlife Area. Follow the gravel road into a parking area and turn right between two fence posts. Follow the dirt road north 0.25 miles to a fence on the left side to a locked gate on left. Drive through the gate into the crop field towards the old pump house. A ground level roll-in goose pit blind is available with seasonal success dependent on weather. Call the Ephrata Regional Office at 509-754-4624 to reserve the blind and obtain a key.

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

Frenchmen Ponds Regulated Access Area – From Moses Lake travel south on Highway 17 to Road M SE and turn right (south). Continue on Road M for about six miles and turn right (west) onto highway 262 (O’Sullivan Dam Road). Continue on highway 262 across O’Sullivan Dam and past Potholes State Park and turn right (north) onto Road C SE. Proceed north on Road C SE for 1.4 miles and look for the disabled access gate on the left hand side of the road. For further detail, see the map in the Regulated Access Area section of this document.

PRIVATE LANDS

LAND OWNERSHIP

Whether hunting, hiking, or wildlife viewing, it is important that we all respect private property rights and always ask permission before entering private lands. Fortunately, technology has made this process considerably easier and land ownership can now be ascertained from the internet using the following resources. Simply log on and use the interactive map program to zoom into your area of interest. Clicking on the parcels will reveal land owner information.

<http://adamswa.mapsifter.com/>

<http://grantwa.mapsifter.com/>

The disadvantage of these resources is the lack of portability and difficulty scanning a large area for availability of public land. However, these are by far the best available resource for identifying ownership of specific locations. The best resource available for identifying where public land occurs is the Department of Natural Resources public lands quadrangles (1:100k). See the link below to order a copy for a fee.

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

PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through a negotiated agreement. Landowners participating in a WDFW cooperative agreement retain liability protection provided under RCW 4.24.210. Landowners receive technical services, materials for posting (signs and posts), and in some cases monetary compensation. In addition, lands under agreement are well known by WDFW enforcement staff. Currently, the private lands access program includes four basic access agreement types: Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt, Hunt by Written Permission, and Hunt by Reservation (TABLE 2). More information on where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's GoHunt site, <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/gohunt/index.html>. Over 200,000 acres of private property in the Ephrata District are accessible to hunters through these agreements. When accessing these lands, hunters should obey all the rules posted for that specific piece of property. Hunters should also be aware that, unless property is enrolled in these agreements, they may not access private property and they may be prosecuted if they trespass.

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

TABLE 2. ACREAGE OF ACCESS ACQUIRED BY ACCESS TYPE.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

YOUTH HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

WDFW and the Columbia Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever have been partnering in recent years to host a day of pheasant hunting during the youth season. This event will take place on Saturday, September 19 at B&G Farms in the Royal City area. Please make a reservation for Private Lands Hunting Access location [Rd 15, Rd 13 south of Hwy 26](#) so that the organizers can plan accordingly. However, those arriving without reservations will be welcome to participate. For more information, check the [Columbia Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever - Facebook Page](#) or call the WDFW Ephrata Regional Office at (509) 754-4624.

BIRD DOG TRAINING

The Ephrata District does not currently have any areas designated for bird dog training. Thus, all training on WDFW land must occur within the established bird dog training season, which runs from August 1 – March 31.

TARGET SHOOTING

Per WAC 332-52-145, target shooting is allowed in developed recreational facilities (TABLE 3) or areas with an unobstructed, earthen backstop capable of stopping all projectiles and debris in a safe manner. Targets are defined as ‘items that are commercially manufactured for the specific purpose of target shooting’. Because of extensive misuse of WDFW managed lands (primarily litter related), some areas have been closed to target shooting, particularly in the Lind Coulee, Potholes, and Seep Lakes units of the CBWA. Information for shooting range facilities is provided below.

County	Name	Contact
Adams	Lind Golf & Gun Club	509-671-3314
Adams	Othello Gun Club	509-488-3768
Adams	Ritzville Gun Club	Gun Club Road, Ritzville
Adams	Washtucna Gun Club	509-646-3263
Grant	Boyd Mordhorst Memorial Range	509-345-2550
Grant	Coulee City Sportsmen	509-632-5137
Grant	Marlin Trap Club	509-982-2445
Grant	Moses Lake Gun Club	509-765-1382
Grant	Quincy Gun Club	509-787-5506

TABLE 3. LIST OF TARGET SHOOTING FACILITIES IN THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

LITERATURE CITED

- Buller, R. J. 1975. Redistribution of waterfowl, influence of water, protection, and feed. International Waterfowl Symposium 1:143–154.
- Rabenberg, M. J. 1982. Ecology and population dynamics of mallards wintering in the Columbia Basin. M.S. Thesis, University of Montana, Missoula. 135 pp.
- Munro, R. E., and C. F. Kimball. 1982. Population ecology of the mallard: VII. Distribution and derivation of the harvest. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Publication 147.

Desert Unit (GMU 290) Photos



DESERT UNIT (GMU 290) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: Where should I start looking for a mature buck?

A: The highest density of mule deer typically occurs between Dodson Road and Potholes Reservoir, bounded on the north by Interstate 90 and on the south by Frenchmen Hills Road. It is recommended to explore all access points around this area when getting to know the unit, then branch out from there.

Q: What is the area like?

A: The unit sits within the heart of the Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, which delivers water to over 600,000 acres of farmland in the area. As a result, many small ponds and streams have been incidentally created in this area. Hunters should be familiar with the orientation of Frenchmen and Winchester Wasteways, as they pose a significant barrier and can only be crossed by boat or with chest waders in places. There are many small ponds associated with these wasteways that are used by waterfowl hunters. The Desert Unit provides a rich source of natural vegetation, so although mule deer utilize agricultural fields such as alfalfa, the crops may not be the best place to seek out your deer. Bitterbrush, which is common within the Desert Unit, is an important mule deer food item during winter. Be familiar with the distribution of bitterbrush patches, particularly during the later seasons if snowfall has occurred.

The Desert Unit sits on deep sandy soils. These soils have been wind-blown, resulting in long east-west running dunes which characterize the landscape (and provide great vantage points to scan for deer). These dunes and sandy soils can make walking difficult at times and will certainly make packing out an animal a lot of work.

Q: What size bucks am I likely to encounter?

A: The typical buck harvested from the Desert Unit is a 4x4 with a 24" spread. Many hunters report having seen larger bucks than the one they harvested.

Q: Are there any areas that I cannot hunt?

A: Hunters need to be aware of the locations and boundaries of Winchester Reserve, Frenchmen Reserve, and North Potholes Reserve (Figure 19). Private lands within the Desert Unit are only open to hunting if the hunter first obtains landowner permission.

Q: Where should I stay?

A: The town of Moses Lake is the nearest location, with many amenities (motels, restaurants, etc.). Camping is allowed on WDFW lands, and most folks camp within the parking areas. Expect crowds during the opening weekend of duck and pheasant hunting.

Q: Is there any other hunting going on in the area?

A: The entire unit is open to hunting. Expect to see waterfowl hunters and upland bird hunters throughout the area. However, these hunters are typically associated with the wasteways and associated ponds. Once you get far enough into the shrub dominated uplands, you will find far fewer people.