

2015

ERIC HOLMAN, District Wildlife Biologist
NICHOLLE STEPHENS, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



Photo by Allan Holcomb

District 10 Hunting Prospects

Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

CONTENTS

DISTRICT 10 GENERAL OVERVIEW	1
ELK	2
Significant Changes for 2015.....	2
Elk Population Information.....	3
Bacterial Hoof Disease	5
DEER	8
BEAR	10
COUGAR.....	11
MOUNTAIN GOAT.....	11
UPLAND BIRD.....	12
FOREST GROUSE	12
WATERFOWL	13
PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES.....	18
PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS	19

DISTRICT 10 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 10 is located in southwestern Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. Game management units (GMUs) in this district include 501 (Lincoln), 503 (Randle), 504 (Stella), 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 530 (Ryderwood), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). This wide area includes maritime rolling hills in Wahkiakum County to Cascade peaks in Lewis County.

A high percentage of this district is in private ownership, which presents a variety of access options and challenges. The recent trend is for private forest land to become more limited to public access or to sell access permits for hunting seasons to a limited number of participants. Understanding the recreational access policies of individual timber companies is an important first step in planning your hunt. Recreational access information is typically available on timber company websites or by calling access hotlines. You can find a list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by private industrial timber companies at the end of this document. It is always a good idea to obtain a map from the landowner where you wish to hunt.

Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10. Major changes to hunting access implemented in 2014 include the requirement to purchase an access permit to hunt on Weyerhaeuser land on their St. Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). Access permits are being sold for \$160. A few select areas remain open to free recreational access. Information about recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land, including maps, can be found [here](#) or by calling 1-866-636-6531.

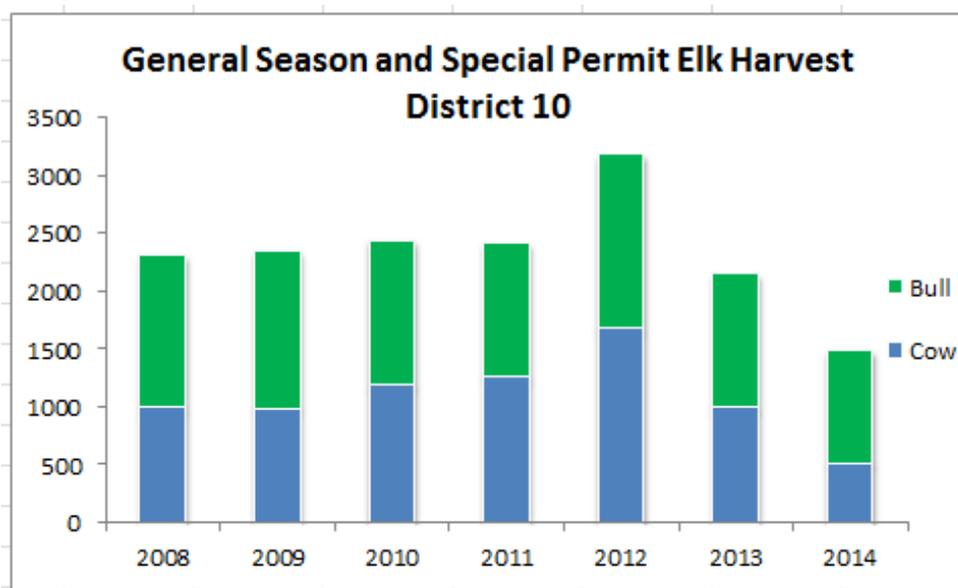
Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but may have limited motorized vehicle access. Other major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Hancock Forest Management, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond, Olympic Resource Management, West Fork Timber, and Weyerhaeuser's Columbia Timberlands (formerly Longview Timber). Access to these lands may be impacted during the months of August, September, and in some cases October due to high fire danger. More information about hunting opportunities on private land can be found on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [Private Lands webpage](#), on page 97 of the pamphlet, or at the [Go Hunt mapping](#) site.

Public land in the district includes WDFW's [Cowlitz](#) and [Mount St Helens](#) Wildlife Areas, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) scattered throughout all three counties. These are public lands open to public access. Contact the USFS Cowlitz Valley Ranger District at 360-497-1100 or visit their website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/giffordpinchot/recreation/recarea/?recid=31180>. Information

about DNR managed lands can be obtained by contacting the Castle Rock DNR office at 360-577-2025 or visiting their website at: <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/>.

ELK

District 10 has historically been among the leaders in statewide harvest of elk. The highest general season harvests in 2014 occurred in 520 (Winston), 506 (Willapa Hills), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). There are also many permit hunts in District 10, which are offered to manage the elk population, address agricultural damage caused by elk, and provide recreational opportunity. Additionally, two GMUs, 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle), are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In 2014, a total of 1,068 elk were harvested during the general season in addition to 424 elk harvested by permit in District 10. A 5-point elk is generally considered a nice trophy in this district, as 6-point bulls are few and far between.



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR 2015

GMU 524 Margaret Elk

A change of particular interest to elk hunters for the 2015 hunting season is the change of GMU 524 (Margaret) to general season hunting for bull elk instead of being managed as a permit-only GMU. For 2015, general season bull hunts are offered to archers, muzzleloader hunters, and modern firearm hunters. The hunt dates correspond to the general season structure for western Washington and all user-groups are under the 3-point antler restriction. Antlerless opportunity for Margaret is still managed on a special permit basis.

Hunters should be aware that the easternmost portion of the Margaret GMU, located within the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, is closed to general season elk hunting. The portion of Margaret not open to general season hunting is identified by the Norway Pass Elk Area #5066. Elk hunting for all user groups in this area is now managed by special permit. For detailed information on the boundaries of Elk Area 5066 and specifics on elk hunting permits in this area, see the 2015 Big Game Pamphlet.

Muzzleloader Elk

As part of the statewide effort to provide additional elk hunting opportunity to muzzleloader elk hunters, many additional GMUs within District 10 are now open for general season muzzleloader hunts. Game Management Units 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 524 (Margaret), which is discussed in detail above, and 550 (Coweeman) all offer early muzzleloader general seasons for 3-point or larger bulls during the October early season.

ELK POPULATION INFORMATION

Elk populations in the game management units comprising the Mount St. Helens elk herd area are down from historic highs reached during the mid-2000s. This population reduction was implemented per the objectives of the St. Helens Elk Herd Plan.

(See <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00771/>.) Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity combined with some years of late winter and spring storms have reduced the elk population in these GMUs. Antlerless hunting opportunity has been reduced accordingly and those hunters holding antlerless permits in 2015 should enjoy less-crowded conditions compared to years past.

The spring of 2015 survey of elk in the monitored portions of the St. Helens herd showed a modest increase in the population of both cow and bull elk. Additionally, the mild winter of 2014-15 resulted in few winter mortalities on the annual survey of elk on the St. Helens Wildlife Area. These indicators point towards a productive elk hunting season during the 2015 hunt.

Survey information in the GMUs comprising the South Rainier and Willapa Hills herds is favorable as well.

The general bull elk season is always challenging, but the District 10 elk population produces a harvest of more than 1,000 bull elk annually, and those hunters who put in the effort and remain focused may be rewarded with success.



PHOTO BY SAM KOLB (WDFW)



BULL GROUP IN THE ST. HELENS HERD – PHOTO BY SCOTT MC CORQUODALE (WDFW)

Strategies in Situations of Restrictions Due to Fire Danger

Early hunting season access for archery hunters is often complicated by hot weather and fire access closures. If that occurs, hunters should consider going west to GMUs 506 or 530 (Willapa Hills and Ryderwood), where blocks of state (DNR) forest lands are available. Another good choice during times of fire danger would be GMUs 513 (South Rainier) and 516 (Packwood), which are comprised mostly of national forest lands. These public lands almost always stay open during times of high fire danger, but be sure to check with land managers before heading to the field.

Elk Scouting Strategies

Using the [Go Hunt mapping](#) online tool to look at aerial photos to identify recent clearcuts and drainages is a good start for identifying areas to hunt. Pre-season scouting on the commercial tree farms is usually done by bike or on foot, as most areas will not be open to motorized access at that time. Motorized access and camping is available on state DNR lands unless there is high fire danger. Prospective elk hunters should keep in mind that the animals often prefer cooler, wetter areas during times of warmer weather and are more often active during dawn and dusk.

Additional Resources for Those Interested in District 10 Elk

[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer and elk based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website. For more information regarding elk management in WDFW Region 5 (Districts 9 and 10), see page 112 of the Annual Elk Status and Trend Report located on the WDFW website at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01667/>

BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

Over the past decade, WDFW has received a growing number of reports of elk exhibiting hoof deformities in southwest Washington. This is a major concern for hunters, area residents, and state wildlife managers alike. Reports have been increasing in number and geographic scope, and hunters are regularly seeing and sometimes harvesting an elk with this condition. It has been noted in both males and females, old as well as very young animals, and in any hoof.

Through collaborative work with five independent diagnostic laboratories and epidemiological specialists within the USA and abroad, hooves from affected elk have been extensively examined and results have been reviewed by a 16-member technical panel of researchers and veterinarians. All evidence to date indicates that elk hoof disease is caused by treponeme infectious bacteria and appears to be very similar to a disease complex known as digital dermatitis (DD), the most prevalent infectious hoof disease of cattle, and in some parts of the world, sheep as well as goats. Although many bacteria play a role in hoof disease, a type of spirochete belonging to the genus *Treponema* is the most common.

Treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) in elk most closely resembles contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) in sheep. Infection in elk hooves results in abnormal hoof growth, cavitating sole ulcers, and in severe cases, eventual sloughing of the hoof capsule. There is no evidence that the bacteria are harmful to humans, and tests have shown that the disease does not affect animals' meat or organs.

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

The primary area of TAHD infection is in the Cowlitz River Basin; however, suspected incidences of hoof disease occur in southwest Washington in ten counties and the disease affects both the Mount St. Helens and Willapa elk herds. Scientists believe environmental factors are important in disease initiation, and the bacteria likely persist in wet soils and are spread to new locations on the hooves of infected animals

Hunters should be aware to minimize the spread of the disease. The Department has implemented new regulations requiring hunters to leave the hooves of any elk taken in the affected area on site. See page 50 of the 2015 Big Game Hunting Pamphlet for details on the regulation regarding leaving elk feet at the site of harvest in southwest Washington.

We currently do not know the prevalence of the disease, or its adverse effects on the population, and there is not a treatment plan or vaccine available at this time. WDFW continues to work towards a better understanding of the hoof disease situation for both the infected animals specifically and the elk population as a whole. Recent undertakings include a volunteer based effort to determine the distribution and prevalence of the disease across the landscape and a WDFW research project to understand the possible effects of TAHD on elk survival and reproduction. If hunters harvest an elk with a collar, please call the phone number on the collar as soon as possible so we can retrieve the collar. Much more information can be found on page 66 in the pamphlet and on the department's [webpage](#). Hunters can help WDFW address this challenging wildlife management issue by reporting elk with hoof disease on the [online reporting tool](#).



PHOTO BY NICHOLLE STEPHENS (WDFW)

DEER

Several GMUs in District 10 are among the best in the state for black-tail deer harvest. The highest general season buck harvests in 2014 occurred in 530 (Ryderwood), 501 (Lincoln), 520 (Winston), and 550 (Coweeman). The majority of the antlerless harvest occurs during the general archery and muzzleloader seasons. For more information on deer in WDFW's Region 5 (Districts 10 and 9), see page 62 in the annual Game Status and Trend Report located at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01667/>.

Black-tailed deer hunting is often best near the end of the general season, as conditions in the heavily vegetated west-side improve for stalking and moving through the woods quietly. The best opportunity often occurs during the late buck hunt, when favorable stalking and weather conditions combine with the breeding season or rut. This year's late buck season goes from November 19 to 22. Black-tails generally favor dense vegetation and have small home ranges. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer.

Black-tail populations are very stable in District 10. The annual harvest of more than 2,000 bucks has been typical for many years. The mild winter of 2014-15 should mean excellent survival of all segments of the deer population and bodes well for the 2015 fall hunting season.

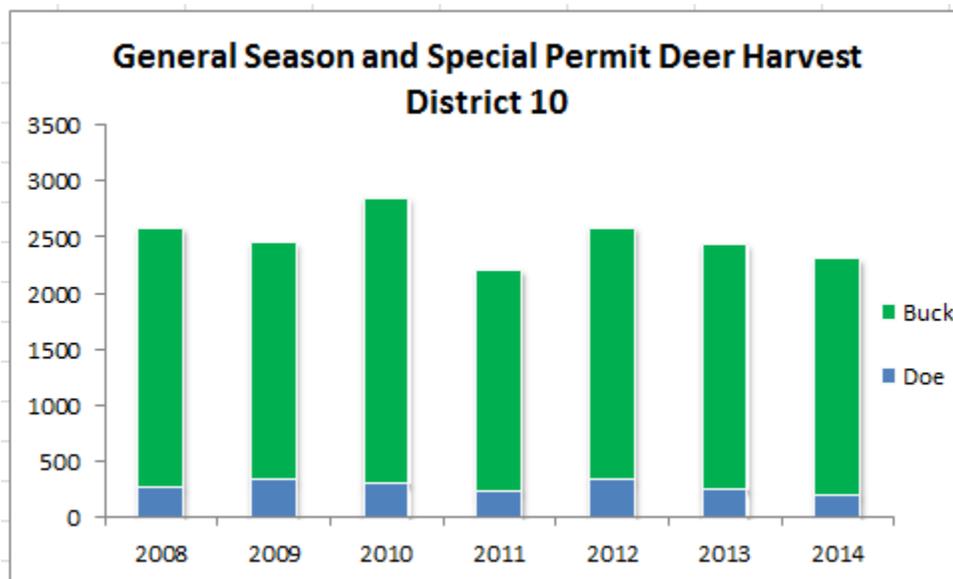




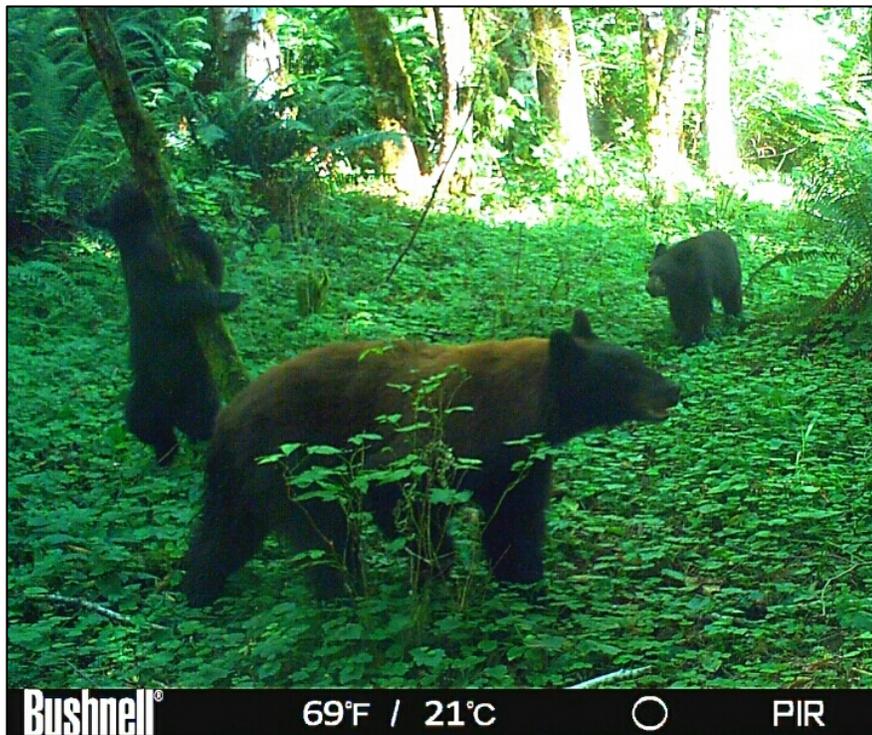
PHOTO BY GARY BELL (WDFW)

BEAR

District 10 makes up part of both the South Cascades (GMUs 503, 505, 510, 513, 516, 520, 550, and 556) and Coastal (GMUs 501, 504, 506, and 530) black bear hunt zones for the fall bear hunting season. In the Coastal hunt zone, the season runs from August 1-November 15. In the South Cascades hunt zone, the season starts on August 15 and runs through November 15. Harvest numbers and hunter success for 2014 in the South Cascades and Coastal zone were 141 (3.9% success) and 137 (4.5% success), respectively. For more information on the management of black bears in Washington, including the Coastal and South Cascades management zones, see page 223 of the annual Status and Trend report at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01667/>.

All successful bear hunters must submit the premolar tooth in a tooth envelope—see page 69 of the pamphlet for more details.

Hunting for black bears is challenging but also can be rewarding. Hunters should try a variety of methods, including targeting areas of favored foods like huckleberries, blackberries, cascara trees, etc. Other methods include glassing clearcuts or alpine areas at times of dawn and dusk, as



well as predator calling.

PHOTO BY KYLE CAMERON

COUGAR

In 2014-2015, hunters took 13 cougars in the GMUs that make up District 10. Cougar hunting in this region is managed under a harvest guideline designed to harvest 12-16% of the population (excluding kittens) annually. The harvest guideline may be achieved during the fall hunt and prospective hunters should visit the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/> to assure that the season in their prospective area remains open.

Most cougar hunting in western Washington occurs as an additional opportunity concurrent to deer and elk hunting. Hunters who want to harvest cougars should focus on areas with concentrations of deer and elk, choose to hunt following fresh snow for tracking, and may want to try predator calling.

MOUNTAIN GOAT

The Goat Rocks/Tieton River goat hunt area has five special permits for the 2015 hunting season and is one of the premier spots in the state for mountain goat hunting. Populations in the Goat Rocks/Tieton River Goat area have remained stable at approximately 300 goats over several years. Hunter success in this unit is usually 100%.

For the first time in 2015, successful mountain goat hunters are required to bring the head and horns of their animal to the closest WDFW regional or district office for biological sampling within 10 days of harvest. Successful draw applicants will receive a letter with additional details.



PHOTO BY WDFW

UPLAND BIRD

Western Washington Pheasant Release Program

Pheasants are released for hunting at three locations in District 10. These are located at Kosmos (Lewis County), Woodland Bottoms (Cowlitz County), and Lincoln (Lewis County). For more information about the pheasant release program in western Washington, visit the WDFW website at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/western/>

Youth hunters, as well as those over 65 years of age, should be sure to check the regulations closely for opportunities to hunt earlier in the season than other user groups.



PHOTO BY WDFW

FOREST GROUSE

District 10 supports substantial forest grouse populations and is one of the top producers for western Washington. Spring conditions for chick survival were excellent this year, which should translate into good grouse hunting this fall. Hunting riparian areas with mixed forest species and walking closed or abandoned roads are good strategies for grouse hunting.



PHOTO BY WDFW

WATERFOWL

Duck and goose hunting will be good this fall after the rains in November and December encourage birds to come south to our area. Surveys conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicate strong duck numbers. See the following sources for information on North American waterfowl populations:

<http://flyways.us/>

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/TrendsInDuckBreedingPopulations.pdf>

<http://www.flyways.us/status-of-waterfowl/pilot-reports.>

Hunters are reminded to consult the regulations pamphlet for details. Prospective hunters should take special note of the late September season open only to youth hunters. Check the regulations closely for the details on this mentored hunting opportunity for early season ducks.

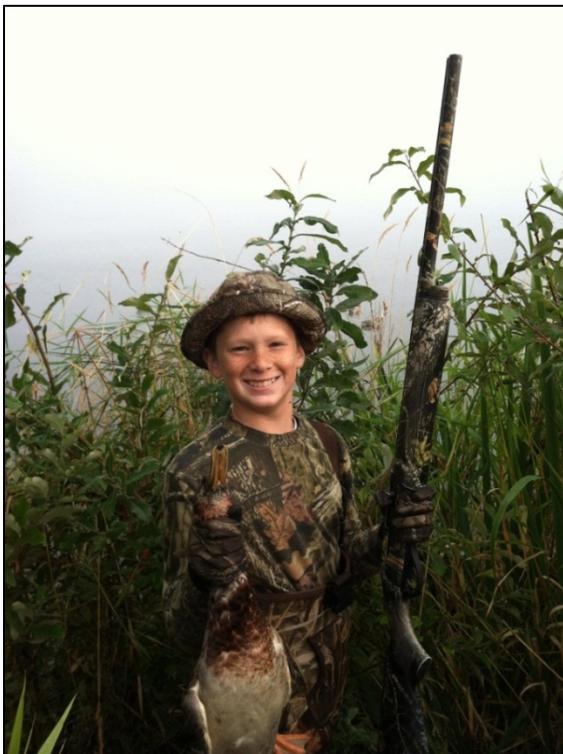
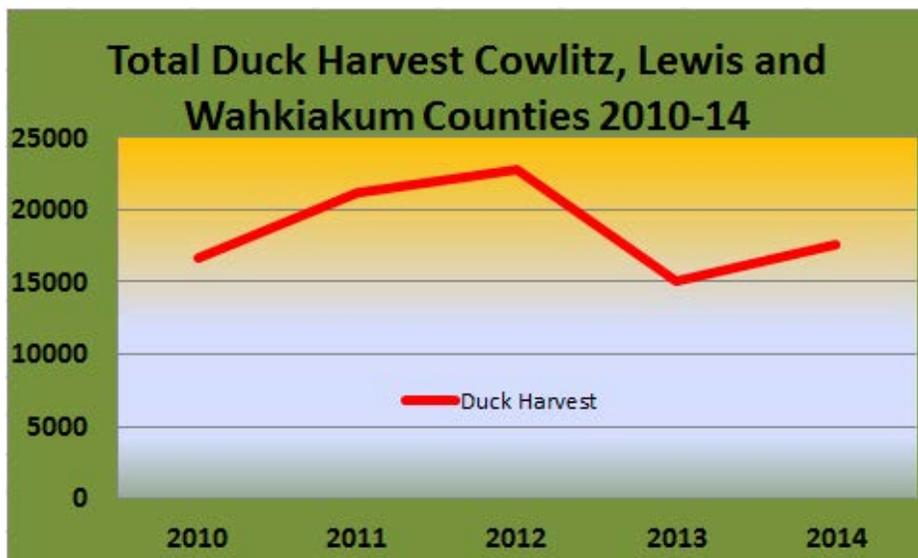


PHOTO BY KEITH HARRIS

Hunting early in the season is often best along the Columbia River and other large, permanent bodies of water. Remember that the Columbia River is tidal in flow and watch for outgoing tide conditions to avoid having your boat get stuck. Be careful on the water and always have your PFD on! Later in the season, when high water might disperse birds, having access to farmlands is a great way to adapt to changing behavior patterns of birds. More information can be found on the Department's [waterfowl webpage](#).

Duck harvest in 2014 was 4,547 in Cowlitz County, 8,966 in Lewis County, and 4,110 in Wahkiakum County. The reduced duck harvest over the past two seasons reflects the mild fall weather during 2013-14 and 2014-15. Prospective hunters should be aware that success often depends on the severity of fall/winter weather, with more severe conditions generally producing better duck hunting in southwest Washington.



Goose Hunting: Hunters are reminded of the complex goose hunting regulations in area 2A designed to protect wintering populations of the dusky Canada goose. New hunters and those who had their previous year's hunting authorization invalidated for Goose Management Area 2A need to pass an exam with a minimum of 80% to receive their current year hunting authorization.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO Area 2A GOOSE HUNTING THIS YEAR

Goose hunting in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties is subject to the additional restrictions of Goose Management Area 2A, which are in place to protect the dusky subspecies of the Canada goose. Goose hunters are encouraged to review the different subspecies of Canada geese in southwest Washington and are reminded that the ability to identify the different subspecies will still be the key to productive and enjoyable goose hunting.

For the 2015-16 southwest Washington goose season, the Fish and Wildlife Commission in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the states of Oregon and Alaska approved the following changes:

- The season for dusky Canada geese is **closed** and hunters will be cited for taking a dusky Canada goose.
- Southwest goose season hunting hours extended: 30 minutes after the start of official hunting hours to 30 minutes before the end of official hunting hours (same as other goose hunting areas of the state now)
- Hunters are no longer required to record harvest or bring birds to check stations.
- 2A / 2B boundaries are changed to now include all of Clark and Grays Harbor counties.
- General season ending dates extended to March (“Late Season” discontinued). All hunters can now participate in the February-March season, but only on private lands.

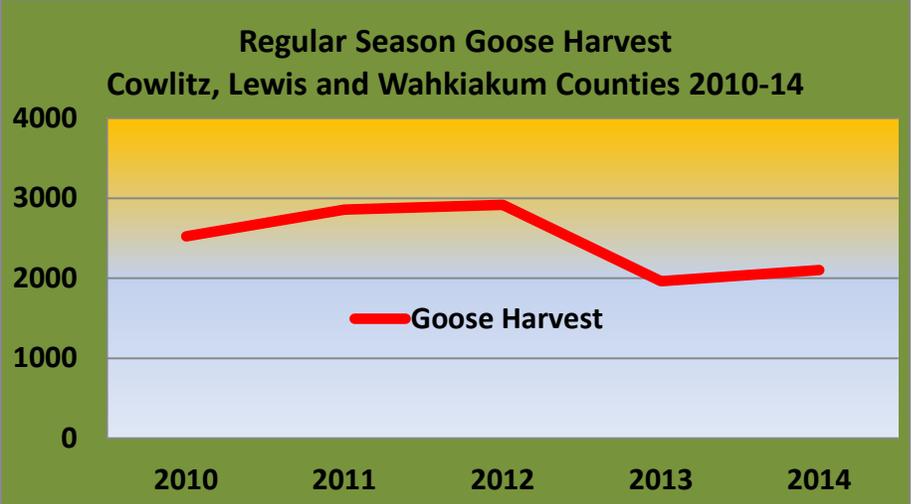
Please review the revised goose identification training program at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/canada_goose/ prior to hunting this season, and see the 2015-16 WDFW Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for more information. Wildlife managers are relying on southwest goose hunters to make this new season format successful, so that goose hunting will remain open in permit zones.

Most public goose hunting in Clark County is located in the Vancouver lowlands and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Hunter access to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is by reservation.



CAACKLING CANADA GEESE IN SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON – PHOTO BY BROOKE GEORGE (WDFW)

While dusky Canada geese remain of concern, several other subspecies are abundant and support large annual harvests. Regular fall goose harvest in 2014 was 528 in Cowlitz County, 1217 in Lewis County, and 355 in Wahkiakum County.



Goose hunters are also encouraged to take advantage of the early goose season, which takes place in September. Again, see the waterfowl hunting pamphlet for details on this enjoyable goose hunt for western Canada geese. Harvest during the September season in 2014 was 128 in Cowlitz County, 69 in Lewis County, and 147 in Wahkiakum County.

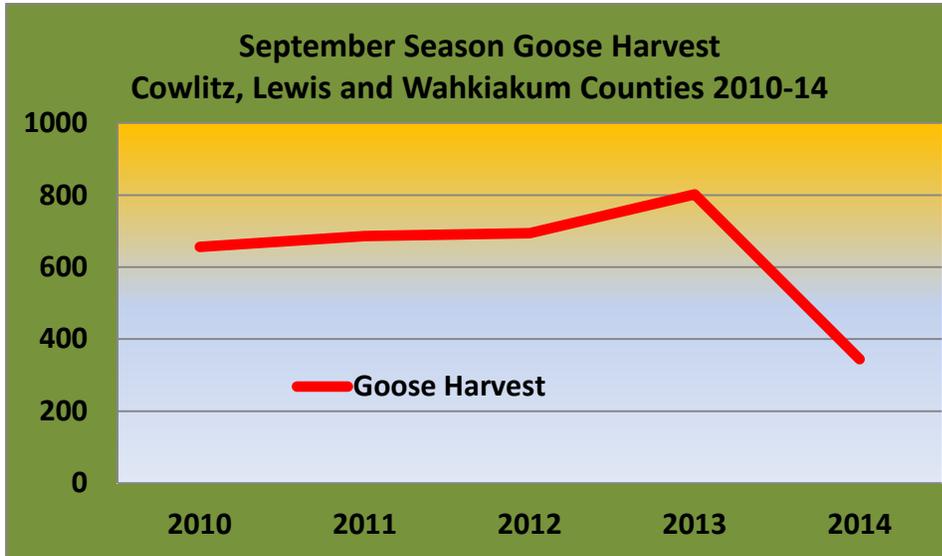


PHOTO BY KELLY MCALLISTER WDFW

PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)

601 Bond Road

PO Box 280

Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov

Link to purchase DNR quadrangle maps:

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

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Headquarters

10600 N.E. 51st Circle

Vancouver, WA 98682

(360) 891-5000

Cowlitz Valley Ranger District

10024 US Hwy 12

PO Box 670

Randle, WA 98377

(360) 497-1100

Mt. Adams Ranger District

2455 Hwy 141

Trout Lake, WA 98650

(509) 395-3402

Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument

42218 N.E. Yale Bridge Rd.

Amboy, WA 98601

(360) 449-7800.

Link to purchase ranger district maps:

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

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

Green Diamond

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

Hancock Forest Management (HFM)

HFM Cathlamet Tree Farm,

- Access hotline 360-795-3653

HFM Klickitat Timberlands

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

Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management

- Generally open to walk-in access
- <http://www.orm.com/Timberlands/PublicUse.aspx>

Port Blakely

- Generally open to walk-in access

Rayonier

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

SDS (Stevenson Land Company or Broughton)

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

Sierra Pacific

Ryderwood Tree Farm

- Generally open to walk-in access with select areas open for motorized access
- Access hotline 360-623-1299

Weverhaeuser

- Recreational access hotline-866-636-6531, recreation webpage <http://www.weverhaeuser.com/Businesses/RecreationalAccess/Washington>
- Access varies by tree farm
 - St. Helens Tree Farm
 - Access permit required in most areas from August 1st -January 31st. Permits can be purchased on the website above. Select blocks are also open for free walk-in access. Please see website for details including maps.
 - Yacolt Block- Washougal GMU 568
 - Free public access
 - Yacolt Burn Sportsman Club opens and closes the gates on roads 8200, 8600, & 8500 in morning and evening, beginning early October (after fire danger has subsided) until mid-December. Don't remain behind gates after sunset, you will be locked in.
 - Vail Tree Farm
 - Permit required for recreational access from August 1st-January 31st
 - Permits go on sale in May or June and generally sell out quickly
 - Pe Ell Tree Farm
 - Permit required for recreational access all year
 - Motored and non-motorized permits available
 - Permits go on sale in May or June and generally sell out quickly
 - Columbia Timberlands (formerly Longview Timber)
 - Permit required from July 1st-December 31st
 - Motored and non-motorized permits available
 - Access hotline: (360) 442-7619

Western Pacific Timber

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

West Fork Timber

- Generally open to walk-in access