

2015



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DISTRICT 1 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties

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BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

This report was written before the full extent of this year's wildfires in northcentral and northeast Washington was known. We will update this information as soon as possible after the fires subside and their impact on hunting opportunities becomes clear.

While the department currently has no plans to close any hunting seasons due to wildfires, access restrictions are in place on many public and private lands in these areas. Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions and other emergency rules before you head out.

For more information see:

- [Wildfire status updates](#)
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [Chelan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Okanogan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Stevens County updates](#)
- [Contact list for major landowners](#)

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DISTRICT 1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 1, in the northeastern corner of Washington, is comprised of seven game management units (GMUs): 101 (Sherman), 105 (Kelly Hill), 108 (Douglas), 111 (Aladdin), 113 (Selkirk), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry) (Figures 1 and 2). The topography is dominated by four mountain ranges that run north and south: the Kettle, Huckleberry, Calispell and Selkirk ranges. There are broad valleys in-between these ranges that are drained by the Kettle, Columbia, Colville, and Pend Oreille rivers, all within the Columbia River watershed.

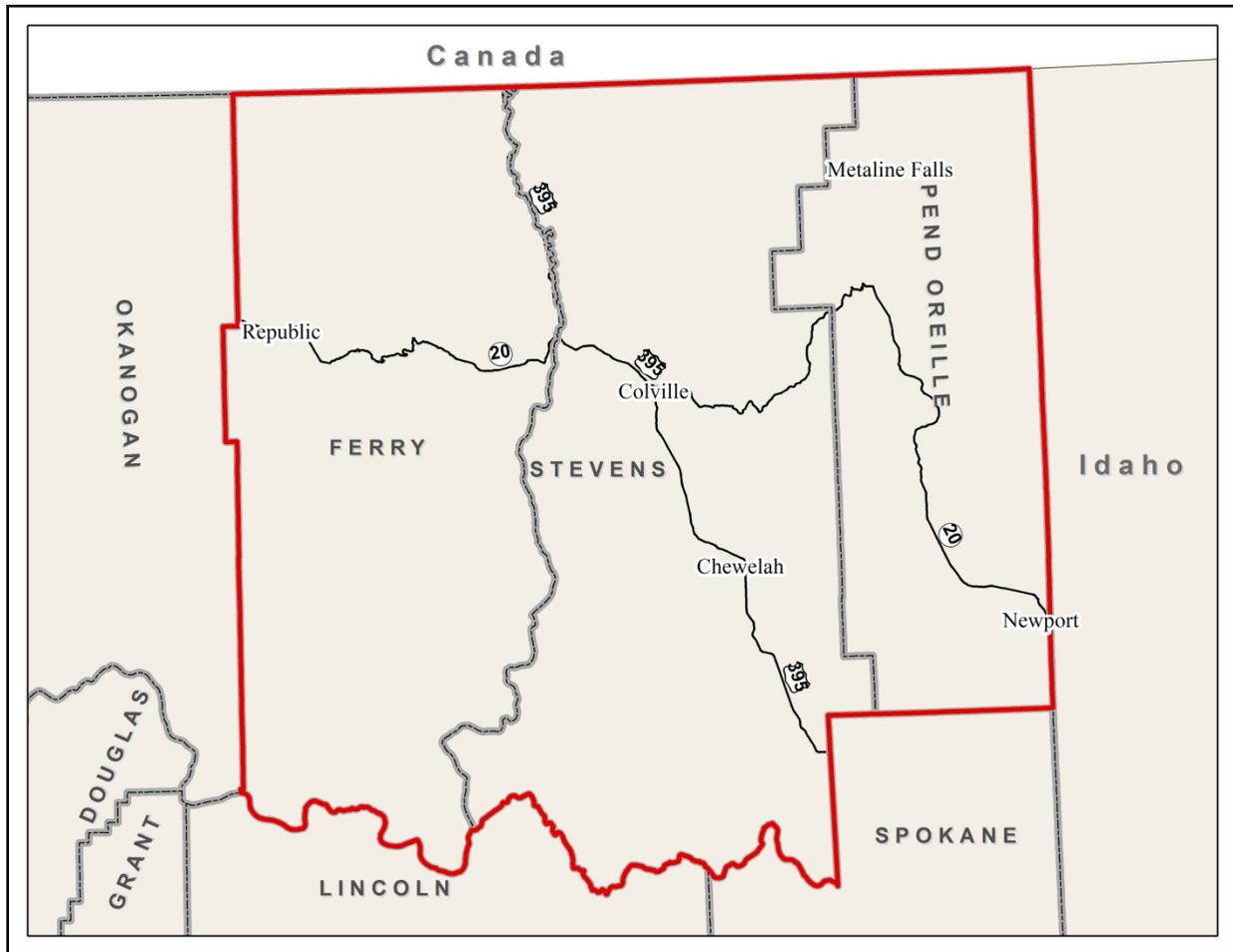


FIGURE 1. DISTRICT 1 IN NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON INCLUDES FERRY, STEVENS, & PEND OREILLE COUNTIES.

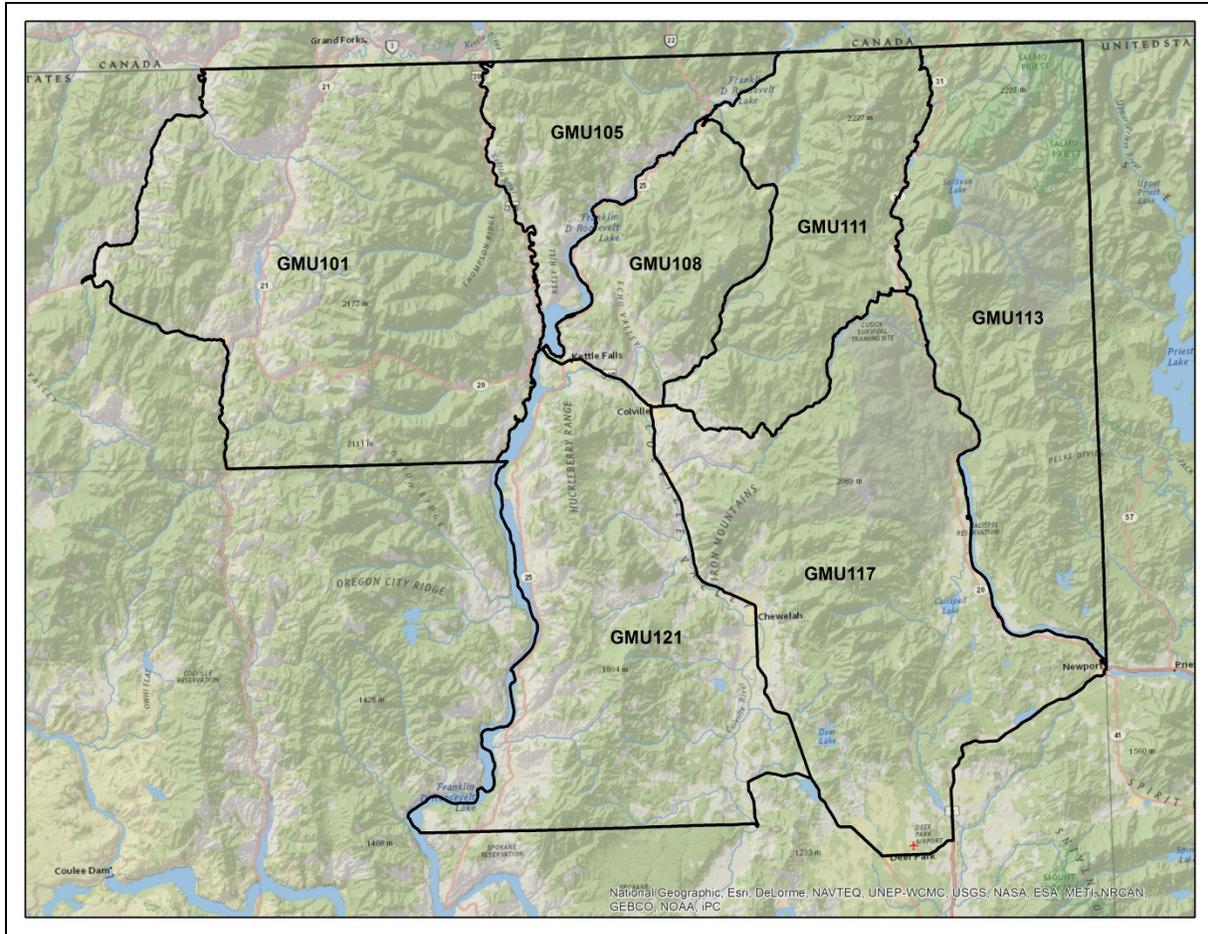


FIGURE 2. GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS (GMUS) WITHIN DISTRICT 1.

Elevations vary from about 1,290 feet at the normal pool level of Lake Roosevelt (Reservoir) to 7,309 feet on Gypsy Peak in the north Selkirk Range. Coniferous forest is extensive within District 1, covering about two thirds, or 68 percent, of the district’s landscape. Agricultural land, range land, and water features cover most of the balance.

Over one third (37 percent) of the land mass in District 1 is public land, mostly national forest, but also state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Additional public lands include federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and a few other government agencies. Most of the public lands outside of Indian reservations are open to public hunting. There are large timber company lands open to public hunting, although not necessarily open to private motorized vehicles. Private lands are typically only open to hunting by first gaining written permission from the landowner or manager.

District 1 is well-known for its white-tailed deer, moose, and turkey hunting opportunities. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including mule deer, elk, black bear, forest grouse, and cougar.

Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and days per kill for most game species in District 1 during the 2014 general hunting season, as well as how those estimates compare to the 2013 season and the 5-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends or permit statistics, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

TABLE 1. HARVEST AND DAYS PER KILL FOR MOST GAME SPECIES FOUND IN DISTRICT 1 DURING THE 2013 AND 2014 HUNTING SEASONS. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE AND A COMPARISON OF 2014 ESTIMATES TO 2013 ESTIMATES AND THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE.

Species	Harvest					Days/Kill				
	5-yr avg.	2013	2014	% change (5yr)	% change (2014)	5-yr avg.	2013	2014	% change (5yr)	% change (2014)
Elk	220	229	200	-9%	-13%	89.7	88.9	92.2	3%	4%
Deer	4780	4971	5510	15%	11%	20.4	19.0	17.0	-17%	-11%
Bear	294	182	354	20%	95%	74.3	115.2	61.7	-17%	-46%
Cougar	27	34	44	63%	29%	Not available			---	---
Ducks	8982	11535	8978	0%	-22%	0.5	0.5	0.5	0%	0%
Geese	2238	2992	2878	29%	-4%	1.3	1.1	1.2	-8%	9%
Turkey	1867	1659	1731	-7%	4%	8.8	10	9.0	2%	-10%
Forest Grouse	14747	12532	13951	-5%	11%	2.1	2.2	1.9	-10%	-14%
Mourning Dove	136	47	267	96%	468%	0.9	2.6	0.4	-56%	-85%
Quail	935	861	943	1%	10%	1.1	1.2	0.6	-45%	-50%
Pheasant	824	682	345	-58%	-49%	1.8	2.7	1.7	-100%	-100%
Rabbits	246	187	238	-3%	27%	8.7	11.5	10.3	18%	-10%

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

All elk that occur in District 1 are Rocky Mountain elk. There are ten identified elk herds in Washington, and elk in District 1 are part of the Selkirk Elk Herd. The quality of elk hunting opportunities in District 1 varies from poor to fair depending on the GMU, but in general, opportunities are marginal. Elk are widely scattered in small

groups throughout the densely forested region of northeastern Washington. As a consequence, elk in northeastern Washington are difficult to both survey and harvest. Population data are limited, but there is currently no clear indication that bull to cow ratios or opportunities for quality hunting are declining. The best elk hunting opportunities occur in GMUs associated with the Pend Oreille sub-herd area, which include 113 (Selkirk), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 111 (Aladdin). Elk hunter numbers in the Colville District have increased over the last several years. In recent years, WDFW provided increased opportunity or season timing to improve equity among the three hunting method groups. Hunter participation and harvest is now well dispersed across the Colville District through all three hunting methods. However, hunting elk successfully within District 1 is no small challenge.



The management objective for elk in the Colville District is being met with a sustained annual harvest of a viable and productive elk population with desirable population characteristics. While there are unreliable post-season survey data on bull to cow ratios, the prime bull (6 point +) percentage in the 2014 bull harvest was 28%, which is indicative of desirable population characteristics for elk productivity and quality bull hunting opportunities.

Currently, WDFW does not make formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor elk populations in District 1. Harvest levels have been relatively low for the northern Selkirk Herd compared with other regions of Washington State. Consequently, devoting substantial resources to surveying bull to cow ratios has not been a high priority. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill, are used as surrogates to a formal index or estimate. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and hopes to gain the resources necessary to begin monitoring populations using formal sampling designs in the future.

Increasing hunter harvest, winter and spring surveys, and anecdotal information indicate that elk populations are stable and possibly increasing in northeastern Washington. 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 at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01667/wdfw01667.pdf> or the Selkirk Elk Herd Plan at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01350/>.

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt?" This is not always easy to answer because it depends on what hunting method is going to be used and what type of hunting experience the hunter is looking for. For example, not all GMUs are open to late archery hunters.

Some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature bull. Although large mature bulls do exist in District 1, they are not very abundant and hunters are usually advised to apply for special permit opportunities in District 3 (Blue Mountains) if they are searching for a better opportunity to harvest a large mature bull in Region 1.

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 1. 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. Other hunters prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of elk if that means there are also fewer hunters.



The information provided in Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how District 1 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are the three 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, as GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of elk harvested over

the past three years during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 108 (Douglas) and 113 (Selkirk) has been nine and 22 elk, respectively. Just looking at total harvest suggests a much higher density of elk in GMU 113 compared to GMU 108. However, when harvest is expressed as elk harvested per square mile, it's an estimate of 0.03 in both GMUs, which suggests elk densities are probably more similar between the two GMUs than what the total harvest indicates.

Each GMU was ranked for elk harvested/mi² (bulls and cows), hunters/mi², and hunter success rates for the general season only. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum (lower rank sums are better). The modern firearm comparisons are the most straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same in each GMU.

For archery seasons, consider that antlerless elk may be harvested in all GMUs in the early season, but only five GMUs are open for any bull during late archery seasons. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs.

TABLE 2. RANK SUM ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES A QUICK AND GENERAL COMPARISON OF HOW TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES COMPARE AMONG GMUS DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER SEASONS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A THREE YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE. AS A GENERALIZATION, THE LOWER THE RANK SUM, THE BETTER THE OVERALL ELK HUNTING OPPORTUNITY IS WITHIN A GMU.

MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	1	>0.001	5	103	0.09	1	1%	4	10
105	296	5	0.02	3	122	0.41	2	4%	2	7
108	289	9	0.03	2	134	0.46	4	5%	1	7
111	455	12	0.03	2	317	0.70	5	3%	3	10
113	736	22	0.03	2	640	0.87	7	4%	2	11
117	954	41	0.04	1	793	0.83	6	5%	1	8
121	796	11	0.01	4	337	0.42	3	3%	3	10

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank		
101*	1,103	6	0.01	3	65	0.06	1	12%	1	5
105	296	5	0.02	2	64	0.22	5	9%	3	10
108	289	3	0.01	3	47	0.16	3	8%	4	10
111	455	9	0.02	2	97	0.21	4	10%	2	8
113	736	18	0.02	2	254	0.35	5	8%	4	11
117	954	25	0.03	1	369	0.39	6	8%	4	11
121	796	11	0.01	3	117	0.15	2	8%	4	9
MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank		
101	1,103	0	0	3	29	0.03	2	2%	5	10
105	296	2	0.01	1	46	0.16	4	7%	2	7
108	289	1	0.003	2	29	0.10	3	3%	4	9
111	455	4	0.01	1	83	0.18	5	7%	2	8
113	736	9	0.01	1	222	0.30	6	4%	3	10
117	954	13	0.01	1	13	0.01	1	8%	1	3
121	796	4	0.01	1	4	0.01	1	7%	2	4

* GMUs bolded in the archery section are open during early and late archery seasons. All GMUs allow for antlerless harvest in the early archery season.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Elk populations typically do not fluctuate dramatically from year to year, but periodic severe winters can trigger substantial die-offs. The 2014-15 winter was mild and consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2013 and 2014 seasons. That said, the total hunter harvest of elk in District 1 is low compared to other WDFW districts, hovering around 200-300 animals per year since 2009.

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

HOW TO FIND ELK

When hunting elk in District 1, 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. Elk within District 1 are scattered in small groups and often stay on the move throughout the year. With a lot of scouting to “pattern” these groups it is possible to increase your chances of harvesting an elk. Many, if not most, hunters spend great amounts of their time focusing on forest clear-cuts, which makes a lot of sense because elk often forage in clear-cuts and are highly visible when they do. However, there are many elk (especially bulls) that do not frequent clear-cuts during daylight hours. Instead, they spend most of their time during the day in closed canopy forests, swamps, or “reprod”. Moreover, those highly visible elk often attract many hunters and clear-cuts 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 log “landings”. Log landings from past timber harvest operations 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 higher elevation stands that provide cover and are adjacent to open hillsides and/or clear-cuts. During early seasons when it is warm, these areas often include 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. Any snow cover generally enhances the elk hunter’s ability to find elk tracks. Hunting right after a fresh snow usually presents a particularly good advantage in tracking down an individual

or group of elk, hot on the trail so to speak. Lastly, provided that non-motorized access is allowed, hunters should not let a locked gate in an otherwise open area keep them from going in on foot, horseback, or bicycle 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 popular approach to hunting these areas is to use mountain bikes and trailers, which is not extremely difficult given the density of maintained gravel roads that occur on timber company lands.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

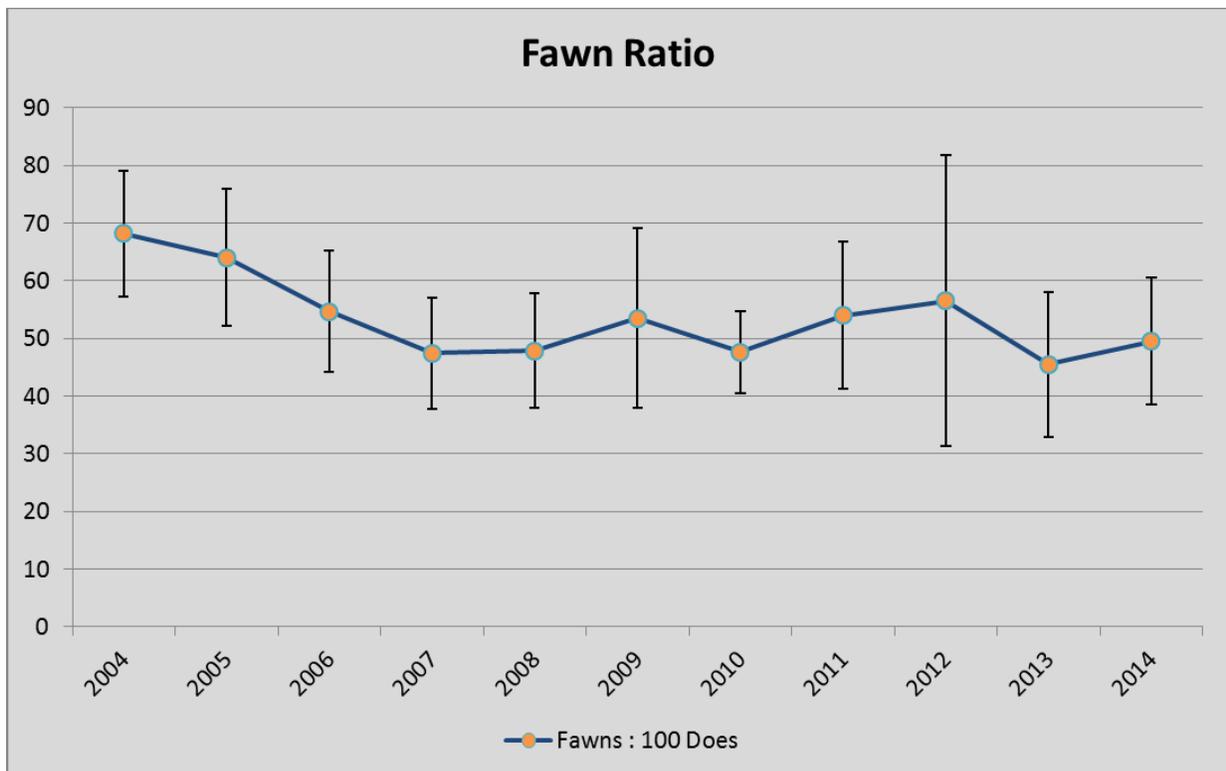
In northeastern Washington, white-tailed deer are the most abundant deer species. Mule deer are locally common, especially in the higher elevations and throughout Ferry County, but their overall numbers are low compared to white-tailed deer on a district scale. Deer hunting opportunities in District 1 vary from fair to excellent, depending on the GMU. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 1 generally occur in GMUs 101 (Sherman) and 121 (Huckleberry). All GMUs within the district offer good opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer.



The white-tailed deer harvest management objective is to provide antlered and antlerless hunting opportunity for all hunting methods whenever feasible. The buck escapement goal is to maintain a ratio of at least 15 bucks per 100 does in the post-hunting season population and allow populations to increase by limiting the amount of antlerless hunting opportunity, all while still attempting to maintain some opportunity for all user groups.

Management goals for mule deer are to provide conservative hunting opportunity, maintain a range of 15 to 19 bucks per 100 does in the post-hunting season population, and allow population levels to increase by managing antlerless hunting opportunity.

Surveys for deer in District 1 are conducted before the hunting season. Pre-season ratios come from ground surveys conducted during August (for buck to doe ratio) and September (for fawn to doe ratio). These ground-based surveys provide an estimate of fawn production for the year and buck ratios prior to hunting season (Figure 3).



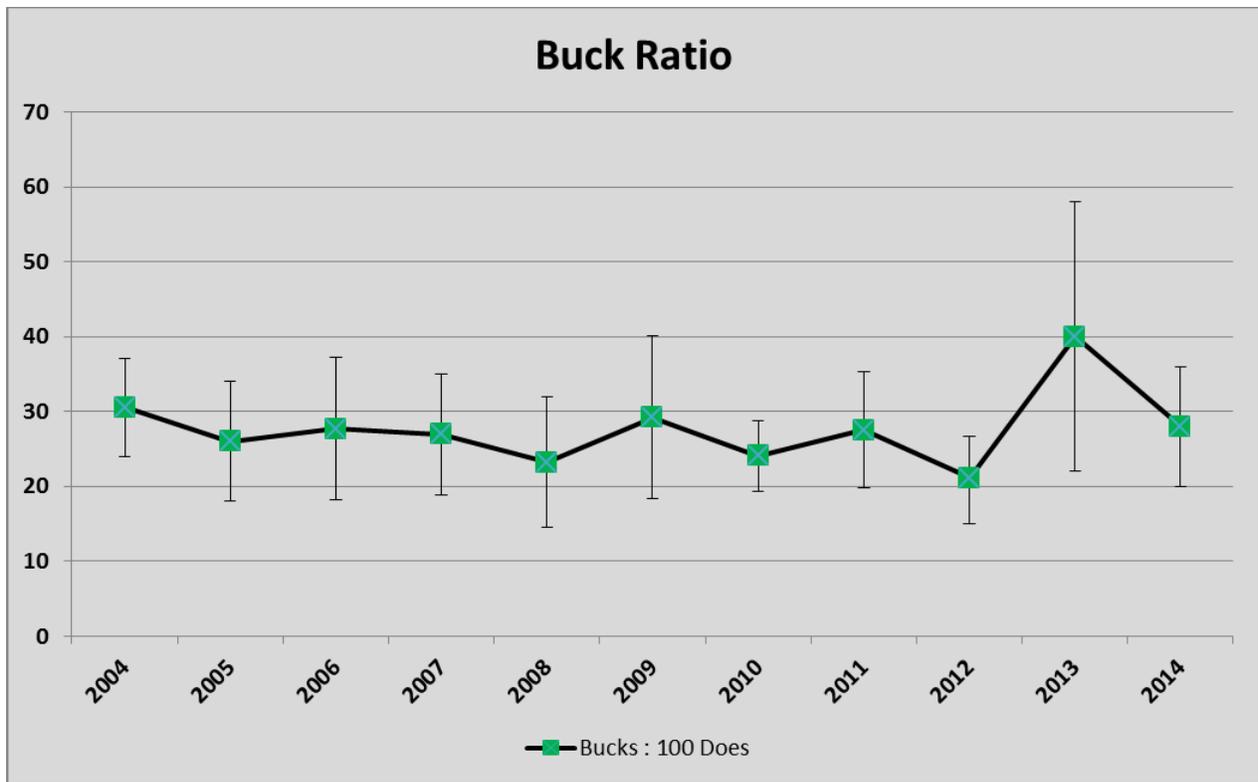


FIGURE 3. PRE-SEASON WHITE-TAILED DEER RATIOS FROM GROUND SURVEYS WITHIN DISTRICT 1.

All available harvest and survey data indicate white-tailed deer populations appear to be slightly increasing in all GMUs associated with District 1. Mule deer populations appear to be stable or slightly decreasing. For more detailed information related to the status of 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 at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/game/>.

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” This is not easy to answer because it depends on what hunting method 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 1. 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. Other hunters

prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if that means there are also relatively few hunters.

The information provided in Table 3 provides a quick and 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 three year averages for each statistic. Mule deer and white-tailed deer are combined for this table, but it is a reasonable assumption that in GMUs other than GMU 101, the vast majority of the deer harvested are whitetails. 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.

Each GMU was ranked for deer harvested/mi², hunters/mi², and hunter success rates. Then, the three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. Comparisons are pretty straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs. Differences that should be considered are:

1. GMUs 117 and 121 had a 4-pt. minimum harvest restriction for white-tailed deer during most general seasons in 2014.
2. Mule deer have a 3-pt minimum harvest restriction during all general seasons except early archery in GMU 101.
3. Only GMUs 101,105 and 108 were open for any white-tailed deer during the late archery season and GMUs 121 and 117 offered a very short late archery season for 4-point minimum buck or antlerless white-tailed deer.

TABLE 3. RANK SUM ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES A QUICK AND GENERAL COMPARISON OF HOW TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES COMPARE AMONG GMUS DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASONS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A THREE YEAR AVERAGE. AS A GENERALIZATION, THE LOWER THE RANK SUM, THE BETTER THE OVERALL DEER HUNTING OPPORTUNITY IS WITHIN A GMU.

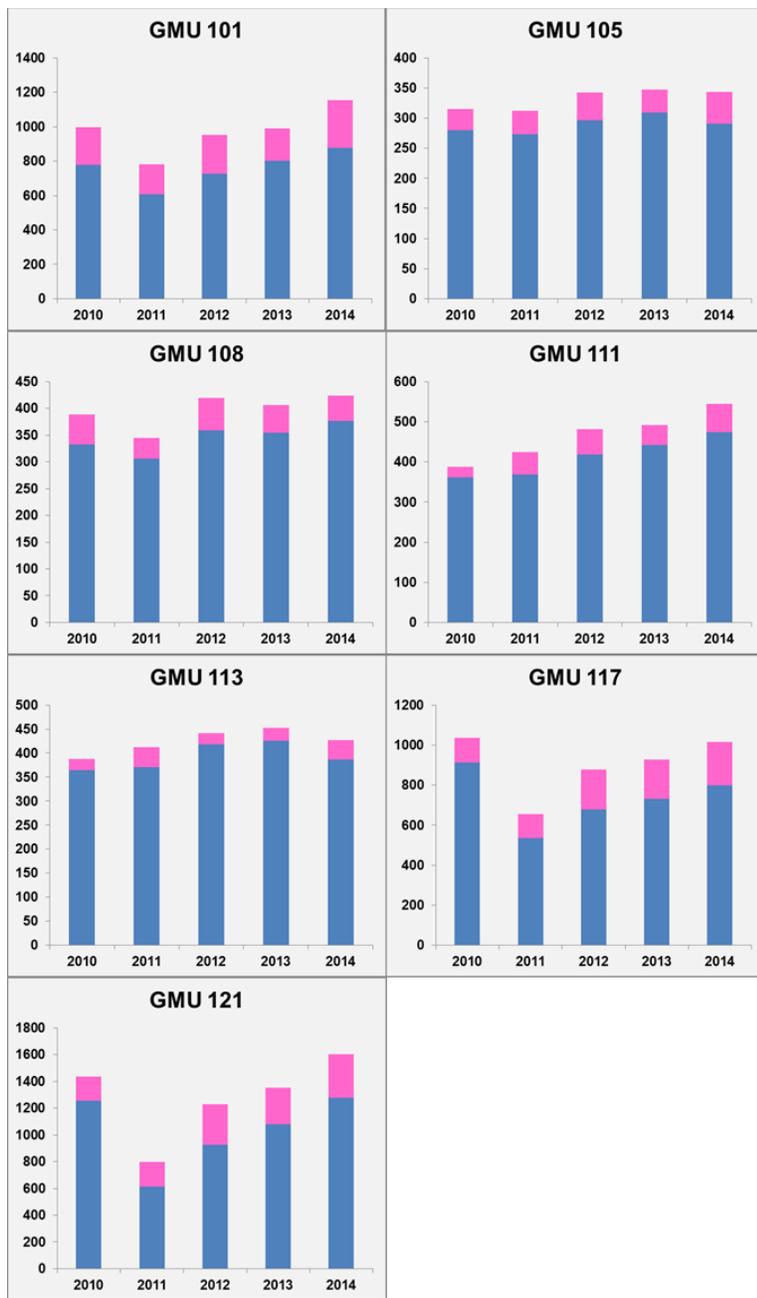
MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	668	0.61	6	2817	2.55	2	22%	5	13
105	296	299	1.01	4	971	3.28	4	30%	3	11
108	289	362	1.25	2	1067	3.69	6	33%	1	9
111	455	482	1.06	3	1526	3.35	5	30%	3	11
113	736	355	0.48	7	1631	2.22	1	22%	5	13
117	954	761	0.80	5	3053	3.20	3	24%	4	12
121	796	1213	1.52	1	3673	4.61	7	31%	2	10

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	268	0.24	1	855	0.78	7	30%	2	10
105	296	29	0.10	4	121	0.41	4	22%	5	13
108	289	41	0.14	3	110	0.38	3	40%	1	7
111	455	6	0.01	5	55	0.12	1	10%	6	12
113	736	11	0.01	5	112	0.15	2	10%	6	13
117	954	136	0.14	3	575	0.60	6	24%	4	13
121	796	130	0.16	2	439	0.55	5	28%	3	10
MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	54	0.05	2	199	0.18	4	28%	2	8
105	296	6	0.02	3	22	0.07	1	24%	3	7
108	289	6	0.02	3	23	0.08	2	31%	1	6
111	455	9	0.02	3	52	0.11	3	20%	4	10
113	736	56	0.08	1	328	0.45	5	17%	5	11
117	954	6	0.01	4	66	0.07	1	11%	6	11
121	796	12	0.02	3	58	0.07	1	24%	3	7

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

Harvest has been gradually increasing in District 1 over the past two years, a trend expected to continue.



Fall surveys for the past two years also have yielded slightly higher buck to doe and fawn to doe ratios. Recent moderate winters have likely contributed to increased over-winter survival of deer in District 1. District 1 runs voluntary check stations on select weekends during the modern firearm season. The number of deer checked was down in 2014, but this is likely due to participation and not harvest success.

A good predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent trends in harvest and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill. Figures 4 and 5 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 to hunt in District 1. Keep in mind that as of 2011, a 4-pt minimum restriction was imposed for white-tailed deer in GMUs 117 and 121, which led to decreases in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Available evidence shows this regulation change brought about these decreases and not a dramatic decrease in the white-tailed deer population.

FIGURE 4. TRENDS IN THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BUCKS (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS (PINK) DEER HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL SEASON MODERN FIREARM, MUZZLELOADER, AND

ARCHERY DEER SEASONS COMBINED IN EACH GMU FROM 2010 – 2014. HARVEST TOTALS DO NOT INCLUDE TRIBAL HARVEST OR SPECIAL PERMIT HARVEST.

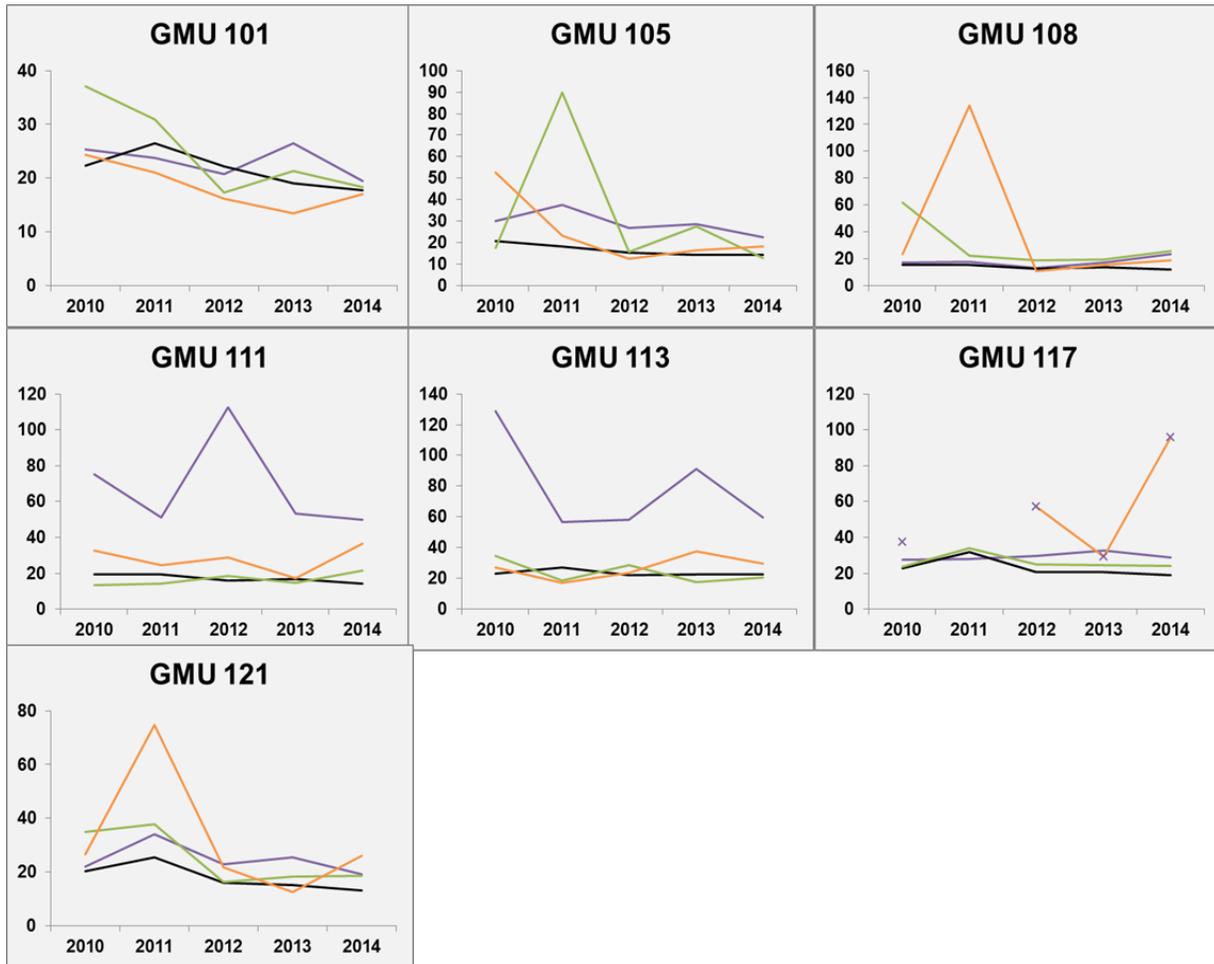


FIGURE 5. TREND IN DAYS PER KILL FOR ARCHERY (PURPLE), MUZZLELOADER (ORANGE), MULTIPLE WEAPON (GREEN), AND MODERN FIREARM (BLACK) DURING THE GENERAL SEASON FOR DEER IN EACH GMU WITHIN DISTRICT 1.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT WHITETAILED

As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a white-tailed deer in District 1 is scouting. Whitetails occur throughout the district and occur in nearly every habitat type that is present. White-tailed deer densities are highest in the valleys and foothill benches bordering the valleys, especially in the farm-forest mosaic within GMUs 105, 108, 117, and 121. GMUs 101, 111, and 113 also have white-tailed deer, but with more localized distributions.



The majority of hunting is done in or adjacent to agricultural fields or recent forest timber harvest areas because when deer are present, they are much more visible than in adjacent habitats. However, deer typically use these more open areas at night, dawn, and dusk, especially once they have been disturbed by human presence. Therefore, it is advantageous for hunters to seek out areas a short to moderate distance away from these openings, which provide more cover where deer are spending more time. If a hunter is seeing large amounts of deer sign in an area, then odds are those deer are not far.

The traditional approaches to hunting whitetails generally include the following: still-hunting, where the hunter is moving, but very slowly through a “patch” of habitat, stopping frequently to scan or glass the vegetative cover ahead with binoculars. The hunter looks for parts of a deer, like legs, an antler, or a portion of the body or head, as opposed to the whole deer, which is usually not visible through the vegetation. Stand hunting is another technique. This method involves the hunter patiently waiting in a tree stand, on a stump, against a tree trunk, on a ridge rock, etc. in high deer use areas (highly traveled trails, habitat edges, bottlenecks, funnels, etc.) until deer show up. A third deer hunting approach is conducting drives. This technique involves at least two hunters, but ordinarily larger groups to maximize its effectiveness. Here the hunters divide into “drivers” and “blockers”. The blockers position themselves in an organized spacing, often downwind of a patch of deer bedding habitat (thick woods, forested swamp, or heavy brush field). The drivers then slowly hike through the habitat patch, alerting the deer and hopefully “pushing” them to the blockers. Sometimes it’s a good idea to post one blocker at the front of the habitat patch behind the drivers in the event that any deer double back to evade them. Although each of these approaches is highly effective, there is another technique that is not as well-known or used as much as it could be. This includes rattling and grunting to simulate two bucks fighting over a doe. This technique is more common with midwestern and eastern white-tailed deer

hunters, but can be effective here as well, especially in the days leading up to the rut (deer breeding season) in mid-November. A quick Google search on this topic will yield plenty of evidence to illustrate the effectiveness of this technique when conditions are right.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT MULE DEER

Mule deer occur in District 1, but in lesser abundance than white-tailed deer, especially east of the Columbia River. Although mule deer occur within every District 1 GMU, the highest density is in GMU 101. As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a mule deer in District 1 is scouting. The classical western method of hunting mule deer is sometimes called glass and stalk. Here the hunter uses good optics, binoculars, and spotting scopes to scan from ridge tops and other vantage points to find the mule deer, pick out suitable bucks, and then stalk them to within shooting distance. Ordinarily the stalk entails a strategic hike and cautious sneak action. Much of District 1 does not offer the open country required for this method of hunting, but where it does it can be effective.

DEER AREAS

There are three Deer Areas in District 1. These include Republic (Area 1030), Parker Lake (Area 1031), and the Highway 395 Corridor (Area 1035). These Deer Areas are described in the Area Descriptions section of the Big Game Pamphlet, located at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01712/wdfw01712.pdf>. They each offer deer hunting by special permit only that goes beyond the general season opportunities. Note that the Parker Lake Area (1031) is only open for hunting by special permit.

NOTABLE CHANGES

During the 2015 season, GMUs 117 and 121 return to any buck during the general seasons. In addition, antlerless opportunity has been restored to early archery hunters in GMUs 117 and 121. Muzzleloader hunters can harvest any white-tailed deer in all GMUs in District 1 during the early season, and youth, senior, and disabled hunters can now harvest an antlerless white-tailed deer during the entire general modern firearm season (Oct. 17-27).

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The goals for black bear management in Washington are to: 1) preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage black bear and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations; 2) minimize threats to public safety from black bears, while at the same time maintaining a sustainable and viable bear population; 3) manage black bear for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, wildlife viewing, and photography; and 4) manage populations statewide for a

sustained yield . For management purposes, the state is divided into nine Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs). Harvest levels vary between BMMU depending on local population dynamics and environmental conditions.

District 1 consists of GMUs that are part of the Northeastern BMMU, which is one of nine BBMUs defined by WDFW. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for the Northeastern BMMU 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 the proportion of harvested bears that were female, the median age of harvested females, and the median age of harvested males.

WDFW does not conduct annual surveys to monitor trends in black bear population size. Trends in harvest data are used instead for population estimates or indices. Currently, black bear populations are believed to be stable in District 1.

Black bears occur throughout District 1, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a bear likely occur in GMUs 101 (Sherman), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry).

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

Although some hunters specifically target black bears, most bears are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest and hunter success can vary quite a bit from one year to the next. Since 2004, hunter success in District 1 GMUs has varied from four to 18%. Hunter success rates are likely higher for hunters who specifically hunt bears versus those who 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 1 showed an increasing trend from 2004 to 2007 before it declined sharply during the 2008 season. Harvest has continued to fluctuate up and down (Figure 6).

At the GMU level, most black bears will likely be harvested in GMUs 101 (Sherman), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry). Harvest numbers during the 2014 season compared to long-term (ten year) and short-term (five year) averages suggest that the bear harvest has been increasing in District 1 (Figure 7). Gauging from the number of observed bears within the district, we expect bear harvest in 2015 to be close to the five year average.

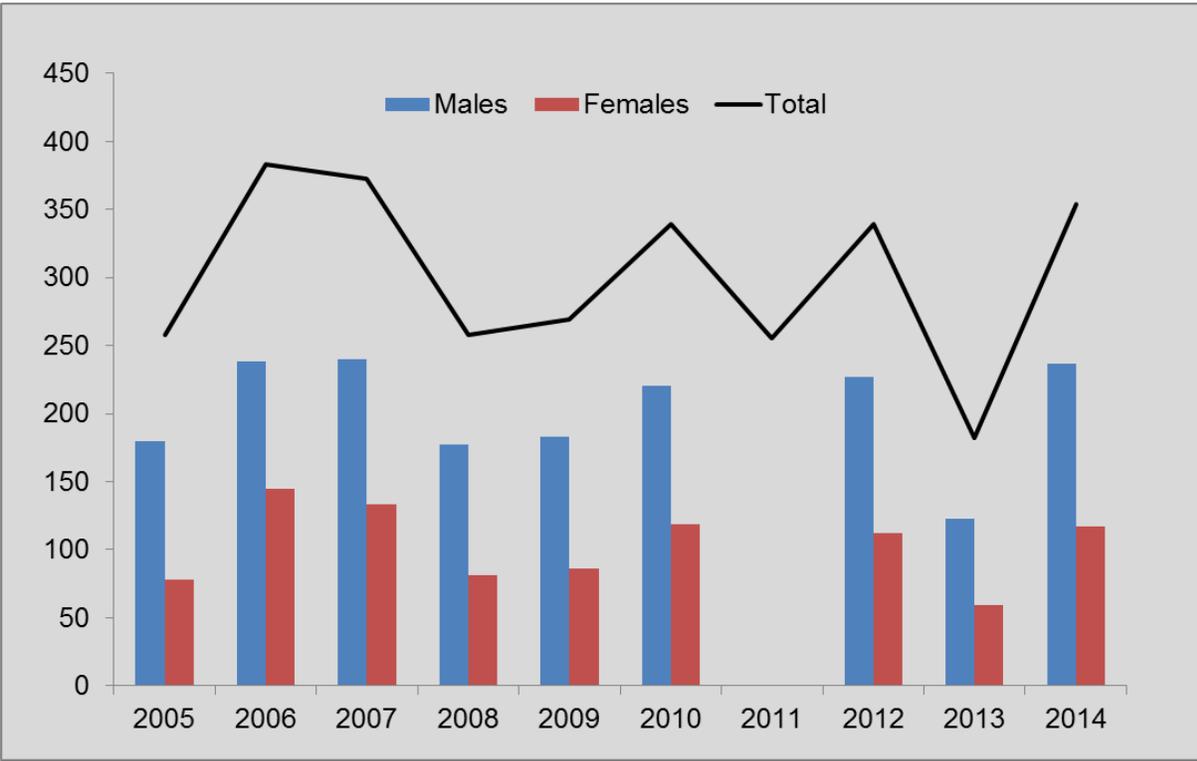


FIGURE 6. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 1, 2005–2014. HARVEST ESTIMATES DO NOT INCLUDE BEARS HARVESTED DURING SPRING PERMIT SEASONS OR BEARS THAT WERE REMOVED BECAUSE THEY WERE CAUSING DAMAGE TO PRIVATE PROPERTY. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

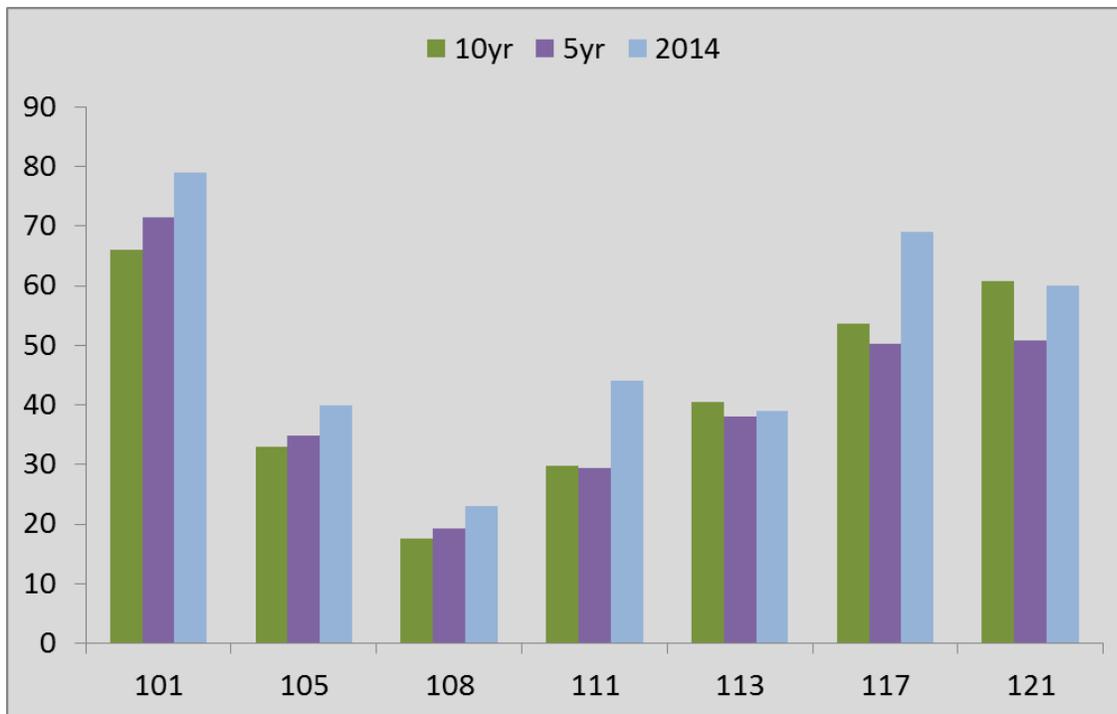


FIGURE 7. THE NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU DURING THE 2013 GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 1. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE 10-YEAR AND 5-YEAR AVERAGE FOR THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU.

HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR

Scouting is an extremely important factor that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 1. Although black bears are fairly common and occur in some areas at 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. In the early fall, hunters should focus their efforts at higher elevations and in open terrain (e.g. open hillsides). Huckleberries ripen throughout the summer, but in the early fall the most berries remaining are typically at higher elevations. A good huckleberry patch yielding lots of fruit would be a good place to hunt.

Bears can also be located in recent timber harvests that contain a large number of berry-producing shrubs, including huckleberries, serviceberries, snowberries, soapberries, and thimbleberries. During the fall, hunters need to find openings 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 frequenting the area. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching these areas, they stand a reasonable chance of harvesting a bear. Patience is the key.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

District 1 black bear hunters, especially those hunting within GMUs 105 and 113, are strongly encouraged to complete WDFW's on-line bear identification program at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/bear_cougar/bear/index.html. There have been multiple recent grizzly bear sightings and reports in District 1. Grizzly bears are a federally threatened and state-listed endangered species. Killing one, either unintentionally or intentionally, can bring costly fines and penalties. Just like with other similar looking game species such as elk, moose, caribou, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and other animal groups, Washington hunters are responsible for being able to tell the difference between black and grizzly bears. This knowledge and skill is critical in areas where the ranges of these two bear species overlap (Figure 8).

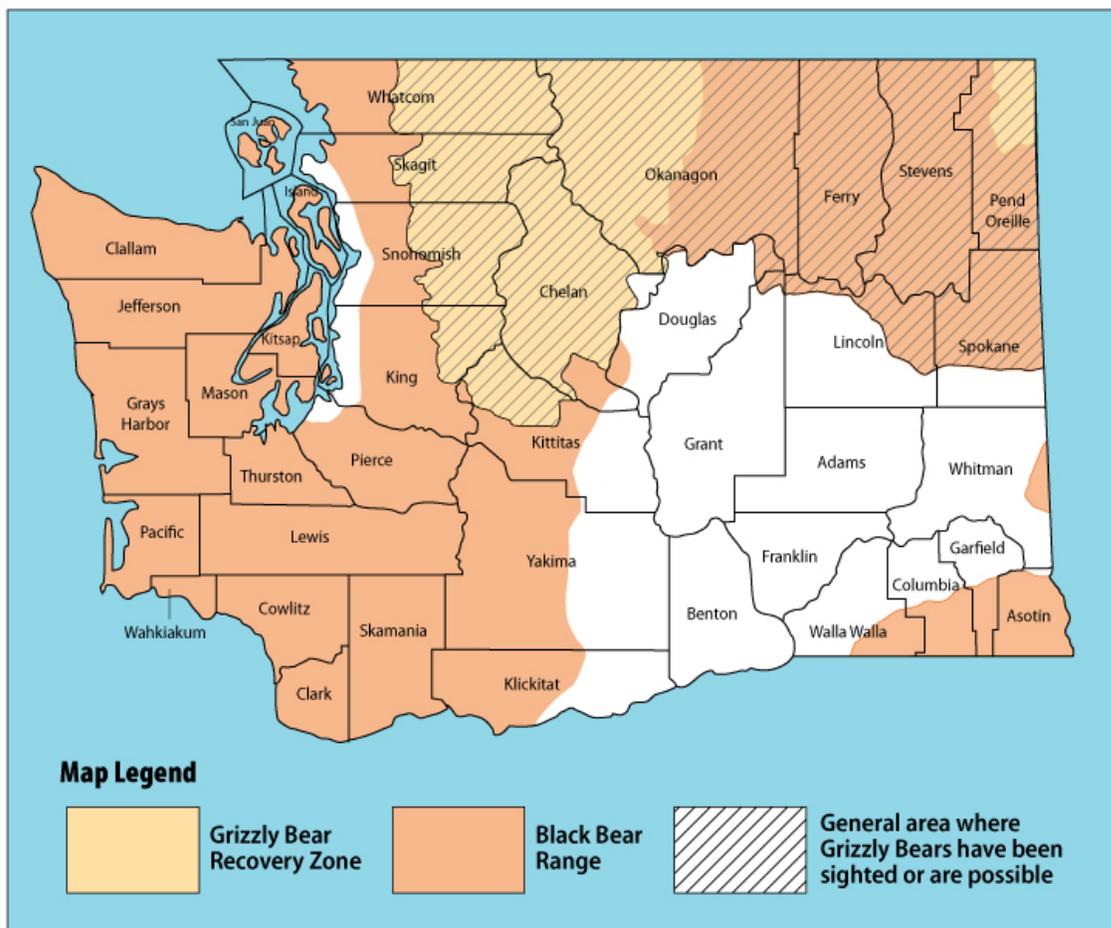


FIGURE 8. BLACK BEAR RANGE AND GRIZZLY BEAR SIGHTING AREAS IN WASHINGTON STATE.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the fall 2015 season. Spring black bear permits have been increased in all GMUs within District 1.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars occur throughout District 1, but densities likely vary among GMUs. Cougars in District 1 are managed with the primary objective of maintaining a stable cougar population.

Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed cougar harvest management throughout Washington. The biggest change was shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougar harvested, and instead using a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intent was to have a longer season, without any hunting implement 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. Beginning in the 2015 hunting season, cougar season dates have been extended through April 30. However, to hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, hunters need to purchase a 2016 hunting license and cougar tag. Harvest numbers are examined starting January 1 and any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline may be closed. Hunting cougar after December 31 requires first confirming that the cougar season is open in the area intended to hunt by calling 1-866-364-4868. Harvest guidelines for each Hunt Area located in District 1 are provided in Table 4.

For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>.

Hunt Area (GMU)	2015-2016 Harvest Guideline	2013-2014 Harvest
101	10 - 12	5
105	2 - 3	2
108, 111	7 - 8	6
113	6 - 8	5
117	8 - 10	12
121	6 - 8	4

TABLE 4. HARVEST GUIDELINES AND 2014-15 HARVEST LEVELS FOR THE SIX COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 1.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

Cougar harvest in District 1 has been increasing since 2009 (Figure 9). The average age at harvest has been variable for both males and females, but is typically three years or younger (Figure 10).

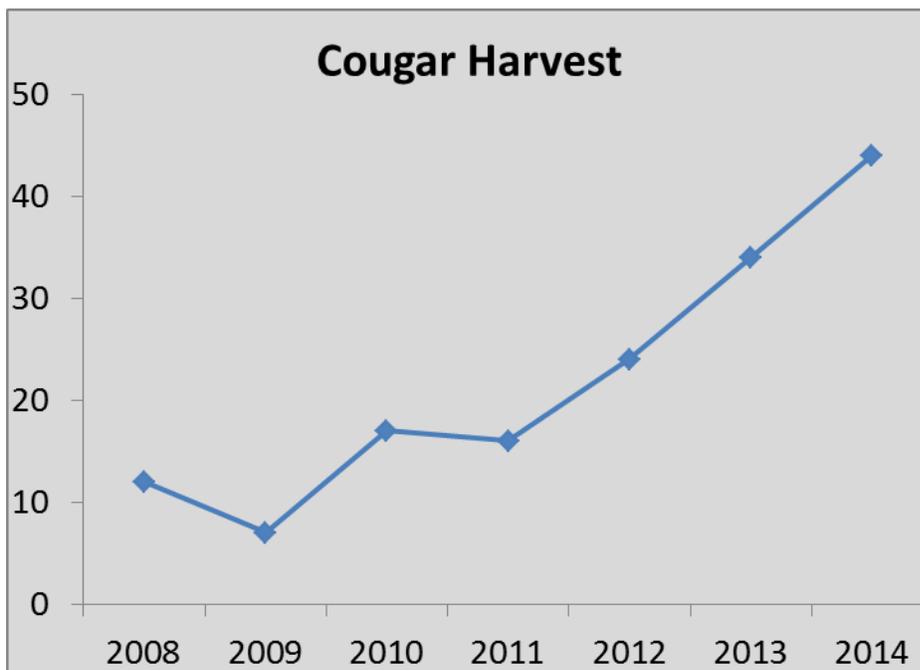


FIGURE 9. GENERAL SEASON COUGAR HARVEST IN DISTRICT 1, 2008-2014.

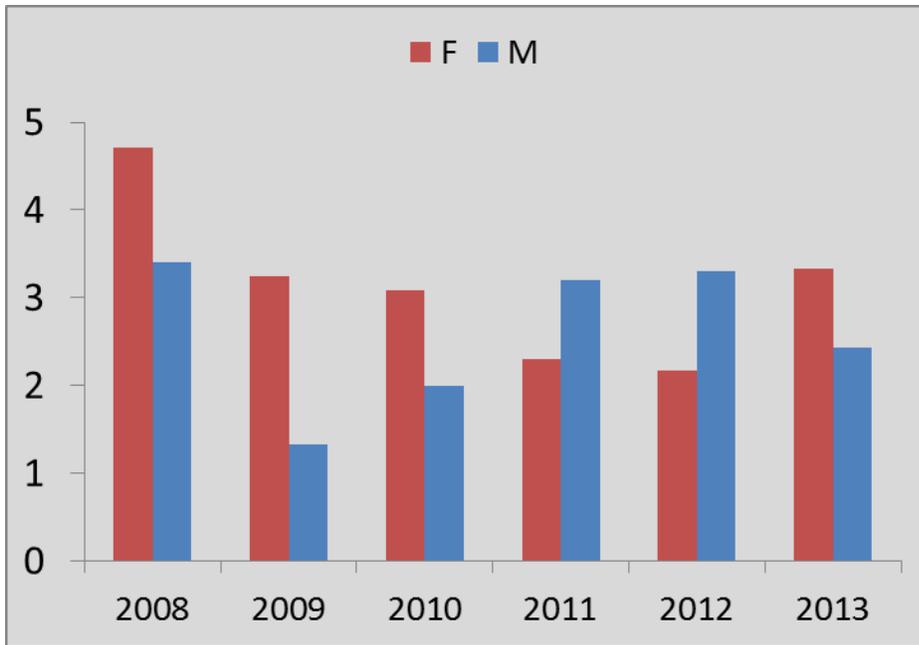


FIGURE 10. AVERAGE AGE OF THE FEMALE (RED BARS) AND MALE (BLUE BARS) COUGAR HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL SEASON IN DISTRICT 1, 2008-2013. AGE DATA (FROM TOOTH SAMPLES) IS STILL BEING PROCESSED FOR THE 2014 SEASON.

NOTABLE CHANGES

Season dates have been extended until April 30. However, to hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, hunters need to purchase a 2016 hunting license and cougar tag. In addition, the harvest guideline has been raised for all GMUs in District 1 for the 2015 season.

FOREST GROUSE

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

There are three species of grouse that occur in District 1-- ruffed grouse, dusky (blue) grouse, and spruce grouse. Ruffed grouse are the most abundant and occur at lower elevations and valley bottoms. Spruce grouse are usually located in lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce stands. In District 1, these habitats are prevalent within the Kettle and Selkirk mountain ranges. Dusky 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 surveys to monitor forest grouse populations in District 1. Trends in harvest data are used instead for population estimates or indices of population size. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers, so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE; birds harvested per hunter day) is the best indicator of population trends. In District 1, grouse populations appear to have declined since 2009, as CPUE has slowly declined from 0.55 birds per hunter day to approximately 0.52 birds per hunter day during the 2014 season (Figure 11).



HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

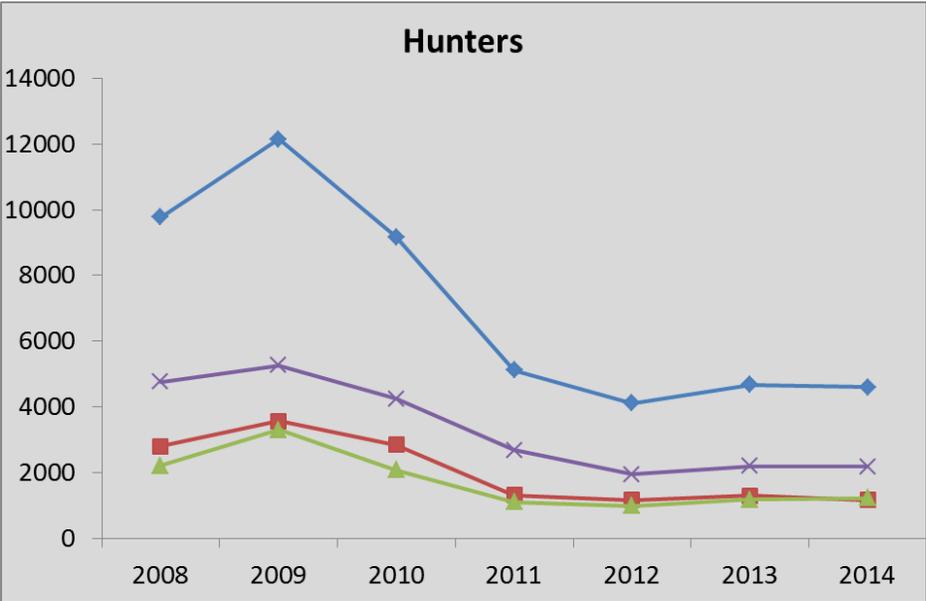
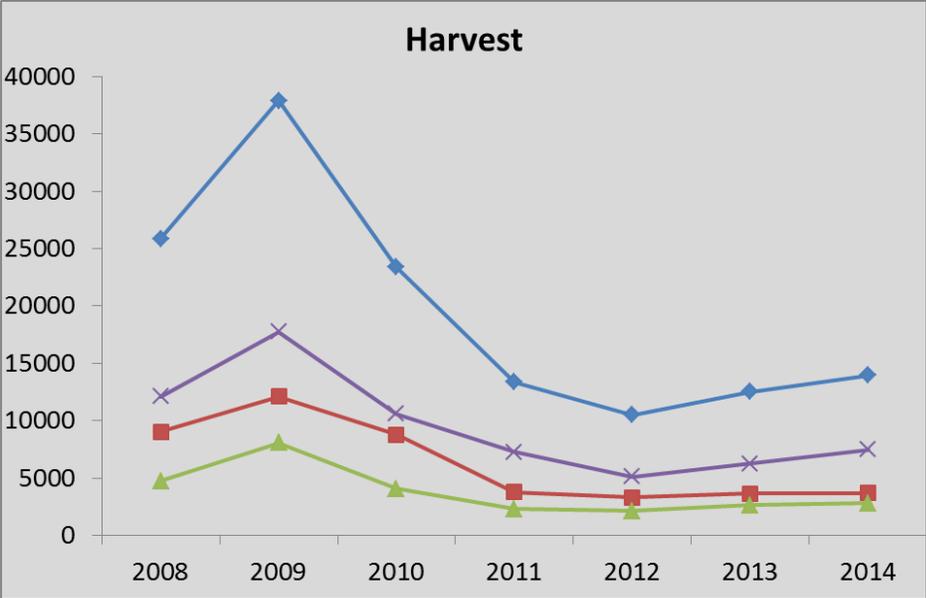
The total number of grouse harvested in District 1 has gradually been declining since 2009. On the other hand, so have hunter numbers, especially over the past few years. The 2014 season saw a little uptick in CPUE. In addition, the spring of 2015 in District 1 was very dry and we expect to have good chick survival with increased opportunity during the 2015 season.

Regardless of where they hunt, hunters could expect to bag somewhere between 0.4 and 0.5 grouse per day hunting day.

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt grouse in District 1 is by walking little used forest 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 much motor vehicle traffic. Consequently, hunters should target roads behind locked gates and roads that have been decommissioned by the respective landowner. Some forest grouse hunters use trained bird dogs, a team system that can be extremely effective. To learn more about how to hunt each of Washington's grouse species, see WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/upland_birds/forest_grouse.html.



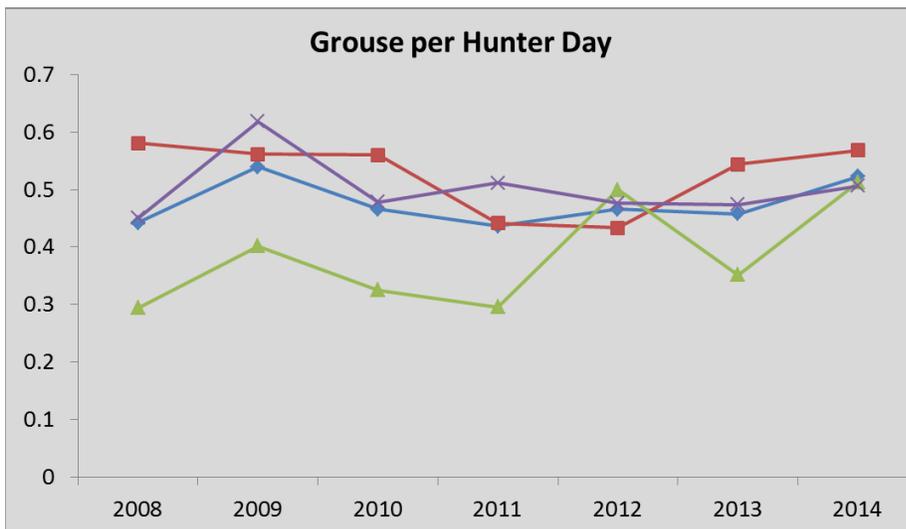
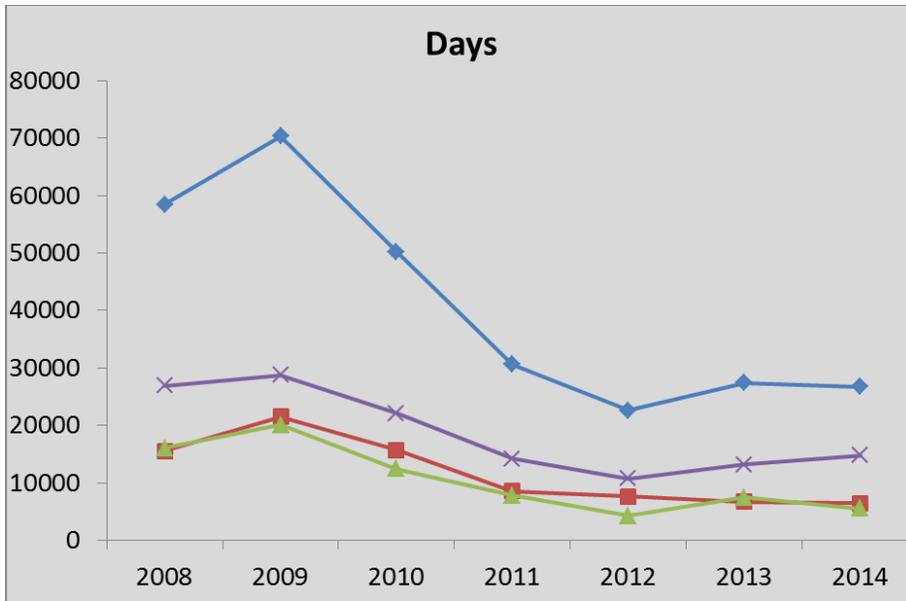


FIGURE 11. TRENDS IN TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, HUNTER DAYS, AND FOREST GROUSE PER HUNTER DAY DURING GROUSE SEASONS IN FERRY COUNTY (RED), STEVENS COUNTY (PURPLE), PEND OREILLE COUNTY (GREEN) AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 1 (BLUE), 2008–2014.

NOTABLE CHANGES

Bag limits for forest grouse have changed. New bag and possession limits are as follows:

Bag limit: four grouse with no more than three of any one species

Possession limit: 12 grouse with no more than nine of any one species



PHEASANTS

There is only a small, range-limited population of wild pheasants in District 1. Consequently, most pheasant hunting opportunity within District 1 is associated with the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement and 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, thousands of pheasants are released at 33 sites and one of those sites (Sherman Creek) occurs in District 1. The Sherman Creek Release Site is located in Ferry County on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (Figure 12).

To protect other wildlife species, including waterfowl and raptors, nontoxic shot is now required for all upland bird, dove, and band-tailed pigeon hunting on all pheasant release sites statewide. At these release sites, hunters may use only approved nontoxic shot (either in shotshells or as loose shot for muzzleloading). Possession of lead shot is also regulated on some wildlife areas. See the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet, located at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>, for more information. To learn more about the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement and Release Program, visit the WDFW website

at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/estern/>.

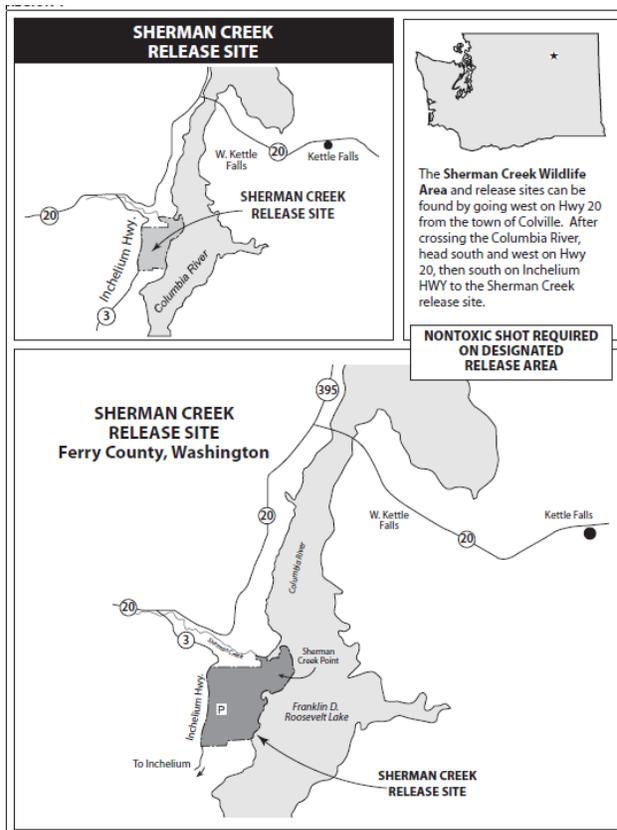


FIGURE 12. MAP OF THE SHERMAN CREEK PHEASANT RELEASE SITE IN FERRY COUNTY.



TURKEYS

The turkeys found in District 1 are Merriam's Wild Turkeys. Merriam's turkeys flourished here after being introduced in 1961, but then slowly declined. Since a large transplant from South Dakota in 1988-89, this population has steadily expanded its range and density.



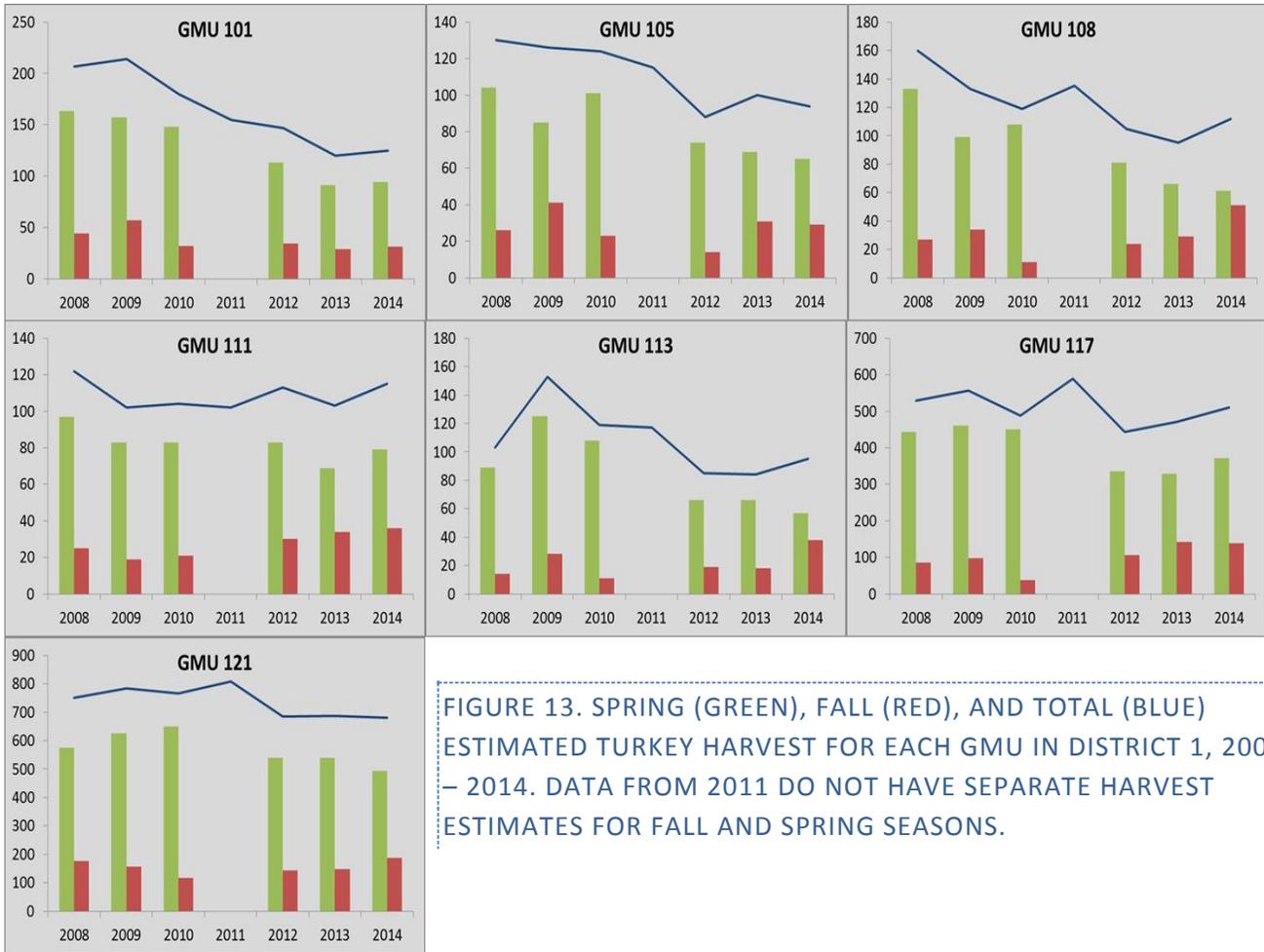


FIGURE 13. SPRING (GREEN), FALL (RED), AND TOTAL (BLUE) ESTIMATED TURKEY HARVEST FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 1, 2008 – 2014. DATA FROM 2011 DO NOT HAVE SEPARATE HARVEST ESTIMATES FOR FALL AND SPRING SEASONS.

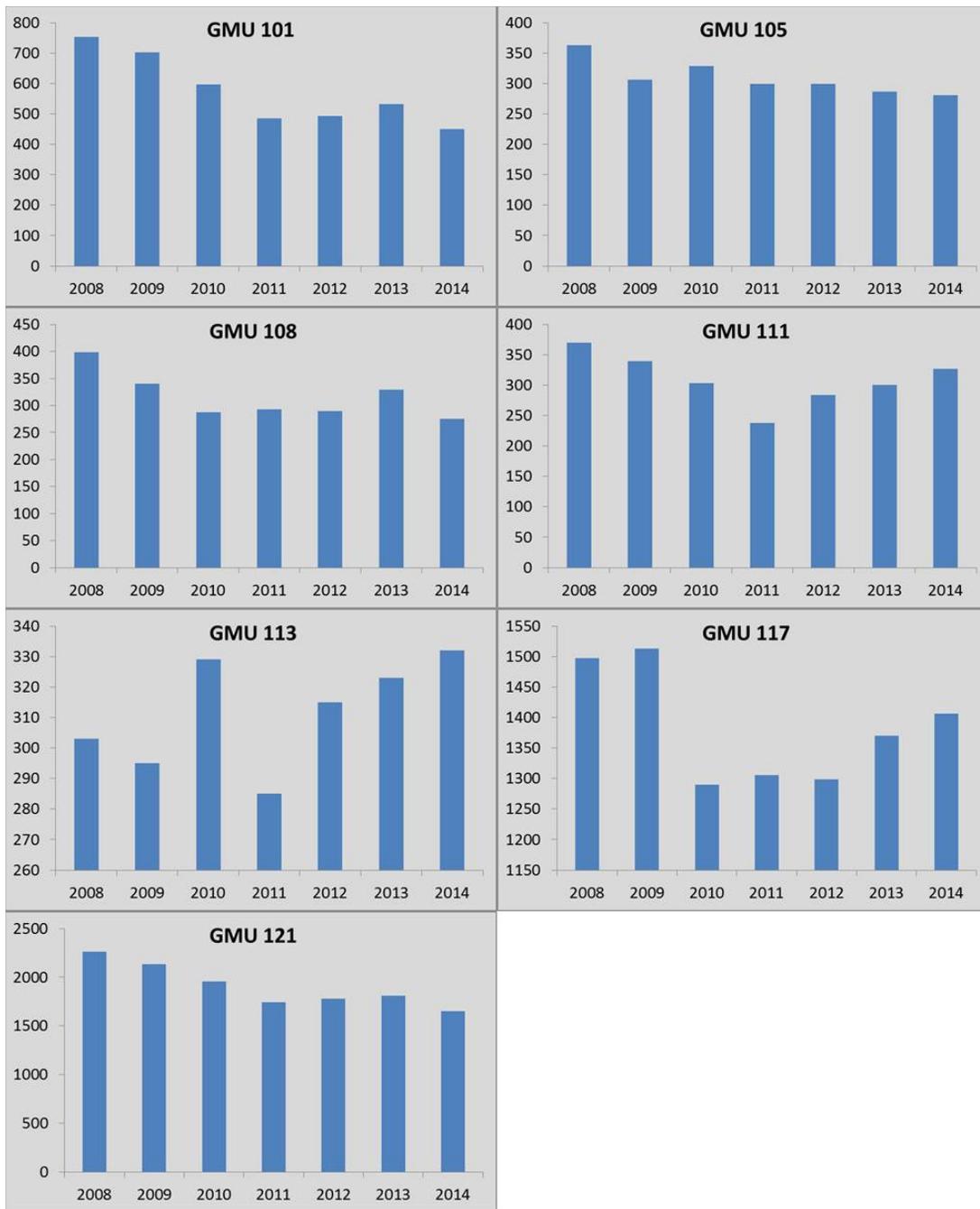


FIGURE 14. TOTAL NUMBER OF TURKEY HUNTERS (SPRING + FALL) FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 1, 2008 – 2014.



FIGURE 15. TURKEY HUNTER DAYS PER HARVEST FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 1, 2008 – 2014.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT TURKEYS IN THE SPRING

Increasing daylight between late winter and early spring triggers the beginning of breeding season, although unusually prolonged cold, wet, or warm weather may delay or advance it. Gobbling and strutting start well before mating while turkeys are still on their winter range, usually in late March or early April. There are normally two peaks of gobbling—the first when males are calling and females not yet nesting, and the second, a few weeks later, when most hens are incubating eggs. Finding these gobbling toms, and moving close enough to call them in without “bumping” (flushing) them is the challenge and excitement to traditional spring turkey hunting.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT TURKEYS IN THE FALL

During fall and winter, wild turkey priorities are food and roosting areas. In the fall, food remains critical for growth of poults (juvenile turkeys) and for adults adding fat reserves. Forest edges that offer seeds, nuts, and fruits, as well as some green vegetation, are used the most. At this time of year, turkeys are at their highest population and widest distribution within northeastern Washington, including District 1. As autumn wears on and snowfall comes, the turkeys gradually constrict their range to lower elevations. Where agriculture predominates, a mosaic of short grass fields or cropland and forest is generally the best place to find turkeys.



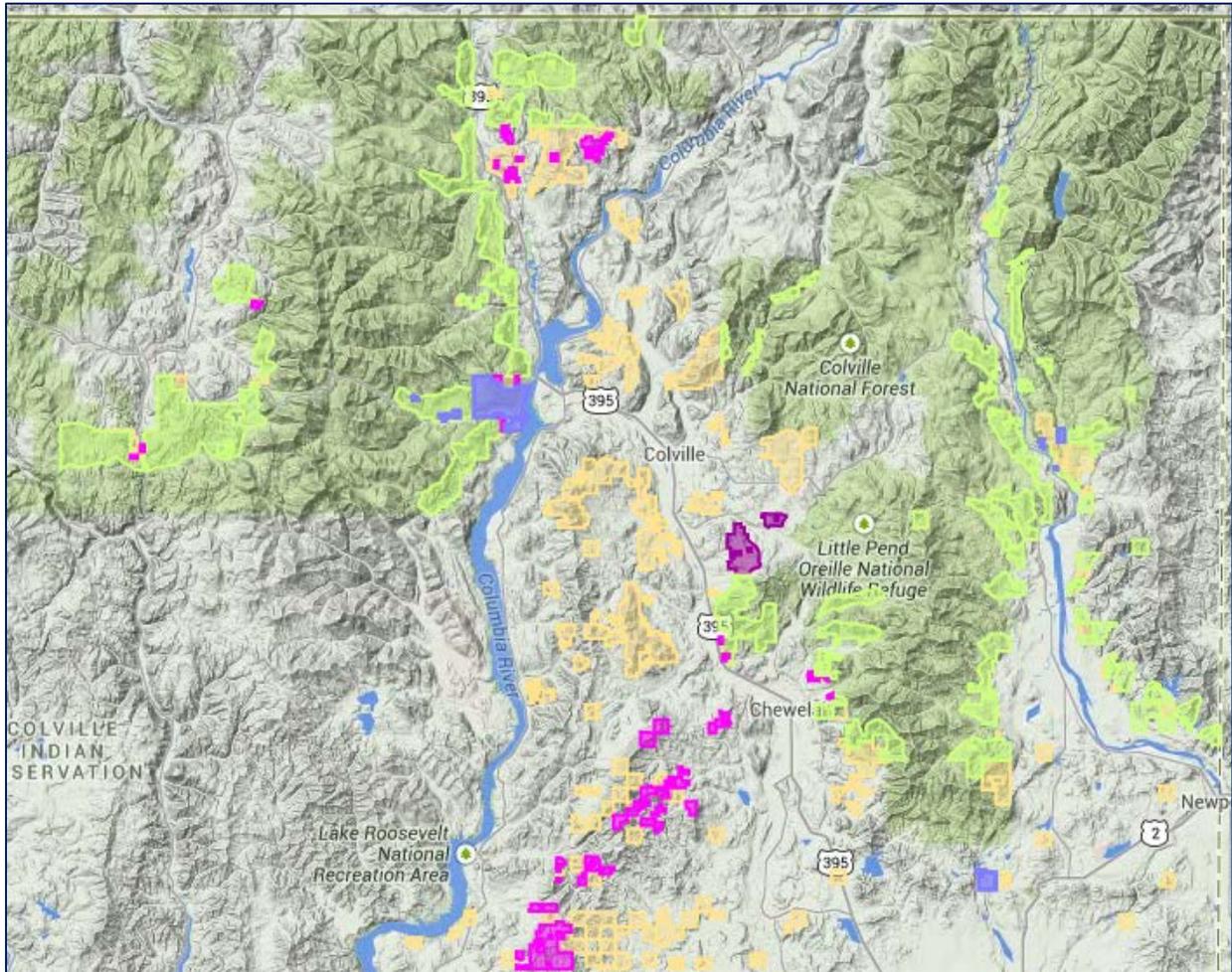


FIGURE 16. MAP DEPICTING PUBLIC LANDS THAT ARE GOOD FOR TURKEY HUNTING. THIS MAP IS PRODUCED BY MAP METRICS AND CAN BE FOUND AT [HTTP://MAPMET.COM/GAME/TRACTSMAT.HTML](http://mapmet.com/game/tractsmat.html).

WATERFOWL

COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 1. Common dabbling ducks include mallard, gadwall, American wigeon, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Diving ducks are also present, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, redheads, goldeneyes, and mergansers. Nesting wood ducks can be located in the Pend Oreille, Colville, and Kettle River valleys, and can provide a unique hunting opportunity early in the season. Mallards are the most abundant duck species in Washington and constitute the majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically \geq 50%). They are a commonly harvested duck in District 1 as well.

Canada geese are the only wild goose commonly found within District 1. They are abundant in the Pend Oreille, Colville, and Kettle River valleys, especially in the widest valley bottom areas where there is extensive farmland cultivation.



BEST HUNTING AREAS

PEND OREILLE RIVER

The “upper” Pend Oreille River, from Newport downstream to Usk, probably offers the best general waterfowl hunting opportunity within northeastern Washington. Outside of the east

shoreline, alongside the Kalispell Indian Reservation, most of the river itself is open for hunting along with a number of islands. In most instances a boat is required, either as a hunting blind in itself or for access to islands and sandbars open to hunting. There are also Pend Oreille Public Utility District lands, as well as U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service refuge lands (the “Cusick” Unit) open to public hunting. These parcels are located near the mouths of Tacoma and Trimble creeks into the Pend Oreille River.

Dabbling Ducks: Moderate numbers during migration, mostly gadwall, wigeon, teal, mallards, and some pintails.

Diving Ducks: Moderate numbers with the highest densities during peak migration periods.

Geese: Canada geese occur in the greatest abundance in this part of District 1.

LAKE ROOSEVELT

Lake Roosevelt up to the 1310 feet elevation contour is mostly federally owned and managed by the National Park Service. Much of the lake shore also borders the Colville and Spokane Indian Reservations, however, and in these areas the tribes manage the shoreline area. As such, where you can legally hunt is somewhat complicated. Hunters should call the National Park Service in Kettle Falls at 509-738-6266 for clarification before hunting.

Dabbling Ducks: Low to moderate numbers during migration, mostly wigeon and mallards.

Diving Ducks: Relatively few, but higher densities during peak migration periods.

Geese: Canada geese have a scattered distribution in this hundred mile long reservoir, and can occur in high numbers during peak migration.

COLVILLE AND KETTLE VALLEYS

Almost all of the valley bottoms are private lands, so obtaining written permission for hunting access is essential. Ducks are most common where there are slow, meandering streams, sloughs, and/or farm ponds. Geese are most common in the agricultural areas.

Dabbling Ducks: Low to moderate numbers during migration, mostly mallards.

Diving Ducks: Relatively few, but higher densities during peak migration periods, especially on the Colville River.

Geese: Canada geese are fairly evenly distributed in the Colville Valley. When heavy snowfall covers fields late in the season, however, they tend to migrate south to warmer, snow-free areas.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Duck hunting methods are largely dependent on location. . When hunting inland waters associated with ponds and rivers, or feeding areas, traditional decoy setups work the best. Birds are most active during early morning and late afternoon as they move from resting areas to feeding areas. See “Let’s Go Waterfowling” at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/> for more information.

The techniques employed to harvest geese are pretty standard. Find agricultural areas where geese are feeding and set up decoy spreads well before daylight where geese are expected to concentrate. In District 1, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate generally include hay fields and winter wheat (or other cereal grain crop) fields. Because of this, most goose hunting opportunities occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting.

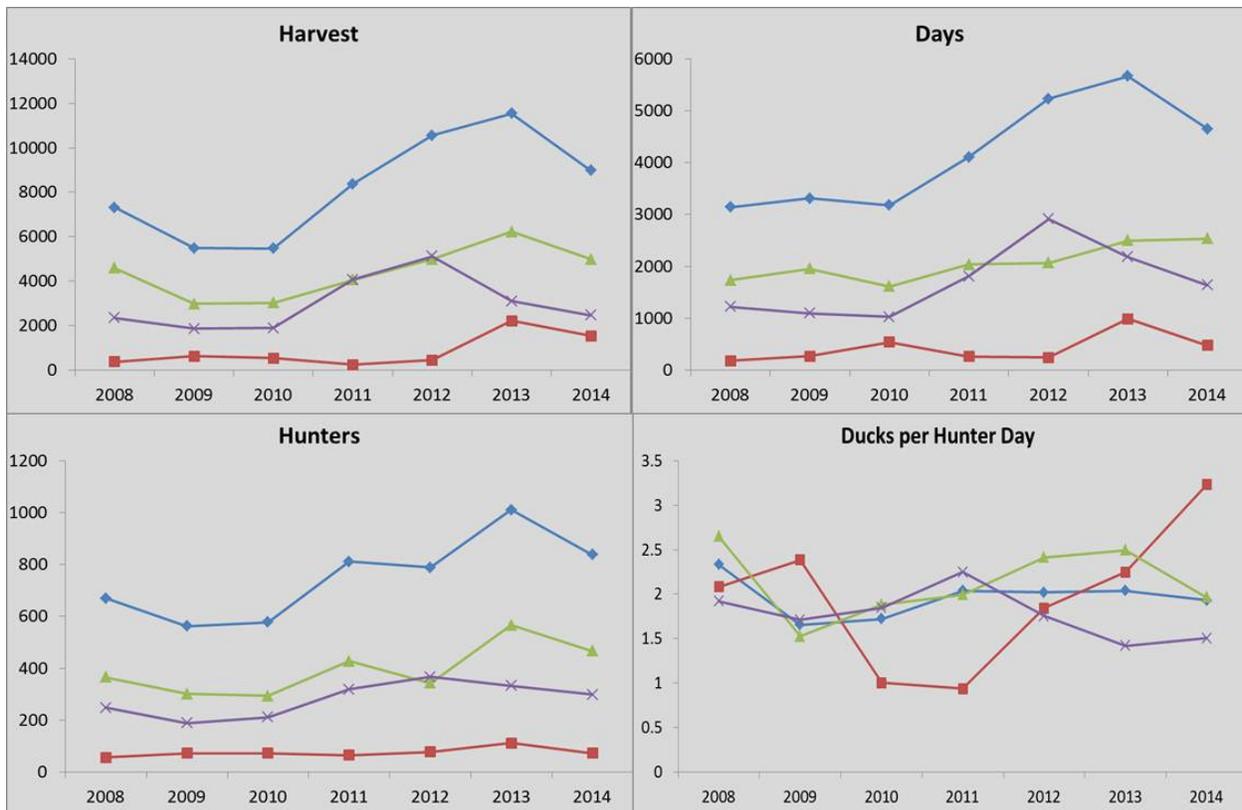


FIGURE 17. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF DUCK HUNTERS, HUNTER DAYS, TOTAL DUCKS HARVESTED, AND DUCKS HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY IN FERRY COUNTY (RED), STEVENS COUNTY (PURPLE), PEND OREILLE COUNTY (GREEN), AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 1 (BLUE), 2008 – 2014.

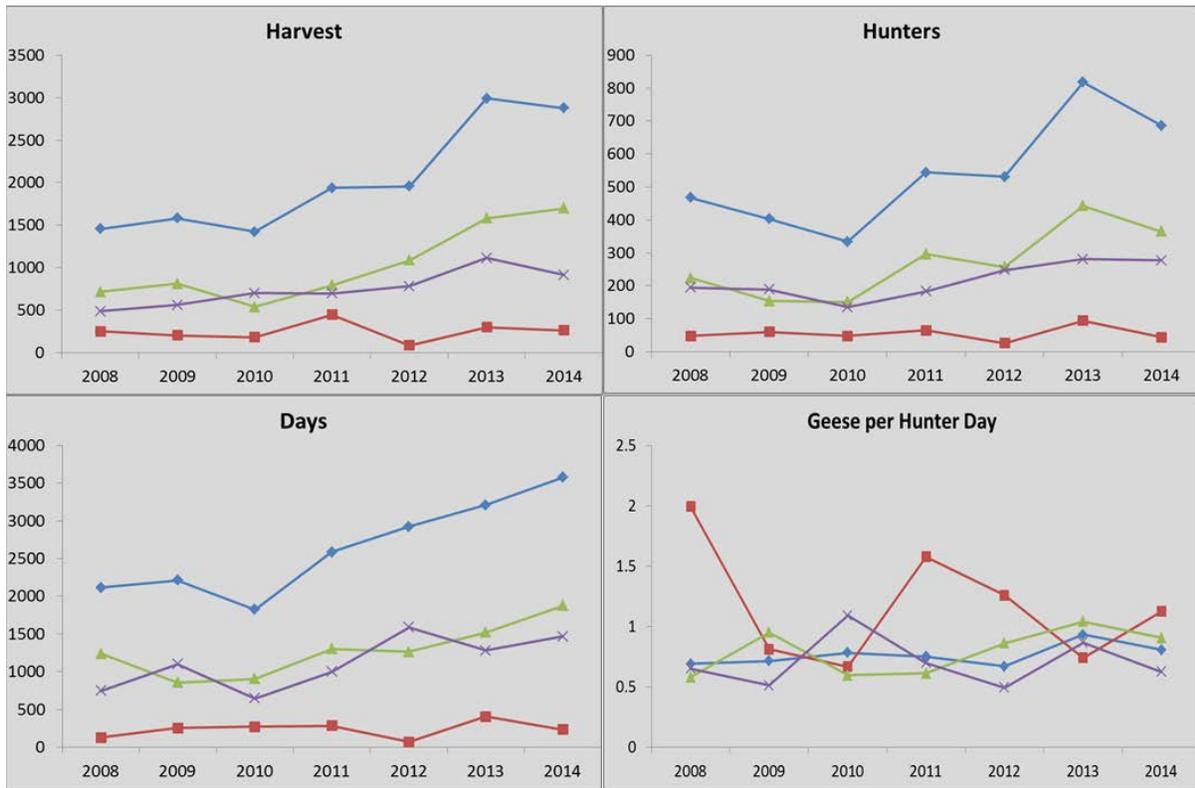


FIGURE 18. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF GOOSE HUNTERS, HUNTER DAYS, TOTAL GEESSE HARVESTED, AND GEESSE HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY IN FERRY COUNTY (RED), STEVENS COUNTY (PURPLE), PEND OREILLE COUNTY (GREEN), AND THROUGHOUT DISTRICT 1 (BLUE), 2008 – 2014.

OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species that occur in District 1 but are not covered in detail include valley quail, Hungarian (gray) partridge, snowshoe hare, bobcat, and coyote. Additional migratory game birds include mourning dove, Wilson’s (common) snipe, and American coot.

MOOSE – SPECIAL PERMIT ONLY



The moose in northeast Washington are Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*), which is the smallest of the four subspecies of moose in North America. Shiras moose are named after George Shiras III, an ardent conservationist, explorer, and U.S. Congressman in the early 1900s. This subspecies is native to the northern Rocky Mountains and apparently migrated on its own accord into eastern Pend Oreille County, in the 1950s. The first official state documentation of moose in Washington occurred in 1954. In the decades since, moose have dramatically increased both in numbers and distribution and are now common throughout much of northeast Washington.

Hunters should take note that while moose are fairly common, they are by nature a solitary animal, and occur only individually or in small groups scattered over wide areas. They tend to select habitats based on forest successional stage and local climatic conditions. Moose can be found at any elevation in northeast Washington, but are most likely found in the 3,000 to 5,000 foot elevation band. In the fall they seek deciduous browse, primarily willow, serviceberry, *ceanothus*, and other shrubs in logged over areas or burns that are approximately 15 years old or

older. Moose are drawn to north slopes or east flowing drainages, which are cool and moist. Late fall and early winter snowfall does not seem to deter moose in any way.

Moose rut from mid-September to early October and some hunters have been effective with calls. Hunters using calls should stay on stand for at least one hour or longer, as bulls come to the call from long distances. Early in the season, moose are widespread and snow is usually not present for tracking, but access is good in October. Usually by some time in November, snow is common and locating moose tracks, as well as seeing these dark animals against a white background of snow, becomes much easier. However, by late November there is frequently deep enough snow to be concerned about having only limited road access into moose range. Inland Empire Paper Company and other private timber companies may close their roads to motor vehicle traffic depending on weather conditions.

Forest Service Ranger Stations located at Newport and Colville are good sources of information on moose, weather, and forest road conditions or restrictions. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also sells maps and has a regional office located in Colville.

Kettle Range – GMU 101, GMU 105, GMU 204

Moose continue to expand their range in the Kettle Range moose unit, but currently the most productive locations for hunting are in two general areas. The first is within GMU 101 and includes the South Fork Sherman Creek drainage, the upper Barnaby Creek drainage, and the east slope of the Kettle Crest under Snow Peak, Sherman Peak, Barnaby Buttes, and White Mountain. There also tends to be a lot of moose sign on the west side of White Mountain up Hall Creek Road, but the dense timber makes sighting them difficult. The second area is in GMU 105 near the Canadian border in the vicinity of Churchill Mountain and Lead Pencil Mountain. The creek drainages may be most productive, including Sheep Creek, Crown Creek, and Flat Creek. The Little Boulder Creek drainage west of the Kettle River in Ferry County seems to be an area moose have recently expanded into as well.

Selkirk Mountains – GMU 113

Good areas to hunt in the western portion of the Selkirk Mountains Unit are Skookum Lakes to South Baldy, along with the LeClerc Creek, Harvey Creek, upper Sullivan Creek, and Slumber Creek drainages. On the east side of the unit, the West Branch Priest River, Flat Creek, Goose Creek, Kalispell Creek, South Fork Granite Creek, Cache Creek, Willow Creek, and Gold Creek drainages can be productive.

Douglas – GMU 108

Moose are frequently seen in the vicinity of Harrier Creek, VanStone Mine, and Rogers Mountain.

Aladdin -- GMU 111

Moose are more frequently seen in the south and central portion of GMU 111, but some hunters have had luck in the northern portion of the GMU as well. Some specific areas that generally harbor moose in GMU 111 include Big Meadow Lake, Seldom Seen Mountain, Bon Ayre Ridge, North and South Forks Mill Creek, Amazon Creek, and Clark Creek.

49 Degrees North – GMU 117

The 49 Degrees North GMU is divided by a mountain range into east and west drainages. The areas near the crest of the divide or the drainages on the east side have the most moose activity. In the southern portion, good areas would be Boyer, Nelson, and Chewelah mountains, along with the Calispel, Tenmile and Gletty creek drainages. In the north portion of GMU 117, Winchester, Small, Ruby, and Flodell creek drainages, along with Tacoma, Dirty Shirt, Little Calispel, Calispel, Goddards, and Olson mountain peaks tend to hold significant numbers of moose. There are many recent and older harvest units in 117 which allow ample opportunity to glass hillsides from a ridgeline or road.

Parker Lake – GMU 117

The Parker Lake Hunting Closure area is approximately 21,000 acres, and is very similar to the surrounding forest, with a blend of timber harvest, mature stand forests, and reproduction/burn units. From approximately September through May, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Training (SERE) School is present in either the Tacoma, Cusick, or Ruby creek watersheds. Training typically occurs 24 hours/day from Saturday through Thursday of each week, except for an approximate three week period during the Christmas and New Year's holidays. To aid hunters in their planning and to assist in establishing a pattern of avoidance, deer or moose special permit holders will receive a map of the SERE School area of operation from the USAF Training Area Manager. Moose are found throughout the Parker Lake Closure; however, seasonal timing will dictate elevations, population densities, and hunting opportunities. There are quite a few small ponds and swampy areas where moose can be found. Northern slopes and eastern drainages between 3,000 ft. and the crest of Timber Mountain should provide ample opportunities. The SERE School has very little activity above 3,500 ft. elevation.

Huckleberry – GMU 121

Good areas to hunt in the Huckleberry Range are the mountains extending north and south of the Springdale - Hunters Pass off the Springdale - Hunters Highway. The east side of the pass has the majority of the moose habitat, especially the headwaters of the forks of Chimokane Creek and Deer Creek. Moose sightings are also common east of the Fruitland area with access to the mountains through the Fruitland Valley or up the “O-Ra-Pak-En” Creek drainage.

GENERAL ACCESS BY GMU

Sherman – GMU 101

Access: The majority of GMU 101 is owned by the US Forest Service. All of the Kettle Range has good but somewhat limited road access for automobiles. In GMU 101, there are roads leading up to the Kettle Crest from both the east and the west, but only three that cross over, including two paved and maintained roads, Sherman Pass and Boulder Pass, and one unpaved, Little Boulder. During the late hunt, some access may be limited in the higher elevations if there is snow. A four-wheeled drive vehicle is recommended in the late season if there is a possibility of snow.

Maps: Colville National Forest map is recommended.

Kelly Hill – GMU 105

Much of GMU 105 is owned by the US Forest Service. Largely in the southern portion of the GMU there are lands owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), industrial timber company land (mainly Hancock Forest Management), and other private lands. The eastern portion of the GMU also has some private timber company ownership. Road access is good throughout the unit.

Maps: Colville National Forest map is recommended.

Douglas – GMU 108

Access: The majority of GMU 108 is private, but there are a few sizeable blocks of Colville National Forest and DNR land. Road access is good in this GMU.

Maps: Colville National Forest and/or Department of Natural Resources maps are recommended.

Aladdin – GMU 111

Access: Access is best either from Colville north on the Aladdin Road, from Highway 20 between Colville and Ione, or west of Highway 31 in the area of Ione. GMU 111 has very good driving access with the majority of land either owned by the US Forest Service (Colville

National Forest) or the WA Department of Natural Resources. In the northern portion of the GMU, there are fewer roads with more opportunities for walk-in, bike, and/or horse access, as well as cross-country travel. Throughout the GMU are closed or decommissioned roads to get off of the main road system.

Maps: Colville National Forest map is recommended.

Selkirk – GMU 113

Access: The northern half of GMU 113 is mostly within the Colville National Forest, but many of the roads are gated or “retired,” which limits vehicle access. The southern half of GMU 113 is a mix of private timber company, private property, and National Forest. Most timber company gates are locked year-round, as well as some forest service roads. If hunting the eastern portion of GMU 113, it may be easier to access the area through Idaho. It is likely the higher elevations in GMU 113 will have some snow during the late hunt. A four-wheeled drive vehicle is recommended if there is a possibility of snow.

Maps: Colville National Forest map is recommended.

49 Degrees North – GMU 117

Access: 49 Degrees North is a mix of private property, Colville National Forest, and private industrial timber company land. Road access on National Forest land is fairly good, but most access on industrial timber company land is restricted to non-motorized. In some of the southern portion of 117, all motorized access is restricted within the Buck Creek Road Closure Area, which includes Boyer Mountain and Nelson Peak.

Maps: The Colville National Forest travel map is recommended. The Department of Natural Resources map is also recommended, especially for the southern portion of the unit.

Huckleberry – GMU 121

Access: The majority of GMU 121 is in private ownership. Hancock Forest Management owns much of the forest land in this area. See below for information on accessing private industrial timberlands.

Maps: Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maps are recommended.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Over one third (approximately 37 percent) of the land mass in District 1 is public, consisting of mostly national forest, but also state DNR and WDFW, federal BLM, USFWS, and a few other government agencies. Most of these lands outside of Indian reservations are open to public hunting. The public lands tend to be at higher elevations, with steep terrain, a shorter growing season, no row crop agriculture, and in general a lower density of game animals, especially deer and turkey. GMUs with the most public land include 101 (Sherman), 111 (Aladdin), 113 (Selkirk), and 117 (49 Degrees North).

For more information related to the location of WDFW Wildlife Areas, see Figure 19 see WDFW's hunting access website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/. For more information on resources available to locate public lands, please see the Online Tools and Maps section below.

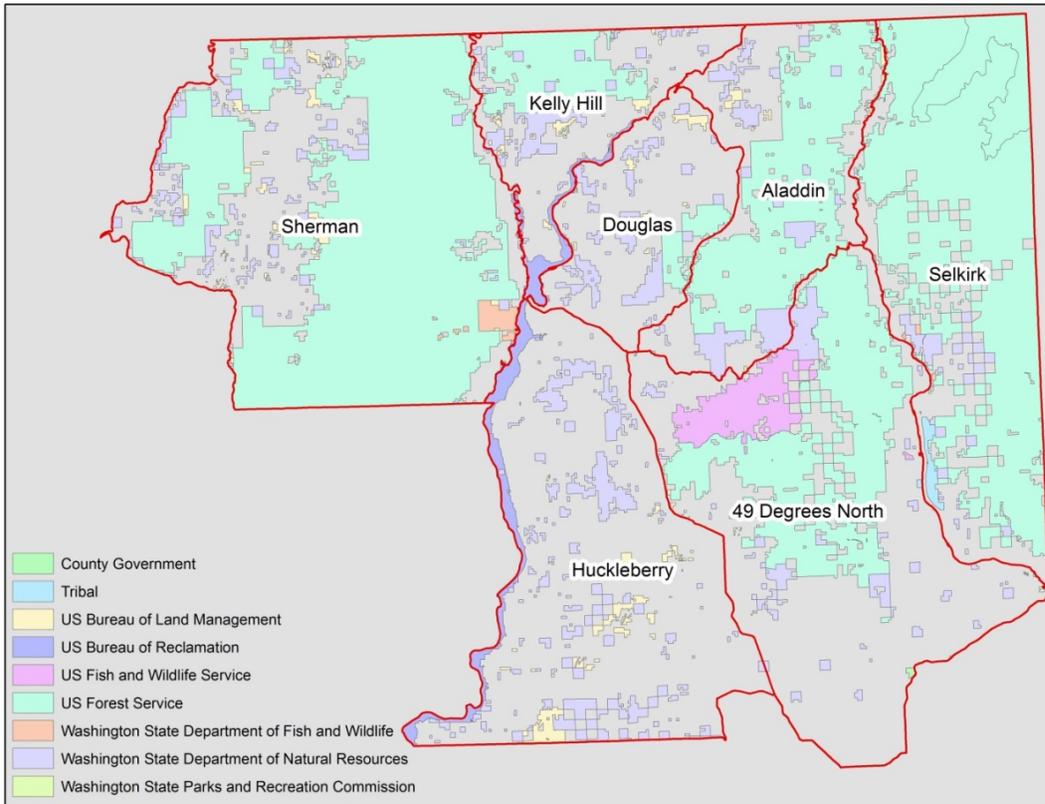


FIGURE 19. MAP DEPICTING THE LOCATION OF PUBLIC LANDS WITHIN EACH GMU COMPRISING DISTRICT 1.

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

GENERAL INFORMATION

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

Much hunting opportunity, especially for big-game and forest grouse, occurs on private industrial forest lands. Timber companies that own large tracts of land and are the most well-known include Hancock, Stimson, and Inland Empire Paper. Hunters should be aware that there are a number of other smaller timber companies that have operations in District 1 but are not mentioned here.

WDFW recognizes that some of the best hunting opportunities occur on private industrial forest lands. WDFW works cooperatively with private timber companies to maintain reasonable public access during established hunting seasons. Private industrial forestlands have typically been open for public access, but hunters should always remember access granted to private 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 who hunt on their lands. One of the primary reasons for access restrictions and loss of access is hunter disrespect of the landowner’s rules. WDFW reminds hunters to treat this privilege with respect and follow basic access rules.

BASIC ACCESS RULES

Specific rules related to hunter access on private industrial forest lands vary by timber 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 commonplace on many private industrial forest lands. Timber companies may have more or less restrictive rules in place and ultimately, it is the hunter’s responsibility to be 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, ORVs, off road driving, target shooting or forest product removals. Exceptions: mushrooms and berries for personal use.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ HELP PREVENT FOREST FIRES

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 classifications issued by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Hence, timber lands may be closed during archery and muzzleloader seasons, which typically begin earlier in the autumn when there is a greater risk of forest fire. Hunters are urged to respect the landowners by adhering to any access restrictions they have in place.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

Some landowners have hotlines and/or web sites where hunters can find information about public access. It is important to remember, however, that these companies do not have staff dedicated to answering hunter questions. Therefore, hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW Region 1 office in Spokane (509-892-1001) if there are questions related to public access on private industrial forest lands.

PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS 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.

There are several private landowners in District 1 who are enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program. Specific information, including property locations, can be found on WDFW's Hunter Access website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/. Below is a summary, by GMU, of cooperators and acres currently enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. The Feel Free to Hunt Program acres listed are those lands in the Cooperative Road Management Program with private timber companies.

GMU	Hunting Only by Written Permission		Feel Free to Hunt		Hunt by Reservation	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
101 (Sherman)	3	720	1	2,702	1	361
105 (Kelly Hill)			1	240		
108 (Douglas)	2	360	1	800	1	298
111 (Aladdin)			3	6,660	2	515
113 (Selkirk)	2	890	3	51,117		
117 (49 Degrees North)	3	896	4	72,266	1	913
121 (Huckleberry)	2	6,968			1	331

TABLE 5. COOPERATORS AND ACRES CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN THE PRIVATE LANDS HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM WITHIN DISTRICT 1.

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 1 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

A good 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.

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.

Stevens County tax parcels can be searched using the assessor's website at <http://propertysearch.trueautomation.com/PropertyAccess/?cid=0>.

Ferry County tax parcels can be searched using Mapsifter at <http://ferrywa.mapsifter.com/Disclaimer.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fdefault.aspx>.

Pend Oreille tax parcels can be searched using the assessor's website at <http://216.229.170.172/PropertyAccess/PropertySearch.aspx?cid=0>. You will need the address of the property to use this search tool.

WDFW's GoHunt Tool

WDFW's GoHunt Tool has been revamped and provides hunters with a great interactive tool for locating tracts of public land within each GMU. The GoHunt Tool can be accessed on WDFW's Hunting website at <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/>.

Colville Area Maps

There are a variety of maps showing trails, camping locations, public lands, and popular landmarks available for download on the Colville Chamber of Commerce website at <http://www.colville.com/page/default.asp?page=34>.

Other On-line Resources

[Ferry County hunting page](#)

[Colville Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Ferry County Chamber of Commerce](#)

[North Pend Oreille Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge](#)

[Colville National Forest](#)

[LC Sportsmaps, Inc](#)

2015

MICHAEL ATAMIAN, District Wildlife Biologist
CARRIE LOWE, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 2 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman Counties

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DISTRICT 2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Hunters should be aware that motorized access may be limited or closed completely on Inland Empire Paper, Stimson, Hancock, and other private timber company lands this season due to fire danger. Be sure to check on closures before you go. Fire restriction updates can be found here for [IEP](#) , [Stimson](#), and [Hancock](#).

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) District 2 is located in eastern Washington, bordering Idaho, and covers Lincoln, Whitman, and Spokane counties. Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 2 include 124 (Mount Spokane), 127 (Mica Peak), 130 (Cheney), 133 (Roosevelt), 136 (Harrington), 139 (Steptoe), and 142 (Almota) (Figure 1). The majority of the district is in private ownership, so hunters are highly encouraged to secure access prior to the hunting season or applying for special permits.

The geography of District 2 includes the edge of the Rocky Mountain Range in the east, the Columbia Basin in the west, and the Channeled Scablands and Palouse in between. This diverse geography supports a wide range of habitats that include mixed coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir, larch, dry Ponderosa pine forests, some aspen groves, scabland, sagebrush steppe, grasslands, and extensive agricultural lands. Topography varies from ~500 feet above sea level along the Snake River in the south to the 5883 foot Mount Spokane in the north. Dominant river drainages include the Spokane, Palouse, Columbia, & Snake rivers.

District 2 is most well-known for its deer hunting opportunities, including white-tailed deer in the Spokane and the Palouse agricultural lands and mule deer in the Channeled Scablands and breaks of the Snake River. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including pheasant and elk, if hunters have secured access to private lands, and moose and bighorn sheep if hunters are selected for those special permit hunts.

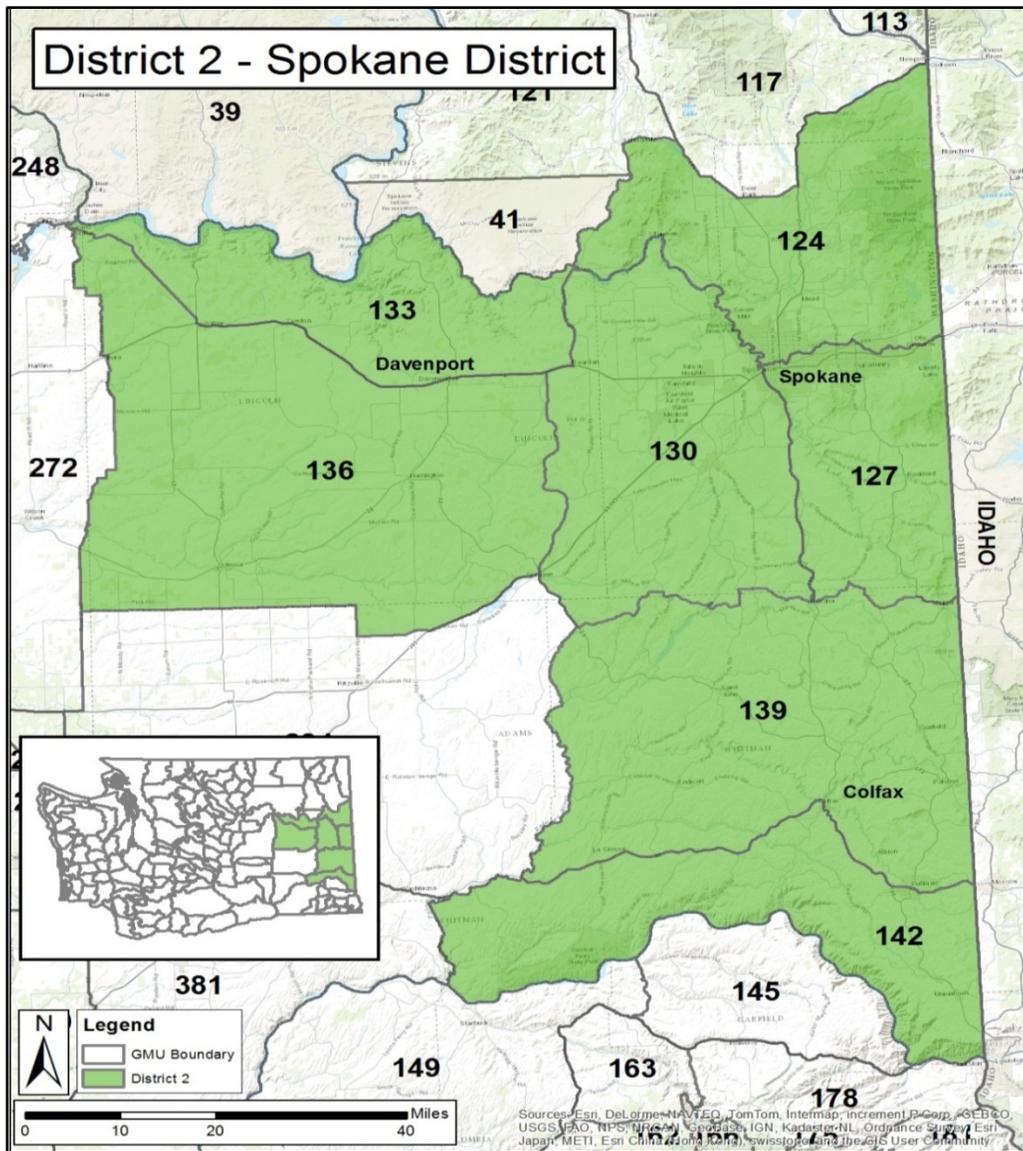


FIGURE 1. GENERAL LOCATION AND GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS (GMU) FOR WDFW DISTRICT 2.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The Selkirk herd originated in Pend Oreille County and has expanded its range over the last 40 years to include GMUs 124-142. Elk in District 2 are considered to be the Spokane sub-herd of the Selkirk herd. Elk habitat in District 2 continues to be lost to urban sprawl and agricultural conversion. General hunts in all GMUs are “any elk.” The goal of this harvest strategy is to maintain the population at its current level (roughly 1000-1500 elk) to limit agricultural damage and conflict within urban areas. Given the majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, managing this population requires landowner acceptance and cooperation.

Opportunistic surveys, harvest data (Figures 2-4), sightings, and damage complaints are generally used in place of formal estimates to indicate population trends in most of District 2. The exception is GMU 130 (Cheney), where the majority of the district’s elk harvest (25-50%) typically occurs. This unit includes Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, which has been regularly surveyed for herd composition for the last 11 years. WDFW herd composition objective is to maintain a ratio of 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows pre-hunt and/or 12 to 20 bulls per 100 cows post-hunt. The 2014 pre-hunt aerial survey in GMU 130 found the bull:cow ratio to be within, but at the low end, of this management objective. 2014 calf production was consistent with 2013 counts, with a calf:cow ratio of 50:100. Combined data sources for District 2 over the last ten years indicate a stable to slightly increasing population trend. For more detail on the status of elk in Washington, see WDFW’s 2014 Game Status and Trend Report at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01667/>.

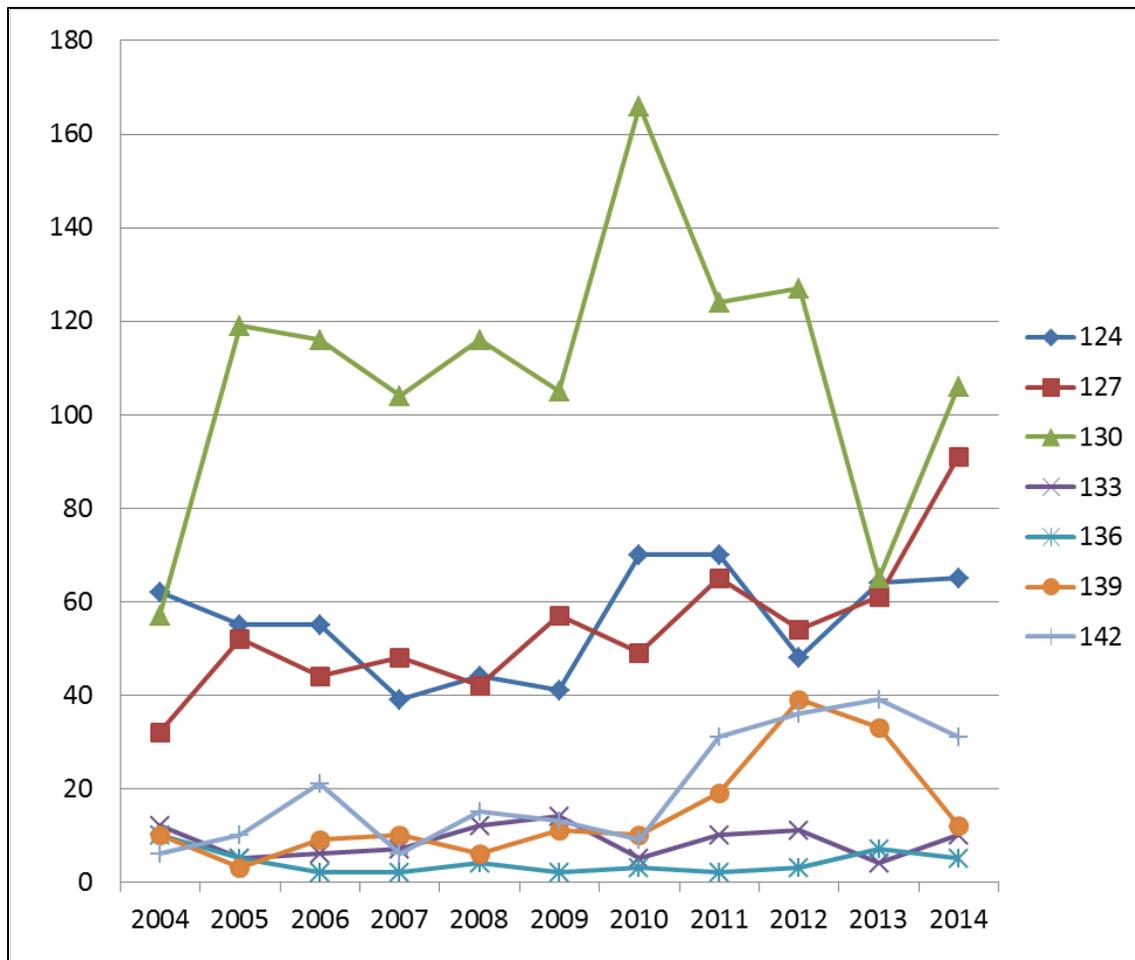


FIGURE 2. ELK GENERAL SEASON TOTAL HARVEST IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

The highest proportion of the elk harvest consistently occurs in GMUs 124, 127, and 130 (Figure 2). However, elk appear to be expanding into new areas and harvest in GMUs 139 and 142 has been generally on the rise. Some of these appear to be elk that move back and forth between Idaho and Washington, so timing and access to private lands will be the key to successful elk hunting in these GMUs. General hunt participants on private lands in GMU 130 have the highest success (Figure 4), probably benefitting from animals moving on and off Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge during the season. With almost 40% of the hunters in District 2, GMU 124 (Mount Spokane) sustains the greatest hunting pressure. As a result, hunter success is lower there (Figure 4), although the unit typically does produce one of the highest number of mature bulls (6+ points) in the harvest (Figure 3). Private timber companies, especially Inland Empire Paper,

offer public access in this unit with a paid permit. See Inland Empire Paper Company - Recreational Use at <http://www.iepco.com/recreation.htm> for their rules and regulations. Hunters should be aware that motorized access may be limited or closed completely on IEP and other timber company lands this season due to fire danger. Hunters are advised to check closures and restrictions before setting out. IEP fire restriction updates can be found at <http://www.quality-service-inc.com/inland-empire-paper-company/>.

For more detailed harvest information, visit:

District 2 - 2014 Game Harvest Statistics:

- Elk

Harvest: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/harvest/2014/reports/deer_gmu.php?District=2

- Elk Special Permits

Harvest: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/harvest/2014/reports/elk_permits_gmu.php?District=2

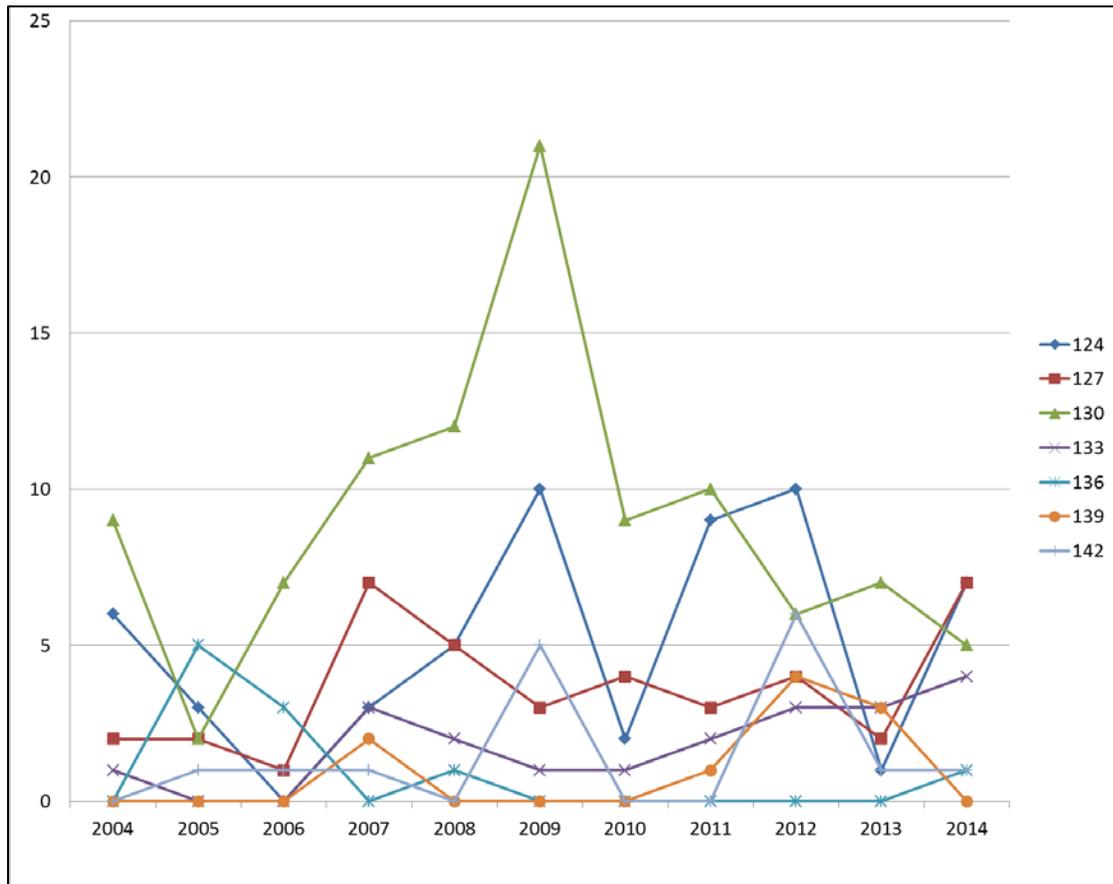


FIGURE 3. NUMBER OF MATURE BULLS (6+ POINTS) HARVESTED BY GMU IN DISTRICT 2.

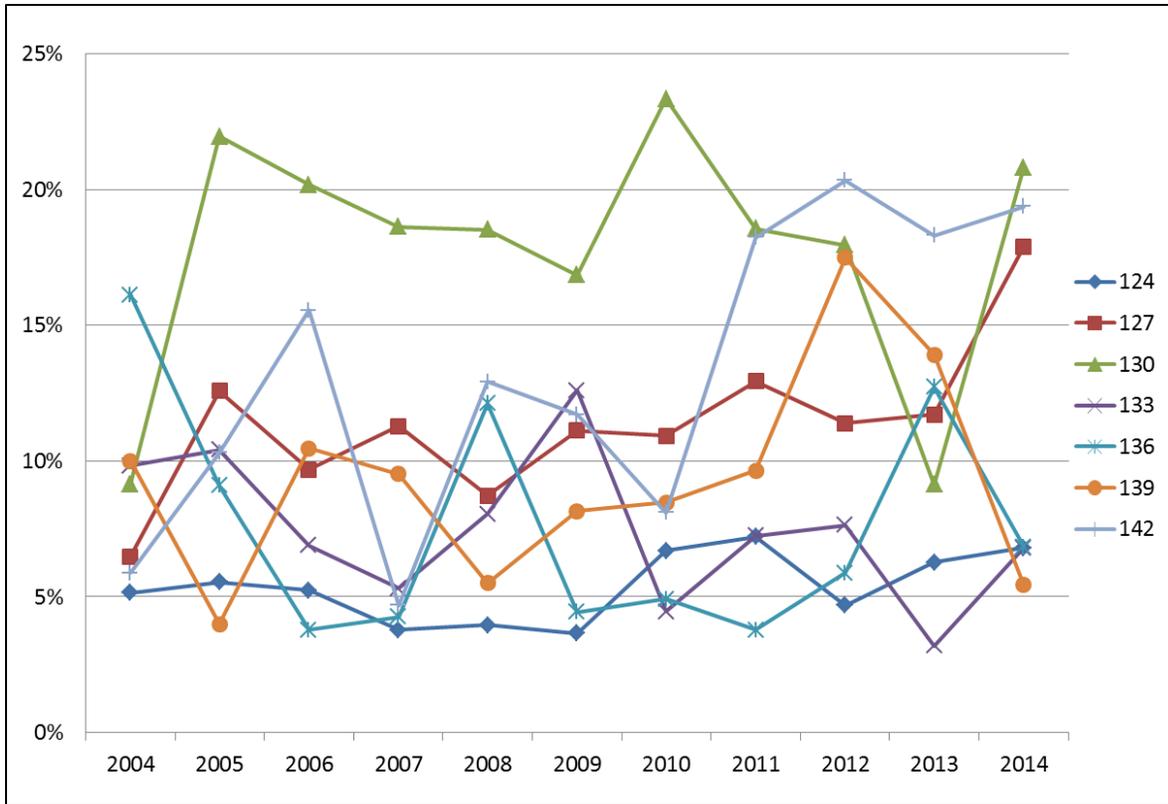


FIGURE 4. ELK GENERAL SEASON HUNTER SUCCESS IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

ELK AREAS

Elk Area 1015 is located within Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Turnbull special permit hunts were created in 2010 to address damage to aspen stands on the refuge and to address complaints from landowners in the area. These are walk-in hunts in specified portions of the refuge. For 2015, one bull permit and 62 antlerless permits will again be allocated across several hunt categories, including each weapon type, Youth, Master Hunter, and Hunters with Disabilities. Turnbull hunters average 42% success for antlerless hunts, while the bull permit has had 100% success each year except for 2014. For those who missed the May permit application deadline, Turnbull permit hunts should be offered again next year. For more information about Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, visit Turnbull - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Turnbull/what_we_do/resource_management/Elk_Management.html. To address winter property damage in the area, there are also several late-season raffle permits and WDFW special permits offered on Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA) properties in areas around Turnbull. See the “Private Lands Program” section for more information on acreage enrolled and the CPWMA website at <https://sites.google.com/site/columbiaplateauwildlifemgmt/> for details on their hunt management.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

There are no notable changes for 2015 elk hunting in District 2. Across all GMUs, elk hunter success has averaged 10% over the last ten years, and hunters have spent an average of 40 days hunting per kill. These numbers vary widely by area, as hunter success depends heavily on the work the hunter is willing to put in to obtain access to private property. There are over 50 landowners enrolled in WDFW's private land hunting access program. The majority of these are built around upland game and deer hunting. However, some support elk hunting as well, so opportunities exist for elk hunters who do their research. For locations of these properties, visit the GoHunt website at <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/>.

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 has both white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). White-tailed deer are found predominantly in the north and east portions of the district, in the forest/agricultural interface and along riparian corridors. Mule deer are predominantly found in the west and south of the district, in the shrub steppe, scablands, and farm lands.

Deer population levels are closely tied to droughts, severe winters, and land-use practices. The primary management objective for white-tailed and mule deer in District 2 is to keep the herds stable to slightly increasing and within landowner tolerance. Given the majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, managing this population without landowner cooperation is impossible. Additional management objectives include maintaining herds at 15-19 bucks to 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 2. Instead, trends in harvest (Figures 5 & 6), hunter success (Figure 7), days per kill (Figure 8), and pre-season sex and age ratios (Figure 9), are used to estimate populations. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using this data to monitor trends in population size and we are currently evaluating new approaches to monitoring white-tailed and mule deer populations.

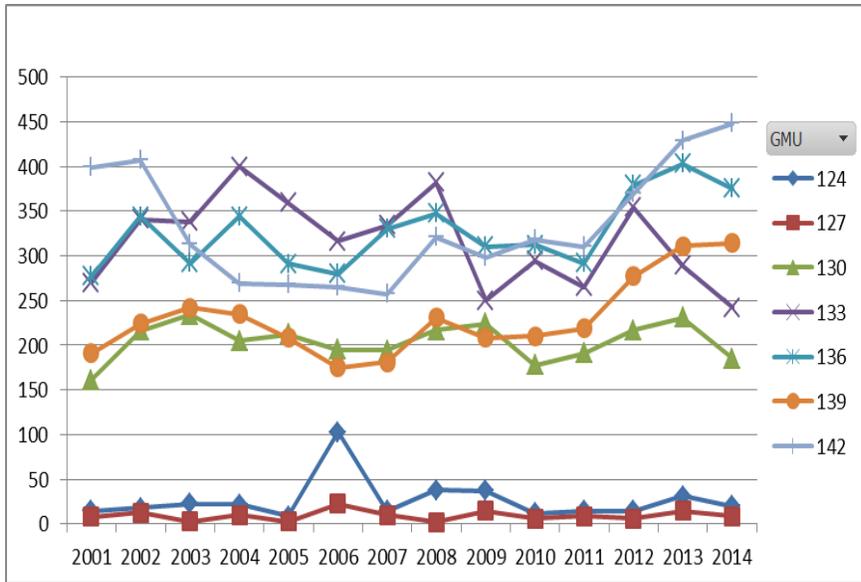


FIGURE 5. MULE DEER GENERAL SEASON BUCK HARVEST IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

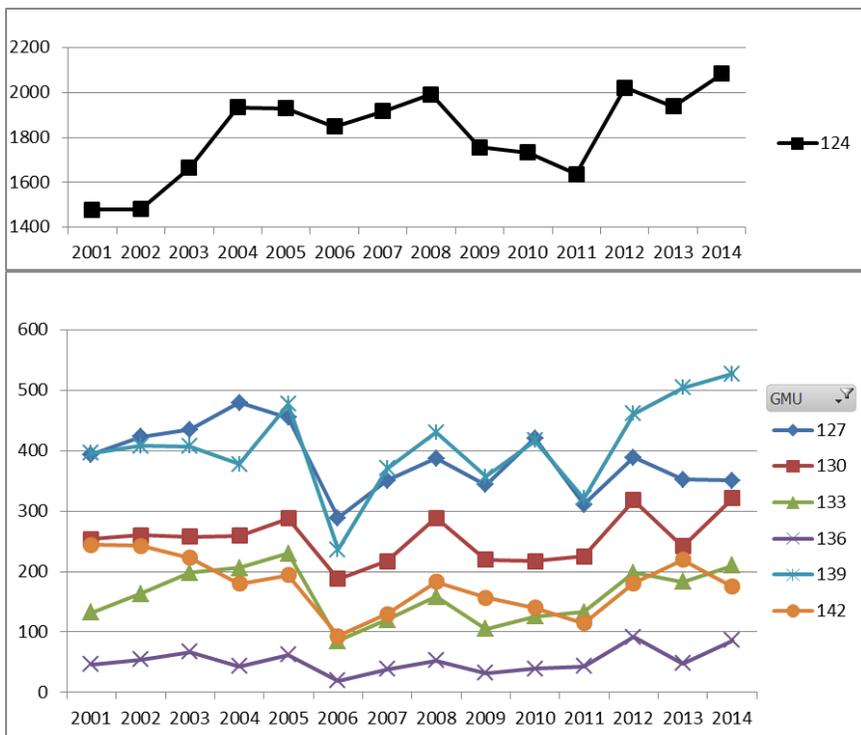


FIGURE 6. WHITE-TAILED DEER GENERAL SEASON BUCK HARVEST IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

The harvest of mule deer has remained relatively stable in the district over the past 14 years, with an increasing trend over the past four years in GMUs 136-142 (Figure 5). White-tailed harvest appears stable overall in the district, with an increasing trend in GMUs 124 and 139 the past three years (Figure 6). The steep decline in white-tailed harvest in 2006 is associated with the conversion of the general late season into a permit only hunt in GMUs 127-142 called the Palouse Hunt.

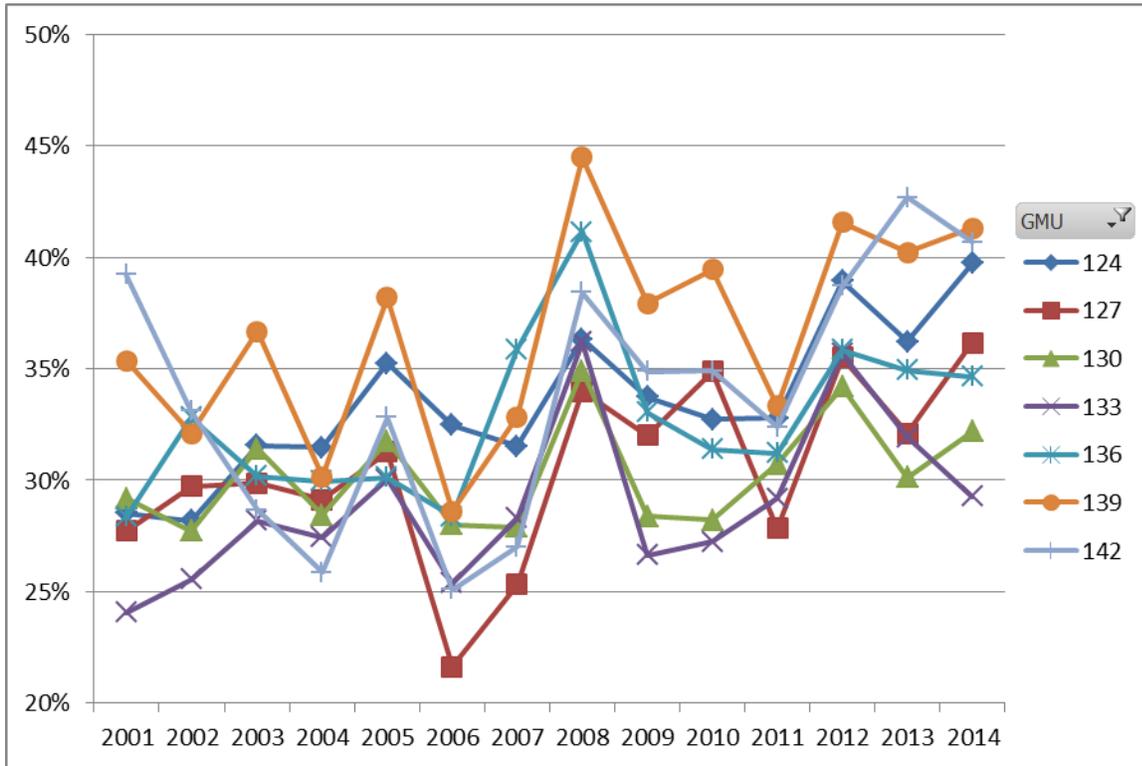


FIGURE 7. DEER GENERAL SEASON HUNTER SUCCESS IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

While harvest has remained relatively stable over the past 14 years, hunter success has increased from an average of 30% in 2001 to an average of 36% in 2014 (Figure 7). Over the same time period, hunter effort (Days/kill) has declined from 14 days/kill on average in 2001 to 11 days in 2014 (Figure 8). Pre-season fawn to 100 doe ratios for mule and white-tailed deer show a slight decline over the past 13 years, but for the past six they have been relatively stable (Figure 9).

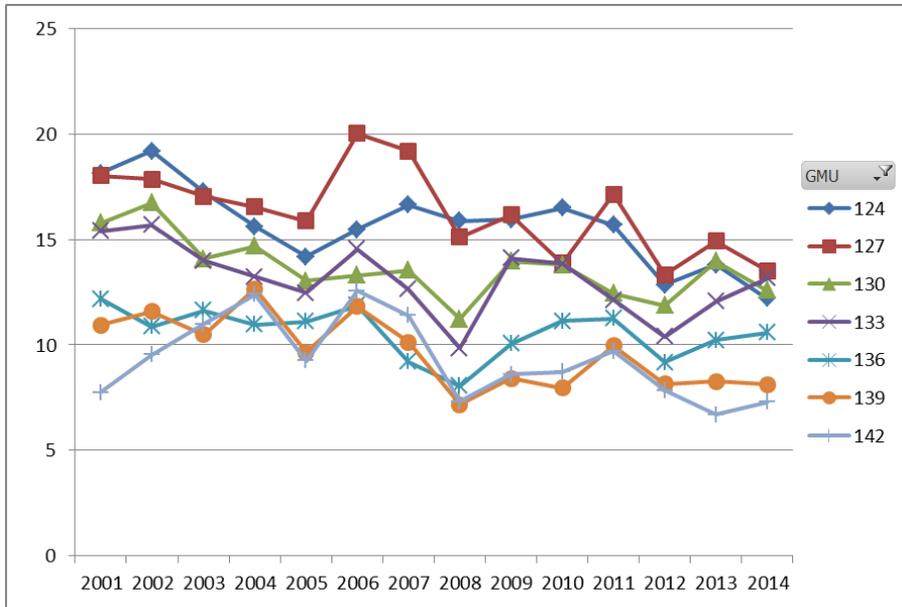


FIGURE 8. DEER GENERAL SEASON DAYS/KILL IN DISTRICT 2 BY GMU FOR ALL WEAPON TYPES COMBINED.

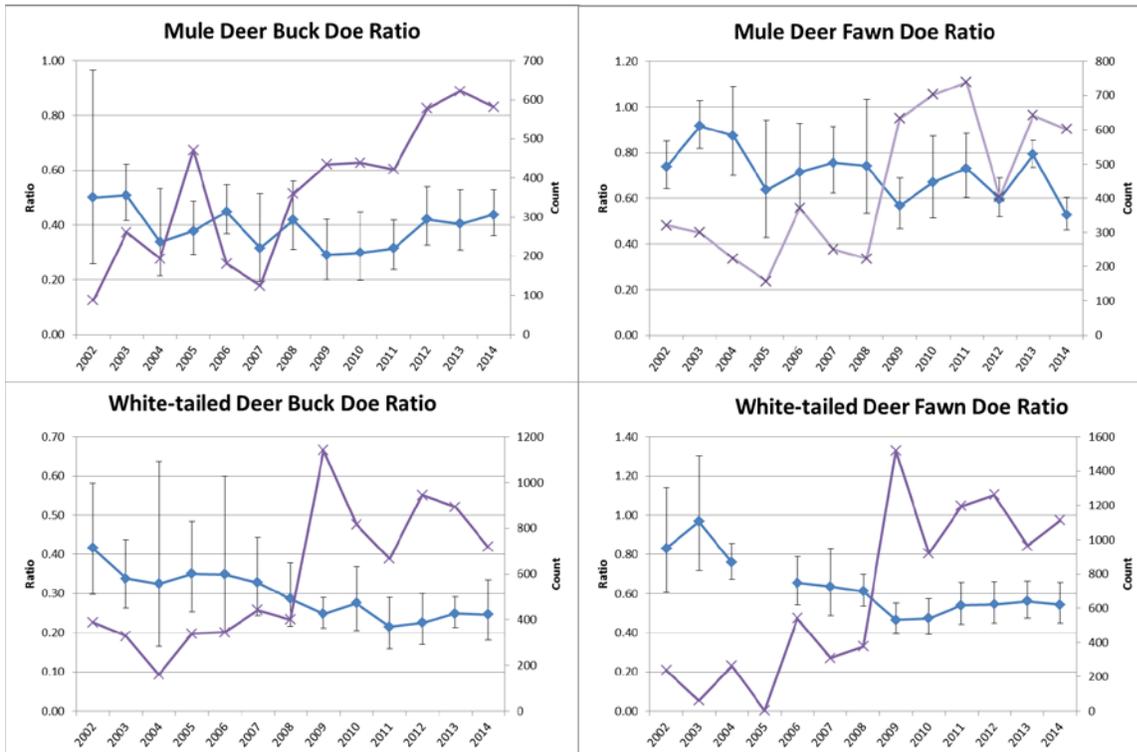


FIGURE 9. DISTRICT 2 PRE-SEASON BUCK TO DOE (AUGUST) AND FAWN TO DOE (SEPTEMBER) RATIOS (BLUE LINES WITH 90%CI) AND TOTAL COUNT (PURPLE LINES) BY SPECIES.

Overall harvest data and pre-season ratios taken together indicate white-tailed and mule deer populations appear to be stable to slightly increasing in all GMUs in District 2. Damage complaints associated with these herds are a perennial issue and have shown some signs of increasing in recent years, indicating an approach of social carrying capacity. For more information related to the status of 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 WDFW website

at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/search.php?Cat=Hunting&SubCat=Game%20Harvest,%20Status%20and%20Trends>.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

White-tailed and mule deer hunting opportunities in District 2 vary from marginal to excellent, depending on the GMU and if private land access has been secured. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 136, 139, & 142 on private property (Figure 5). The best opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 124, 127, 130, & 139 on private property (Figure 6). For archery hunters, GMU 124 & 127 provide the best terrain, whereas the terrain in GMUs 136-142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm.

Low mule deer fawn production in 2014 (Figure 9) and severe drought this summer will likely combine to produce poor fawn survival and recruitment this year. White-tailed deer herds appear to have fully recovered from the hard winters of 2008 and 2009. With average white-tailed deer fawn production in 2014 (Figure 9), as well as a mild winter, white-tailed herds should experience average to good survival and recruitment. However, the drought and high temperatures this summer may increase the chance of outbreaks of diseases such as Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) and Blue Tongue.

There is a three-antler-pointt minimum regulation in GMUs 127-142 for white-tailed deer, and the late white-tailed deer season in GMUs 127-142 is by permit only (Palouse Hunt) as of 2006. Hunter success is, on average, higher for the Palouse Hunt (47%), with 5-plus- point bucks making up, on average, a greater percentage of the kill (38%) when compared to the general season 2001 to 2006 average of 24% and the 27% averaged since 2006. There are currently 750 permits offered for the Palouse Hunt.

Mule and white-tailed deer populations overlap in District 2, so make sure to identify the species before harvesting an animal, since regulations can differ between species within a GMU. The bulk of District 2 is private land, and buck hunters will have to put in the time to get access. Doe hunters should have an easier time given the agricultural nature of this district. We have enrolled many new cooperators in our hunter access program in southeast Washington. See the “Private Lands Program” section below and note that the locations are mapped on the GoHunt website.

For more 2014 harvest information from District 2 visit:

- Deer General

Harvest: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/harvest/2014/reports/deer_gmu.php?District=2

- Deer Special Permits

Harvest: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/harvest/2014/reports/deer_permits_gmu.php?District=2

DEER AREAS

There are suburban/rural areas in District 2 where deer congregate and have the potential to cause landscape/property and agricultural damage. To help address this issue, extended general season opportunities have been created for youth, senior, & disabled hunters to harvest antlerless deer that occur in these areas. Additionally, 975 second tags, half of the district's second tag (doe only) opportunities, are focused in these areas. The remaining 975 second tags are primarily offered in the rural GMUs (133-142) to help address agricultural damage. WDFW deer area locations and boundaries are mapped on the GoHunt website.

BIGHORN SHEEP

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 is home to one herd of California bighorn sheep, found in GMU 133 north of Highway 2 in Lincoln County (see the GoHunt website for a map). These sheep can most often be seen in the cliffs in the town of Lincoln and in the cliffs around Whitestone Rock approximately seven miles downstream from Lincoln. Sheep are also observed frequently in the cliffs above Sterling Valley, the area between Lincoln and Whitestone, and in agricultural fields nearby.

WDFW has conducted regular aerial surveys to assess the status of the Lincoln Cliffs herd since 2002. Minimum population size is estimated by the count of rams and ewes observed during these flights. The population has been increasing over the previous five years, but is showing signs of leveling off (Figure 10). Although still at the low end of the goal of 90-100 animals, social tolerance, habitat quantity and quality, and disease threats will continue to be factors in the management of this population. For more details on the status of bighorn sheep in Washington, take a look at WDFW's 2014 Game Status and Trend Report.

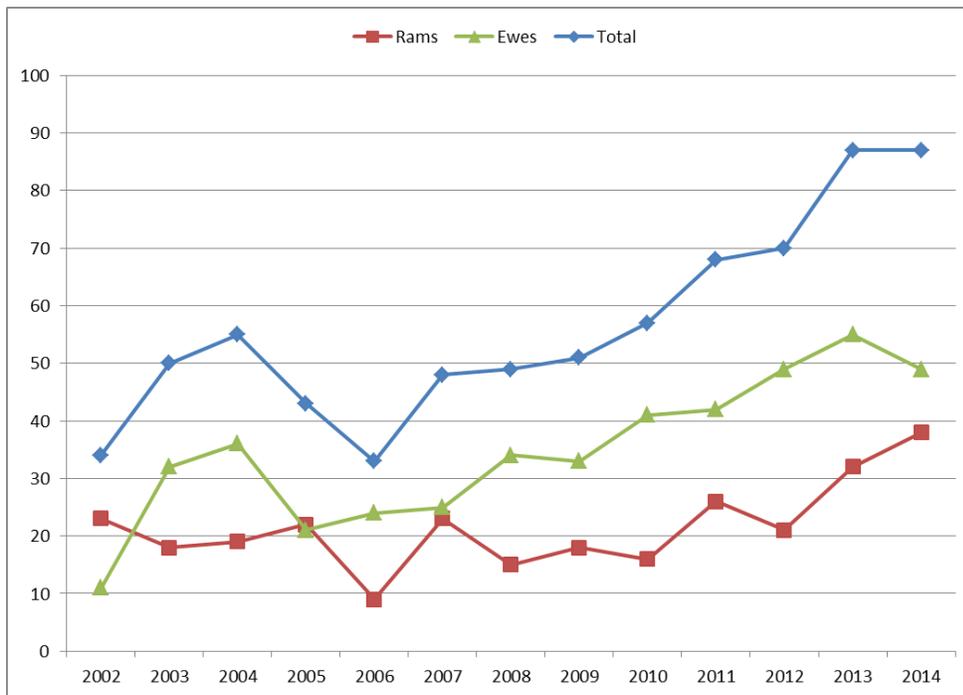


FIGURE 10. LINCOLN CLIFFS MINIMUM POPULATION ESTIMATE BY SEX FOR 2002-2014. ESTIMATED AS THE MAXIMUM COUNT FROM HELICOPTER SURVEYS CONDUCTED EACH YEAR.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Bighorn sheep hunting in Washington requires a special permit. One ram permit for the Lincoln Cliffs herd was offered each year from 1997–2013. In 2014 this was increased to two ram permits, and two will be issued again for the 2015 season. The average number of applicants for this hunt over the last five years is 1,540 and harvest success has remained at 100%. The area is almost entirely private property and permittees will need to obtain permission to access these properties for their hunt.

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

MOOSE

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Moose in northeast Washington are Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*). Moose were not believed to be common or widely distributed in the Rocky Mountain States in the 1800s, and it was not until 1908 when explorer George Shiras III found a fairly large population in Yellowstone National Park that this mountain race was described. Shiras moose were only rarely noted in Washington until the late 1950s when distribution began to expand into eastern Pend Oreille County. Moose have dramatically increased in numbers and distribution in the last couple of decades and now are relatively common throughout northeast Washington.

Statewide moose management goals are to: 1) Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage moose and their habitats to ensure healthy productive populations; 2) Manage for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes; and 3) Manage statewide moose populations for a sustained yield. The proximity of an expanding moose population near the Spokane metropolitan area adds the challenge of balancing population objectives with the community's tolerance of moose.

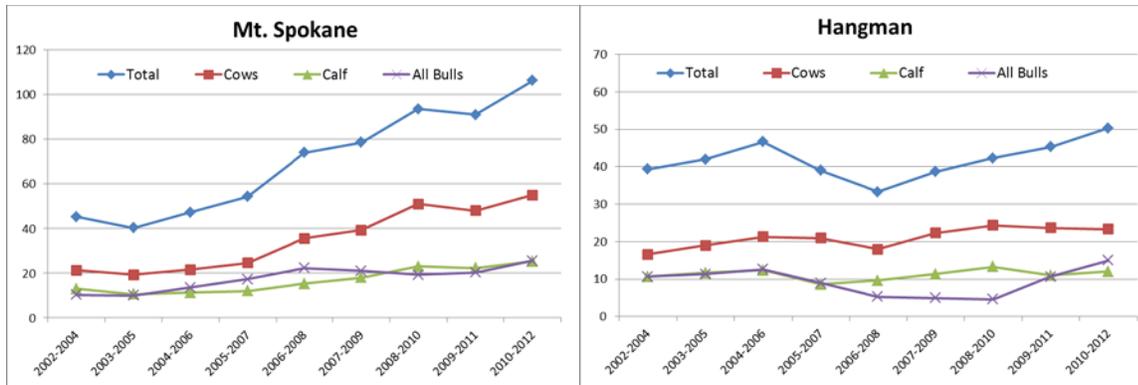


FIGURE 11. MOUNT SPOKANE (NORTH AND SOUTH) AND HANGMAN UNITS MOVING THREE YEAR AVERAGES OF OBSERVED MOOSE DURING DECEMBER/JANUARY AERIAL SURVEYS FROM 2002-2012.

Currently, WDFW uses a combination of aerial surveys and harvest metrics to monitor and manage moose populations in District 2. From 2002 to 2012, annual aerial surveys were flown during winter (December-January) by district biologists covering a sub-sample of each hunt unit in District 2. General trends in observed moose during aerial survey flights (Figure 11) indicate a stable to growing population in each area. However, there is large variability in the observed count between years, much of which is likely due to movement of moose back and forth across state lines (all hunt units border Idaho). In 2013, WDFW changed its survey methodology. The new method allows for a greater proportion of northeast Washington to be covered. However, this resulted in reduced coverage in each unit. The new methodology resulted in 76 moose (18 bulls, 40 cows, and 18 calves) observed in Mount Spokane and 24 moose (eight bulls, 13 cows, and three calves) in Hangman. No flights were conducted in 2014 due to lack of snow.

Calf to 100 cow ratios in the hunt units (Figure 12) have been fairly stable year to year and have averaged 50 for Hangman and 47 for Mount Spokane for the past 11 years, also indicating a stable to growing population. The low calf to 100 cow ratio in Hangman in 2013 is likely due to the new survey methodology and low number of moose observed.

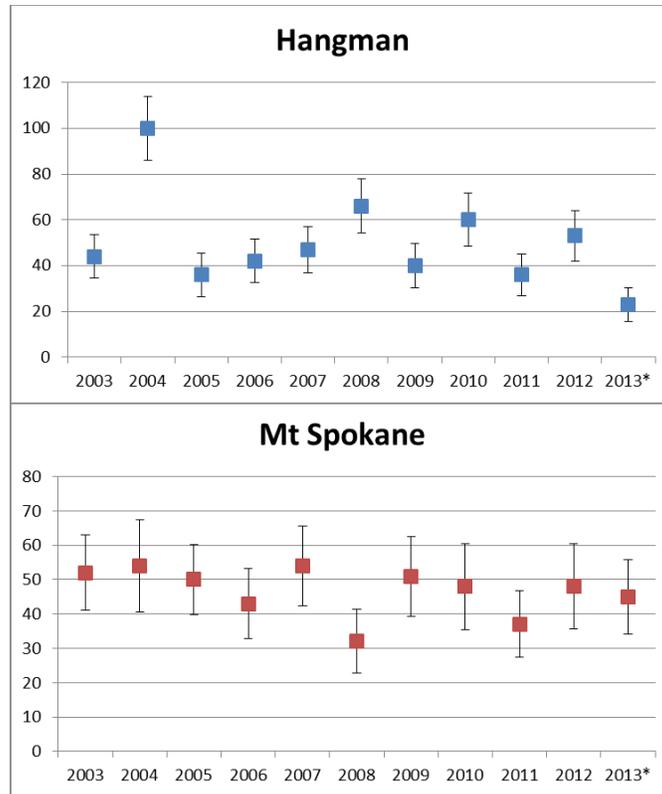


FIGURE 12. MOOSE CALF TO 100 COW RATIOS FROM AERIAL SURVEYS FROM 2003-2013 FOR MOUNT SPOKANE (MOUNT SPOKANE NORTH AND SOUTH COMBINED FOR 2012-2013) AND HANGMAN UNITS.

Harvest management emphasizes quality hunting opportunities through a limited entry permit process. Prior to 2012, District 2 had two moose hunt units, Mount Spokane and Hangman. In 2012, the Mount Spokane Unit was split into the Mount Spokane North and Mount Spokane South units (maps found at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/moose_units/) to help distribute hunters more evenly across the area and increase hunter opportunity. However, the harvest data presented herein combines the two units to allow for an easier comparison to previous years. Additionally, in 2015 the Hangman Unit was split into the Mica Peak and Cheney units for antlerless hunts only and the Spokane West Moose Unit was created. Prior to this, the area was part of the Huckleberry Unit. Both were altered to distribute hunters and allow WDFW to increase the number of tags offered.

Hunter success rates for Mount Spokane over the past 14 years have been consistently high, with an average of 95% (Figure 13). Hunter effort (days/kill) declined from 2001 to 2006, and has since remained stable at around four days per kill in Mount Spokane (Figure 13). Both of these harvest metrics indicate a stable to growing moose population in this area. The drop in success in the Hangman Unit in the past two years and the increase in days/kill in 2014 is of significant

concern and will be closely monitored. If the trends continue, permits will likely need to be reduced. For more detailed information related to the status of moose in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report, which is available for download on the WDFW website.

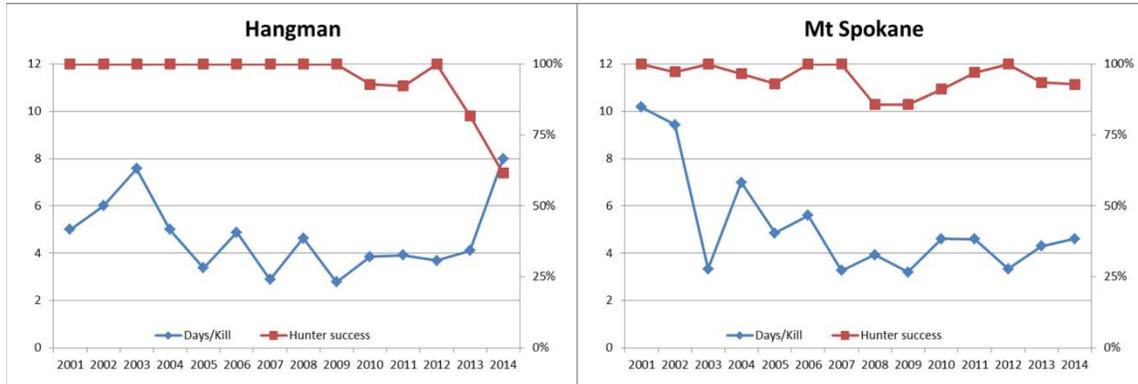


FIGURE 13. MOOSE HUNTER SUCCESS AND DAYS PER KILL FROM 2001-2014 FOR MOUNT SPOKANE (MOUNT SPOKANE NORTH AND SOUTH COMBINED FOR 2012-2013) AND HANGMAN UNITS.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

Moose hunting in Washington is by special permit only. Sixty-four permits (23 Any Moose and 41 Antlerless) are offered in District 2 at this time. Success rates for these hunts have been historically stable and high (Figure 13), and with most metrics indicating stable to increasing populations, success rates should continue to be good. However, success has dropped in recent years in the Hangman Unit. This is predominantly driven by the antlerless hunts. Success for the any moose hunts are still averaging >90% success over the past three years.

District 2 also has a Master Hunter Only Coordinated Damage Hunt (10 permits). However, the opportunity to hunt under this permit depends on problem moose occurring in a safe area to harvest. Over the course of this hunt's existence (started in 2010), there have been only six moose harvested.

The majority of the kills occur early in the season while roads are still open. However, hunters have been successful later in the season as well, and the largest moose have generally been killed later in the season. Antler spread of harvested moose has averaged about three feet for all units over the past 14 years (Table 1). However, in most years moose in the 3.5 foot range are harvested, and in both areas moose with a 50 inch or greater spread have been harvested. Another advantage to hunting early is that there will be no competition or interference from deer or elk modern firearm hunters.

Year	Hangman A			Mount Spokane A			Mount Spokane North A			Mount Spokane South A		
	Harv	Avg	Max	Harv	Avg	Max	Harv	Avg	Max	Harv	Avg	Max
2001	4	42	51	12	32	49						
2002	5	37	45	9	31	40						
2003	4	40	49	9	32	53						
2004	4	33	43	9	35	47						
2005	5	35	43	9	36	40						
2006	4	34	39	9	31	35						
2007	5	32	42	9	39	44						
2008	6	33	41	11	32	41						
2009	7	37	47	11	36	50						
2010	7	43	50	12	39	46						
2011	6	39	44	9	32	42						
2012	7	36	52				8	36	45	7	35	46
2013	5	37	45				7	35	44	8	35	40
2014	5	37	42				8	35	43	6	36	40
Total	74	37	52	109	34	53	23	36	45	21	35	46

TABLE 1. AVERAGE ANTLER SPREAD FOR HARVESTED MOOSE IN DISTRICT 2 BY HUNT UNIT.

Hunters should take note that moose are by nature a solitary animal and are scattered over very wide areas as individuals or in small groups. Early in the season, moose are widespread and snow may or may not be available for tracking. This is a good time to learn the country and view clear-cuts, since roads are still open, and many hunters take moose in October. While they can be found at any elevation, they are most likely found between 3,000 to 5,000 feet. In the fall they are looking for deciduous browse, primarily willow brush in clear-cuts or burns that are 15 years old or older. Moose seek out the cooler, moist drainage basins and slopes. North slopes or east flowing drainage basins are generally preferred. Moose are still in the rut in early October and some hunters have been effective with calls. By November, snow is common and locating

moose tracks and seeing these dark animals with a snow background is much easier. However, by mid to late November, there is usually enough snow that motor vehicle access can be limited. Experience shows that moose seek out snow rather than avoid it in late fall and early winter. Actual elevation of where moose may be found varies, but in years without much snow, they are found right around the top of the mountain. In years with a lot of snow, they move down to the foothill band around the mountain

Moose habitat in the district is largely located on private timber company lands, but smaller private ownerships can also harbor good moose concentrations. Inland Empire Paper (IEP) is the largest of the timber companies in District 2. IEP does charge an access fee. However, they are the only timber company that allows motor vehicle access, dependent on the area and time of year. See their website at <http://www.iepco.com/recreation.htm> for details and maps. Permit holders should exercise caution and know where they and the moose they are targeting are at all times given the percentage of private land ownership, proximity to Idaho, and non-hunting lands (state & county parks, national wildlife refuge) within the moose hunting units.

WATERFOWL

At the statewide level, District 2 is not known for its duck hunting and is not a large duck production area due to the ephemeral nature of the waterbodies in the Channeled Scablands. Local surveys indicate brood production is down this year relative to last year's high, but is still in the range of normal for the area (Figure 14). The most common breeding duck species in the area are mallard, gadwall, and redhead. Other common waterfowl species in District 2 include ruddy duck and all three teal species. Based on Breeding Population Surveys (BPOP), overall duck numbers appear to be increasing in the Channeled Scablands/ Potholes region of eastern Washington, of which District 2 is a part (Figure 15). Canada goose and American coot counts show similar trends. Given the limited number of local nesting ducks, the waterfowl hunting opportunity in this district is dependent upon the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska, the amount of precipitation (winter snow and/or fall rains), and how long waterbodies remain ice free. Given the lack of snow during the 2014/15 winter and the severe drought this summer, hunters should focus their efforts on larger perennial waterbodies unless fall rains are significant. For more information on waterfowl hunting, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/index.html> and Waterfowl Hunting Areas in Region 1.

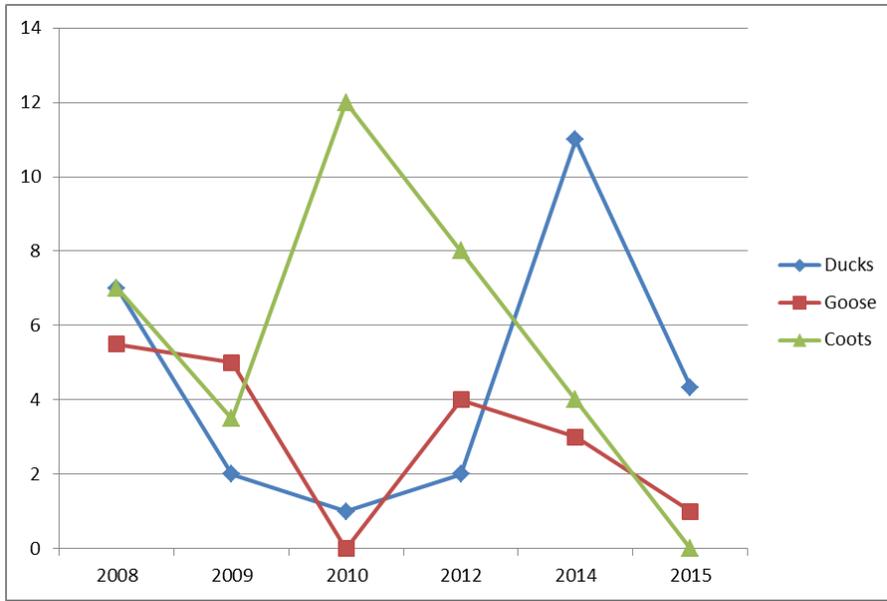


FIGURE 14. AVERAGE NUMBER OF BROODS OBSERVED PER ROUTE FOR DISTRICT 2 BROOD PRODUCTION GROUND SURVEYS.

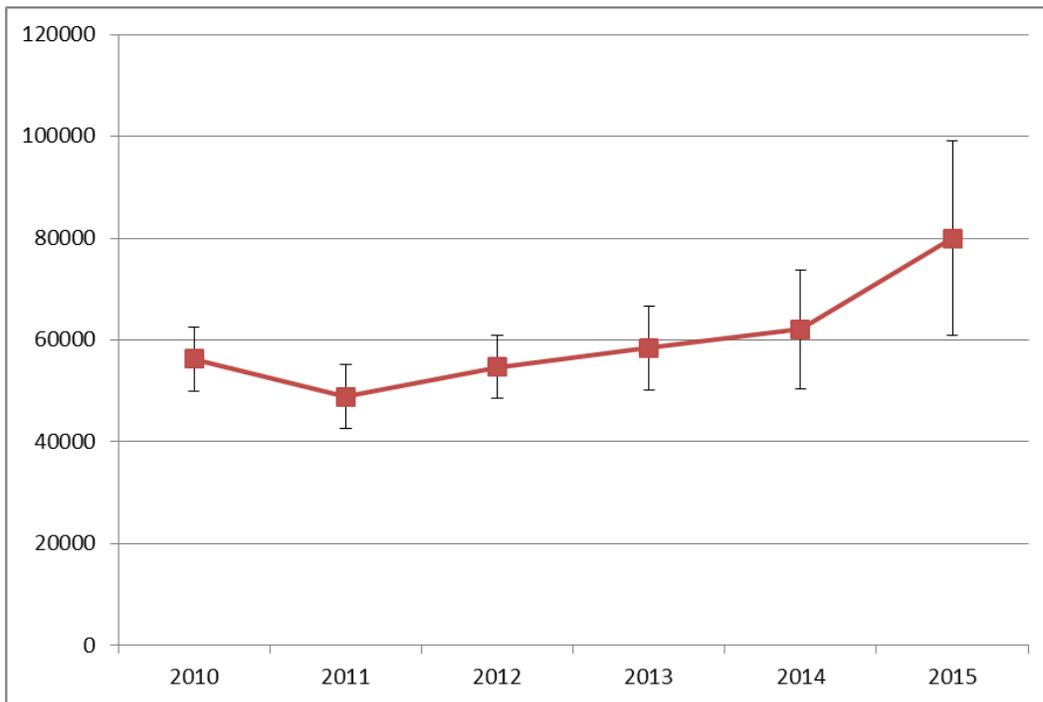


FIGURE 15. TOTAL DUCK ESTIMATES FROM BREEDING POPULATION SURVEYS FOR THE POTHOLES REGION OF EASTERN WASHINGTON.

PHEASANT

Across the district, pheasant count surveys were 4% higher this year than the previous five year average (Figure 16). However, this was driven by the St. John route (up 54%), while the other routes are negative relative to their previous five year averages. Spring & summer weather was good and should lead to good production and recruitment. District wide trends in harvest continue to decline, while hunter numbers appear to have stabilized (Figure 17, top), mirroring statewide trends. Days per hunter have remained fairly stable in the district, while harvest per hunter has declined (Figure 17, bottom). The majority of pheasant hunting occurs in Whitman County, which has ~five times the harvest and ~three times more hunters than Lincoln or Spokane. Overall, pheasant populations in the district should see some recruitment this year, but are experiencing long term declines. This is a trend seen across the country, and though the cause of the decline in pheasant populations in Washington is undefined, it likely results from several causes associated with current farming practices and habitat loss.

For more information on harvest statistics see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Pheasant - Statewide and by County. For more information on pheasant status in Washington see the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

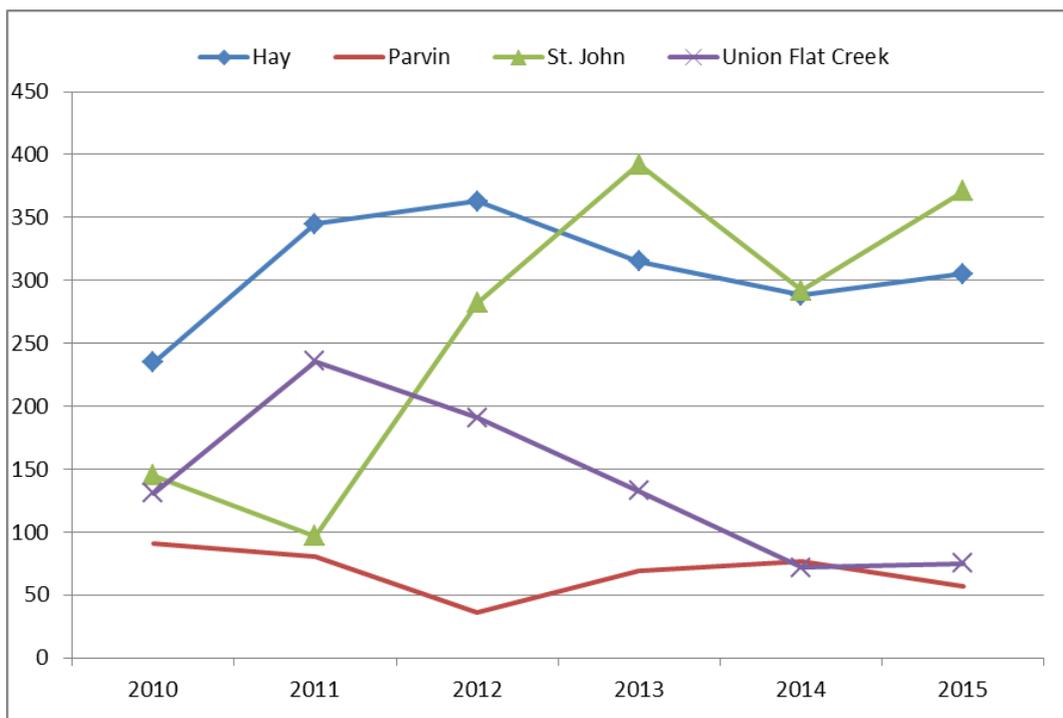


FIGURE 16. MAXIMUM COUNT FROM PHEASANT CROW ROUTES IN DISTRICT 2 FROM 2010-2015.

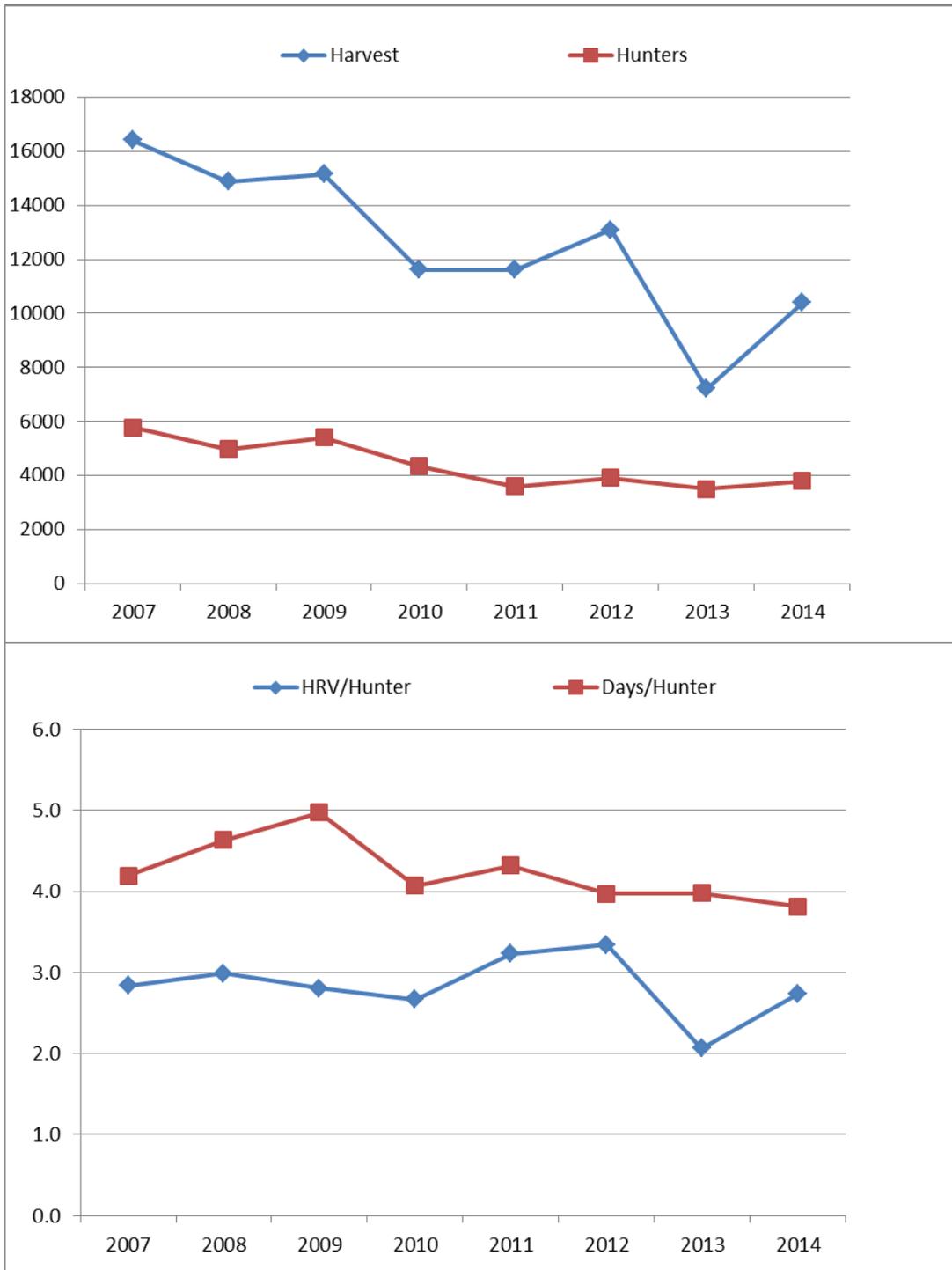


FIGURE 17. TOP GRAPH: PHEASANT HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014. BOTTOM GRAPH: PHEASANT HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014.

Since most of the land in this district is private, hunters will need to spend some time “knocking on doors” to get access to the better sites. See the “Private Lands Program” below for private land access program acres by GMU. Many new cooperators have been enrolled in WDFW hunter access programs in the last couple years in southeast Washington. The locations are mapped on the GoHunt website.

WDFW will also be releasing game farm produced roosters once again this fall at the traditional release sites, which are also mapped on the GoHunt website and the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program publication at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/eastern/>. For more information see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Pheasant - Statewide and by County at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/harvest/2014/reports/small_game.php.

CHUKAR AND GRAY PARTRIDGE

Nest and brood success for chukars and partridge should be good, with decent spring weather leading to good nest success. However, the severe drought may reduce brood survival and recruitment. Harvest has been quite variable the past two years, but in 2014 was just about average, relative to the long term average (Figure 18). Hunter numbers, effort (days/hunter), and harvest per hunter remain stable (Figure 18).

Partridge broods of 10-12 chicks have been seen regularly during field work in Lincoln County. Partridge are most common in Lincoln and Whitman counties and are most often seen in and adjacent to agricultural fields.

There are very few chukar in District 2. They are predominantly found along the breaks of the Snake River. Terrain is steep and rocky with limited public access from above. There is some access via US Army Corps of Engineers along the Snake River from below, but not all of the Corps lands allow hunting. See the website at <http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation.aspx> for details.

For more information on gray partridge and chukar see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by county, and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

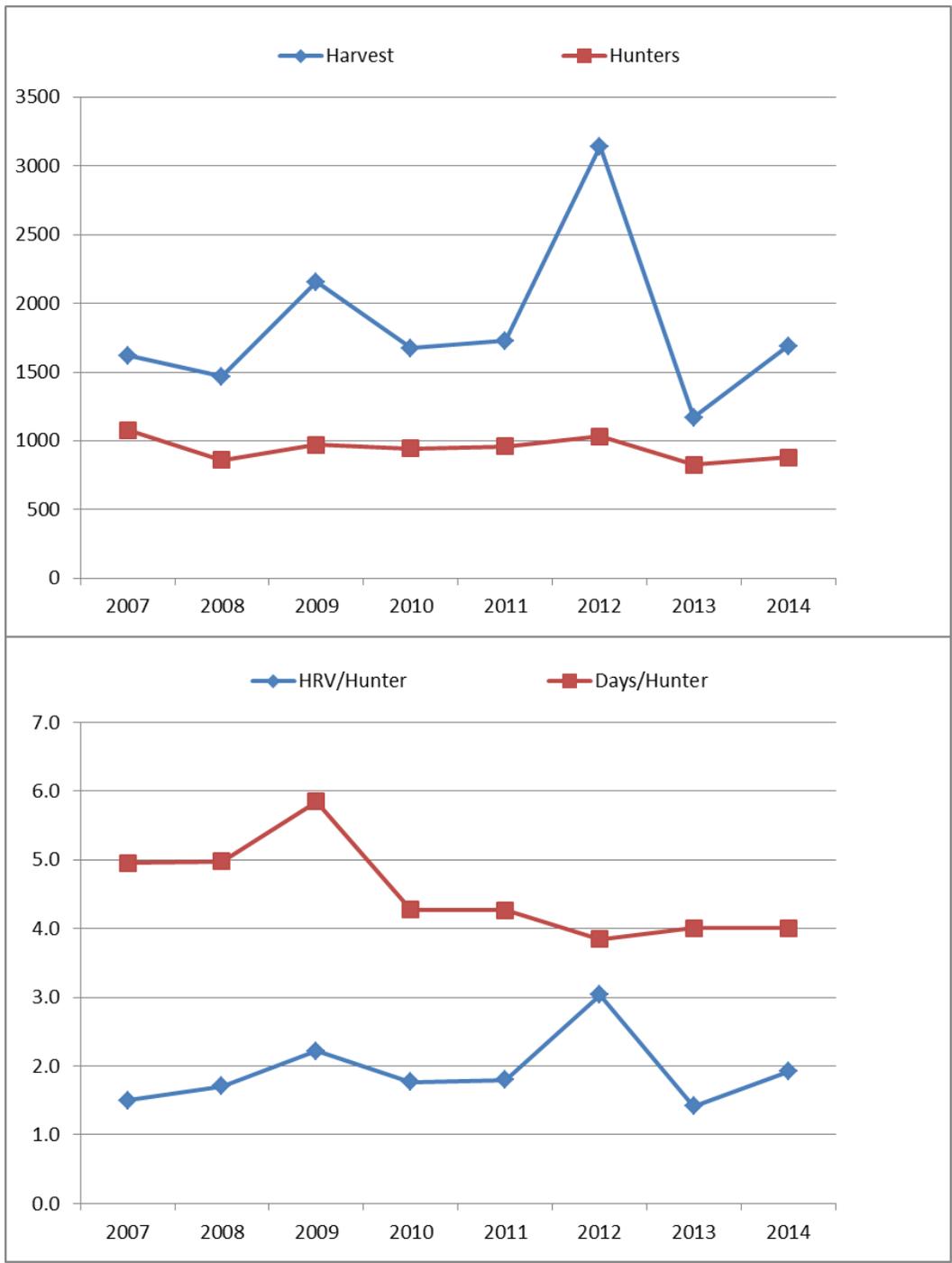


FIGURE 18. TOP GRAPH: CHUKAR AND PARTRIDGE HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014. BOTTOM GRAPH: CHUKAR AND PARTRIDGE HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014.

FOREST GROUSE

The mild winter and decent spring weather should combine to produce good nesting and brood success this year. However, the severe drought and fires may reduce summer survival and recruitment into the fall population. Populations overall appear to be down in District 2, but it's still possible to shoot one opportunistically in the forested portions of GMUs 124, 127, and 133. Harvest and hunter numbers are down relative to long term averages, but have been relatively stable the past five years (Figure 19, top). Hunter effort remains stable at ~five days per hunter, while hunter success (harvest/hunter) is showing signs of recovering (Figure 19, bottom).

For more information on forest grouse see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by County, and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

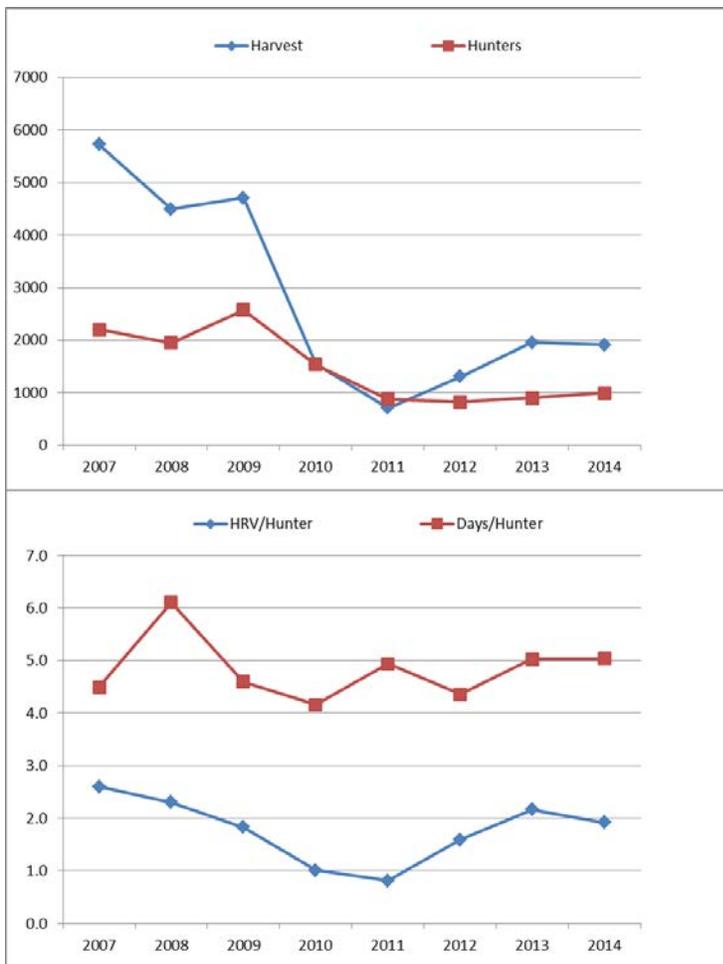


FIGURE 19. TOP GRAPH: FOREST GROUSE HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014. BOTTOM GRAPH: FOREST GROUSE HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014.

QUAIL

Quail populations appear to have recovered from the hard winters of 2008 and 2009. Prospects look good, with decent spring weather this year for nests and broods. However, severe drought and fires will likely impact summer survival. Good brood numbers were seen in south Spokane and Whitman counties. All harvest metrics show a long term negative trend, but for the past five years they have been stable (Figure 20), indicating a relatively stable population. Access can be a problem, especially with most of the good quail habitat occurring in and around farmsteads and towns. For more information on harvest statistics see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Quail - Statewide and by County. For more information on quail status in Washington see the most recent Game Status and Trend Report

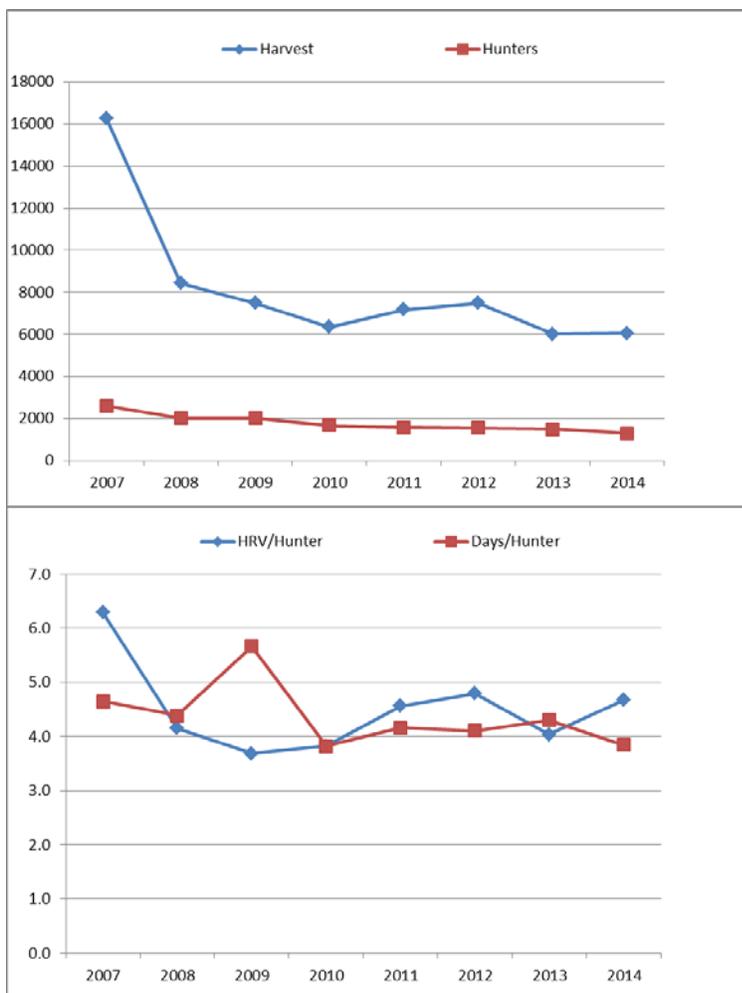


FIGURE 20. TOP GRAPH: QUAIL HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014. BOTTOM GRAPH: QUAIL HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014.

TURKEY

Opportunistic observations during field work, public reports, and damage claims all indicate that the turkey population is doing very well in GMUs 124-133 and expanding into GMUs 136-142. Again, the district is predominantly private land and hunters will need to secure access. Access during the spring hunt can be competitive, but access should be relatively easy to acquire in GMU 124 for the fall seasons.

For more information on turkey in Washington, see the Turkey Game Harvest Statistics and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

DOVE

Doves in District 2 occur at low population densities relative to the Columbia Basin and similar regions. As often as not, cool temperatures just prior to or during the dove season push many doves further south out of the district. Hunter harvest metrics indicate a highly variable, but relatively stable population (Figure 21), with harvest averaging ~3000 birds a year by ~300 hunters. Hunter effort (days/hunter) has been slowly increasing the past five years, while harvest per hunter shows high annual variation (Figure 21). It is important to note that eastside hunters have an additional dove opportunity – the Eurasian collared dove. This dove is an exotic dove that has just invaded most of eastern Washington and can be hunted with a license all year round.

For more information on doves see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: 2014 Statewide and by County, and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

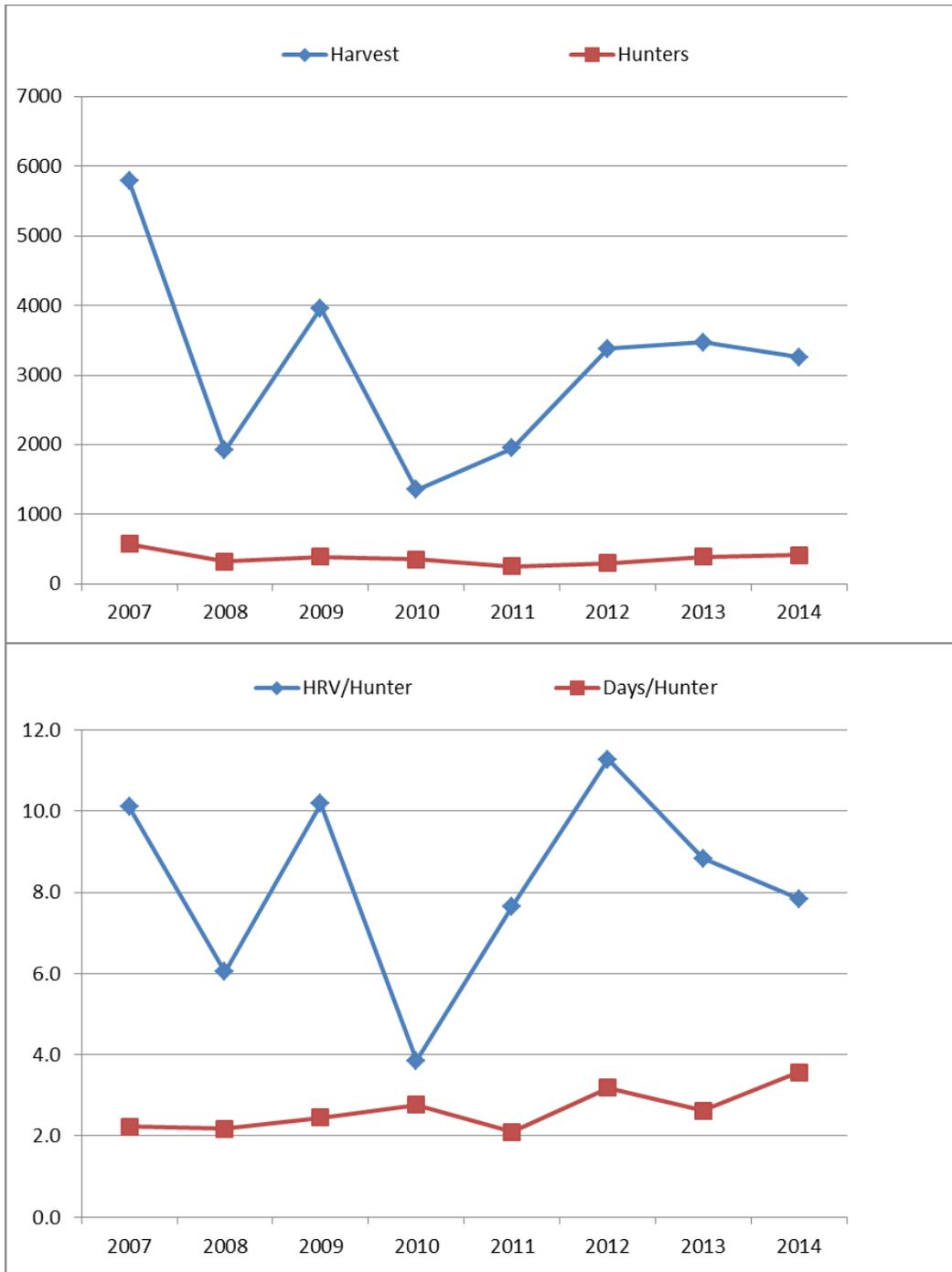


FIGURE 21. TOP GRAPH: DOVE HARVEST AND HUNTER NUMBERS FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014. BOTTOM GRAPH: DOVE HARVEST AND DAYS HUNTED PER HUNTER FOR DISTRICT 2 FROM 2007-2014.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

The majority of the district is privately owned. However, WDFW and BLM own ~60,000 acres in the center of Lincoln County and ~15,000 acres in northwest Whitman County. For more information on BLM property, or to order maps, please visit the blm.gov website. For more information on WDFW lands, see the wildlife area webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/index.html.

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 on the DNR website at <http://dnr.wa.gov/>.

The US Army Corps of Engineers also maintains lands associated with the Snake River that are open to the public for recreational purposes. Not all of these lands are open to hunting, so hunters will want to research beforehand.

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) has a limited entry youth waterfowl hunt (details available through TNWR) and allows elk hunting by permit only (permits allotted via WDFW special permit draw in June).

Riverside State Park and Mount Spokane State Park, along with all county parks in Spokane County, are open to public access, but NOT to hunting.

There are several private timber companies that allow hunting in Spokane County, and throughout the district there are private landowners enrolled in WDFW hunt access programs (see “Private Lands Program” below and visit the WDFW Private Lands Access web site at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/).

PRIVATE LANDS

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 five basic access agreement types: Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP), Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH), Hunt by Reservation (HBR), Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP), and Register to Hunt (RTH). Total accessible acreage in District 2 is 170,809 acres – 24,892 in Spokane County, 45,324 in Lincoln County, and 100,593 in Whitman County. A summary of these acres by GMU and the program are in Table 2 below. The LHP in GMU 130 is managed by the Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA). Access is only available through WDFW Special Permitting and CPWMA Raffle Permit Hunts (see WDFW Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations Pamphlet). More information on the other four access programs and where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's [GoHunt site](#) and at the [WDFW Private Lands Access web site](#).

Game Management Unit (GMU)	Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP)		Feel Free To Hunt (FFTH)		Hunt By Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)		Register to Hunt (RTH)	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
124 Mt Spokane	2	298	2	9,228						
127 Mica Peak			1	3,130						
130 Cheney	1	6,246					1	5,990		
133 Roosevelt	18	20,788	1	612						
136 Harrington	12	16,658	7	7,266						
139 Steptoe	15	12,620	7	5,286	22	48,852			2	320
142 Almota	8	12,111	6	3,248	10	18,156				
TOTAL	56	68,721	24	28,770	32	67,008	1	5,990	2	320

TABLE 2. ACRES OF PRIVATE LAND ENROLLED IN WDFW ACCESS PROGRAMS BY GMU IN DISTRICT 2.

2015

PAUL WIK, District Wildlife Biologist
MARK VEKASY, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 3 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties

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BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

This report was written before the full extent of this year's wildfires in northcentral and northeast Washington was known. We will update this information as soon as possible after the fires subside and their impact on hunting opportunities becomes clear.

While the department currently has no plans to close any hunting seasons due to wildfires, access restrictions are in place on many public and private lands in these areas. Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions and other emergency rules before you head out.

For more information see:

- [Wildfire status updates](#)
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [Chelan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Okanogan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Stevens County updates](#)
- [Contact list for major landowners](#)

Nate Pamplin
Assistant Director, Wildlife Program
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

DISTRICT 3 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) District 3 is located in southeast Washington and consists of 13 Game Management Units (GMUs): 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 154 (Blue Creek), 157 (Watershed- Closed entry except by permit), 162 (Dayton), 163 (Marengo), 166 (Tucannon), 169 (Wenaha), 172 (Mountain View), 175 (Lick Creek), 178 (Peola), 181 (Couse), and 186 (Grande Ronde). Administratively, District 3 includes Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin counties, and is one of three management districts (1, 2, and 3) comprising WDFW's Region 1. The northern part of District 3 (north of Highway 12) includes the southeastern portion of the Palouse Prairie ecoregion, while the southern part of the district is in the Blue Mountains ecoregion.

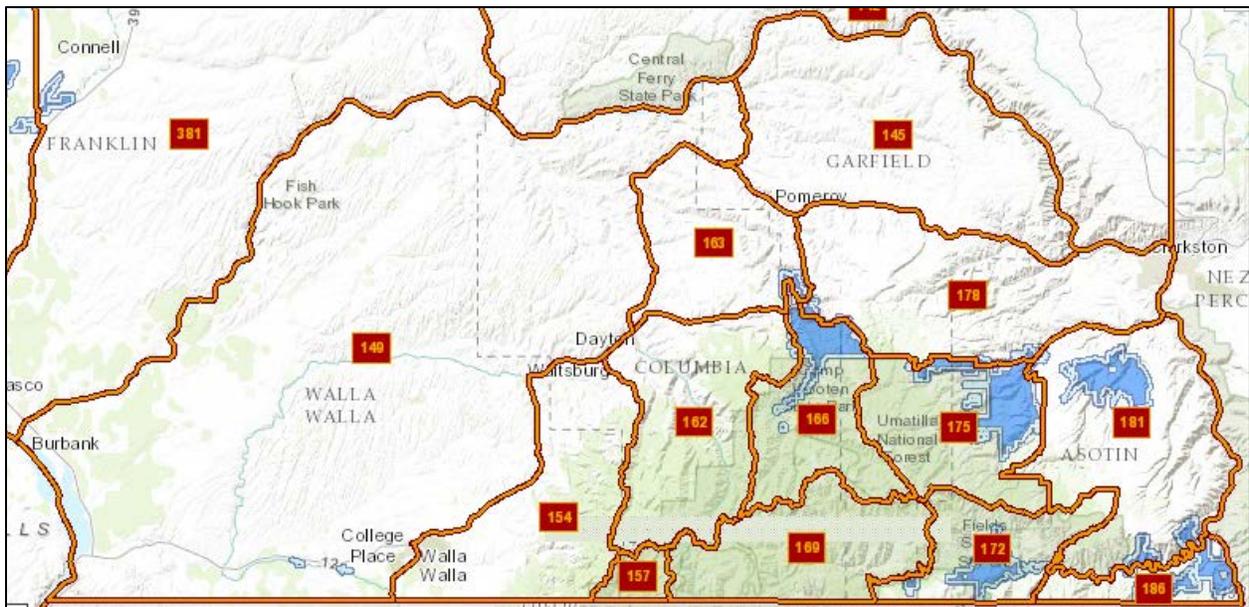


FIGURE 1. GMU MAP (FROM GOHUNT) DEPICTING DISTRICT 3 GMU BOUNDARIES, WEST AND SOUTH OF THE SNAKE RIVER, EAST OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER, AND NORTH OF THE OREGON BORDER. GREEN IS US FOREST SERVICE AND BLUE IS WDFW WILDLIFE AREAS.

The landscape in District 3 is dominated by agricultural land in the prairie and foothill regions, with interspersed grassland areas and brushy “eyebrows” and draws. In the mountains, the most common habitat is characterized by second growth forests consisting primarily of Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, grand fir, and subalpine fir. The Blue Mountains have been characterized as a high plateau dissected by deep draws and canyons carved by numerous creeks and rivers. The Tucannon and Touchet Rivers flow north out of the mountains, while forks of Wenaha River and its major tributaries (Deep Saddle, Beaver, Rock, Butte, Weller, Fairview, Crooked Creeks) generally flow south. Numerous creeks drain the western edge of the foothills, including Mill Creek, with its drainage located in the Walla Walla Watershed.



Blue Creek in the western foothills of the Blue Mountains

District 3 is most well-known for its elk hunting opportunities in the Blue Mountains and mule deer hunting opportunities in prairie GMUs. However, quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including white-tailed deer, black bears, turkey, and pheasant. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and harvest-per-unit effort (HPUE) for most game species in District 3 during the 2014 hunting season, and how those estimates compare to the 2013 season and the five-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

Species	Harvest					HPUE				
	5-yr avg.	2013	2014	% change (5yr)	% change (2013)	5-yr avg.	2013	2014	% change (5yr)	% change (2013)
Elk (General)	151	151	154	1%	1%	115	110	107	-7%	-3%
Elk (Bull Permit)	120	112	112	0%	0%	74%	59%	58%	(Permit success)	
Deer	2,488	2,995	2,802	19%	-10%	18	16	16	-10%	-2%
Bear	103	108	89	-14%	-18%	104	95	130	-25%	37%
Cougar	15	20	13	-12%	-35%	Not estimated		**	**	
Wild Turkey	730	638	742	2%	16%	0.10	0.09	0.11	5%	22%
Canada Goose	3,011	3,067	3,699	23%	21%	0.93	0.95	0.99	6%	4%
Chukar Partridge	1,998	1,014	1,750	-12%	73%	0.86	0.79	1.17	36%	48%
Cottontail Rabbit	269	219	314	17%	43%	0.29	0.30	0.34	16%	12%
Duck	22,914	21,776	28,693	25%	32%	2.41	2.41	2.67	11%	11%
Forest Grouse	2,936	1,771	2,057	-30%	16%	0.34	0.40	0.44	30%	10%
Gray Partridge	1,564	504	1,084	-42%	81%	0.68	0.47	0.48	-29%	3%
Mourning Dove	2,081	1,818	2,125	2%	18%	2.62	2.56	3.06	17%	19%
Pheasant	11,366	7,157	8,099	-29%	13%	0.69	0.59	0.62	-11%	5%
Quail	6,712	3,516	6,931	3%	97%	0.94	0.78	1.23	31%	59%
Snowshoe Hare	40	66	108	169%	64%	0.42	0.60	0.26	-39%	-57%

TABLE 1. GENEREAL SEASON HARVEST AND HPUE ESTIMATES FOR MOST GAME SPECIES FOUND IN DISTRICT 3 DURING THE 2013 AND 2014 HUNTING SEASONS. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE AND A COMPARISON OF 2014 ESTIMATES TO 2013 ESTIMATES AND THE FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE. HPUE IS EXPRESSED AS #HUNTER DAYS/HARVEST FOR ELK, DEER, AND BEAR, AND AS #HARVESTED/HUNTER DAY FOR ALL OTHER SPECIES.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

In Washington, elk are managed at the herd level, while harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. In general, each herd spans several GMUs that collectively define the range of a population that has little interchange with adjacent herds. . Population objectives are set at the herd level, and survey data is summarized at that level as well. District 3 is comprised of the single Blue Mountains elk herd (GMUs 145, 149, 154, 157, 162, 163, 166, 169, 172, 175, 178, 181, and 186).

Only the GMUs within the forested portion of District 3 are managed for elk population stability or growth (GMUs 154, 157, 162, 166, 169, 172, 175, and 186). GMUs 145, 149, 163, 178, and 181 are managed to ‘limit’ elk numbers, although some recreational opportunity is provided as determined through surveys and damage complaints. Minimizing elk depredation to agricultural crops occurs in all GMUs on private agricultural lands. Additional management objectives include maintaining a minimum of 22 bulls:100 cows in the post-season population, with a range of 22 – 28 bulls:100 cows identified as the management target.

Biologists in District 3 conduct an annual helicopter survey within the core elk areas to estimate the post-winter population size. In the spring of 2015, biologists generated a population estimate of 5,307 (90% Confidence Interval of +/- 298) elk. Surveys are conducted along the state line of Oregon (and within Oregon), resulting in approximately 500-600 elk being classified that likely are not available for harvest in Washington during the fall. The average five-year population estimate prior to 2015 was 5,267 elk, which is less than 1% lower than the 2015 estimate.

Calf ratios remained stable over the past couple of years and were estimated at 31.5 calves:100 cows (90% CI +/- 2.3), the third highest recorded level since aerial surveys were implemented in 1991. This increase in calf production should directly relate to a high number of spikes available for harvest in the fall of 2015. Bull ratios also rose over the past year and will result in an increased number of branched-bull permits in years to come. This should result in increased opportunities for this year’s branched-bull permit holders.

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 at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01557/>.

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

Most general season hunters in the Blue Mountains have been hunting here for many years, with the exception of the branched-bull tag holders and archery hunters in GMU 175. New hunters to this area will have to consider a number of options, such as weapon type, private land access versus public land, difficulty of hunt desired (wilderness versus highly roaded landscapes), and as archery hunters, whether the availability of antlerless opportunity is important.

Throughout District 3, the harvest of branched-bulls is regulated through the permit system. All GMUs in District 3, except 145, some hunts in 149, and 186, are managed for quality. The drawing of these tags can be difficult and many hunters invest years of applying before successfully obtaining a permit. New hunters to the district are advised to contact the district biologists prior to applying for a hunt to better understand individual GMU limitations. Once a permit is obtained, district biologists are happy to provide information on where to hunt within the GMU that fits the hunter's needs.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH GMU:

GMU 145: This is a private land unit managed for zero elk. Very few elk reside in this unit, their movements are unpredictable and make them difficult to locate, and access to their locations is often not available.

GMU149: This large GMU is predominantly private land that is managed to minimize elk numbers because of conflicts with agricultural activities. A relatively large number of bulls inhabit the southwest corner of the GMU and do cross back and forth between Oregon and Washington. Most harvest occurs in the area of the Boise Cascade poplar farm. Permission to access this property is required **prior to even applying** for hunts (see footnote in the pamphlet for contact information). Applicants successful in drawing a permit without prior contact may not be allowed to hunt the tree farm, and availability of other areas to find and hunt elk in GMU 149 are extremely limited. An additional herd of elk exists in the northern portion of the unit on the breaks of the Snake River. This is a very difficult herd to hunt without access to numerous landowners, as the elk are highly mobile in this area and can be difficult to locate.

GMU 154: This GMU is 99% private land, but does include numerous landowners in the WDFW access program. The elk are heavily hunted in this GMU due to conflicts with agricultural activities. Access has historically been available to branched-bull tag holders as well as general season hunters.

GMU 157: This GMU is 99% public land, but closed to the public to any entry other than special permit holders. The Mill Creek Watershed is the source of drinking water for the City of Walla Walla, and access is highly regulated and enforced. Successful permit applicants will be contacted by the USFS with an information packet containing rules for hunting the watershed. This unit is very steep and rugged, contains few maintained trails, and is physically challenging to hunt. No scouting inside the watershed boundaries is permitted; only the perimeter roads and trails can be accessed.

GMU 162: The Dayton GMU is a mix of private and public lands and supports approximately 1,000 elk. This unit has the highest density of general season hunters in District 3. Access to the northern portion of the GMU can be difficult as it is predominantly private. The southern portion of the unit is predominantly USFS and lands owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Both of these lands are open to the public with motorized vehicle restrictions scattered throughout.

GMU 163: This GMU is not managed for elk and only occasionally supports huntable numbers of elk. The GMU is predominantly private land.

GMU 166: This GMU has had the highest success rate for general season hunters recently, but also has one of the higher densities of hunters. The unit is predominantly USFS and WDFW owned lands. A portion of the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness extends into this GMU and offers backcountry hunting opportunities.

GMU 169: Most of this GMU is located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. Numerous road access points occur along the edge of this GMU, but a majority of the unit requires backpacking or horse packing to access. Elk densities have remained low in this unit for the past 20 years and do not show indications of improving. This can be a physically challenging unit to hunt.

GMU 172: Elk numbers have risen in this GMU recently and can offer good general season opportunity, depending upon access. Approximately 60% of this GMU is private and access can be challenging. The USFS lands within this GMU are physically challenging to hunt. WDFW has been acquiring land within this GMU recently (4-0 Wildlife Area), but deer and elk hunting there is managed by permit only access.

GMU 175: This GMU is predominantly public land owned by WDFW, USFS, and Washington DNR. Access is good throughout the unit. This is the only unit where archery hunters can harvest antlerless elk without a permit in the Blue Mountains, resulting in very high density of hunters during archery season.

GMU 178: This private land unit is managed to minimize elk numbers due to conflict with agricultural activities. Access can be challenging to obtain. Elk numbers are highly variable in the unit and do not offer reliable recreational opportunity during the general season without knowledge of landowners and herd behavior.

GMU 181: This private land unit is managed to minimize elk numbers due to conflict with agricultural activities. Access can be challenging to obtain. Elk numbers are highly variable in the unit and do not offer reliable recreational opportunity during the general season without knowledge of landowners and herd behavior.

GMU 186: This unit is split equally between private and public lands, with very limited private land access available. This GMU is predominantly winter range for elk in Oregon, although approximately 100 elk reside in the unit throughout the year. The individual elk may reside on private land throughout the season where access is not available, although some years have proven highly successful for the few hunters that know the unit.

The information provided in Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how District 3 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are from the 2014

harvest reports. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of elk harvested and hunters per square mile.

Each GMU was ranked from 1 to 11 for elk harvested/mi² (bulls only for modern firearm and cows included with bulls for archery), hunters/mi², and hunter success rates. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum. The modern firearm comparisons are the most straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same in each GMU.

For archery seasons, hunters have to consider that antlerless elk may be harvested in one public land GMU (175) and on private lands throughout multiple GMUs. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs. Hunters should keep these differences in mind when comparing and interpreting the information provided in Table 2.

MODERN FIREARM											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	Rank Sum
149	1409	7	0.00	9	63	0.04	1	11.1%	2	3	12
154	216	12	0.06	6	279	1.29	5	4.3%	7	3	18
162	210	18	0.09	4	706	3.36	9	2.5%	9	2	21
166	131	15	0.11	3	337	2.57	8	4.5%	6	1	17
169	161	15	0.09	5	209	1.30	6	7.2%	4	1	15
172	108	31	0.29	1	246	2.28	7	12.6%	1	2	9
175	158	23	0.15	2	596	3.77	10	3.9%	8	1	20
178	275	1	0.00	10	110	0.40	3	0.9%	10	3	23
181	262	4	0.02	8	62	0.24	2	6.5%	5	3	15
186	53	3	0.06	7	27	0.51	4	11.1%	3	2	14
ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	Rank Sum
149	1409	0	0	7	9	0.01	2	0.0%	7	3	16
154	216	13	0.03	3	123	0.63	8	10.6%	1	3	12
162	210	8	0.02	4	181	0.78	9	4.4%	4	2	17
166	131	0	0	7	50	0.37	6	0.0%	7	1	20
169	161	1	0.01	5	46	0.25	5	2.2%	6	1	16
172	108	0	0.06	2	42	0.43	7	0.0%	7	2	16
175	158	16	0.15	1	240	1.68	10	6.7%	2	1	13
178	275	3	0.01	5	61	0.18	4	4.9%	3	3	12
181	262	1	0	7	24	0.08	3	4.2%	5	3	15
186	53	0	0	7	0	0	1	0.0%	7	2	15

MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	Rank Sum
172	108	6	0.01	NA	52	0.4	NA	11.50%	NA	2	NA

TABLE 2. RANK SUM ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES A QUICK AND GENERAL COMPARISON OF HOW TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES COMPARE AMONG GMUS DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER SEASONS. GMUS ARE GENERALLY LIMITED TO SPIKE BULL HARVEST, BUT SOME MAY HAVE ANTLERLESS OPPORTUNITY AS WELL (SEE HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS). DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON 2014 HARVEST REPORTS.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

It is typically uncommon for elk populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 3 where severe winter weather conditions seldom occur. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to most years. In 2014, calf numbers remained high and should result in a similar number of spikes on the landscape during 2015. Hunter numbers also typically do not change substantially from one year to the next. Weather does change from year to year, which will influence success rates.

New in 2015 is the number of GMUs available for muzzleloader hunters to pursue spike bulls. A majority of the Blue Mountains GMUs were added in 2015. It is too early to know how the hunters will distribute themselves and what effects this will have on the number of spikes available for the modern firearm hunters and future recruitment into the branched-bull age classes.

HOW TO FIND ELK

When hunting elk in District 3, 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 open ridge tops where they can glass animals from a considerable distance. During the general season, past research on bulls has indicated that a majority of the elk will

move to north aspect, mid-slope timbered hillsides within one day of the opener. With only nine days to hunt the general season, there is a lot of pressure the first few days. Pressure declines as the season progresses and may allow the elk to return to normal behaviors if they are not close to major roads.

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, on public land, hunters should not let a locked gate 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.

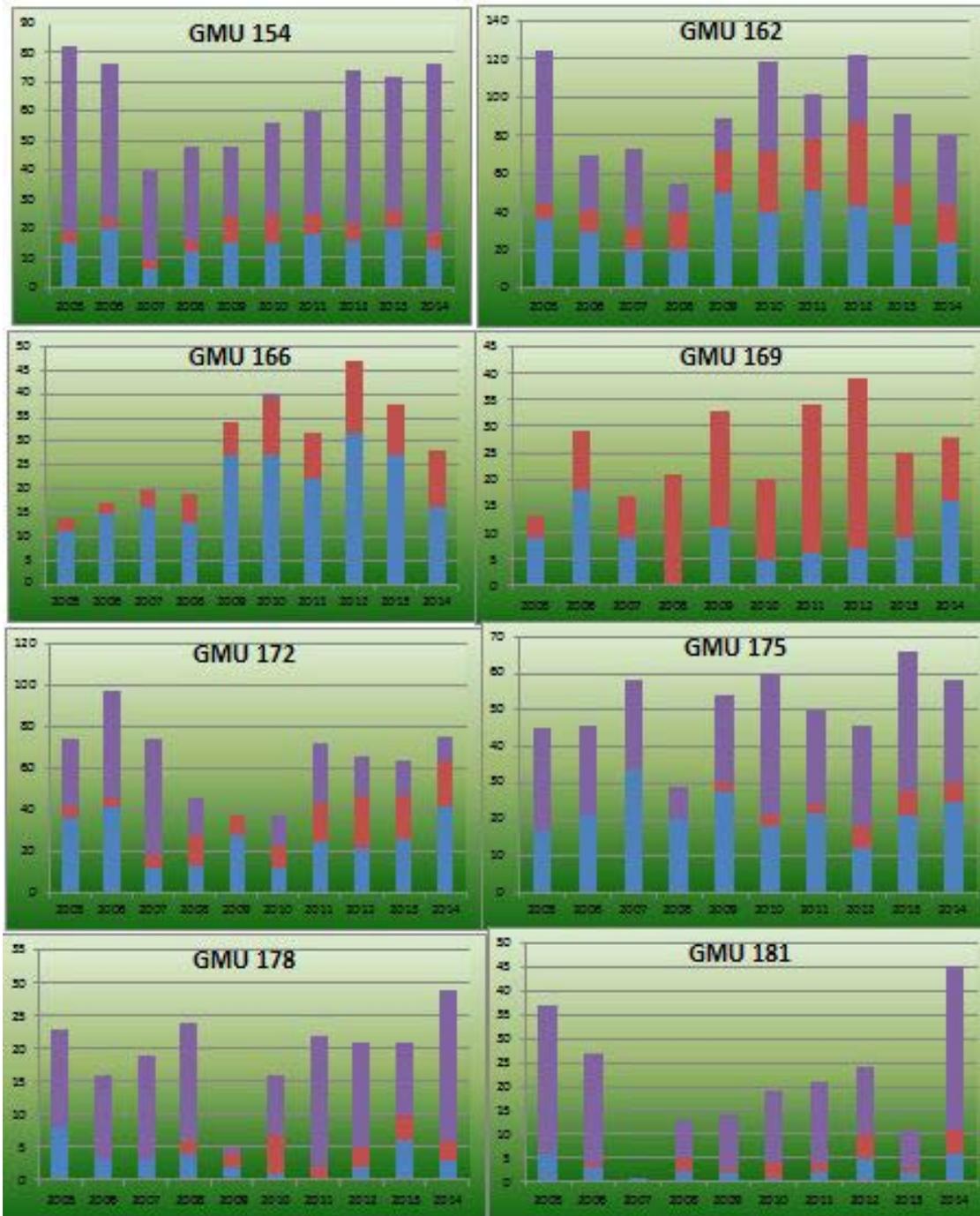


FIGURE 2. TEN YEAR HARVEST TRENDS IN YEARLING BULLS (BLUE), BRANCHED BULLS (RED), AND ANTLERLESS (PURPLE) ELK HARVESTED DURING GENERAL AND PERMIT SEASONS.

ELK AREAS

There are six Elk Areas in District 3: Elk Area 1010 (Dayton private lands), Elk Area 1008 and 1009 (Wenaha Wilderness), Elk Area 1013 (Mountain View Private), Elk Area 1040 (4-0 Wildlife Area) and Elk Area 1016 (Dayton USFS).

Elk Area 1010 is used to focus antlerless and branched-bull elk hunting on private land in the Dayton Unit. In the past, branched-bull tag holders focused on public lands where access was guaranteed, but also increased pressure on that segment of the population. This Elk Area is also used to focus antlerless harvest on the private lands where depredation complaints have historically been high, but limits antlerless harvest on public lands where higher elk densities are desired. Elk Area 1016 is used to provide controlled antlerless elk hunting opportunity on public lands, excluding the Rainwater Wildlife Area (CTUIR).

The intent of Elk Areas 1008 and 1009 was to distribute the hunting pressure within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. In the past, most permit hunters focused in the western corner of the unit where the road density was highest. By spreading out the hunting pressure, additional hunting opportunity was created.

Elk Areas 1040 and 1013 are used to manage hunters within GMU 172. Elk Area 1013 limits antlerless hunting to private lands where damage can occur on agricultural areas, while maximizing elk numbers and recruitment on public lands. Elk Area 1040 is the newly acquired 4-0 Wildlife Area, which is managed for quality hunting opportunity as part of the sale agreement from the previous landowner. All deer and elk hunting on this wildlife area will be managed for quality opportunity, whereas all other species may be hunted by general seasons as listed in the pamphlet.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. Elk Area 1040 (4-0 Wildlife Area) is closed to general season deer and elk hunting. Elk hunting will only be allowed through the permit system on these lands.
2. Antlerless elk opportunity was increased in 2014 GMU 181 due to increasing herd size and depredation complaints.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Both mule deer and white-tailed deer occur throughout District 3. Deer hunting opportunities in District 3 vary from marginal to quite good, depending on the GMU. The GMUs with highest success (GMUs 145, 149, 178, 181) also have the highest amount of private land and access can be limited. GMUs where access to public land is highest (GMUs 166, 169, 175) have the lowest success, probably due to a combination of high hunter numbers and lower quality deer habitat. While overall harvest is one indicator of GMU hunting quality, harvest/unit effort (HPUE) and harvest/unit area (HPUA) equalize GMUs based on hunter numbers, number of days hunting, and GMU size. However, both HPUE and HPUA can be misleading, as HPUE is complicated by private land access limitations and HPUA is complicated by the amount of habitat in the GMU that actually supports deer. In general, HPUE seems to be a better indicator of hunting success. Hunter success and HPUE of either white-tailed or mule deer in District 3 is highest in GMUs 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 178 (Peola), and 181 (Couse), while total general season harvest is highest in GMUs 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 154 (Blue Creek), and 162 (Dayton).

In Washington, both mule deer and white-tailed deer 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 and survey data is summarized at that level as well. District 3 contains all of PMU 16 (GMU 145, 149, 154, 178, and 181) and PMU 17 (GMUs 157, 162, 163, 166, 169, 172, 175, and 186). All PMUs in District 3 are managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing deer herds while also minimizing negative deer-human interactions. The WDFW Game Management Plan for 2009-2015 (WDFW 2008) has a desired status for post-hunt buck:doe ratios of 15-19 bucks:100 does for PMU 16 and 20-24 bucks:100 does for PMU 17. The lower desired ratios for PMU 16 mainly reflect a more liberal harvest of deer in agricultural units that likely have both higher quality forage due to availability of crops and higher levels of deer damage issues than PMU 17.



Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 3. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and HPUE (harvest/hunter day) are used to estimate populations. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and are conducting aerial sightability surveys to monitor deer populations that are independent of harvest data.

All available harvest data indicates deer populations appear to be stable or slightly increasing in both PMUs associated with District 3. For more detailed information related to the status of mule deer and white-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 at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01557/>.

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt?" This is not always easy 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 3. 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. Some hunters 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 Table 3 provides a quick and 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 five-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 since GMUs vary in size. For example, the average total number of deer harvested over the past five years during the general season in GMUs 149 (Prescott) and 154 (Blue Creek) has been 646 and 316 deer, respectively. Just looking at total harvest suggests deer densities are much higher in GMU 149 than 154. However, when harvest is expressed as deer harvested/mi², the result is an estimate of 0.62 in GMU 149 and 1.61 in GMU 154, which suggests deer densities are probably much higher in GMU 154 than they are in GMU 149. This is further complicated by the amount of actual deer habitat in each GMU. For example, GMU 149 is the largest GMU, but is comprised primarily of tilled croplands, and deer are concentrated in CRP fields and along the breaks of the Snake River, so densities are probably higher than the harvest/mi² indicates.

Each GMU was ranked from 1 to 12 (except for ties) for deer harvested/mi², hunters/mi², hunter success rates, and public land access. Then, the four ranking values were summed to produce a

final rank sum. GMUs are listed by GMU number, not by rank. Comparisons are straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs. Differences that should be considered are:

- 1 Some private land GMUs have extensive acreage in WDFW Access programs, such as Feel Free to Hunt, Hunt by Written Permission, Hunt by Registration, or Hunt by Reservation, and may offer similar access to some GMUs with public land. See the Access section of this document for private land acreage available for public hunting in each GMU.
- 2 Some private land GMUs have extensive acreage in tilled croplands, and actual suitable hunting area may be much smaller, leading to higher than expected hunter densities.

MODERN FIREARM											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
145	355	285	0.683	3	624	1.76	4	45%	1	3	11
149	1409	554	0.393	10	1492	1.06	1	37%	4	3	18
154	216	258	1.194	2	925	4.28	11	27%	7	3	23
162	210	347	1.654	1	1610	7.67	12	22%	8	2	23
163	149	92	0.619	6	349	2.34	9	27%	7	3	25
166	131	90	0.690	5	549	4.19	10	17%	9	1	25
169	161	27	0.165	12	215	1.34	2	13%	10	1	25
172	108	55	0.513	9	212	1.96	7	28%	6	2	24
175	158	43	0.275	11	367	2.32	8	13%	10	1	30
178	275	206	0.751	4	520	1.89	6	38%	3	3	16
181	262	146	0.557	7	369	1.41	3	40%	2	3	15
186	53	29	0.547	8	94	1.77	5	31%	5	2	20

ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
145	355	10	0.028	9	40	0.11	2	26%	3	3	17
149	1409	32	0.023	10	116	0.08	1	28%	2	3	16
154	216	59	0.275	1	215	1.00	11	28%	2	3	17
162	210	31	0.146	3	204	0.97	10	15%	5	2	20
163	149	25	0.165	2	128	0.86	9	19%	4	3	18
166	131	14	0.110	5	100	0.76	8	15%	5	1	19
169	161	1	0.007	12	24	0.15	4	6%	6	1	23
172	108	4	0.035	8	23	0.21	5	15%	5	2	20
175	158	6	0.037	7	112	0.71	7	5%	7	1	22
178	275	34	0.124	4	122	0.45	6	28%	2	3	15
181	262	13	0.049	6	37	0.14	3	34%	1	3	13
186	53	1	0.019	11	6	0.11	2	15%	5	2	20

MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
145	355	19	0.052	4	48	0.14	1	38%	2	3	10
149	1409	86	0.061	3	232	0.17	2	37%	3	3	11
154	216	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
162	210	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
163	149	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
166	131	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
169	161	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
172	108	13	0.119	2	43	0.40	4	29%	5	2	13
175	158	4	0.023	6	26	0.17	2	13%	6	1	15
178	275	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
181	262	59	0.227	1	140	0.53	5	43%	1	3	10
186	53	2	0.030	5	7	0.19	3	33%	4	2	14

TABLE 3. RANK SUM ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES A QUICK AND GENERAL COMPARISON OF HOW TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, HUNTER SUCCESS RATES, AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC LAND COMPARE AMONG GMUS DURING GENERAL MODERN, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASONS. GMUS BOLDDED ARE OPEN DURING EARLY AND LATE SEASONS FOR THE RESPECTIVE WEAPON TYPE. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A 5-YEAR AVERAGE.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

It is typically uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 3 where deer move out of the mountains in winter and weather conditions are generally mild and do not result in large winter die-offs. Periodic die-offs have occurred due to epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), a viral condition transmitted by biting midges, which mainly affects white-tailed deer. We have not had a severe outbreak since 2008. However,

conditions for 2015 have the potential for a serious outbreak, with drought conditions and warm temperatures likely to concentrate deer near water sources with high midge densities. While we are monitoring the situation, there is nothing feasible to be done to prevent outbreaks of EHD.

Mule deer populations have experienced long-term declines across much of the west with no definitive cause identified. Habitat loss is suspected to be one possible cause, particularly loss of winter range. The Conservation Reserve Program has probably helped maintain winter range in District 3, and mule deer populations outside of the mountains appear to be stable to increasing. Consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to be similar in size compared to the 2014 season.

Hunter numbers have generally decreased over the last 13 years, but have remained fairly stable since 2006. 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 3 and what they can expect to encounter with regard to hunter success and hunter numbers.

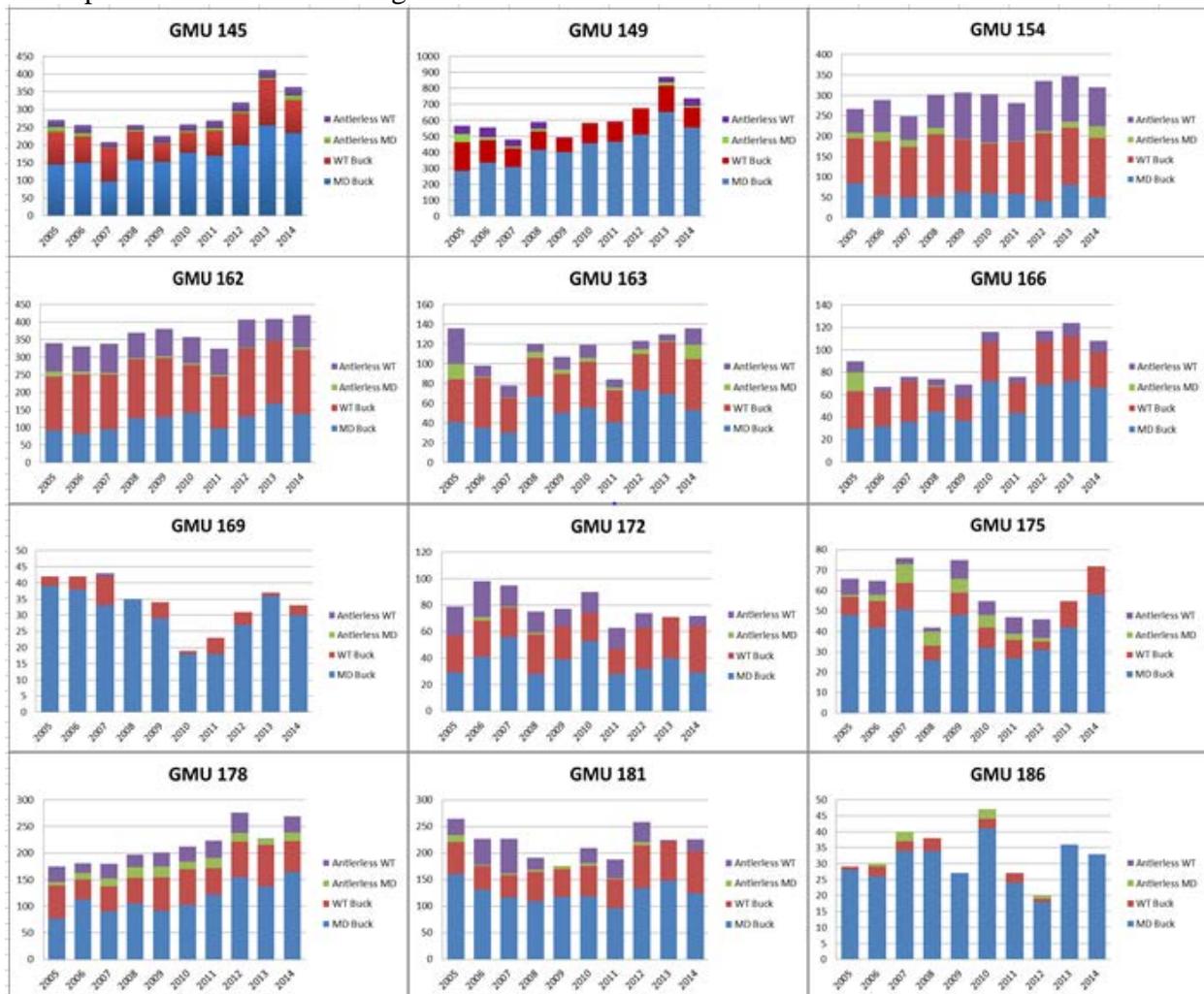


FIGURE 3. 10-YEAR TRENDS IN TOTAL NUMBERS OF MULE DEER BUCKS (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS DEER (GREEN), AND WHITE-TAILED BUCKS (RED) AND ANTLERLESS DEER (PURPLE) DURING ALL GENERAL SEASONS COMBINED FROM 2005-2014. TOTALS DO NOT INCLUDE PERMIT HARVEST.

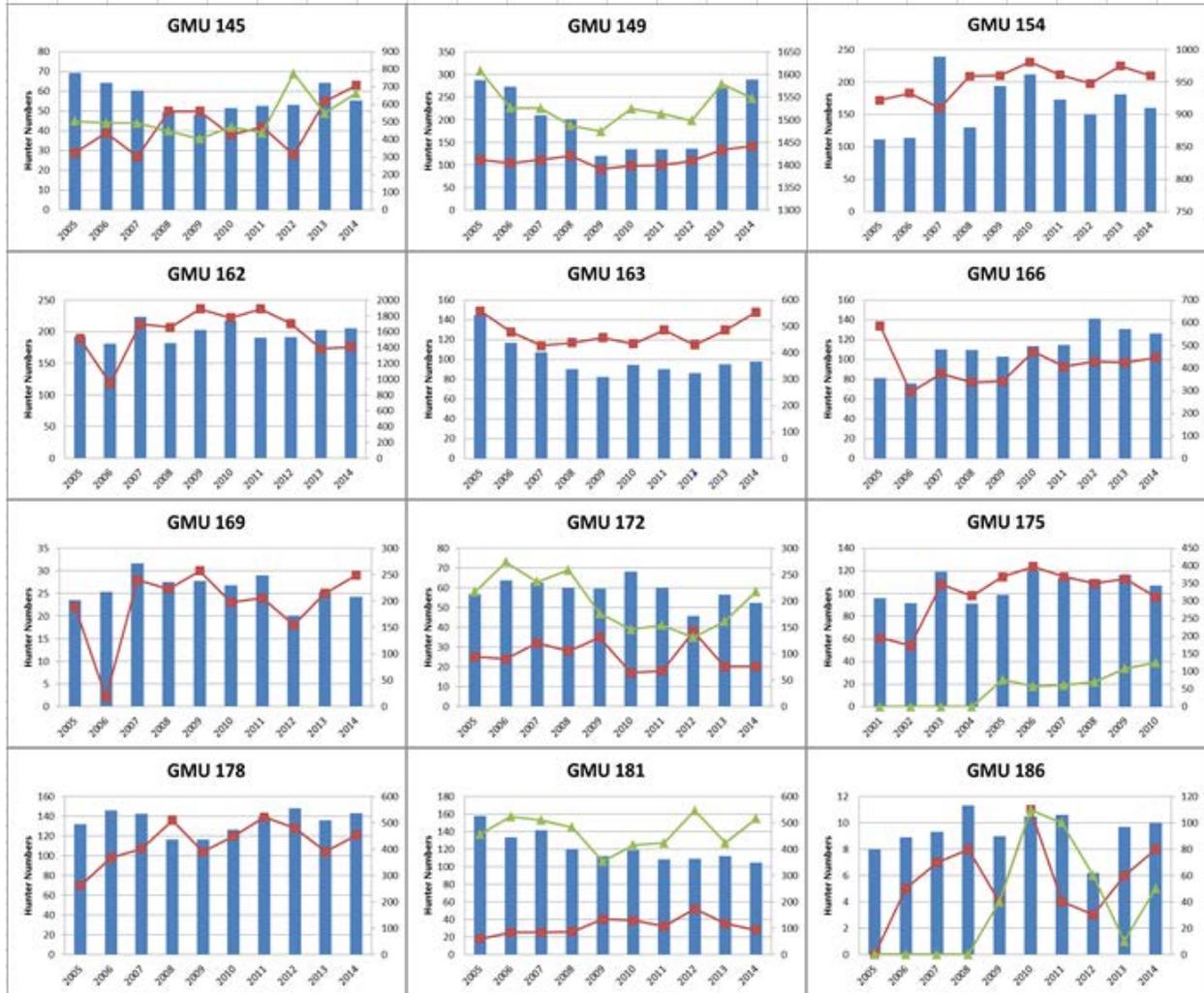


FIGURE 4. 10-YEAR TRENDS IN HUNTER NUMBERS FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 3 FOR MODERN FIREARM (BLUE BARS, SCALE RIGHT AXIS), ARCHERY (RED SQUARES, SCALE LEFT AXIS), AND MUZZLELOADER (GREEN TRIANGLES, SCALE LEFT AXIS) GENERAL SEASONS FOR 2005-2014.

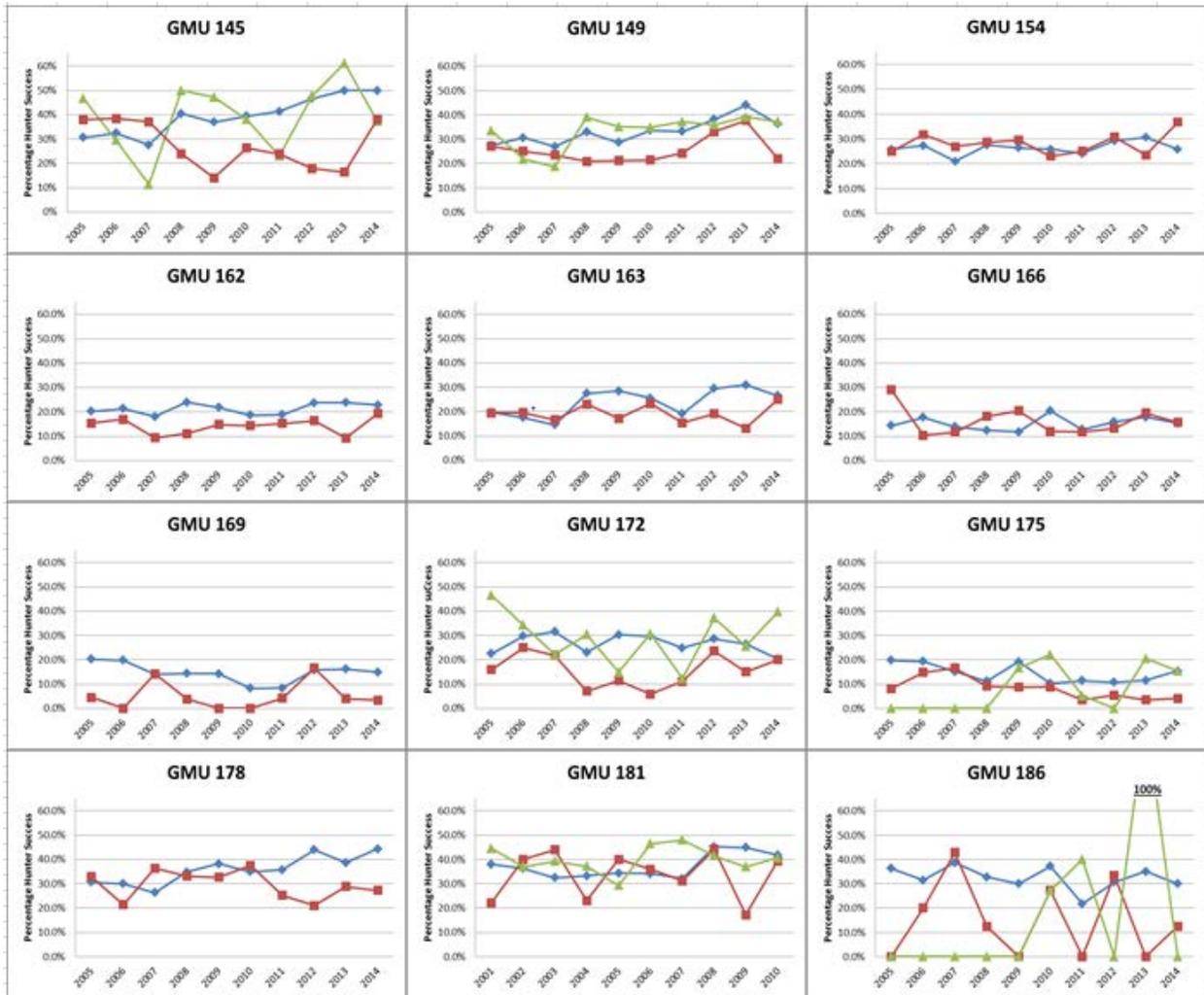


FIGURE 5. 10-YEAR TRENDS IN PERCENTAGE HARVEST SUCCESS FOR EACH GMU IN DISTRICT 3 FOR MODERN FIREARM (BLUE DIAMONDS), ARCHERY (RED SQUARES), AND MUZZLELOADER (GREEN TRIANGLES) GENERAL SEASONS FOR 2005-2014.

DEER AREAS

There are five Deer Areas in District 3 that were created for a number of different purposes. Deer Area 1010 is located within the private land area of GMU 162 and was created to help manage deer damage while limiting antlerless harvest on public land in the GMU. Deer Area 1008 and 1009 divide GMU 169 and help to manage deer by distributing harvest opportunity across the wilderness area. Deer Area 1021 is located in and around the town of Clarkston in GMU 178 and is used to help manage deer in and around this urban area. Deer Area 1040 is located in GMU 172 and consists of the newly purchased 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area. The boundaries of this area are still in flux as different phases of the acquisition are approved, and the designation helps to manage harvest on this unique property.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. New Deer Area 1040 (4-0 Wildlife Area) is closed to general season deer and elk hunting, open only by permit.
2. GMU 145 added 30 additional antlerless permits to 35 already available.
3. GMU 149 added 50 additional antlerless permits to 50 already available.
4. GMU 163 added 40 any antlerless permits to 50 white-tailed deer antlerless permits already available.
5. Youth deer hunt in Deer Area 1040, 5 antlerless deer permits available.
6. Youth deer hunt in Blue Mountains Foothills East and West, added 10 additional antlerless tags to each area.
7. Deer hunters with disabilities, Blue Mountains Foothills area, 20 antlerless permits available.

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears occur mainly in the foothills and forested areas of District 3, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a bear likely occur in GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton).

District 3 consists of GMUs that are part of the Blue Mountains Black Bear Management Unit 8 (BBMU 8), which is one of nine BBMUs defined by WDFW. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for the Blue Mountains 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 the proportion of harvested bears that were female, the median age of harvested females, and the 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 3.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

Although there are hunters who specifically target black bears, 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 3 has averaged just 6% and has never been higher than 9%. However, hunter success is likely higher for those hunters that specifically hunt bears versus those that buy a bear tag in case they see one while they are deer or elk hunting.

Overall, there has been no trend in annual bear harvest during the general bear season in District 3, with harvest generally fluctuating between 75 and 100 bears, excluding a few outliers. 2011 was a relatively poor year, with 66 bears harvested, then harvest rebounded during the 2012 and 2013 seasons, and dropped off again in 2014 to 62 bears (Figure 8). With annual fluctuations in hunter numbers, some index of harvest per unit effort is generally a better indicator of harvest trends. Figure 8 shows the number of hunter days per bear harvested, which also does not show any consistent trend.

At the GMU level, most bears will be harvested in GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton). Harvest numbers during the 2014 season compared to long-term (10-year) and short-term (5-year) averages were lower in both GMUs 154 and 162, but the yearly harvest does not show any identifiable trends (Figure 9), other than there have been very few low harvest years back-to-back. Based on general long-term stability in District 3 bear harvest, hunters should expect similar harvest and success rates during the 2015 season.

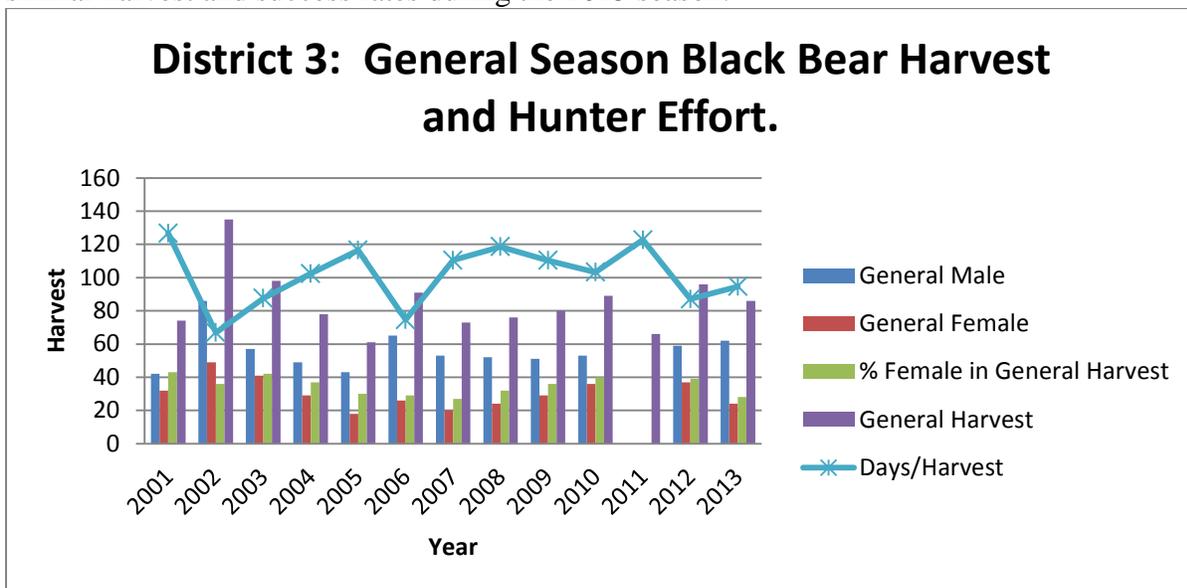


FIGURE 6. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON, AND AN INDEX OF HUNTER EFFORT (HUNTER DAYS/BEAR HARVESTED) IN DISTRICT 3, 2005–2014. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

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 3. Although black bears are extremely common and occur in some areas at very high densities, they are seen infrequently because they limit their time in the open to cooler times of day and move into thick vegetation in draws and creek bottoms.

Black bears can occur in a variety of habitat types so it can be difficult to narrow down where to search for them. Hunters should focus their efforts early in the day in more open terrain (e.g. south-facing slopes). 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 along riparian corridors that contain a large number of berry-producing shrubs, including creeping blackberries and elderberries, or along north-facing slopes with salmonberries, huckleberries, and blackberries. Spring permit holders should look below snow-line on south-facing slopes that get early green-up of wild onions and other vegetation and near springs or wet areas with green aquatic vegetation. During the fall, hunters generally will find bears early in the day foraging across open slopes dissected by shrubby draws. Also, hunters should check riparian areas that may still have berries or rose hips, and hike through them to see if there is any bear sign. If fresh sign is found, odds are there is a bear that is frequenting that area. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching open areas in these riparian patches and corridors, they may get a chance to harvest a bear. Patience is the key.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2015 season.

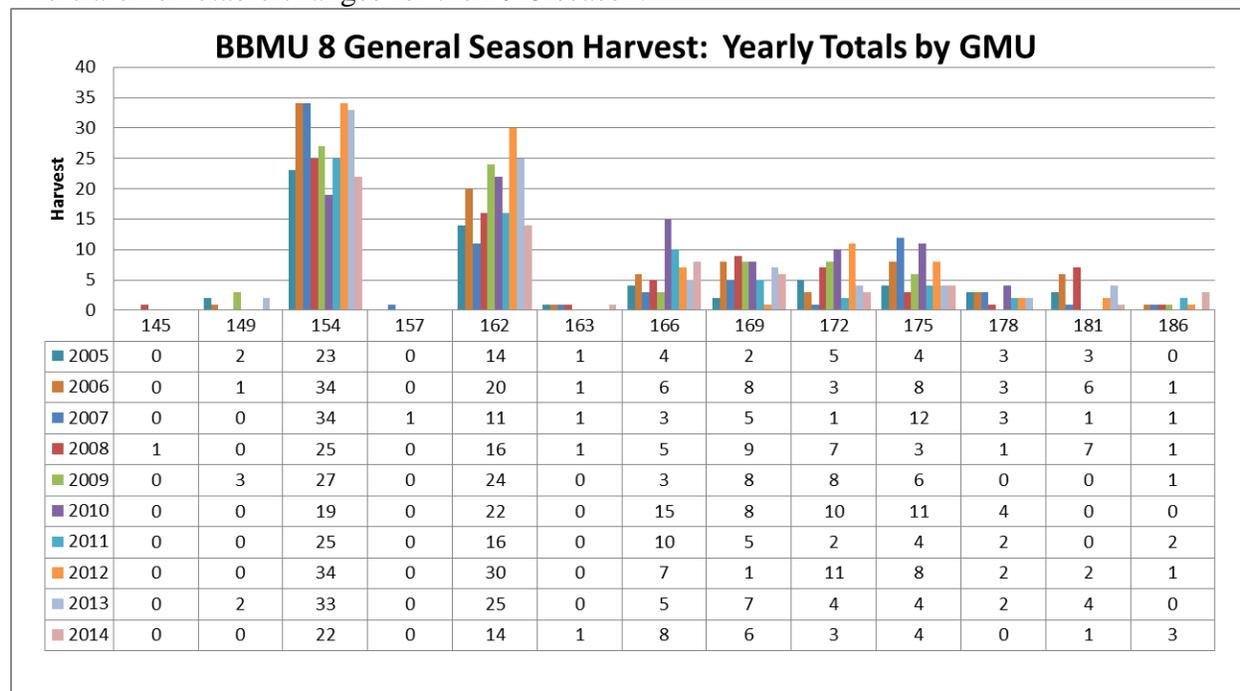


FIGURE 7. THE NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU DURING 2005-2014 GENERAL BLACK BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 3.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars can occur throughout District 3, but densities likely vary among GMUs. Cougar populations in District 3 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 shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougar 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 hunters plan on hunting cougar after January 1, they must confirm that the cougar season is open in the area they plan to hunt. Harvest quotas for each Hunt Area located in District 3 are provided in Table 4.

For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	2013-2014 Harvest
145, 166, 175, 178	5-6	8
149, 154, 162, 163	6-7	4
169, 172, 181, 186	4-5	1

TABLE 4. NEW 2015 HARVEST GUIDELINES AND 2014 HARVEST LEVELS FOR THE 3 COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 3.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

Cougar harvest in District 3 has been variable over the years, with the average since 1990 of 16 cougars and a range between a low of seven and a high of 33. However, in 17 out of the last 25 years, the range has been between 12 and 20 cougars harvested. Since 2001, the number of cougars harvested in District 3 has averaged 14 cougars, and sub-adults typically dominate the harvest. With the yearly variation, it is hard to predict future harvest, but cougar sightings in the district continue to be fairly common and there is no reason to suspect much change in the

harvest. Under the new harvest management guidelines, the two hunt areas comprised of GMUs 145, 166, 175, and 178, and 149, 154, 162, and 163 have both closed after the January 1 evaluation period, so hunters interested in cougar hunting in any of these GMUs need to plan accordingly. The guidelines for harvest have been raised slightly for the 2015 season, but even at the higher threshold, these GMUs are likely to close for the January to March portion of the season.

NOTABLE CHANGES

1. There are higher harvest guidelines for the 2015 season.
2. The late season was extended from January 1st to April 30th. **Be aware that a 2016 cougar license is required to hunt cougar after March 31st.**

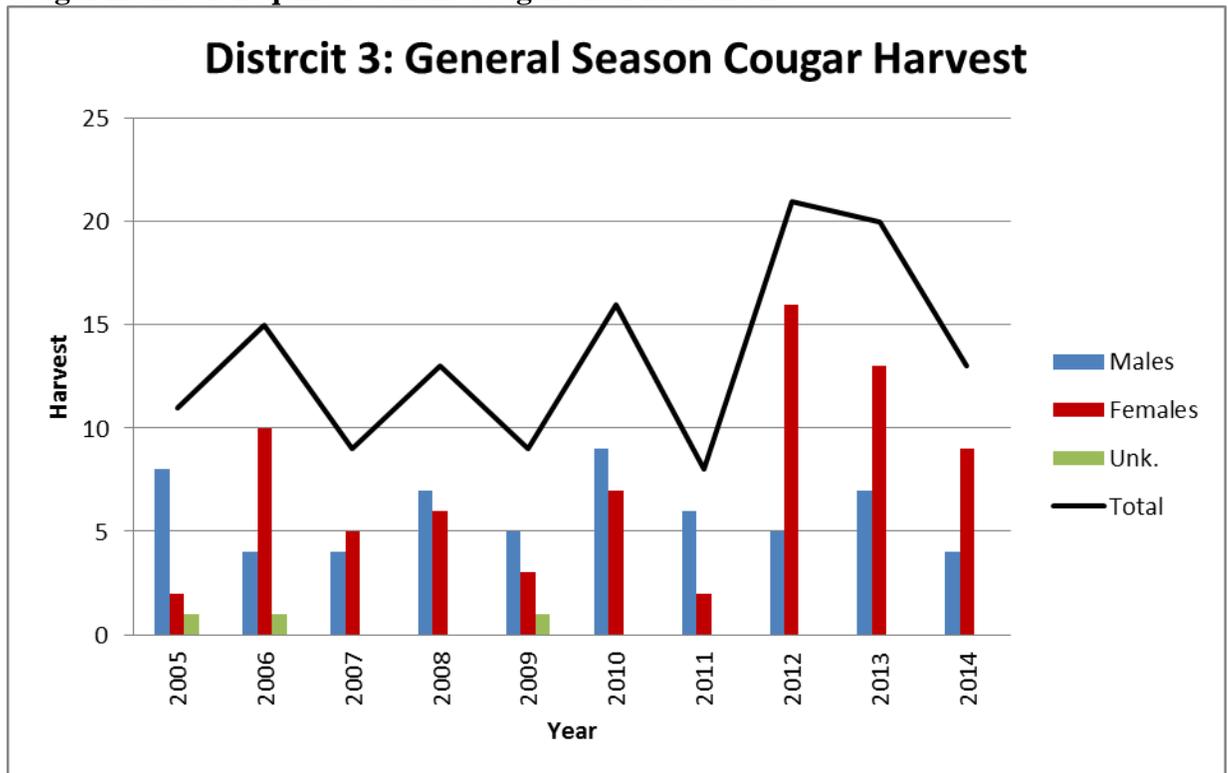


FIGURE 8. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF COUGARS HARVESTED IN DISTRICT 3, 2005–2014.

DUCKS

COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 3. Common dabbling ducks include mallard, northern pintail, American widgeon, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, canvasback, and common goldeneye are present along the reservoirs of the Snake and Columbia River and can occur in fairly large numbers. Nesting wood ducks can be

located along the Snake River near Asotin and can provide a unique hunting opportunity early in the season.

Mallards are the most abundant duck species in Washington and constitute the vast majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically $\geq 50\%$). Mid-winter surveys in the South Columbia Basin segment of District 3 typically yield $>50\%$ of mallards in the dabbling duck count, with goldeneye and canvasback making up 80% of the diving ducks. Hunters should expect harvest opportunities to be mostly mallard and American widgeon, although hunting by boat in the river reservoirs can yield good harvests of diving ducks.

MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY

There are very few ducks in District 3 during late-spring and early summer. Beginning in mid to late September, birds will begin migrating south from British Columbia, the Yukon, and 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 3 as resting and foraging areas and do not stay in the district for long periods of time. Consequently, the number of ducks located in District 3 most likely changes on a daily basis, but begins to decline sharply when there are no more new migrants coming into the area from breeding grounds to the north.

CONCENTRATION AREAS

In general, concentration areas include the wetlands and rivers around McNary National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Columbia and Snake River valleys. Concentrations within these broader areas are dependent on many factors (e.g. hunting pressure, weather, food, etc.) and have the potential to change on a daily basis. The agricultural areas around McNary NWR attract large numbers of foraging ducks and geese, but most of these lands are closed to hunting or leased by private hunting outfitters and access can be difficult or expensive.

POPULATION STATUS

The number of ducks that occur in District 3 during established hunting seasons is most strongly related to the status of breeding duck populations in Alaska. The 2014 breeding survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 3.5 million ducks, a 6% increase over 2013 values, but still well below the 2012 estimate of 4.4 million. The mallard estimate recovered from 2013 lows of 338,000 to an estimate of 501,000 for 2014, a 48% increase and similar to the 2012 estimate (USFWS, Trends in Duck Breeding Populations, 1955-2015). In 2015, the total estimate for the Alaska-Yukon Territory-Old Crow Flats traditional survey area was 3.4 million, a 3% decrease from 2014 estimates and 8% below the long-term average. The mallard breeding population estimate was 417,000, a decrease of 6% from 2014 levels, but still 24% above the long-term average.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

The 2014 duck harvest reflected the improved estimates of breeding populations in Alaska between 2013 and 2014, with nearly 29,000 ducks harvested in District 3, up from the 22,000 harvested in 2013. With the slight decrease in breeding populations this year, a somewhat lower duck harvest is expected for the 2015 season. 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 12).

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 decoy setups work the best. Birds are most active during early morning and late afternoon as they move from resting areas to feeding areas. See “Let’s Go Waterfowling” at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/> for more information on hunting ducks.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of US Army Corp of Engineer (USACE) Habitat Management Units along the Snake River in District 3 that offer good waterfowl hunting opportunities, and McNary NWR along the Columbia River offers some of the premier hunting opportunities in the District. Wildlife Areas in District 3 are primarily big game habitat and do not offer much waterfowl hunting opportunity, but hunters should see the WDFW waterfowl hunting page at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/> for more detailed information related to their location, current waterfowl management activities, and common species.

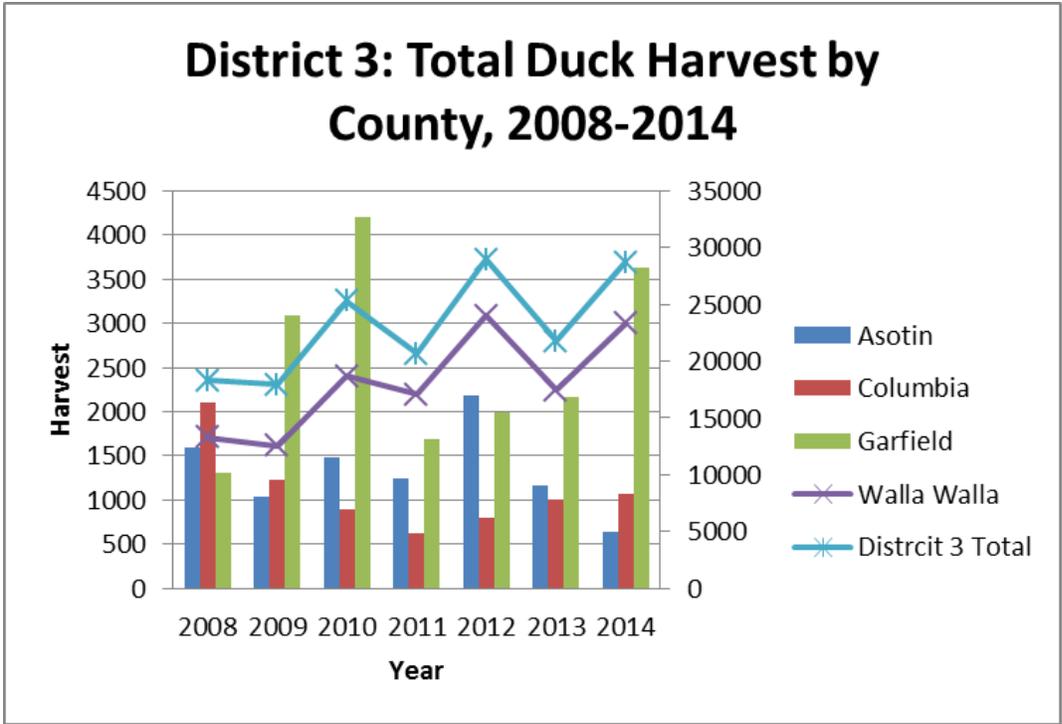


FIGURE 9. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DUCKS HARVESTED (BLUE LINE, RIGHT AXIS), AND TOTALS BY COUNTY IN WALLA WALLA COUNTY (PURPLE LINE, RIGHT AXIS), AND ASOTIN, COLUMBIA, AND GARFIELD COUNTIES (BARS, LEFT AXIS), 2008–2014.

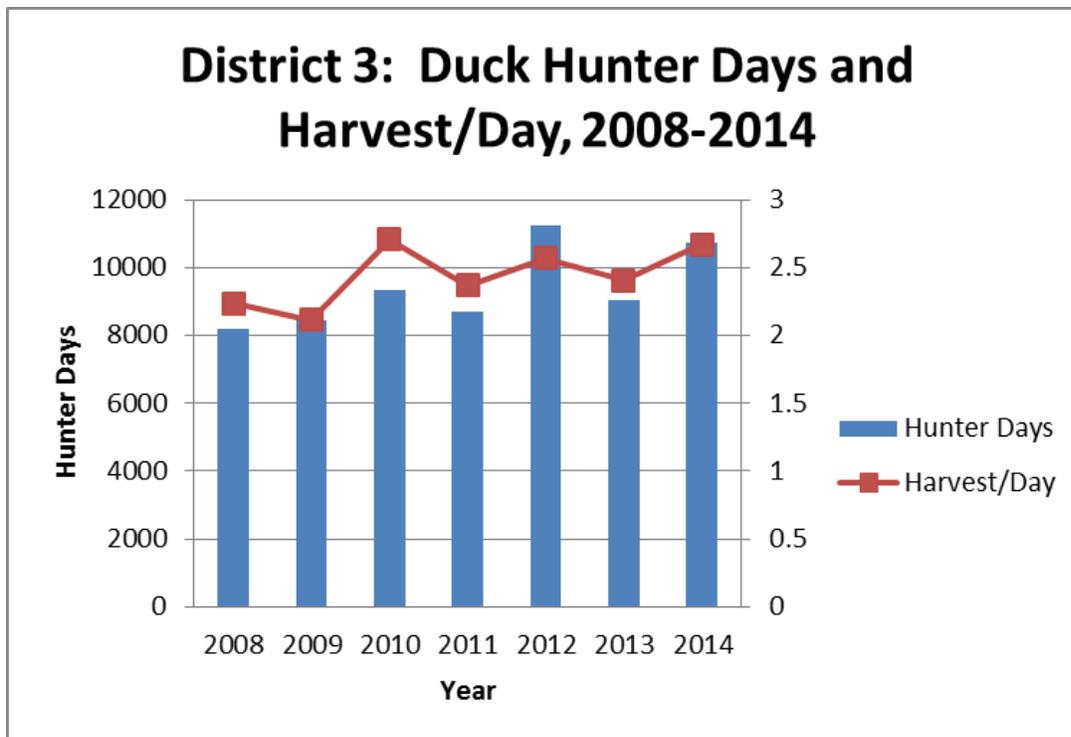


FIGURE 10. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL DUCK HUNTER DAYS (LEFT AXIS), AND DUCKS HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY (RIGHT AXIS) IN DISTRICT 3, 2008–2014.

GEESE

COMMON SPECIES

Canada geese are the only goose species available for harvest in District 3 during the early September season, while Canada, Snow, Ross, and White-fronted geese may all be taken during the late season.

MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

The migration chronology of geese in District 3 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 the district as long as snow cover does not become excessive.

POPULATION STATUS

There are few geese that breed in District 3, so WDFW does not conduct breeding goose surveys in this part of the state. Urban goose populations can be problematic at times, but offer limited hunting opportunities.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

Goose hunting opportunities in District 3 are expected to be similar to trends observed during the last few seasons. Most goose harvest will occur in Walla Walla County during the late season, where twice as many geese are harvested each year compared to Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield counties combined.

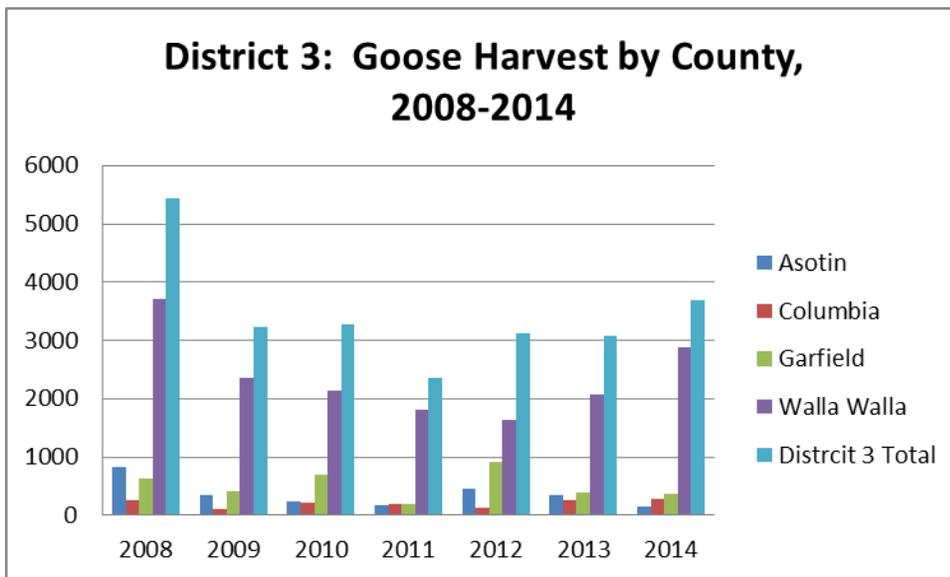


FIGURE 11. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF GEESE HARVESTED (PALE BLUE COLUMN), AND TOTALS BY COUNTY IN AND ASOTIN, COLUMBIA, GARFIELD, AND WALLA WALLA COUNTIES, 2008–2014.

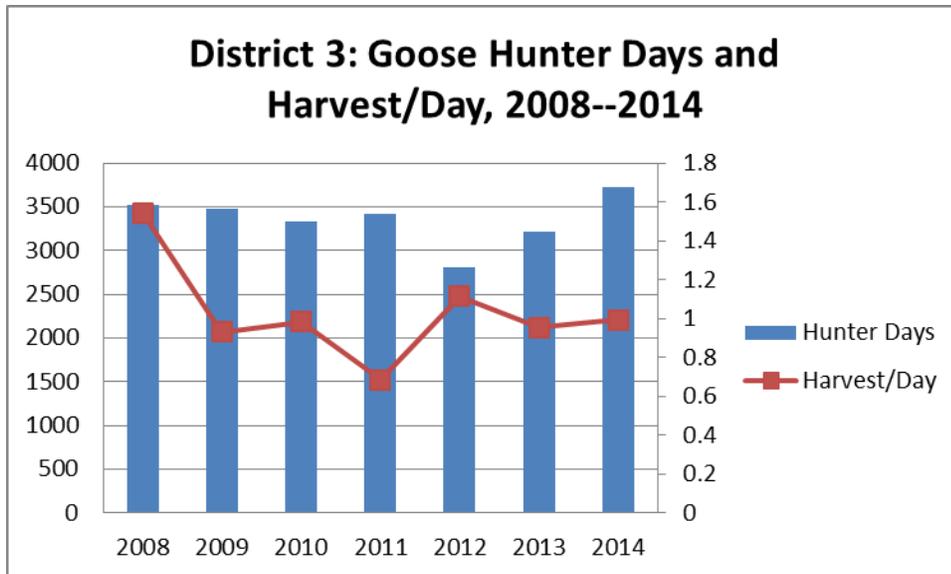


FIGURE 12. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL GOOSE HUNTER DAYS (LEFT AXIS), AND GEESE HARVESTED PER HUNTER DAY (RIGHT AXIS) IN DISTRICT 3, 2008–2014.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

The standard techniques employed to harvest geese include finding agricultural areas where geese are feeding, and setting up a decoy spread well before daylight in parts of the fields where geese are expected to concentrate. In District 3, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate are dryland and irrigated agricultural fields relatively close to the Snake or Columbia rivers. Because of this, goose hunting opportunities most often occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting. There are multiple guide services available for hunters willing to pay for access and experience.

SPECIAL REGULATIONS

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, as there are specific daily regulations. Pamphlets are available at any retailer that sells hunting licenses or they can be downloaded from WDFW’s website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>.

FOREST GROUSE

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

There are two species of grouse that occur in District 3-- ruffed grouse and dusky grouse (formally called blue grouse). Ruffed grouse are the most abundant grouse in the Blue Mountains, and generally occur at lower elevations and along shrubby draws and riparian areas

where hardwoods are present. Dusky grouse can be located in upper elevation timbered slopes and mountain meadows, often near springs or some other water source. Both species will be attracted to berry producing vegetation, such as chokecherry, current, elderberry, and snowberry, with aspen stands also being an attractive habitat for both cover and forage.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not conduct any standardized surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 3. Instead, harvest data trends are used for population estimates. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE; birds harvested per hunter day) is the best indicator of population trends. In District 3, grouse populations appear to have increased in the past three years, as CPUE has slowly increased from a five-year average of 0.34 birds per hunter day to 0.44 birds per hunter day during the 2014 season. Harvest numbers show a strong correlation with number of hunter days, which also suggests the Blue Mountains grouse population is stable, if not increasing.

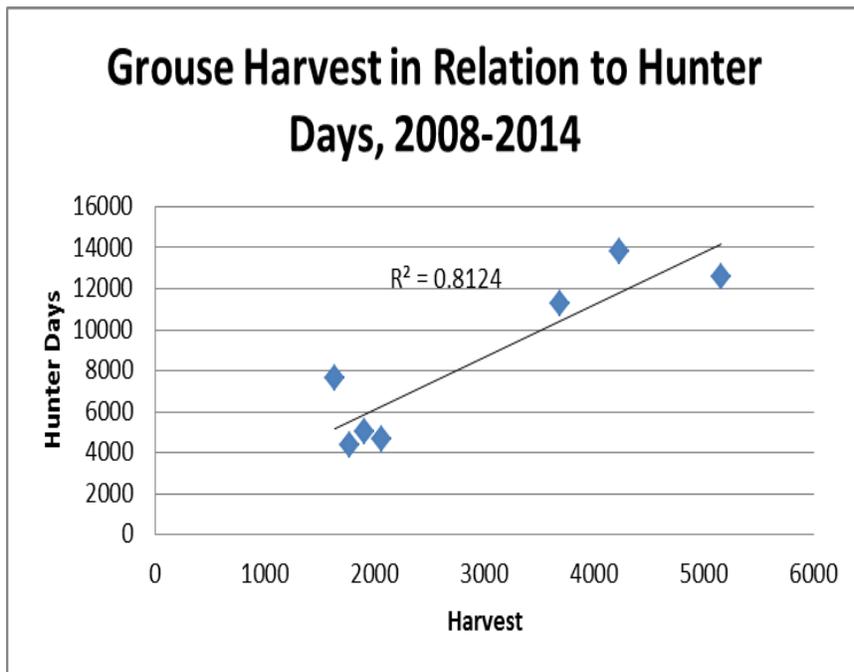


FIGURE 13. NUMBER OF GROUSE HARVESTED IN RELATION TO HUNTER DAYS, 2008-2014.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

The total number of grouse harvested in District 3 declined significantly from 2009 when 5,147 grouse were estimated to be harvested to 2,057 in 2014. However, hunter numbers have declined as well, especially over the past few years. Regardless, hunters should expect to harvest somewhere between 0.2 and 0.4 grouse per day hunted.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt grouse in District 3 is by walking roads and shooting them as they flush or after they roost in a nearby tree. Blue grouse tend to occur in higher densities in the higher elevations of the Blue Mountains, and can occasionally be found in high densities along grassy open ridges mixed with conifer forests. Ruffed grouse are closely associated with riparian areas throughout all elevations of the forested portions of the Blue Mountains. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's grouse species, see WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/upland_birds/forest_grouse.html.

PHEASANTS

Pheasant hunting opportunities in District 3 are associated with the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program. Each year, approximately 3,500 pheasants are released in Region 1, and most of these are destined for release sites in District 3. Nine sites are located throughout the District; four of those sites (Hollebeke HMU, Mill Creek HMU, Rice Bar HMU, and Willow Bar HMU) are owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, two sites (Asotin WMA and Hartsock unit of the Wooten WMA) are WDFW-owned, and the remainder are on private lands open to the public under WDFW's Feel Free to Hunt access program. Releases take place for the youth season on most of the sites in late September, and the remaining releases happen sporadically throughout the pheasant hunting season.

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Pheasants are closely associated with agricultural and grassland habitats throughout the northern and western portions of the district. The best pheasant hunting is located in areas of permanent cover, usually associated with riparian or shrubby habitats.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not currently generate population estimates for pheasants. Instead, harvest data trends are used to estimate populations. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE; birds harvested per hunter day) is the best indicator of population trend. In District 3, pheasant CPUE appears to have remained relatively stable over the past five years. CPUE in 2014 was 0.62 birds harvested per hunter day, with the previous five-year average being 0.69. Other WDFW information implies that populations have declined during the past few decades, but appear to have recently stabilized. For the period from 2008-2014, there is a close relationship between the number of pheasants harvested and the number of hunter days, which also suggests a stable population over the same time period.

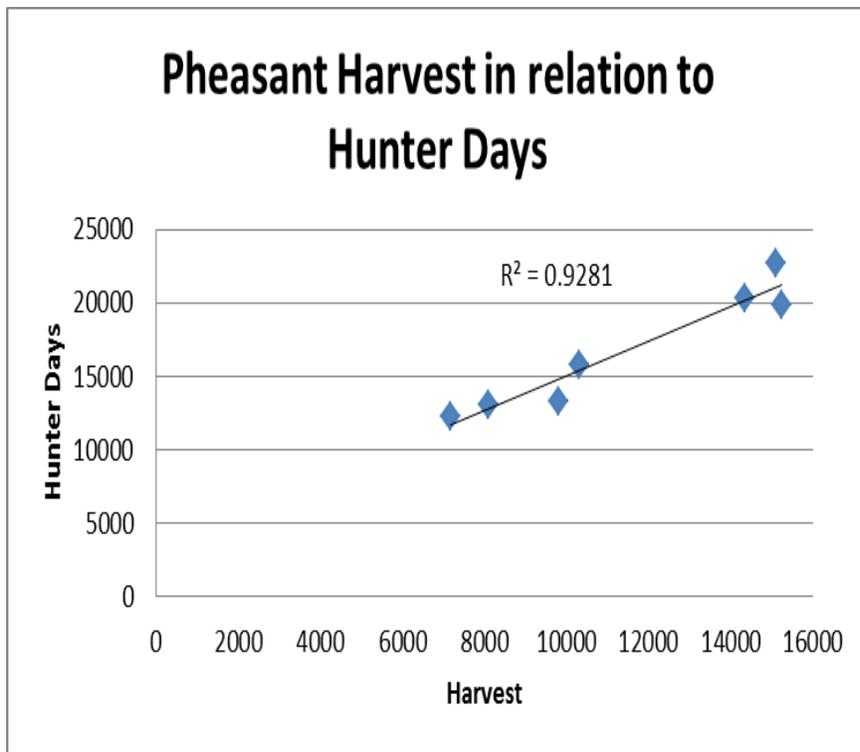


FIGURE 14. NUMBER OF PHEASANTS HARVESTED IN RELATION TO NUMBER OF HUNTER DAYS, 2008-2014.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

The total number of pheasants harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. The spring and early summer of 2015 have been good conditions for nesting and brood rearing for pheasants, although the dry summer may lead to poor insect numbers for latter broods. Biologists predict that pheasant numbers should be better in the fall of 2015 than the past 2-3 years.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt pheasants in District 3 is with the use of a bird dog. Pheasants are usually located in thicker cover and often require a dog to flush them if they do not run in front of the hunters. To learn more about how to hunt Washington’s pheasants, please visit WDFW’s upland bird hunting webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/upland_birds/forest_grouse.html.

Hunters should be aware that special regulations apply when hunting on eastern Washington pheasant release sites. Most notably, hunters are required to use non-toxic shot, and hunting is only allowed between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. To locate maps for the Mill Creek, Hollebeke, Rice Bar, and Willow Bar HMUs, as well as the Asotin and Hartstock WMA Release

Sites, and to learn more about the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program, visit the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/eastern/>.

QUAIL

California quail are common in the lower elevation draws and drainages across the foothills of the Blue Mountains, and in suitable pockets of habitat across the prairie areas and breaks of the Grande Ronde and Snake Rivers. Mountain quail occur in District 3, but there are no sizable populations and sightings are uncommon. When they do occur, it is usually along the Asotin Creek drainage and tributaries that have abundant shrub cover, and hunters looking for California quail in this area should be careful to identify their target, as mountain quail are protected in eastern Washington.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not estimate population size for quail. Instead, harvest data trends are used to estimate populations. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE; birds harvested per hunter day) is the best indicator of population trend. In District 3, quail CPUE improved significantly from low levels in 2013, likely due to weather during the nesting period. CPUE in 2014 was 1.23 birds harvested per hunter day, with the previous five-year average being 0.94.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

The total number of quail harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. The spring and early summer of 2015 have been good conditions for nesting and brood rearing for quail. Biologists predict that quail numbers should be better in the fall of 2015 than the past 2-3 years.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt quail in District 3 is with the use of a bird dog. Quail are usually located in thicker cover and often require a dog to flush. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's quail please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/upland_birds/forest_grouse.html.

TURKEYS

Wild turkeys of the Rio Grande subspecies have been introduced into southeast Washington and have become very common. Turkeys are found in the lower elevation draws and drainages across the foothills of the Blue Mountains, and in suitable pockets of habitat across the prairie areas and breaks of the Grande Ronde and Snake rivers. Turkeys can be found in all GMUs, but tend to be concentrated along riparian areas in the lower elevations of the Blue Mountains, and often near farmsteads and towns.

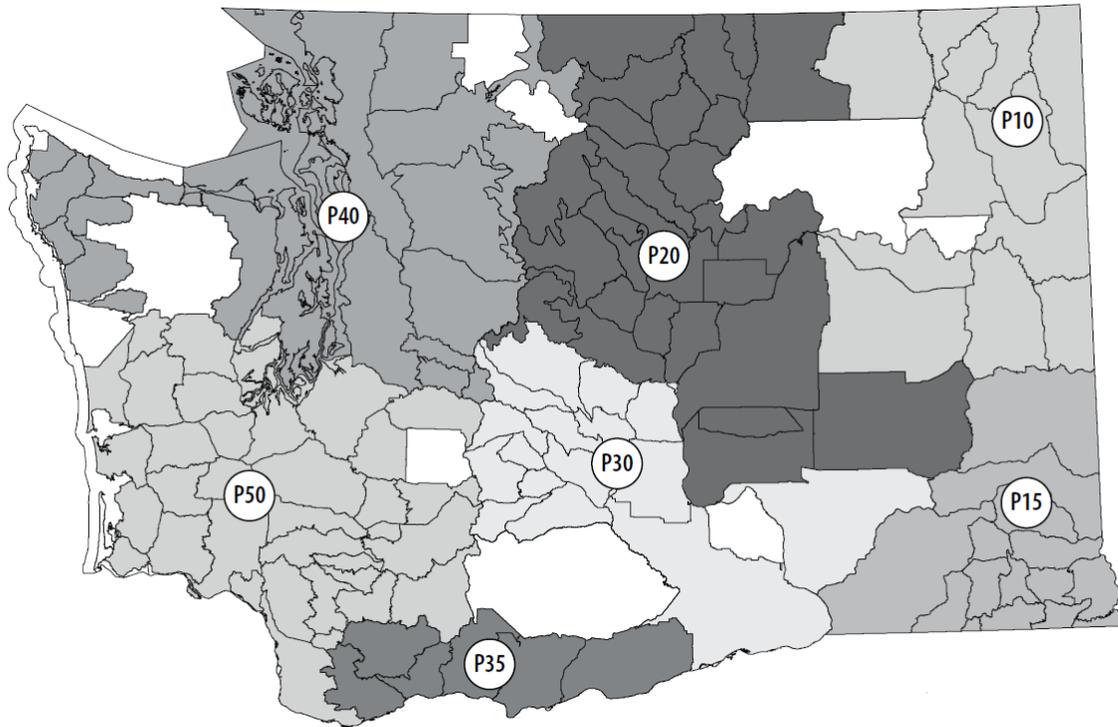


FIGURE 11. MAP DEPICTING WDFW’S SEVEN WILD TURKEY POPULATION MANAGEMENT UNITS.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not estimate population size for turkeys. Instead, harvest data trends are used to estimate populations. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE; birds harvested per hunter day) is the best indicator of population trend. In District 3, turkey CPUE rebounded from a below average year in 2013, to a CPUE of 0.11 in 2014, similar to the five-year average of 0.10 turkeys/hunter day.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

The 2015 wildfires that were still burning in late August may affect hunter access to some hunting areas. Hunters should check the status of wildfires and access restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/49#>.

The total number of turkeys harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. Total harvest dropped from 824 turkeys in 2012 to 638 in 2013, and rebounded slightly to 742 harvested in 2014, which is similar to the five-year average of 730 birds. Based on long-term harvest trends, turkey populations in southeast Washington

appear to have stabilized after years of increasing harvest, and future harvest is likely to be most impacted by spring weather conditions on brood survival. The spring and early summer of 2015 have been good conditions for nesting and brood rearing for turkeys. Biologists predict that turkey numbers should be better in the fall of 2015 than the past 2-3 years.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

Most turkey hunters target gobblers in the spring when males are displaying and readily come to box, slate, and mouth calls that mimic hen groups. Setting a blind or using camouflage clothing near meadows or small forest openings used as strutting grounds can be very effective. Often only minimal calling is needed to bring turkeys within range. Identifying roost areas and setting up nearby can also be effective, but efficient calling will be needed to attract birds. “Gobble” calls should only be used infrequently, and hunters generally should not stalk or approach “gobble” calls as it may be another hunter. For other tips and tactics on safe and ethical turkey hunting, visit the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/turkey/index.html>.

GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton) have the highest turkey harvests. The highest densities are often found on private land in the lower foothill areas that have a mix of forest, grassland, and agricultural fields, and flocks can frequently be seen from roadways along the creek drainages in these areas. Some of these flocks have become nuisance birds, and landowners are often willing to grant permission to thin turkey numbers. Be respectful of private land and always ask for permission to hunt. Although densities are lower, good numbers of birds can be found on National Forest lands and local wildlife areas, including the Wooten Wildlife Area in GMU 166 (Tucannon), Asotin Creek Wildlife Area in GMU 175 (Lick Creek), and the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area in GMU 186 (Grande Ronde).

OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species and furbearers that occur in District 3, but were not covered in detail, include cotton-tail rabbits, snow-shoe hares, coyotes, beaver, raccoons, river otter, marten, mink, muskrat, and weasels. Additional game birds with significant harvests in District 3 include chukar and gray partridge, and migratory birds including mourning doves, snipe, and coot. Asotin County accounts for the majority of the chukar and gray partridge harvest, with Columbia and Garfield counties having localized pockets of good hunting for these species. Walla Walla County accounts for the majority of the mourning dove harvest, and the introduced Eurasian collared dove, which can be hunted anytime with a small game license, has become common in the developed areas of all four counties.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

District 3 does offer considerable public land hunting opportunities. Public land opportunities within the district are comprised of US Forest Service (Umatilla National Forest), US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Natural Resources, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Bureau of Land Management, and WDFW.

GMUs with the greatest amount of public land include GMU 157 (Mill Creek Watershed, closed to entry except by permit), GMU 162 (Dayton), GMU 166 (Tucannon), GMU 169 (Wenaha), GMU 172 (Mountain View), GMU 175 (Lick Creek), and GMU 181 (Couse), and GMU 186 (Grande Ronde).

For more information related to the location of WDFW Wildlife Areas and other public land, visit the WDFW's hunting access website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU

One of the most common questions from hunters is “What is hunter access like in particular GMUs?” Generally, this question is referring to the amount of public land in each GMU, and the following ratings reflect that assumption. Please refer to the “Private Land Access Program” section of this document to determine which GMUs have significant amounts of additional lands available for public hunting.

The following rating system was developed for District 3 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 public land available. Each GMU was given a rating of excellent, good, or poor, with the level of access associated with each rating as follows:

- **Excellent**---A majority of the GMU is in public ownership.
- **Good**---There is a mix of public land within the GMU.
- **Poor**---Most of the GMU is privately owned.

Information provided is a brief description of major ownership. Hunters are encouraged to contact the WDFW Eastern Region (1) office in Spokane Valley (509-892-1001) with other questions related to hunter access..

GMU 145 - Mayview

Access rating = Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although the US Army Corps of Engineers owns the shorelines of the Snake River. In many places, the USACE lands only extend a couple of hundred yards above the waterlines, but there are a few large Habitat Management Units that provide considerable recreational opportunity. There is significant acreage in this unit in WDFW's Access Program.

GMU 149 – Prescott

Access rating = Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although the US Army Corps of Engineers owns the shorelines of the Snake River. In many places, the USACE lands only extend a couple

of hundred yards above the waterlines, but there are a few large Habitat Management Units that provide considerable recreational opportunity. There is significant acreage in this unit in WDFW's Access Program, and the Tucannon Wind Resource area managed by Portland General Electric has limited hunting (see GMU 163 for information and links).

GMU 154 – Blue Creek

Access Rating = Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although a number of large landowners participate in the Department's private land access program. Hunters wishing to hunt in this GMU are highly encouraged to contact landowners long before their season opens to secure access. Hunters applying for special permits in this GMU are encouraged to secure access prior to applying.

GMU 157 – Mill Creek Watershed

Access rating = No entry without permit

Although this GMU is 99% public lands, access is restricted to special permit holders. The Mill Creek Watershed has regulated public access because it is the source of drinking water for the City of Walla Walla. Currently, there are elk and deer permit opportunities within this GMU.

GMU 162 - Dayton

Access rating = Good

Approximately half of this GMU is in public ownership, primarily USFS and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Private land access can be difficult to obtain within this GMU, although a few landowners participate in the department's private land access program.

GMU 163 - Marengo

Access rating = Poor

A majority of this GMU is in private ownership. This GMU has a large percentage of the lands developed for wind power. Special [rules](#) are in place to ensure the safety of hunters, local residents, wind project workers, and equipment. More information is available through the wind project [hunting video](#) and [brochure \(PDF\)](#). Remember, hunting on private lands is a privilege and, as with all hunting activities, rules and prohibitions are enforced by state game agents and local law enforcement. Access to PacifiCorp's Marengo wind facility, Puget Sound Energy's adjacent Hopkins Ridge wind facility and Portland General Electric's Tucannon River wind farm is jointly administered by the utilities. With this shared access program, hunters only need to register with one utility to hunt at any of these wind facilities.

Written permission for access to these lands may be obtained by completing the online registration form. Forms are also available at:

The General Store
426 Main Street
Dayton, Washington,
99328
509-382-1042
tgsdayton@gmail.com

The Last Resort
Kampstore
2005 Tucannon Rd.
Pomeroy, WA 99347
www.thelastresortrv.com

Four Star Supply
2255 Villard St
Pomeroy, WA 99347
509-843-3693
pomeroyfourstarsupply@hotmail.com

GMU 166 - Tucannon

Access rating = Excellent

A majority of this GMU is owned by WDFW and the USFS. Access is good throughout most of the unit, with a portion of the unit being located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness.

GMU 169 - Wenaha

Access rating = Excellent

This GMU is 100% public lands, with 95% of it being located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. This is a very rugged wilderness topographically and access can be physically challenging.

GMU 172 – Mountain View

Access rating = Good

Approximately 50% of this GMU is in public ownership. Access to the private lands can be difficult to obtain. This GMU also has the 4-0 Wildlife Area located within it, where deer and elk hunting is permitted by special draw only.

GMU 175 – Lick Creek

Access rating = Excellent

A majority of this GMU is in public ownership, administered by the USFS, WDFW, and DNR. Access is excellent and this GMU has the highest road density of any District 3 GMU's.

GMU 178 - Peola

Access rating = Poor

This GMU is predominantly private land, with the public land (DNR sections) often being land locked from public access. Landowners tend to allow significant access throughout the GMU and there are numerous landowners who participate in WDFW private lands access program.

GMU 181 - Couse

Access rating = Good

This GMU is mostly private land, but WDFW does own a considerable amount of land. See the WDFW Wildlife Area webpage.

GMU 186 – Grande Ronde

Access rating = Good

Approximately half of this GMU is in public ownership. Access to the private land in this GMU has not been available to the public in recent years.

PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

There are a multitude of private landowners in District 3 who are enrolled in WDFW’s Private Lands Access Program. However, at the time of this writing, cooperative agreements with some of these landowners have not been finalized. Even though there are no indications landowners will not renew their cooperative agreements for the 2015 hunting season, we were hesitant to provide that information in this document. Hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW Eastern Region (1) office in Spokane Valley (509-892-1001) 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/.

The following is a summary of anticipated private land acres available through the Departments Private Lands Access program in 2015.

District 3										
<u>GMU</u>	Hunting Only BY Written Permission (HOBWP)		Feel Free To Hunt (FFTH)		Register To Hunt (RTH)		Hunt By Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)	
	<u>Cooperators</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cooperators</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cooperators</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cooperators</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cooperators</u>	<u>Acres</u>
145 Mayview	8	7,750	10	6,911	1	1,837	1	1,060		
149 Prescott	9	33,013	19	43,671			2	3423	1	7,280
154 Blue Creek	3	3636	17	13,218			1	1,605	0	0
162 Dayton	1	620	1	11,087			1	6,760		
163 Marengo	7	7,833	5	12,741						
172 Mountain View			1	554			2	764		
175 Lick Creek	2	887								
178 Peola	8	11,417	4	1,591	1	2,602	3	1,777		
181 Couse	10	13,813	3	4,059	1	1,617				
186 Grande Ronde										
Total	48	78,969	60	93,832	3	6,056	10	15,389	1	7,280
Total Private Lands Access Acres	201,526									

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 3 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 at <http://dnr.wa.gov>.

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.

Walla Walla County tax parcels can be searched using the county GIS site, 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 Walla Walla County GIS tool can be accessed at <http://wallawallagis.com/Public/>.

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 at <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/>.

2015

JASON FIDORRA, District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 4 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Benton and Franklin Counties

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DISTRICT 4 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 4 is located in the south central part of the state, in the Columbia Basin (Figure 1). The District is comprised of Benton and Franklin counties and administratively is part of WDFW's South-Central Region 3. The following game management units (GMUs) are included in District 4: 372 (Rattlesnake Hills), 373 (Horse Heaven), 379 (Ringold), and 381 (Kahlotus).

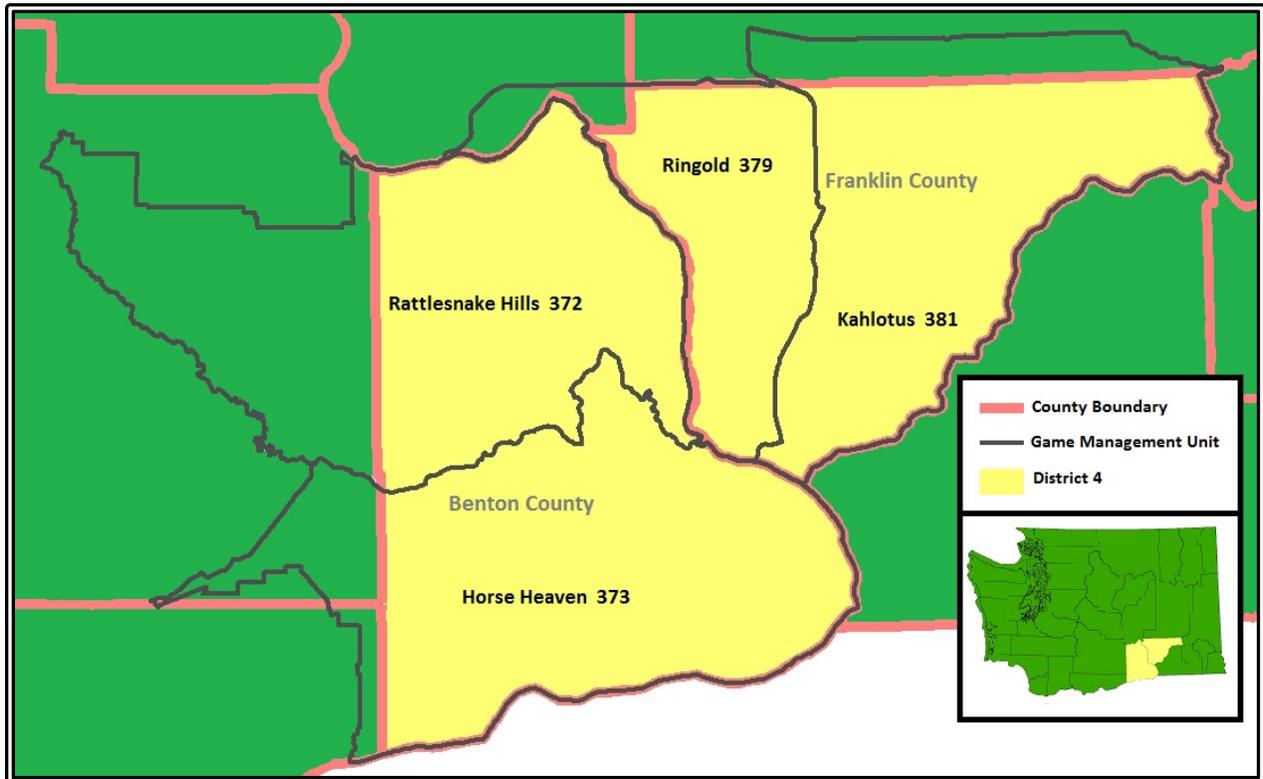


FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF DISTRICT 4 IN WASHINGTON AND ASSOCIATED COUNTIES AND GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS.

Several of Washington's major rivers are prominent in this district. The Hanford Reach of the Columbia River runs through the middle of the district, between Benton and Franklin counties. This 50-mile stretch is one of the most scenic areas of the Columbia in Washington. The Snake and Palouse rivers define the eastern boundary of Franklin County. Near the heart of District 4 is the confluence of the Yakima, Snake, and Walla Walla rivers, with the main stem of the Columbia River at Tri-Cities (Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland). Large populations of waterfowl congregate throughout the district for breeding, migrating, and wintering, despite the fact that this is the driest part of Washington, with only six to nine inches of precipitation per year. Riparian vegetation provides habitat and cover for game birds and the breaks along the Snake and Palouse rivers are favored by congregations of wintering mule deer.

Upland habitats are part of the Columbia Plateau Ecoregion, which was historically dominated by native shrub steppe. Since the 1800s, farmers and ranchers have been working the land around District 4. Intensive irrigated agriculture, supporting many orchards and vineyards, is a major land use in the Yakima River Valley, southern Benton County, and western Franklin County. Dryland wheat is also a major land use in southern Benton County and eastern Franklin County. Many thousands of acres of this wheat country have been enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), providing cover for mule deer and other wildlife that have lost much of their natural shrub-steppe habitat.

In Benton County, large east-west trending ridges, including the Horse Heaven Hills and Rattlesnake Hills, add to the topographic diversity of the district. The eastern Franklin County landscape includes the rolling hills of the Palouse Prairie and the southernmost extent of the channeled scablands. Western Franklin County contains several small lakes and depression wetlands that provide additional wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

Hunting access in District 4 is more limited than some other parts of the state, as much of the district is held in private ownership or by federal agencies that do not allow hunting. However, quality opportunities do exist, and WDFW is always trying to expand hunting access. Information and related links to several public sites listed in each game section can be found in the Major Public Lands section. Information on how to access private land through one of WDFW's access programs is available in the Private Lands section.

Overall, the landscape of District 4 provides a diversity of habitats favored by waterfowl, upland birds, including chukar, partridge, pheasant, quail, and dove, and big game, including deer and elk. Welcome to District 4 and happy hunting!

ELK

Opportunities for elk hunting in District 4 are primarily limited to lands surrounding the western (Blackrock Elk Area 3722) and southern boundaries (Corral Canyon Elk Area 3721) of the Hanford Reach National Monument in GMU 372. Surveys on the Hanford Monument in February 2015 yielded a total herd estimate of 1,109 elk, a historic high. The herd contained ratios of 40 bulls and 21 calves per 100 cows. The high bull ratio is typical for this herd because they can seek refuge on the federal Hanford lands during hunting season.

Typically during the general season, 175-190 hunters pursue elk in District 4. Of those, 20-25 (usually modern firearm) are successful. Last year however, 132 hunters reported harvest of only 10 elk. Hunter success was lower than usual at about 8%. Harvest success depends upon forage

conditions on the Hanford site and the availability of forage crops on farm lands outside of the protected area. Hunters are usually more successful early in the season. While most of the land around the Hanford Monument is private, elk hunters can pursue elk in Benton County on WDFW's Thorton and Rattlesnake Slope units of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area north of Prosser and Benton City. There are also limited opportunities for elk hunting in Franklin County in the Juniper Dunes Wilderness (http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site_info.php?siteid=270) and on the Windmill Ranch Unit of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area (http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/county/Benton/).



AN ELK HARVESTED IN GMU 372.

On private land, the best way to secure access is to apply for a special permit through the Landowner Hunt Program (LHP). If selected, permit holders are guaranteed a one day guided

hunt. Most permits are limited to antlerless opportunity for youth hunters, but a few permits for any elk are issued each year. See the current hunting regulations for more information.

DEER

Eastern Franklin County is an important wintering area for mule deer that migrate south to the relatively mild winter conditions near the Snake River, as compared to conditions on their summer range further north. The highest concentrations of deer (mostly mule deer with a few white-tails) are in the Kahlotus Unit (GMU 381), with a large percentage migrating in from northern units starting in October, right around the opening of the modern firearm general season. During mild winters, some of these deer may remain further north or delay moving into the district.

Post-hunt surveys in December 2014 yielded an estimated 13 bucks to 100 does (Figure 2). This value is below the 10-year average of 19 bucks to 100 does and may be attributable to the high hunter success discussed below. Of these bucks, 11% were classified as 3+ points (i.e. legal to harvest). Fawn numbers were at 71 fawns per 100 does (Figure 2). This compares well to the ten-year average of 60 fawns per 100 does and indicates a second year in a row of good production.

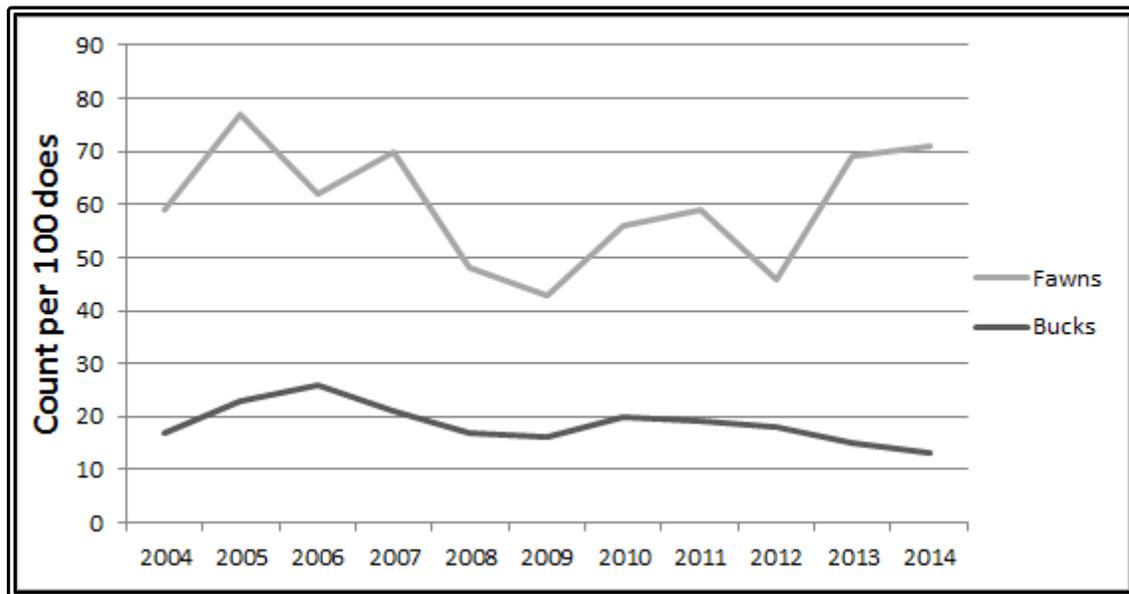


FIGURE 2. BUCK AND FAWN RATIOS IN DISTRICT 4, 2004-2014.

In 2014, the hunter success rate for deer in District 4 was ~32%, with a five-year average of 35%. Hunter success in the five surrounding districts was 25% last season. District 4 hunters enjoy a higher success rate primarily due to restricted access for hunters and a lack of cover for

deer. Most legal bucks will be harvested during the first few days of the modern firearm season. As in past years, a late November muzzleloader general season will open in Franklin County (GMU 379 & 381), providing good opportunity for hunters to harvest a buck or antlerless deer.



A BUCK HARVESTED IN FRANKLIN COUNTY (GMU 381).

In northern Benton County (GMU 372), spend some time scouting for deer in the Thornton and Rattlesnake units of the Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area (Figure 9). In southern Benton County, there are small groups of deer available to hunters on land in the Horse Heaven Hills (GMU 373), managed by the Bureau of Land Management, scattered tracts of DNR and private property, and the USFWS's Umatilla NWR.

Deer Areas 3071 and 3072 on the Umatilla NWR's Whitcomb and Paterson units (Figure 11), provide 40 special permits split every September between muzzleloader and archery hunters. In even numbered years, archery hunters have the opportunity to hunt antlerless deer during the first week of September and any buck during the second week of September, while muzzleloader** hunters are able to hunt antlerless deer for the rest of the month. During odd numbered years, the opportunity switches between weapon types. Muzzleloader hunters are able to hunt antlerless and buck deer in early September and archers hunt antlerless for the rest of the month. Please consult the current hunting regulations for more details. The Whitcomb and Patterson

muzzleloader buck hunts expected in early September 2015 were omitted during the update of the Washington Administrative Code. WDFW intends to continue these hunts and the weapon rotation in 2016 as described above.

There are quite a few “Feel Free to Hunt” and “Hunt by Written Permission” acres where hunters can gain access to deer. Pre-season scouting is advisable in order to learn where to hunt and to obtain permission from private landowners. *Don’t be shy about knocking on doors and respectfully asking about access.*

The newly revamped [GoHunt](#) application on WDFW’s website is the place to learn where the private lands access areas are located. It is advised to double check that lands available for hunting previously are still open to the public.

UPLAND BIRD

Overall, Benton and Franklin Counties offer upland bird hunters many opportunities. Whereas there are many factors that determine hunter success, on average, harvest of most species has been steady or slightly decreasing (Figure 3). Habitat is a key component influencing the survival and reproduction of birds. At the Mesa Lake Unit of the WDFW Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area, funding has been awarded for enhancing nesting opportunities for several species, including pheasant, quail, and doves. Over the past year, several acres were planted with native shrubs and grasses as part of an ongoing effort to enhance wildlife habitat on WDFW lands.

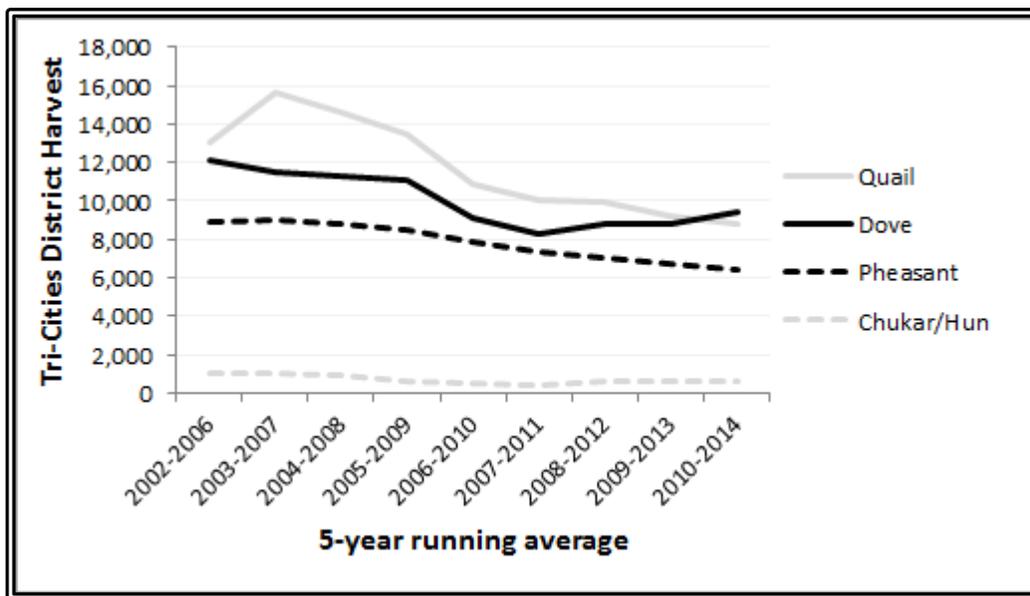


FIGURE 3. UPLAND BIRD HARVEST TRENDS BASED ON FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGES.

PHEASANT

In 2014, the number of ring-necked pheasant hunters in District 4 decreased by 6% (Figure 4). However, pheasant harvest increased, with hunters reporting a harvest of 7158 birds. This was up 28% from 2013, whereas statewide pheasant harvest increased by only 13%.

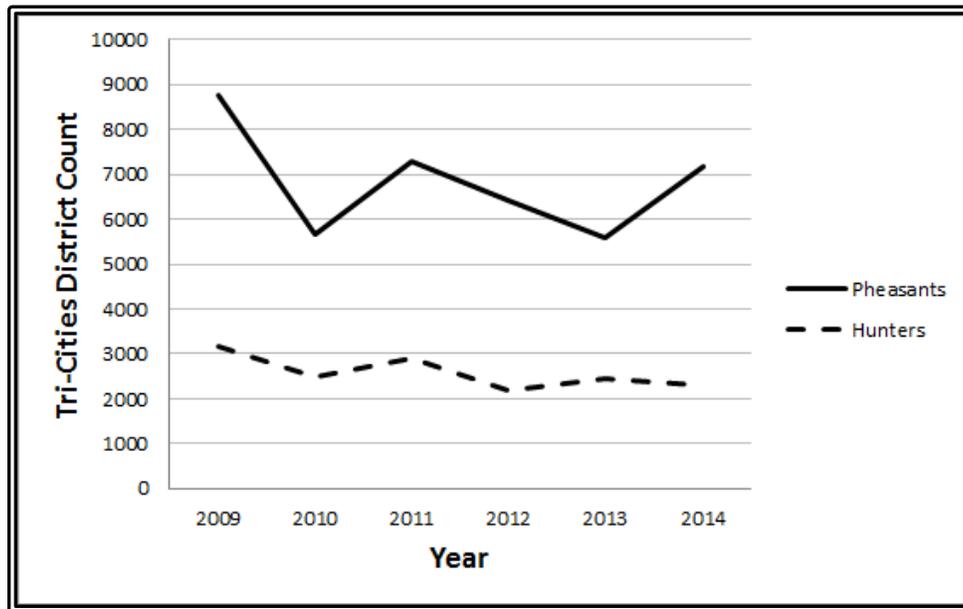


FIGURE 4. PHEASANTS HARVESTED AND PHEASANT HUNTERS IN DISTRICT 4, 2009-2014.

Each summer, biologists with the Yakama Nation conduct pheasant productivity surveys. In 2014, 0.36 pheasants were observed per mile (Figure 5). This is in line with the running average of 0.35 since 1993. Pheasant populations are often limited by cold, wet weather, especially in the spring when chicks are newly hatched. This year's exceptionally mild winter and early spring likely resulted in favorable pheasant survival.

Hunters should focus efforts in dense weedy and grassy areas adjacent to wetlands, streams, and irrigation waterways. Birds may also be found around irrigated farmland. Some of the best pheasant habitat in the district is in north Franklin County on and surrounding WDFW's Windmill Ranch Wildlife Area, Mesa Lake Wildlife Area, and the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch. Each of these hunting areas has two designated parking areas where hunters are required to park and register. All areas allow a maximum of five vehicles per lot. Other areas with good pheasant habitat include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Hanford Reach National Monument's East Wahluke Unit (Figure 10), Ringold (GMU 379), and [Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge](#) along the Columbia River, near the town of Paterson.

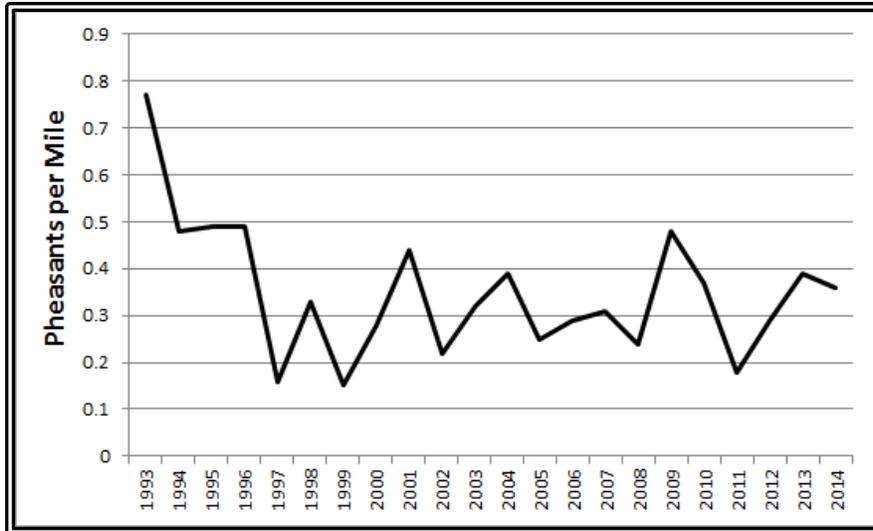


FIGURE 5. AVERAGE PHEASANTS PER MILE OBSERVED DURING BROOD COUNTS ON THE YAKAMA RESERVATION

Going after birds planted as part of WDFW’s [Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) is a great way to work dogs and get kids involved in hunting. Last year, WDFW planted 1,140 pheasants at three locations: the Hope Valley Unit of the WDFW Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area, and the Big Flat and Lost Island Habitat Management Units (HMU) held by the Army Corps of Engineers (Figure 6). For 2015, close to 1200 roosters will be released at these same locations. Pheasant release site locations statewide can be found on the [GoHunt](#) website. Army Corps HMUs information is available [here](#). Nontoxic shot is required at release sites.



ROOSTERS RELEASED AT THE HOPE VALLEY UNIT.

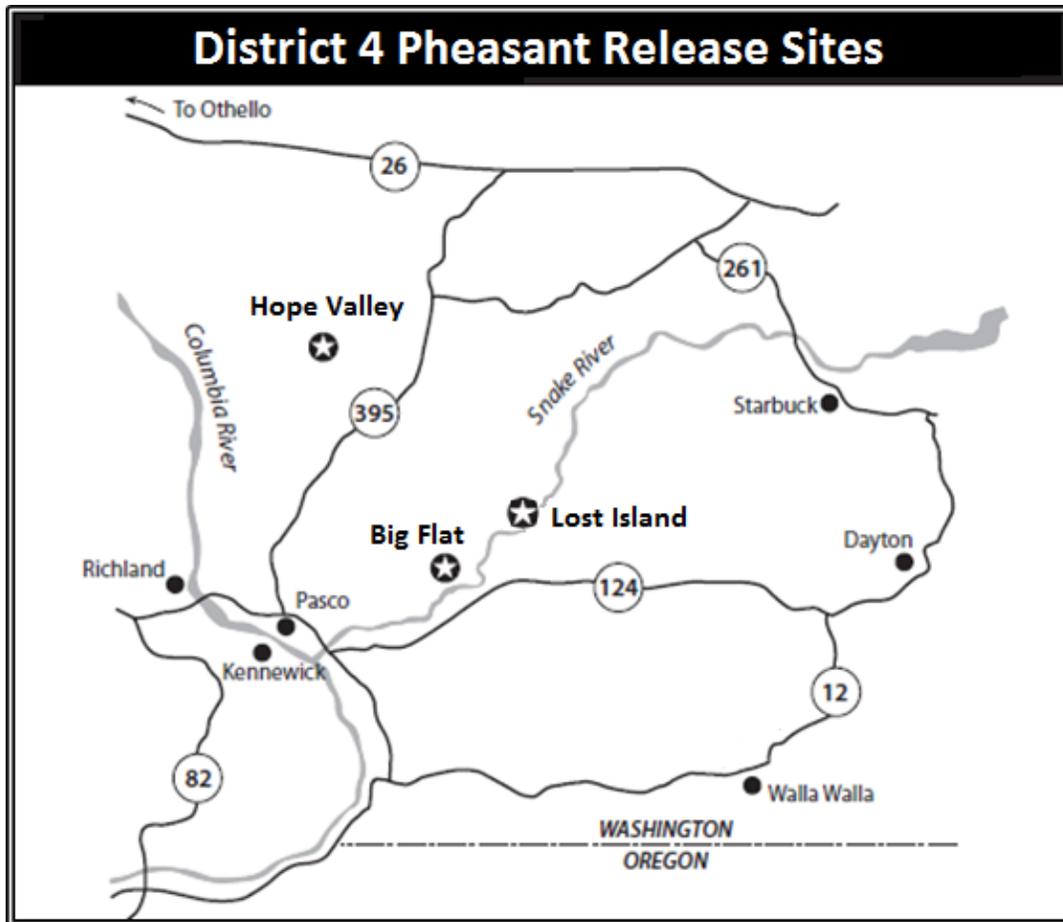


FIGURE 6. LOCATION OF HOPE VALLEY, BIG FLAT, AND LOST ISLAND PHEASANT RELEASE SITES

QUAIL

Numerous California quail have been observed in the district, and given the mild winter and ample cover and insects, it should be a good season in 2015. There has been a decreasing trend in harvest numbers over the past decade (Figure 3). Surveys conducted by the Yakama Nation show that quail numbers vary greatly year to year, but that 2014 was an above average year for quail in the region (Figure 7). The best quail habitat in District 4 is similar to those listed above for pheasant. In addition, anywhere along water bodies where riparian and herbaceous vegetation intersect will provide quail habitat. An ideal setting is where Russian olives or willows are adjacent to black greasewood or sagebrush.

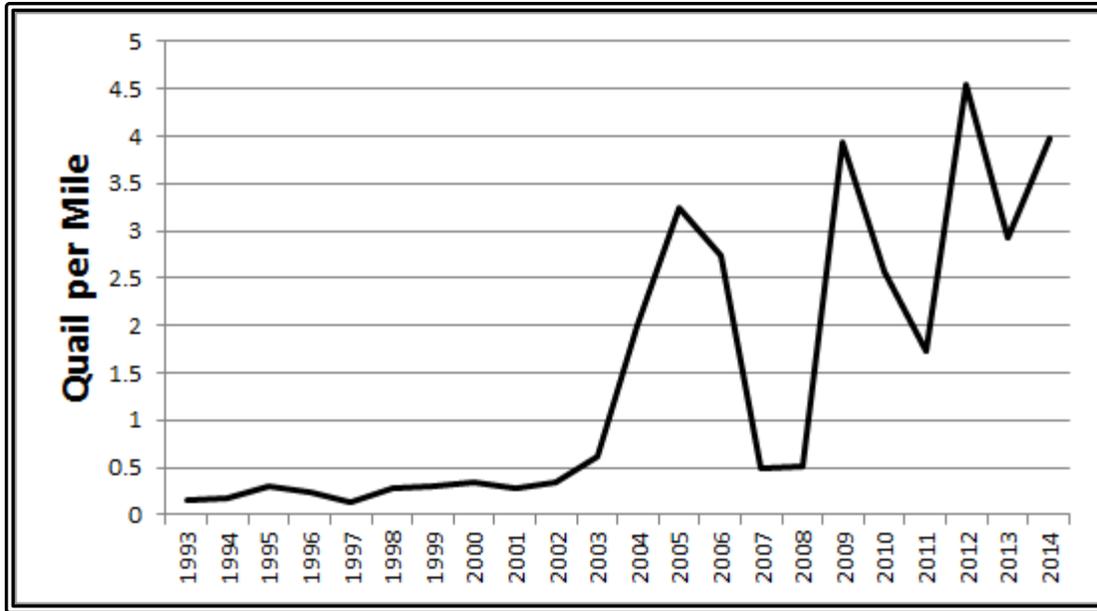


FIGURE 7. AVERAGE QUAIL PER MILE OBSERVED DURING BROOD COUNTS ON THE YAKAMA RESERVATION

DOVE

Mourning dove harvest in District 4 has been increasing over the past five years (Figure 3). There has been good success at our trapping/banding station in 2015. More than two-thirds of the birds captured were juveniles that were hatched this year, indicating good production. In addition, many doves have been observed in Franklin County, even in drier areas. Weather patterns play a critical role in determining how many doves are present during the season opener. Focus hunting efforts in or near wheat or corn stubble fields in the irrigated Yakima and Columbia Basins. The best combination of habitat includes a stubble field near water and large isolated trees or power lines where doves perch and attract other doves.



ONE OF MANY MOURNING DOVES BANDED AS PART OF WDFW'S MONITORING PROGRAM

WATERFOWL

The five year average of ducks harvested in District 4 over the past decade has been increasing, while the goose harvest has been slightly decreasing (Figure 8). Flight surveys conducted in the spring of 2015 over irrigated portions of the southern Columbia Basin yielded an estimate of 21,581 mallards. This is 10% lower than the long term average for the region and likely reflects extremely dry conditions, which reduced the availability of wetland habitat for breeding ducks. However, the overall estimate for eastern Washington waterfowl was equal to the long term average, and as ducks begin to move, there should be ample opportunities for duck hunters. After the season opening, hunter success will likely taper off as the local ducks get “educated” and restrict their daytime movements to local reserves and sanctuaries. At that point, hunters will likely have to wait for the migrants to arrive in the mid- to late-season. Weather patterns will determine when they will arrive and where they will congregate.

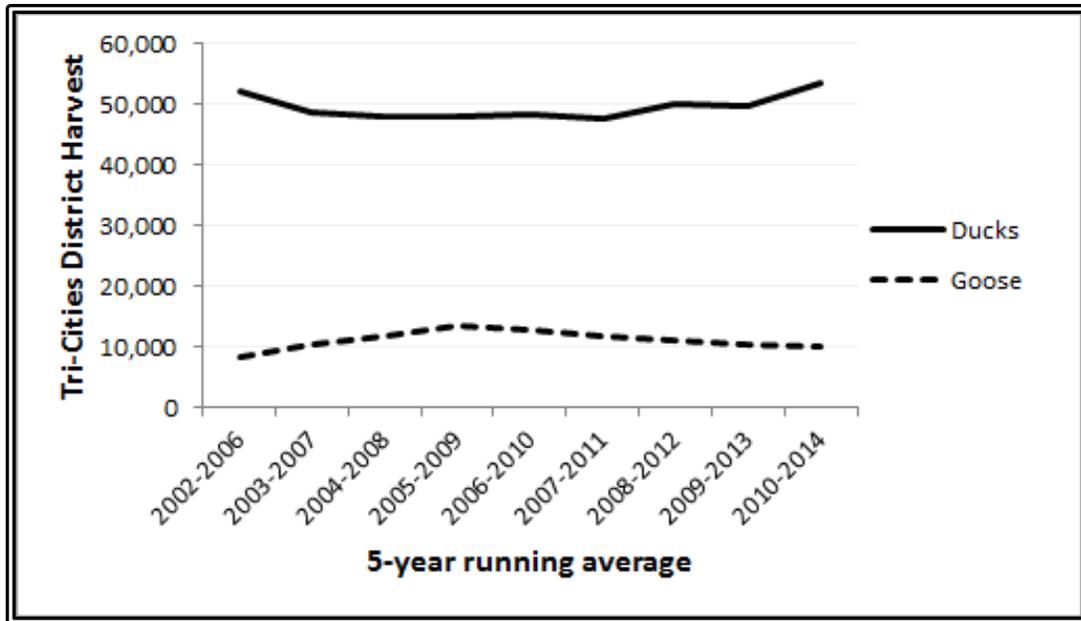


FIGURE 8. DISTRICT 4 WATERFOWL HARVEST TRENDS BASED ON FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGES.

There are many places to hunt ducks and geese in the district. Small ponds and lakes can be found on WDFW’s Windmill Ranch, Mesa Lake, and Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch. This year, wetland management activities will result in increased open water areas at the Windmill and Bailie Youth Ranches in time for duck season. Continued management of the Sunnyside and Snake River Wildlife Areas will result in more habitat for waterfowl and opportunities for hunters in the coming years. Scootney Reservoir, managed by the [Bureau of Reclamation](#), can provide good hunting. For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see “Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

The Snake and Columbia rivers and associated water bodies will hold tens of thousands of ducks when the cold weather sets in. Access can be gained at the McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges and the Hanford Reach National Monument.



A MALLARD BROOD IN THE POTHOLE CANAL, FRANKLIN COUNTY.

During odd numbered years, Canada goose nests are surveyed on most of the islands in the Columbia River throughout District 4 to track local production. This spring, the number of Canada goose nests counted continued an upward recovery seen over recent surveys following decreases in the early 2000s. Therefore, there will be an early goose season running from September 12-13, 2015. In addition, thousands of migratory Canada geese will arrive in the district sometime in October or November. They can be pursued in the farm fields near the Snake and Columbia rivers. Most of the land is private, so hunters will want to secure permission before hunting.

The Cropland Hunting Access Initiative is a program aimed at increasing waterfowl hunting access in the Columbia Basin. Benton and Franklin county farmers are currently being contacted to determine their interest in delaying tillage of corn and wheat stubble and providing hunter access on those acres. To ensure a quality hunting experience, properties are open for hunting only on “Goose Days” and can be reserved via the Hunt by Reservation System. WDFW had 1200 acres enrolled in 2014 and hopes to match that total this year. Watch the WDFW website

for updated maps and directions to these fields in the coming weeks <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/>.



GOOSE HARVEST IN THE TRI-CITIES.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Hunting access in Benton and Franklin counties is more limited than some other parts of the state, as much of the district is held in private ownership or by federal agencies that do not allow hunting. However, quality opportunities on both public and private land do exist and WDFW is continually working to expand hunting access.

Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area: This Wildlife Area (Figure 9) comprises most of the WDFW-owned land in the district and most parcels are open to hunting, but with specific restrictions at some units. Most of the units are managed specifically for wildlife, and enhanced hunting opportunities are possible through crop, habitat, and wetland management. For more

information please visit: http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/. Directions to the Mesa Lake Unit (not described online) are located at the end of this document.

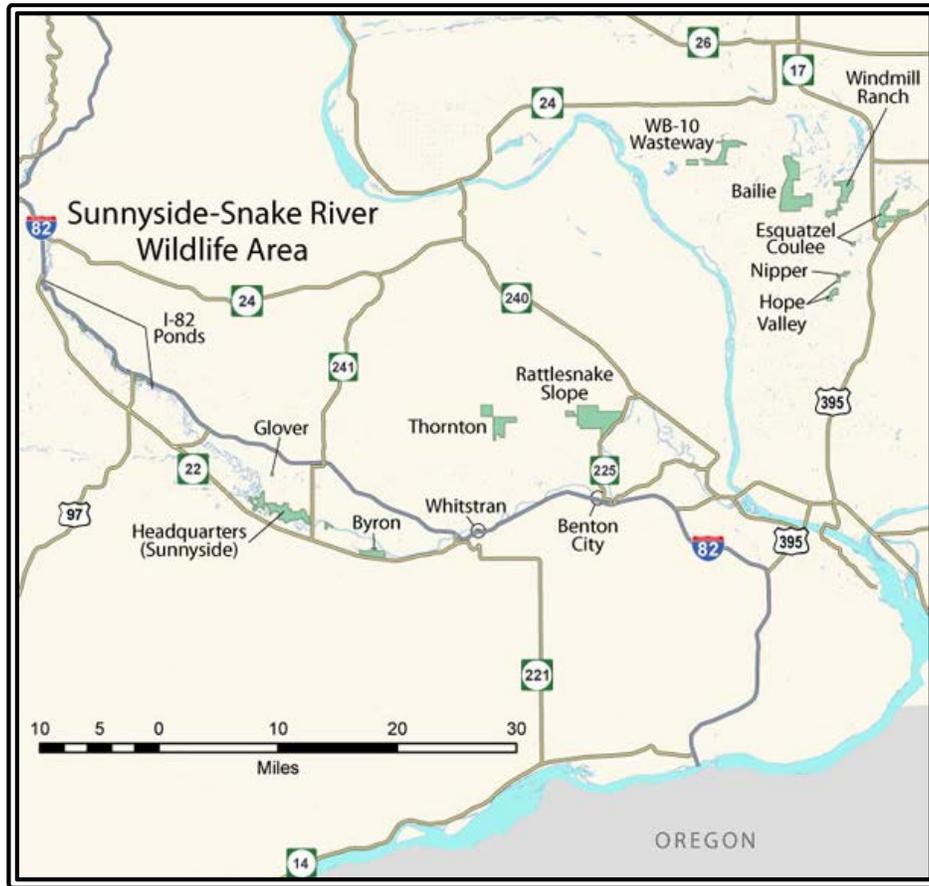


FIGURE 9. MAP OF THE SUNNYSIDE-SNAKE RIVER WILDLIFE AREA UNITS.

Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows hunting on a number of units of this refuge complex, including a portion of the Hanford Reach National Monument (Figure 10), a portion of the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, Figure 11), and certain areas within the McNary NWR. Details and maps can be found [here](#).

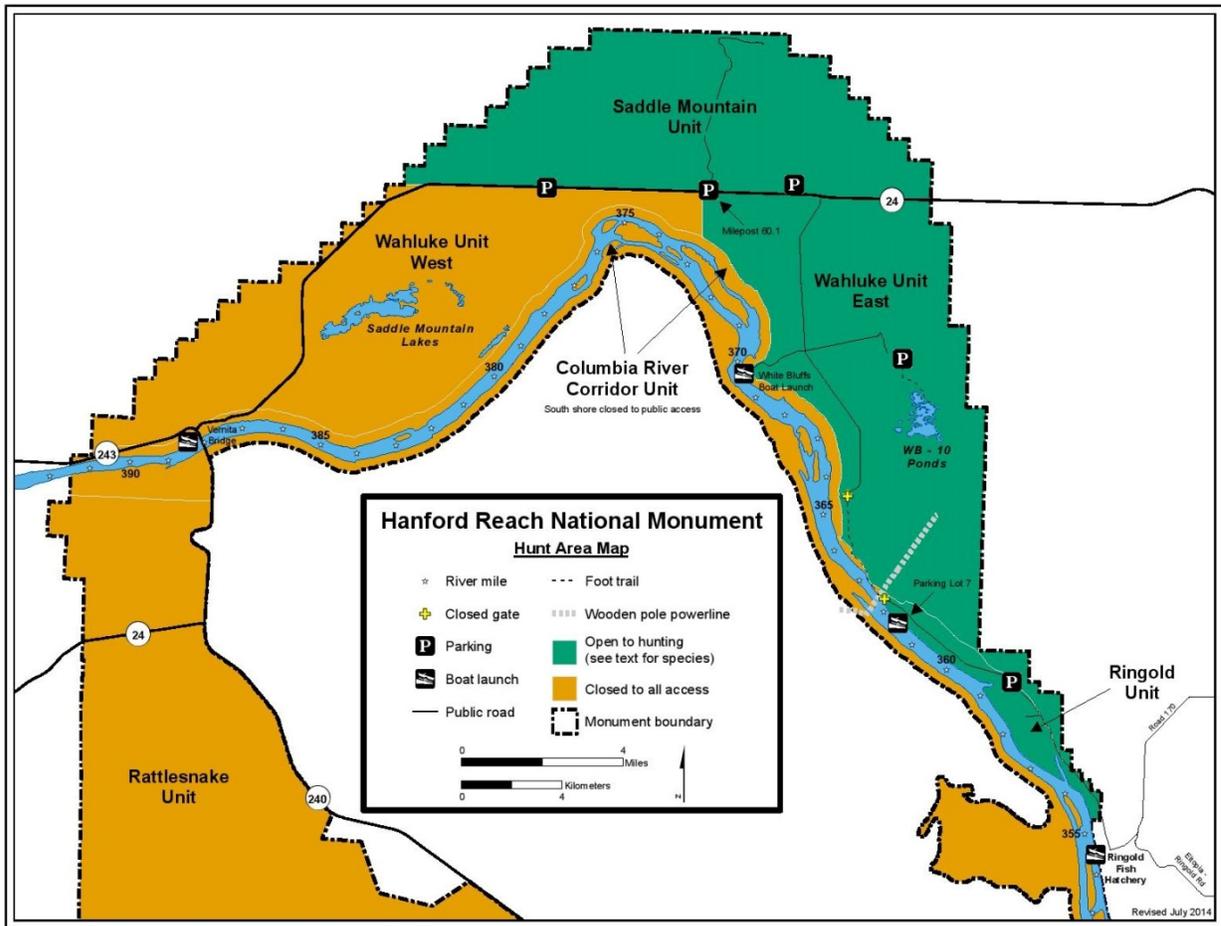


FIGURE 10. HANFORD REACH NATIONAL MONUMENT SHOWING AREAS WITH VARIOUS HUNTING ACCESS DESIGNATIONS.

The Columbia River, all islands except privately owned, in the river, the Benton County shoreline below the high water mark, Central Hanford Department of Energy property, and any peninsula originating on the Benton County shoreline between Vernita Bridge on Highway 24 downstream to the Richland city limits are designated as "CLOSED AREAS" to hunting wild animals and wild birds. The only exception is waterfowl hunting, which is open below the high water mark between the old Hanford town site power line crossing (wooden towers) and the Richland city limits. These details are printed in the 2015 Big Game Regulations on page 89.

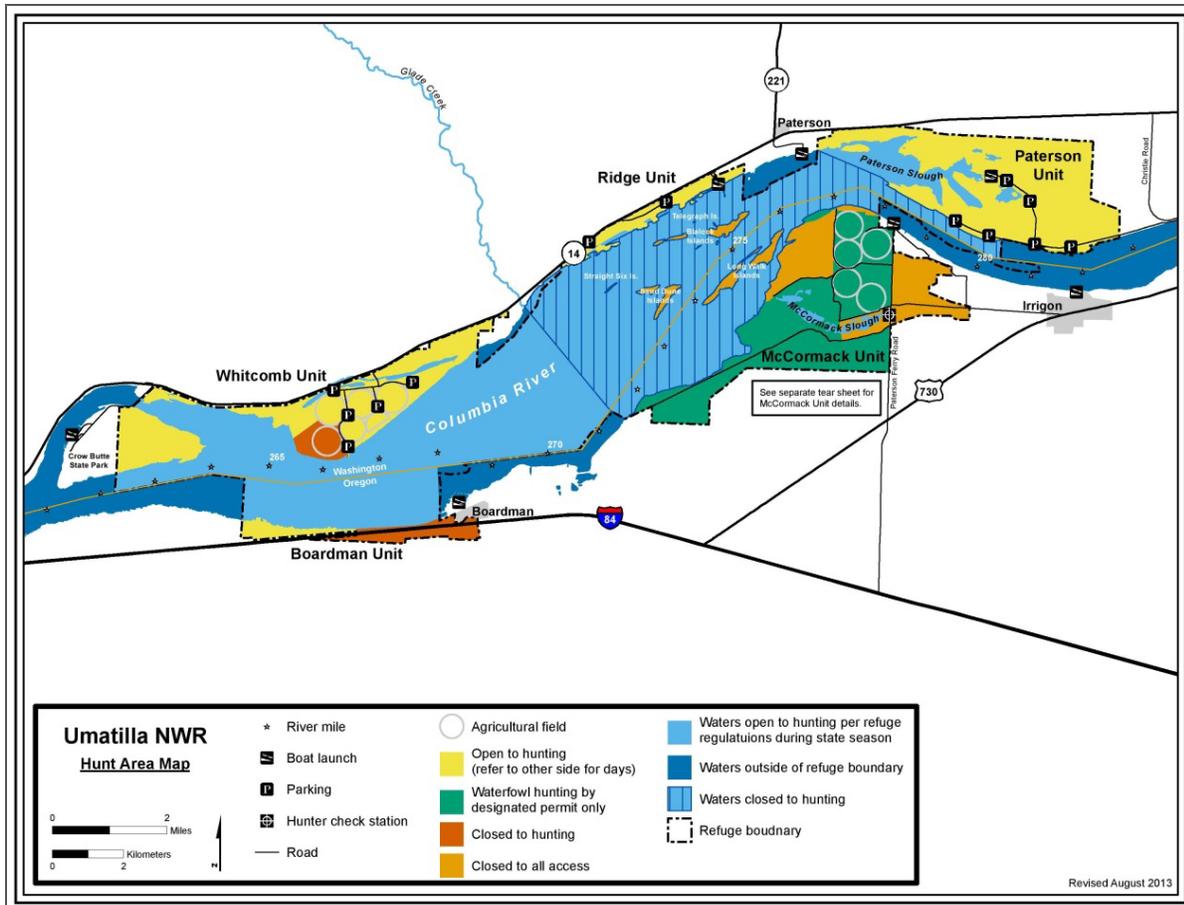


FIGURE 11. UMATILLA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, SHOWING AREAS WITH VARIOUS HUNTING ACCESS DESIGNATIONS.

Other Public Lands: Various other public agencies own or manage land within Benton and Franklin counties that may also be open to hunting. The Bureau of Land Management allows hunting at [Juniper Dunes](#) and other properties within the district. The [Army Corps of Engineers](#) and the Bureau of Reclamation are also federal agencies that allow hunting on portions of their land. Consult a public lands map or [GoHunt](#) for more information.

Washington’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also manages land that is open to hunting unless otherwise posted. Benton and Franklin counties have a large amount of DNR acreage, but it is often leased to private landowners. While leased land may still be open to hunting, hunters should always be aware that adjacent landowners are often managing DNR land as part of their business operations, and hunters should be respectful of property boundaries. Consult a public lands map or [GoHunt](#) for more information.

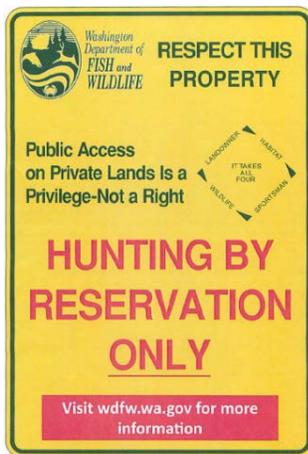
PRIVATE LANDS

Hunters may be most familiar and comfortable with hunting on public land, but WDFW also provides and maintains a Private Lands Access program that allows the public to hunt on land owned by cooperating private landowners. Often these landowners receive little to no compensation for their enrollment in the program, and hunters should always respect their property and wishes. By being a responsible guest on these private lands, hunters can help insure that they remain open for years to come and will continue to enhance WDFW's mission to expand private lands access.

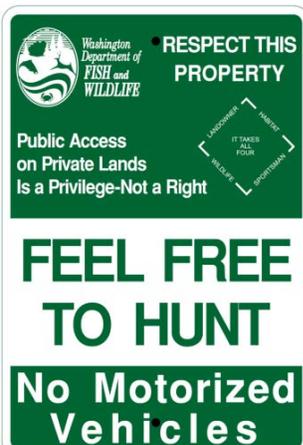
Information about private lands access sites, including site-specific regulations, locations, season availability, and contact information can be found [here](#) and at [GoHunt](#).

Four private lands programs exist, and while each provides public, walk-in only access to private land, they function differently.

Hunt By Reservation

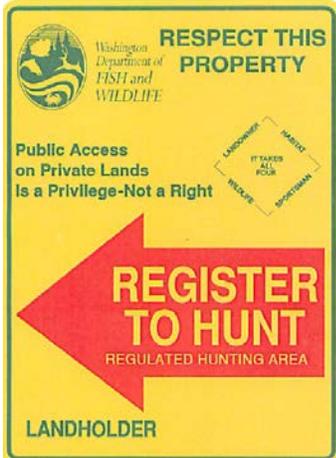


Hunt by reservation is the newest private lands access program in Washington and is coming to Benton and Franklin counties this fall. The program requires hunters to register online at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_land/type/56/. Hunters are required to print out and carry a permit, and they are provided a map of the property. Hunt by Reservation contracts in Benton and Franklin counties are currently in development, but multiple opportunities are expected to be available for both big game and bird hunting. More information about using the reservation site can be found [here](#).



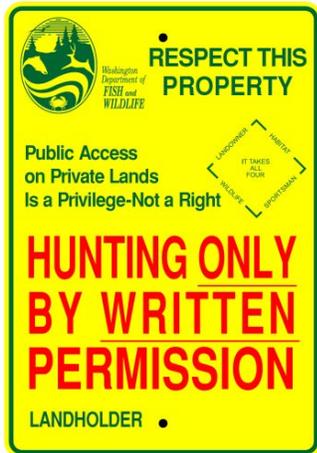
Feel Free To Hunt

Feel Free to Hunt is the largest access program in District 4, with dozens of properties totaling around 100,000 acres. It allows hunters to access designated land at any time during established hunting season. Most District 4 Feel Free to Hunt properties provide access for mule deer hunting with some potential for upland bird hunting as well.



Register to Hunt

District 4 has two Register to Hunt (RTH) sites, totaling 11,700 acres, both in Benton County. Register to Hunt requires hunters to sign in at registration kiosks and carry a permit with them. District 4’s RTH sites primarily provide waterfowl and upland bird hunting opportunities.



Hunt By Written Permission

Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP) requires hunters to make contact with the landowner. Landowners then issue permits to hunters at their discretion and hunters are expected to carry this permit while they hunt. Landowner contact information can be found on the signs at the site. There are seven HBWP properties totaling 20,000 acres within District 4, and they can provide opportunities for both big game and bird hunting.

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

A good starting point for hunters looking for a place to hunt is the newly redesigned GoHunt website at <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/>. GoHunt is a valuable resource that provides hunters with information about public and private lands access points, GMU boundaries and harvest data, landscape features such as roads and topography, and a great deal more.

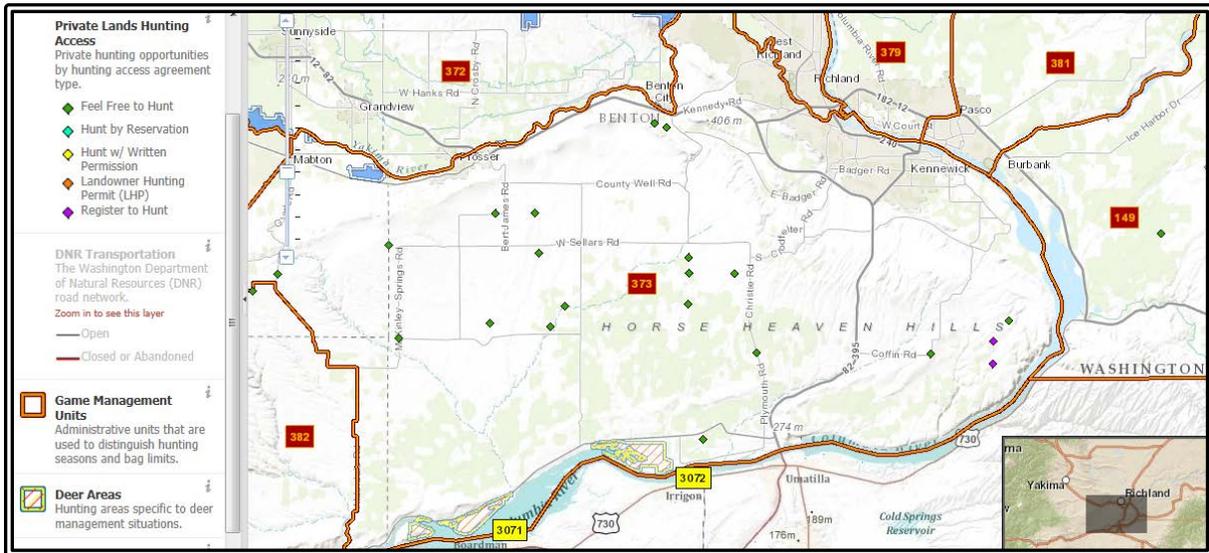


FIGURE 12. A DEPICTION OF THE PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS AND DEER AREAS 3071 AND 3072 IN GMU 373 FROM WDFW'S GOHUNT WEBSITE.

DIRECTIONS TO MESA LAKE REGISTER TO HUNT AREAS

Access Site #1

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: In Franklin County, from HWY 395, take WA-17N toward Mesa/Moses Lake for 0.4 miles, turn northwest onto WA-17 for 0.9 miles, turn west onto Pepiot Road for 0.2 miles, turn slight right onto 1 Avenue S for 0.1 mile, turn west on Sheffield Road for 0.6 miles, then turn west on gravel drive (Sunleaf) for 0.5 miles to east parking lot.

PARKING/RESTROOM INFORMATION: Gravel Parking Lot. No facilities.

OTHER INFORMATION: Register to Hunt; five car limit during hunting seasons only. No overnight camping or open fires. See kiosk for further information/restrictions.

Access Site #2

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: In Franklin County, from HWY 395, take WA-17N toward Mesa/Moses Lake for 0.4 miles, turn northwest onto WA-17 for 0.9 miles, turn west onto Pepiot Road for 0.2 miles, turn slight right onto 1 Avenue S for 0.1 mile, turn west on Sheffield Pepiot

Road for 1.8 miles, turn south on Langford Road for 0.8 miles, then turn east on gravel for 0.2 miles to west parking lot/crude boat launch.

PARKING/RESTROOM INFORMATION: Gravel Parking Lot. No facilities.

OTHER INFORMATION: Register to Hunt; five car limit during hunting seasons only. No overnight camping or open fires. See kiosk for further information/restrictions.

2015

RICH FINGER, District Wildlife Biologist
ORRIN DUVUVUEI, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist



*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*).

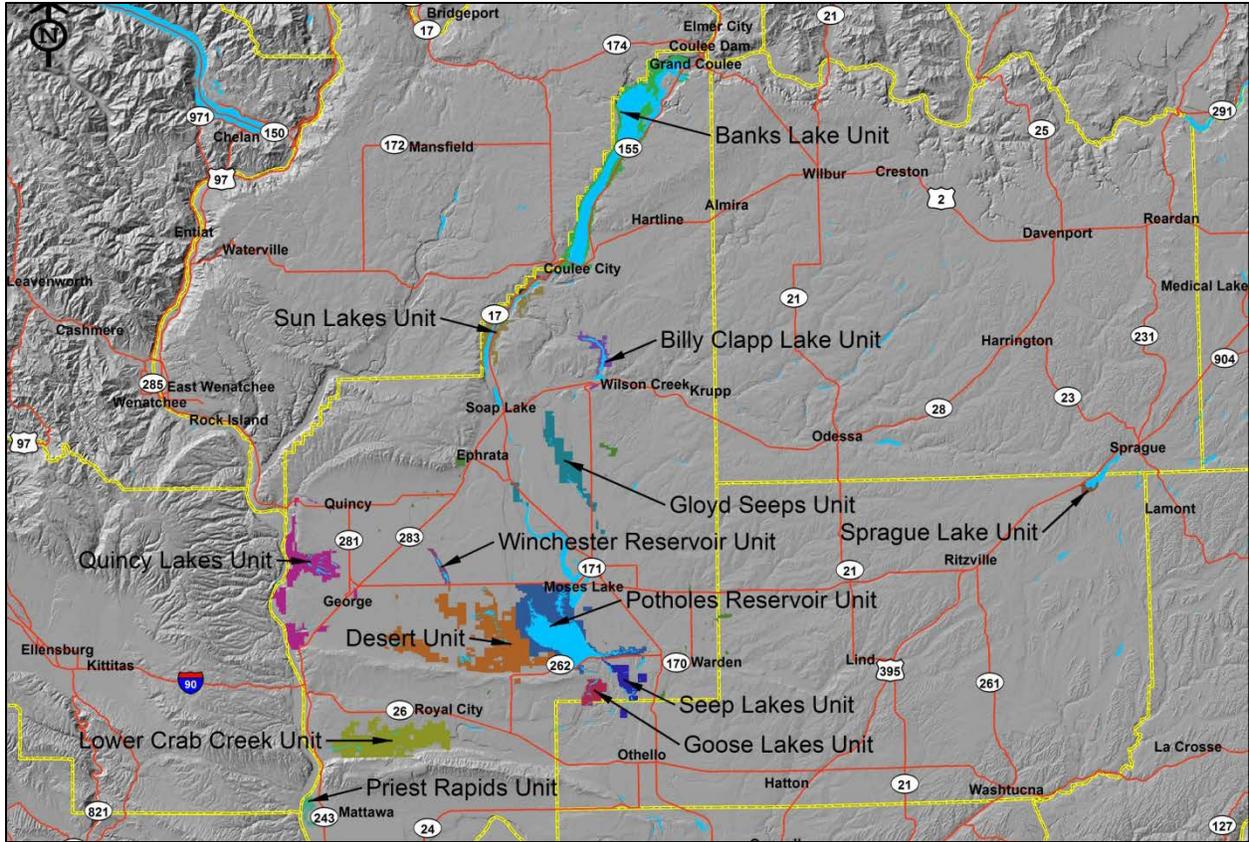


FIGURE 1. COLUMBIA BASIN WILDLIFE AREA UNITS.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Biologists continue working with wildlife area staff to target grant opportunities for funding to create and recover wetland projects, manage wetland succession, and plant a limited acreage of food plots.

Wildlife Area Management Activities (FIGURE 2):

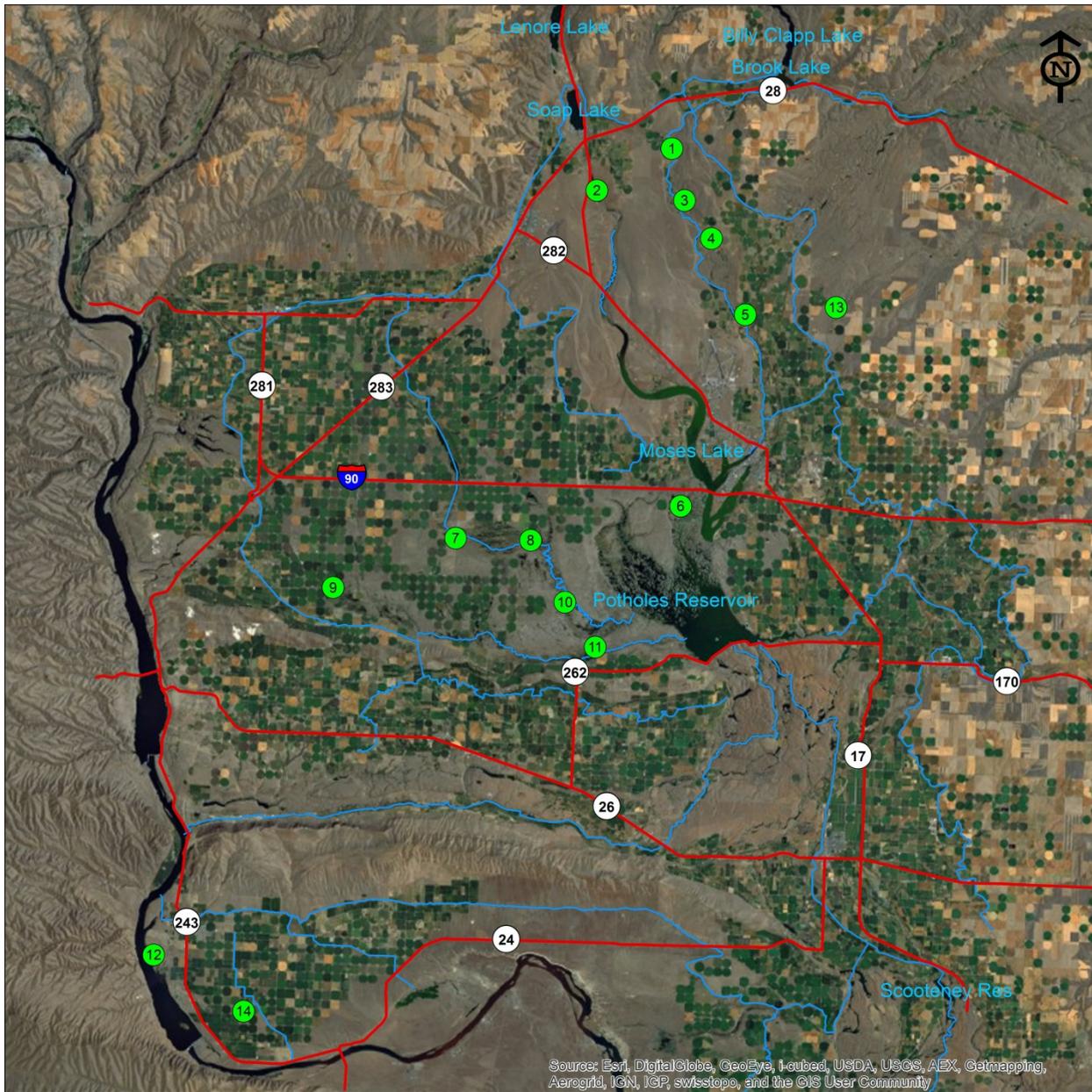


FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF WATERFOWL-RELATED WORK IN EPHRATA DISTRICT. GREEN CIRCLES REPRESENT PROJECT AREAS.

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.

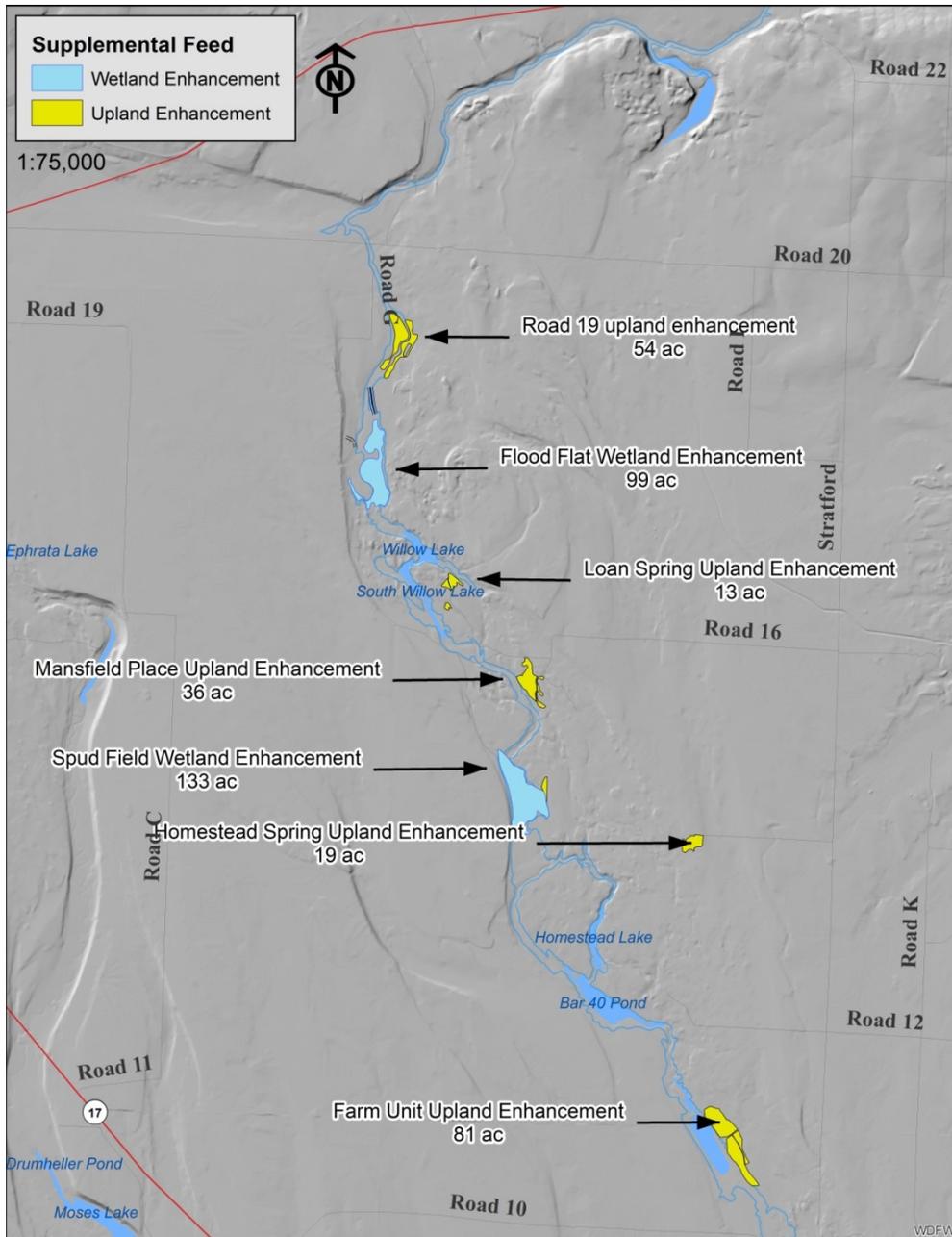


FIGURE 4. LOCATION OF WETLAND AND UPLAND ENHANCEMENTS IN THE GLOYD UNIT OF COLUMBIA BASIN WILDLIFE AREA.

- 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.

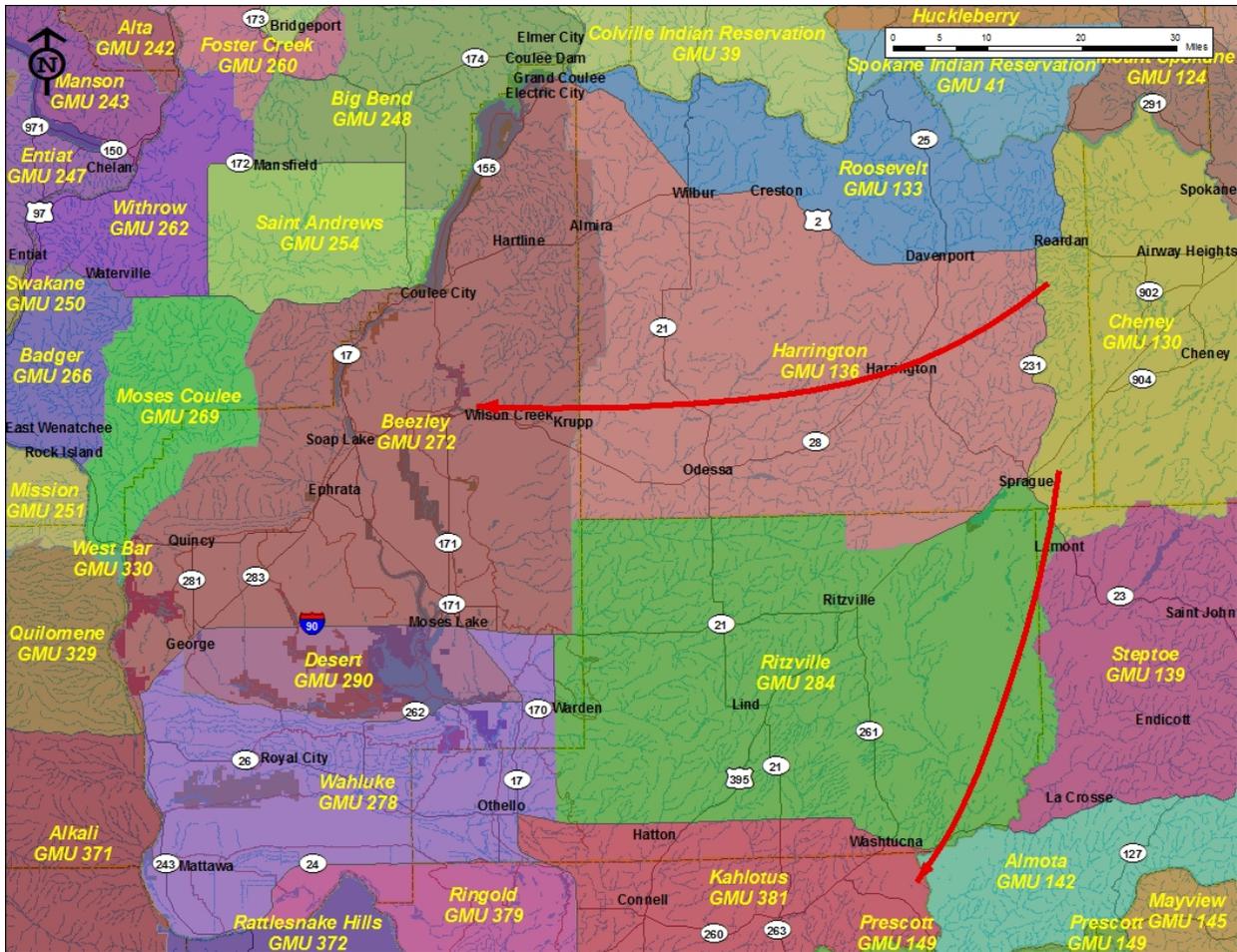


FIGURE 6. GENERALIZED PATTERNS OF FALL AND WINTER MULE DEER MIGRATION INTO THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

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.

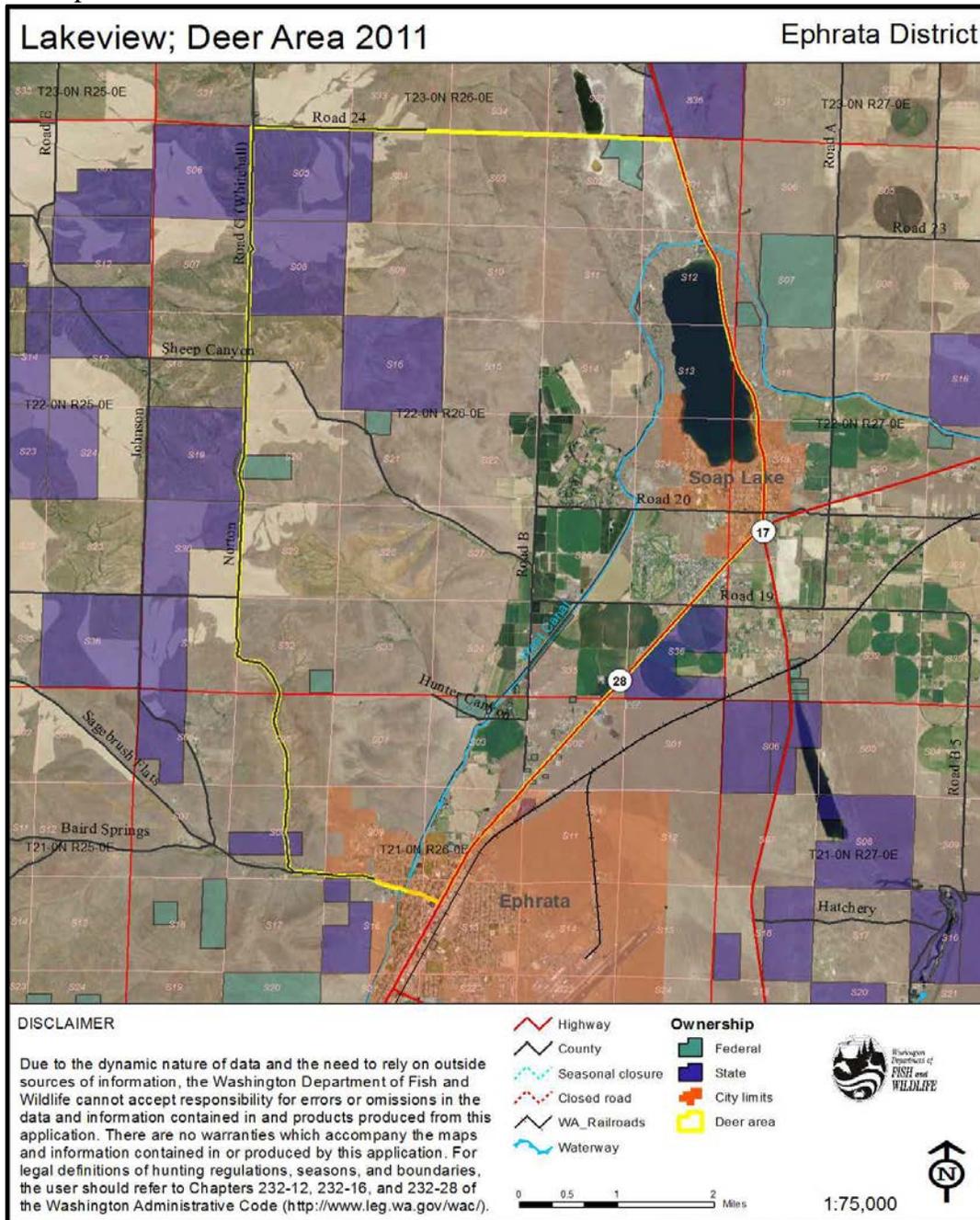
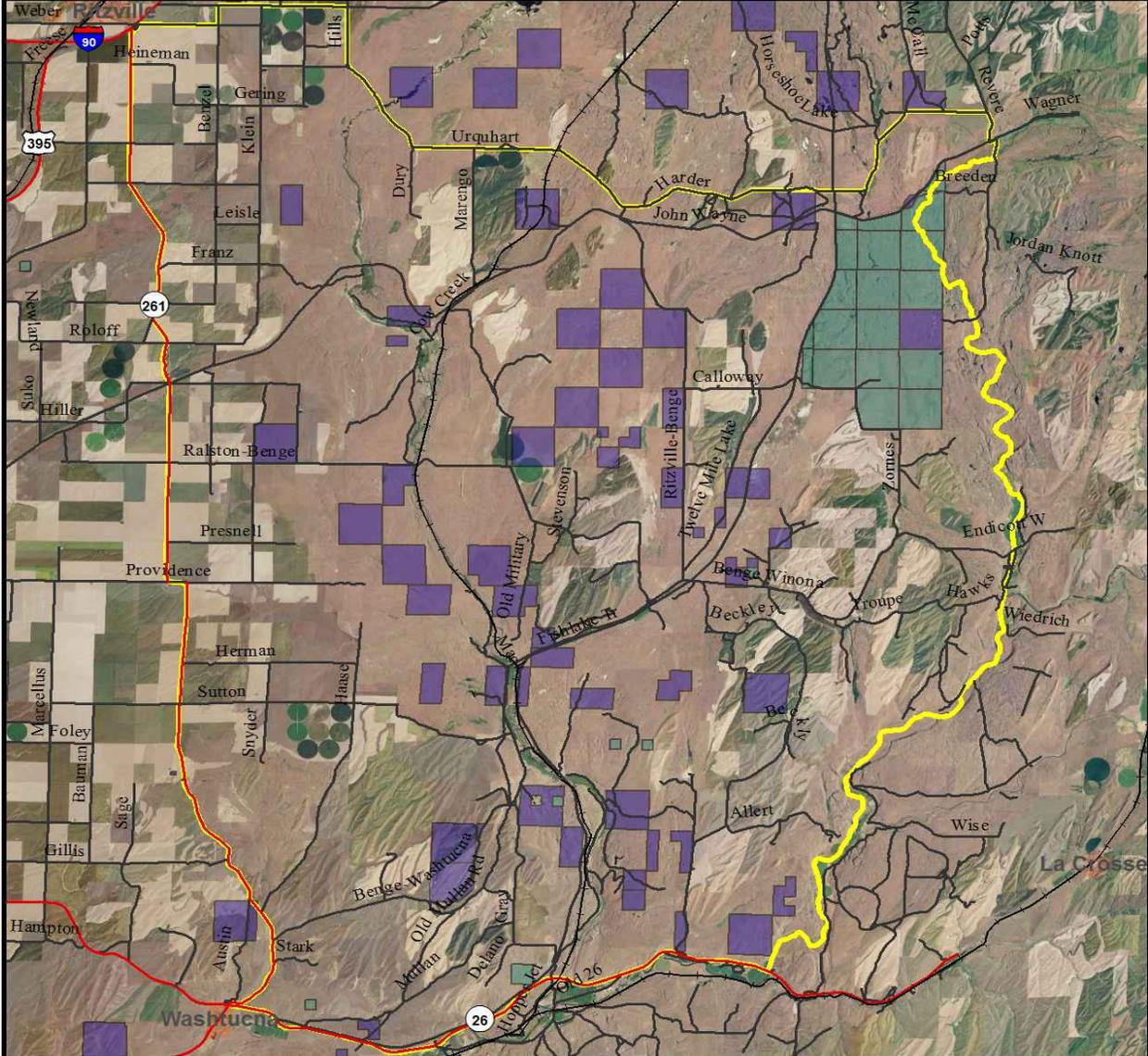


FIGURE 7. LAKEVIEW DEER AREA MAP.

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



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

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.

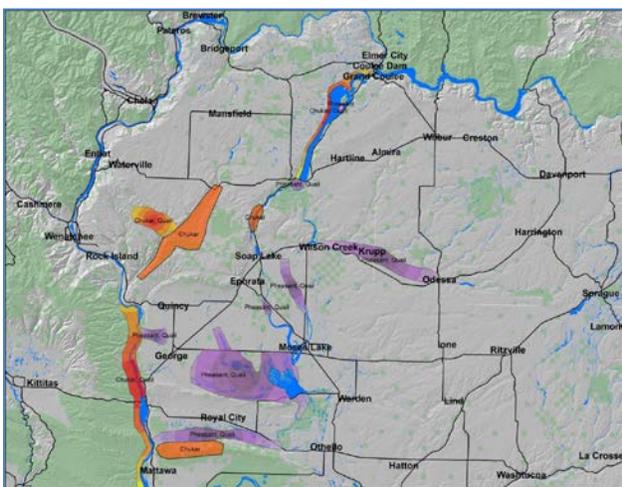


FIGURE 9. GENERALIZED UPLAND BIRD CONCENTRATIONS (PHEASANT, QUAIL, AND CHUKAR) THROUGHOUT THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

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.

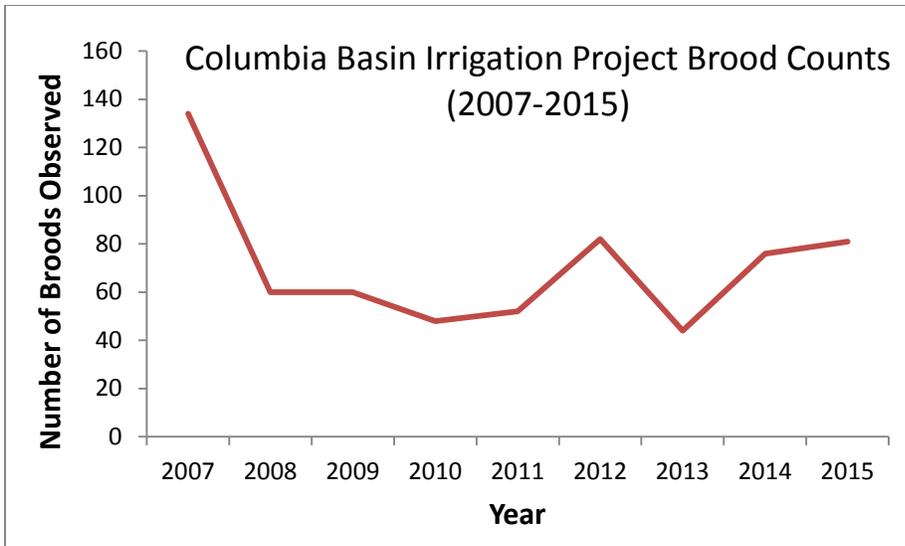


FIGURE 10. DUCK BROOD COUNT TOTALS FOR EPHRATA DISTRICT STRATA INCLUDING WEST CANAL, EAST CANAL, WINCHESTER DITCH, AND EPHRATA LAKE.

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.

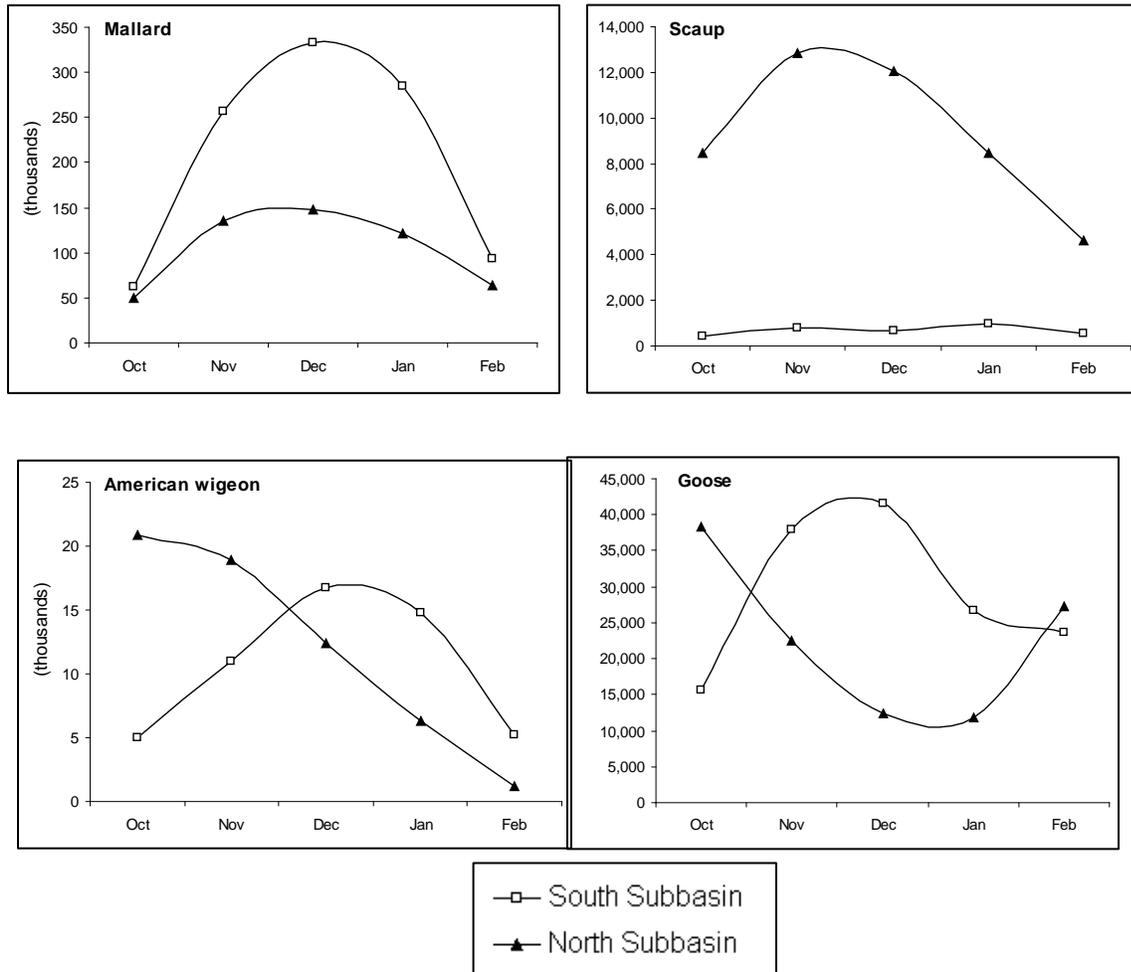


FIGURE 12. MIGRATION CURVES FOR SEVERAL SPECIES WHICH WINTER IN LARGE NUMBERS ON THE COLUMBIA PLATEAU. REFER TO FIGURE 11 ABOVE FOR A MAP OF SUBBASIN BOUNDARIES.

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.

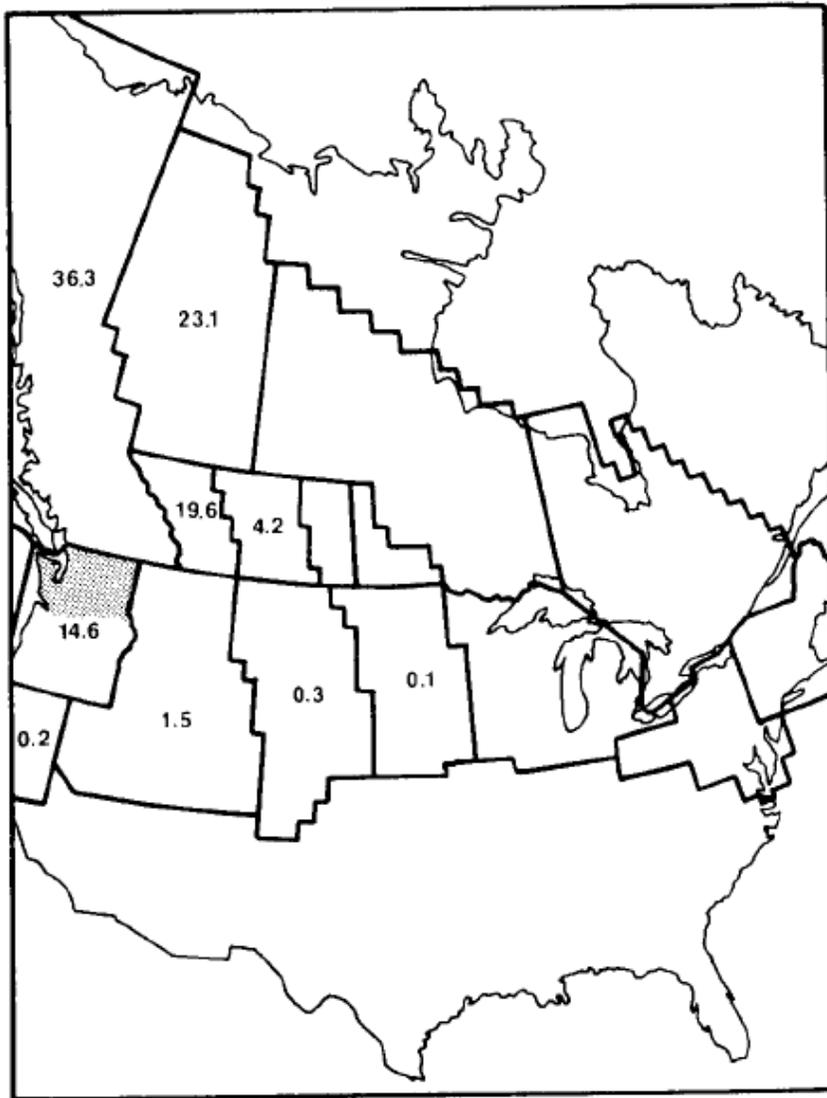


Fig. D-11. Percent derivation of the mallard harvest in *Washington* (shaded) from major breeding reference areas.

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.

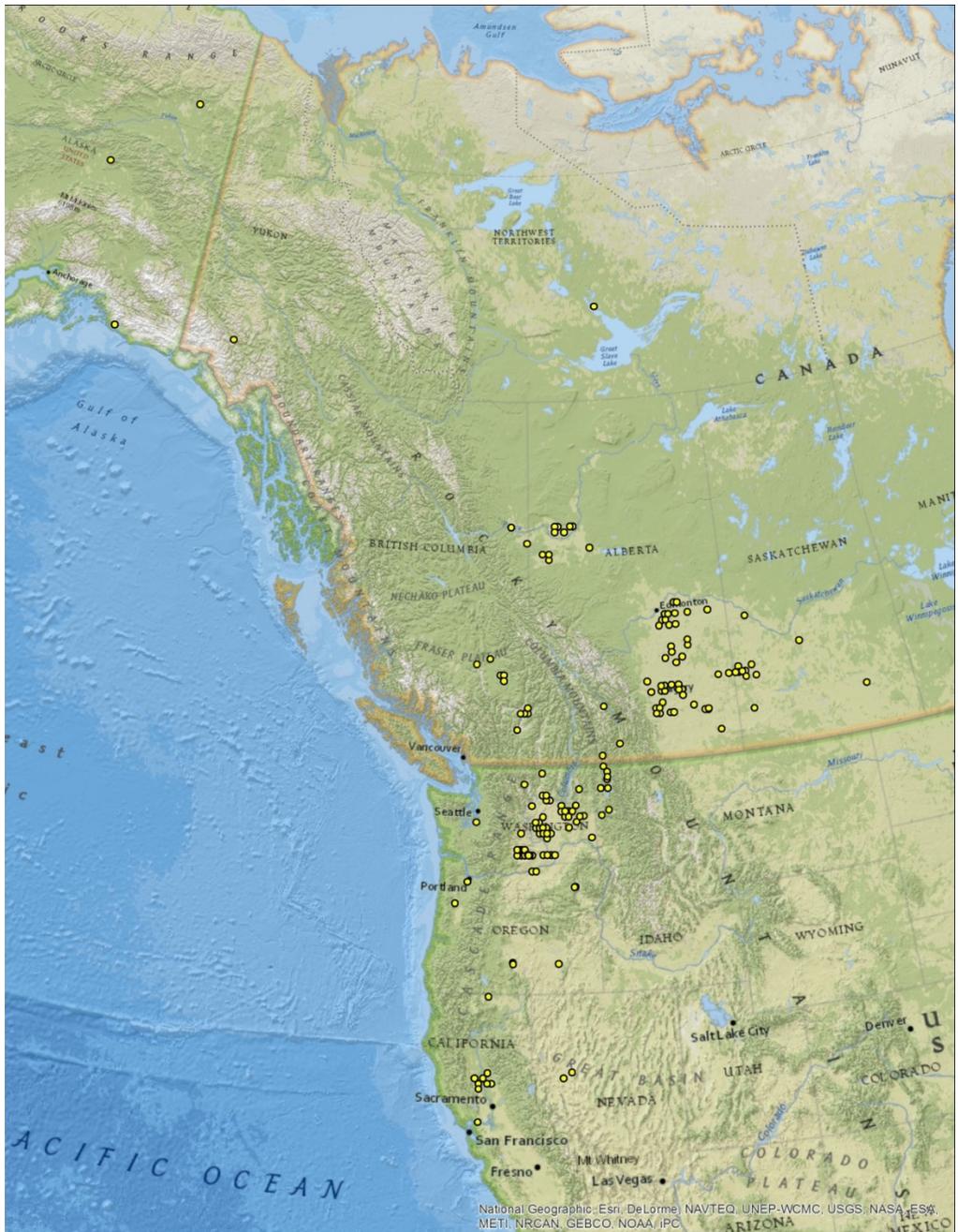


FIGURE 14. LOCATIONS (YELLOW DOTS) WHERE LOCAL MALLARDS (DUCKLINGS) WERE BANDED PRIOR TO BEING HARVESTED IN WASHINGTON STATE. BASED ON BANDING EFFORTS FROM 1949-2012.

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

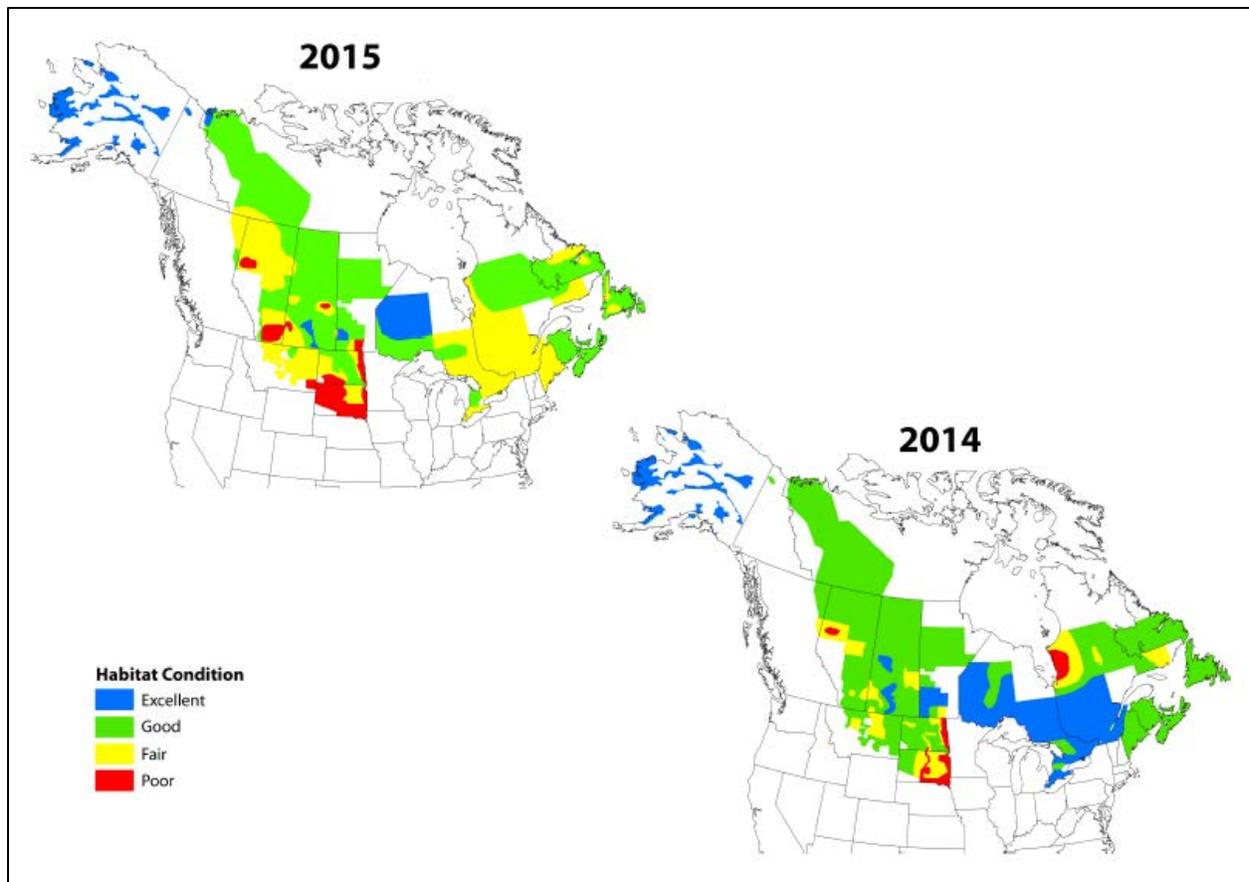


FIGURE 15. IMAGE SHOWING BREEDING AREA CONDITIONS DURING 2014 AND 2015.

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.

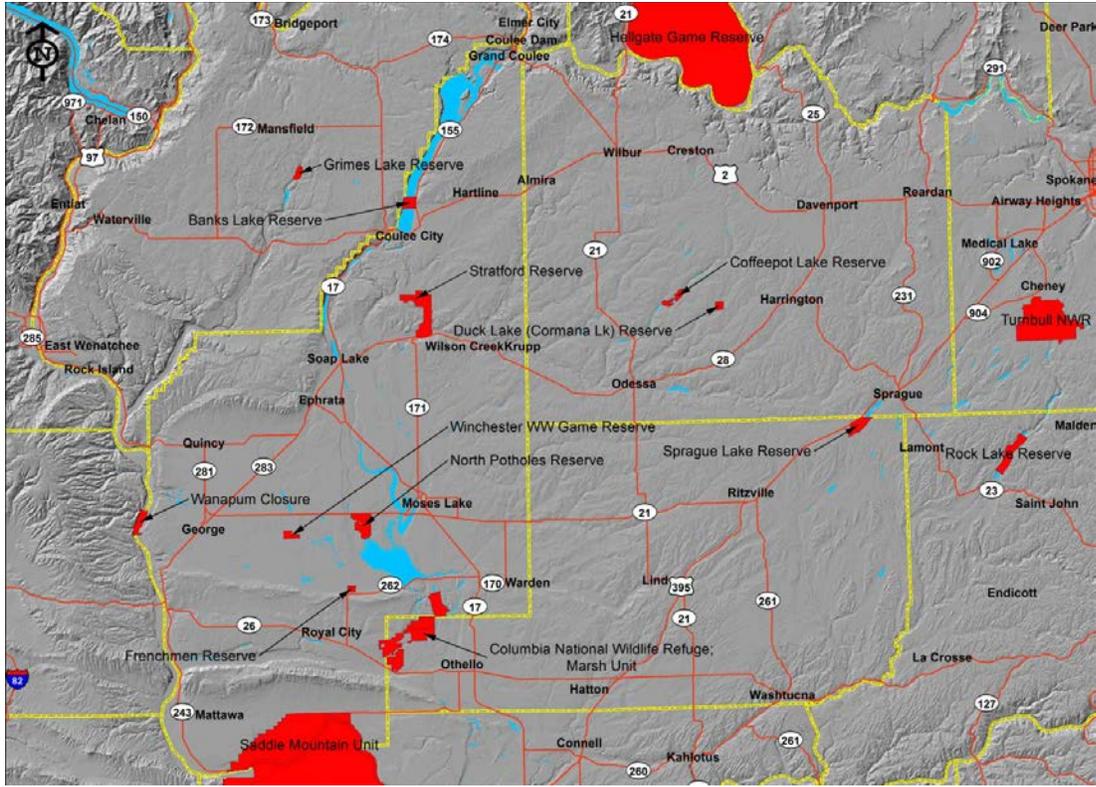


FIGURE 16. LOCATION OF WILDLIFE RESERVES AND CLOSED FEDERAL REFUGE UNITS (IN RED) THROUGHOUT AND ADJACENT TO THE EPHRATA DISTRICT.

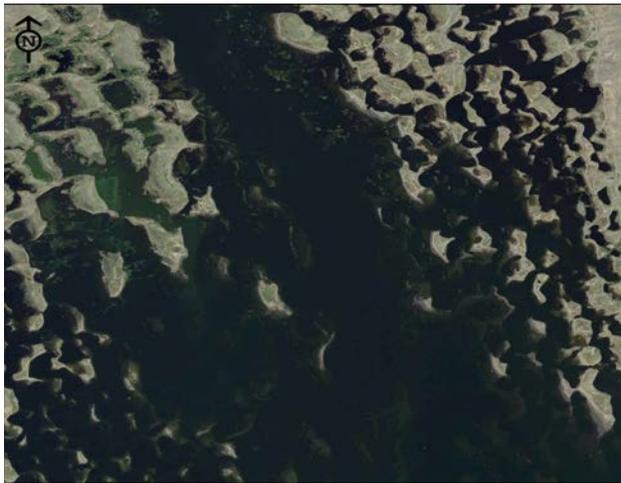


FIGURE 17. AERIAL IMAGERY SHOWING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIGH WATER (JUNE) AND LOW WATER (SEPTEMBER) LEVELS ON POTHOLE RESERVOIR.

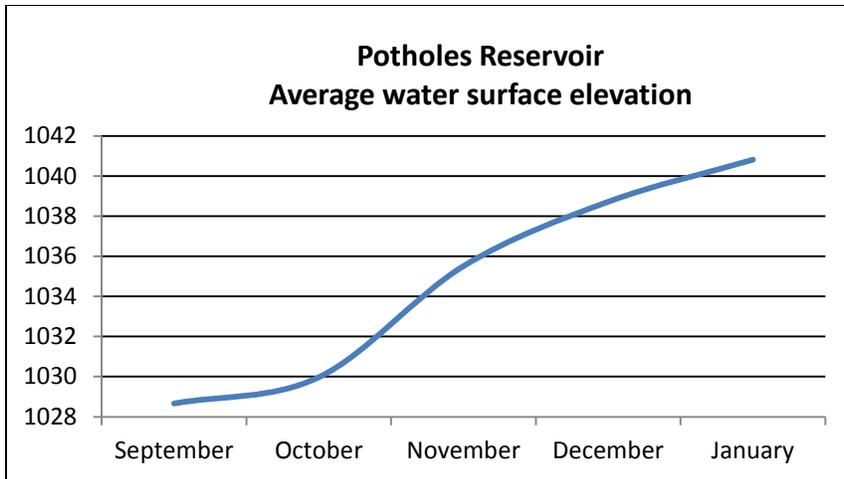


FIGURE 18. POTHoles RESERVOIR WATER SURFACE ELEVATION (IN FEET) DURING WATERFOWL SEASON. NOTE THAT WATER SURFACE ELEVATION IS MEASURED AT O’SULLIVAN DAM AND SOME LAG IN FLOODING WILL OCCUR IN THE UPPER PORTIONS OF THE RESERVOIR.

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.

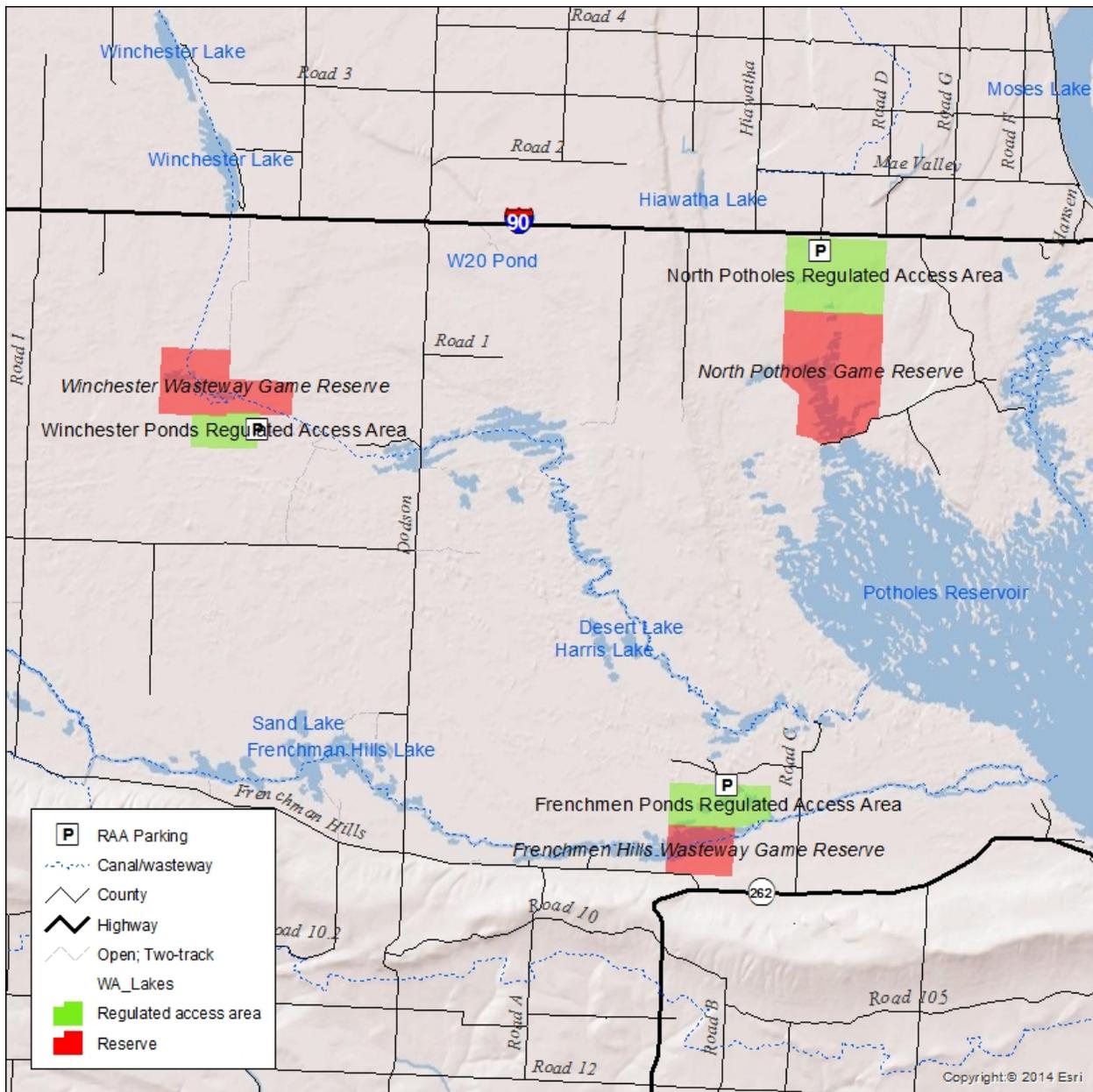


FIGURE 19. REGULATED ACCESS AREA LOCATIONS.

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.

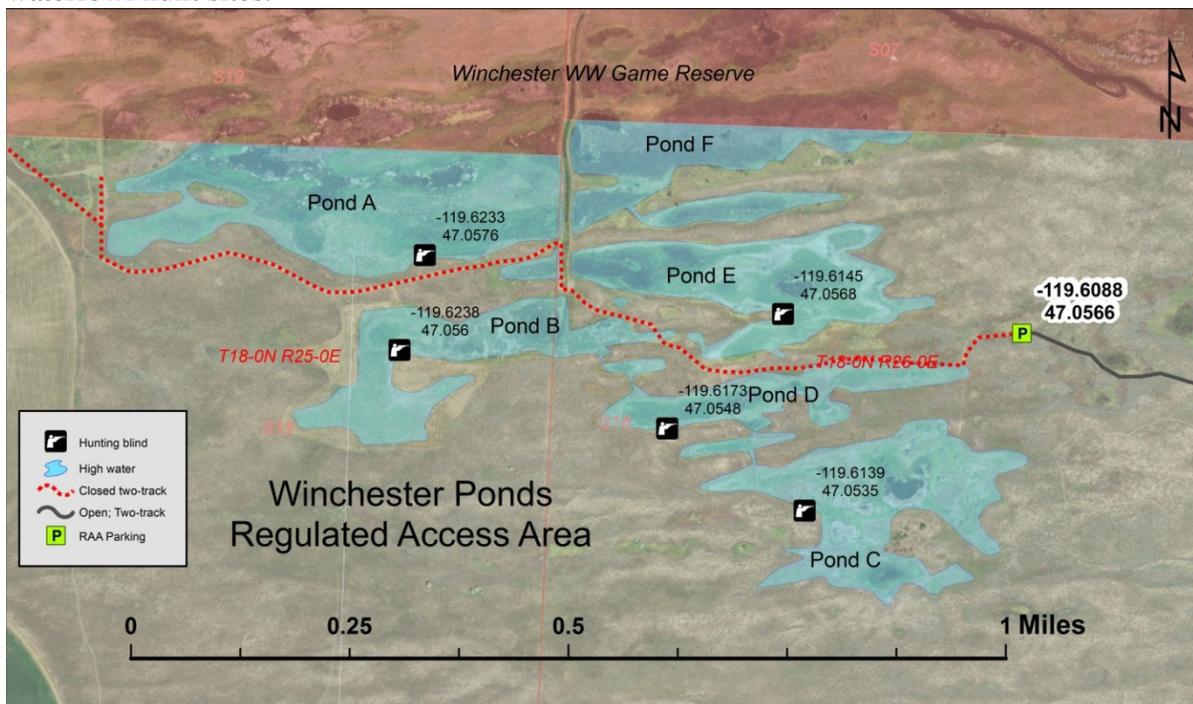


FIGURE 20. WINCHESTER PONDS REGULATED ACCESS AREA.

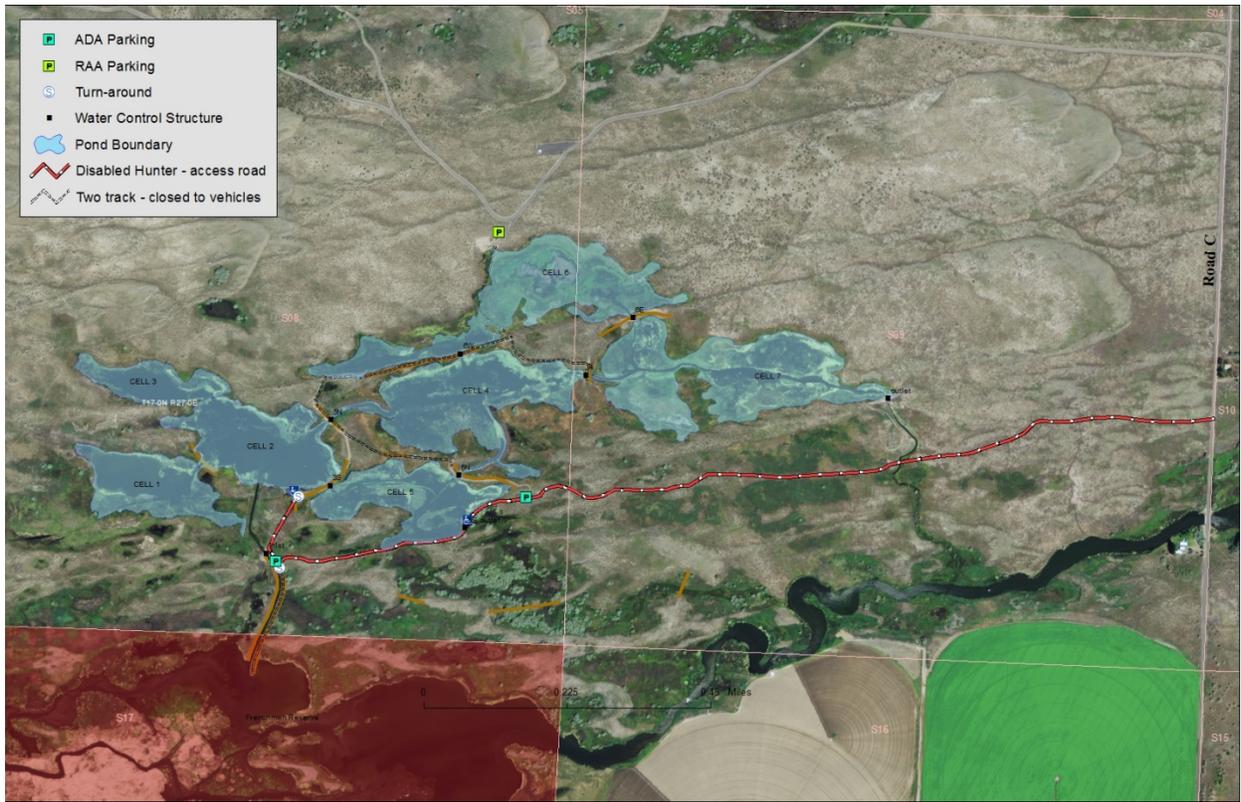


FIGURE 21. FRENCHMEN PONDS REGULATED ACCESS AREA.

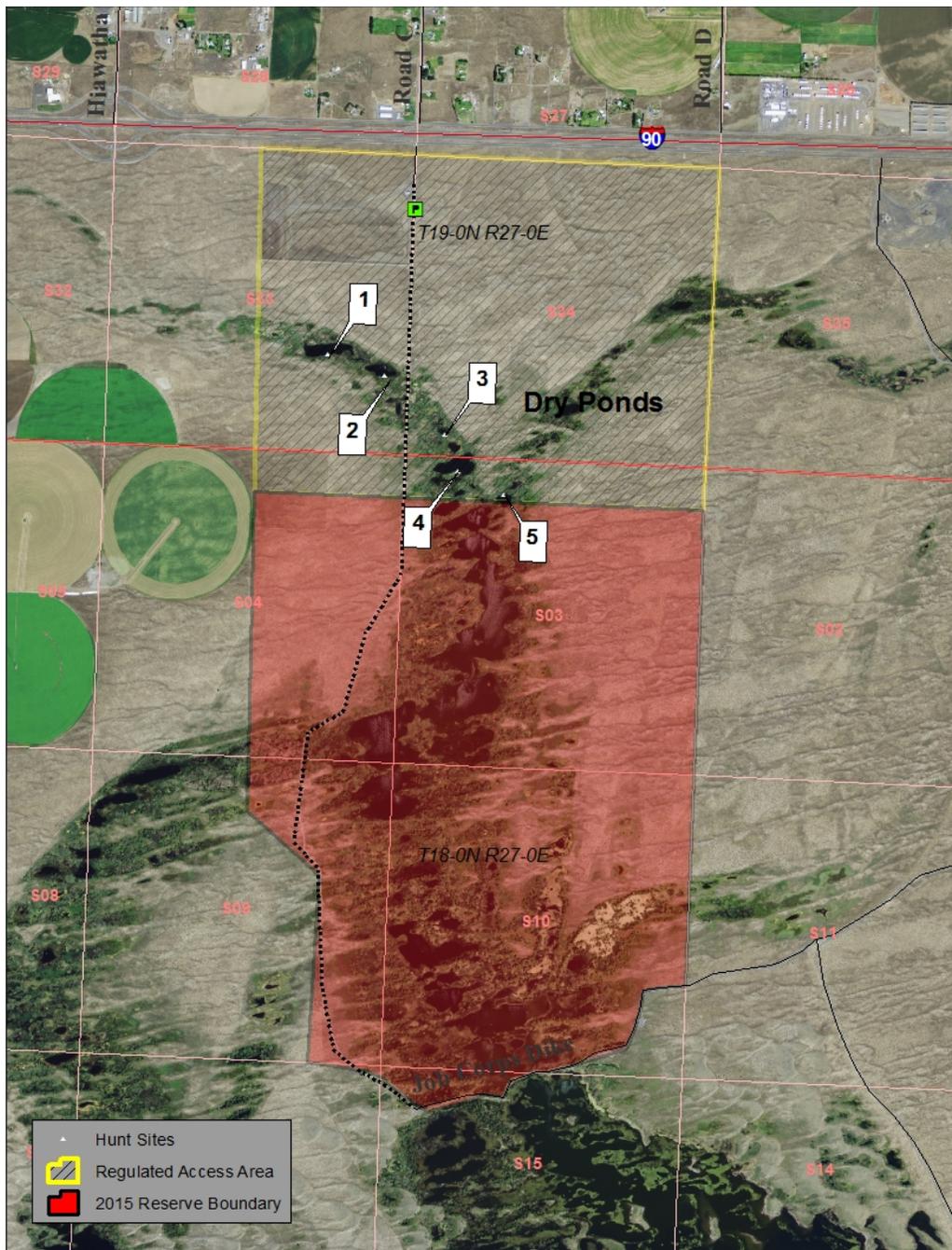


FIGURE 22. NORTH POTHOLES REGULATED ACCESS AREA.

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.

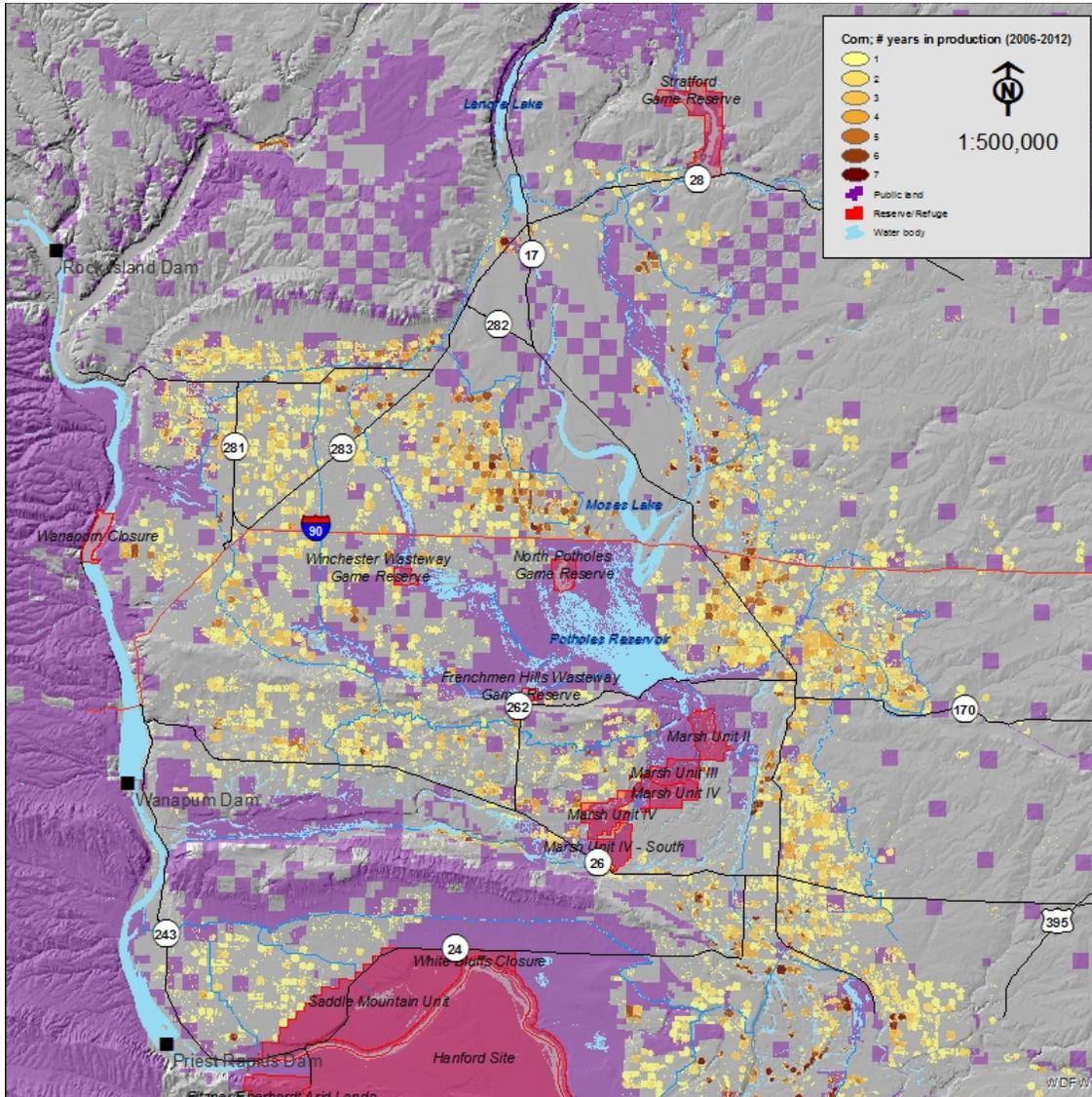


FIGURE 23. JUXTAPOSITION OF CORN PLANTING RELATIVE TO WATERFOWL SANCTUARY AREAS.

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.

2015

SCOTT FITKIN, District Wildlife Biologist
JEFF HEINLEN, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist



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



DISTRICT 6 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Okanogan County

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BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

This report was written before the full extent of this year's wildfires in northcentral and northeast Washington was known. We will update this information as soon as possible after the fires subside and their impact on hunting opportunities becomes clear.

While the department currently has no plans to close any hunting seasons due to wildfires, access restrictions are in place on many public and private lands in these areas. Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions and other emergency rules before you head out.

For more information see:

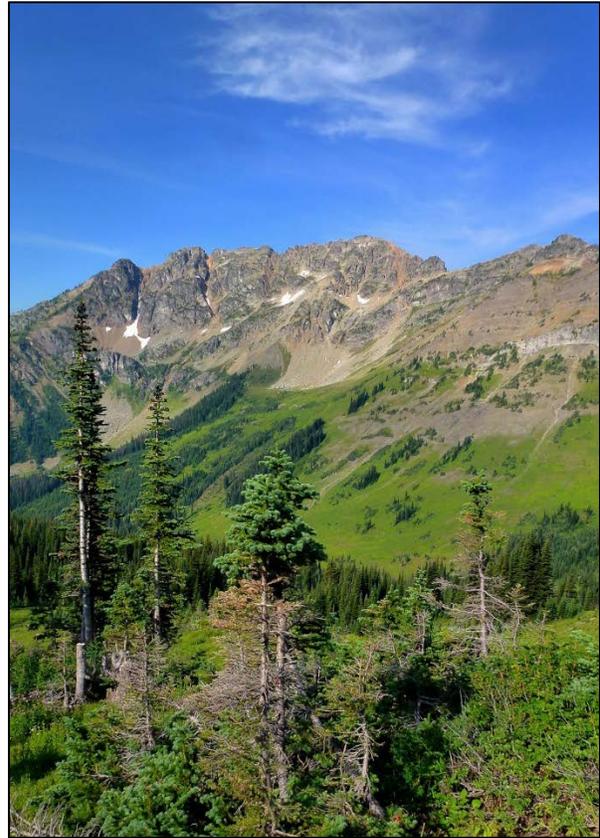
- [Wildfire status updates](#)
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [Chelan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Okanogan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Stevens County updates](#)
- [Contact list for major landowners](#)

Nate Pamplin
Assistant Director, Wildlife Program

DISTRICT 6 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 6 is located along the Canadian border in north-central Washington and encompasses ten game management units: 203 (Pasayten), 204 (Okanogan East), 209 (Wannacut), 215 (Sinlahekin), 218 (Chewuch), 224 (Perrygin), 231 (Gardner), 233 (Pogue), 239 (Chiliwist), and 242 (Alta).

The western two-thirds of the district, stretching from the Okanogan River to the Pacific Crest, lies on the east slope of the Cascade Range and is dominated by mountainous terrain that gets more rugged as you move from east to west. Vegetation in this portion of the district ranges from desert/shrub-steppe at the lowest elevations through various types of conifer forests, culminating in alpine tundra on the higher peaks that top out at almost 9,000 feet. More than three-quarters of the land base in this portion of the county is in public ownership, offering extensive hunting access. Game is plentiful and dispersed throughout the area for most of the year, concentrating in the lower elevations in winter when deep snows cover much of the landscape.



CHEWUCH RIVER AND PASAYTEN WILDERNESS – PHOTOS BY SCOTT FITKIN

GMU 204 includes the eastern one-third of the district (from the Okanogan River east to the Okanogan County line) and is moderately rolling terrain, generally rising in elevation as you move east. The vegetation changes from shrub-steppe near the Okanogan River to a mix of tall grass and conifer forest throughout the remainder of the unit. This portion of the district is roughly a 50-50 patchwork of public and private land with the public lands generally being higher in elevation. Again, game is plentiful and dispersed throughout.

Weather in the Okanogan District can be quite variable and capable of changing quickly in the fall. Be prepared for everything from warm, sunny days to the possibility of winter temps and significant snow at higher elevations by the second week of October.

Please be respectful of private land and treat land owners and their property the way you would want to be treated if roles were reversed.

Agency biologists will be running a biological check and information station at the Red Barn in Winthrop both weekends of the modern firearm general deer season. We encourage hunters to stop and provide data to biologists whether you've harvested a deer or not. Data collected assists in assessing herd health and shaping population management.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Elk numbers are generally low in District 6. However, conditions vary noticeably between the east and west portions of Okanogan County. The western two-thirds of the district are not currently covered under a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) elk herd management plan and the existing harvest strategy (any elk general season) is designed to minimize elk numbers to prevent agricultural damage and avoid competition with the large migratory mule deer herd. As such, elk are quite scarce west of the Okanogan River and very difficult to find without extensive local knowledge.

The eastern portion of the district (GMU 204) is covered by the Selkirk Elk Herd Plan. It's four primary goals are: (1) to preserve, protect, perpetuate, manage, and enhance elk and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations and ecosystem integrity, (2) to manage this elk herd for a sustained hunting yield, (3) to manage elk for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, biodiversity, wildlife viewing, and photography, and (4) to manage elk and elk habitat to minimize human conflicts and agricultural damage. More specifically, GMU 204 supports part of the Pend Oreille sub-herd population where the current management objective is to gradually increase elk numbers while addressing the above four goals. As a result, this unit is now managed with any-bull harvest during general seasons. Elk are not currently abundant

enough to warrant a survey effort in District 6, but anecdotal observations suggest numbers are increasing noticeably in Unit 204.

2014 District 6 Elk Harvest Statistics: [District 6 General Season Elk Harvest](#)

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

As noted above, Unit 204 is the only GMU in District 6 with a significant number of elk. Unless you have up-to-date knowledge on one of the few small bands of elk in the rest of the district (generally limited to local hunters who frequently scout), finding an animal in those GMUs is extremely difficult.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 6 supports perhaps the largest migratory mule deer herd in the state and Okanogan County has long been prized by hunters for its mule deer hunting. The district also supports significant numbers of white-tailed deer, particularly in GMU 204 and 215. Overall, the District 6 deer management objective is for a stable to modestly increasing population within the social tolerance limits for nuisance and damage issues.



OKANOGAN DISTRICT MULE DEER AND WHITE-TAILED DEER – PHOTO BY SCOTT FITKIN

One short-term exception is in GMUs 224, 239, and 242, where the current management is intended to maintain a stable to slightly decreasing population in response to the landscape's reduced ability to support deer in the wake of last year's Carlton Complex Fire. The fire burned huge tracts of critical winter shrub forage. Managing browsing pressure will be important to winter range recovery and the long-term health of the herd.

Despite the massive fire, district deer populations are doing well, thanks in part to greater than normal fall green-up and a mild winter. District 6 deer herds benefitted from better than average mule deer fawn winter survivorship and associated recruitment for the fifth time in the last six years, and post-season sex ratios in December of 2014 remained good at 23 bucks per 100 does.

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

With the possible exception of GMU 209, all units in District 6 support significant numbers of deer, include large blocks of accessible public land, and offer good to excellent deer hunting opportunity. GMU 209 is the driest unit overall and has the highest percentage of private land, so general season opportunities are more modest in this area. Mule deer are abundant throughout the county, with the highest densities occurring in the Methow Valley and along the divide between the Methow and Okanogan Watersheds.

Overall, white-tailed deer are less numerous than mule deer in Okanogan County, and in contrast to mule deer, white-tail abundance generally increases as you move east in the district. The largest population is in GMU 204, where whitetails comprise about half of the overall deer population. Another whitetail hotspot is the central portion of GMU 215, particularly in the Sinlahekin Valley and surrounding drainages. Although white-tailed deer numbers are less abundant in the western portion of the district, they are still found in most all drainages up to mid-elevations, particularly those with significant riparian vegetation. In many areas west of GMU 204 and outside of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, white-tailed deer frequent private lands, so prospective hunters wishing to target white-tailed deer may want to seek permission in advance of the season to access individual ownerships.

General season hunters harvested 2780 deer from the ten game management units comprising District 6. This represents an increase of 35% over the 2013 season despite the disruptive effects of the Carlton Complex Fire. Similarly, general season success rates improved noticeably as well and ended up as follows: Modern – 20%, Muzzleloader – 28%, Archery – 33%, and Muilt – 31%.

GMU 204 (the district's largest unit) yielded the greatest overall general season deer harvest of 816 animals. In the western portion of the district, GMUs 215, 218, 224 combined produced a harvest of 1075 animals, and GMU 233 also produced good tallies. These four units combined accounted for 72% of the total number of deer taken in District 6.

2014 District 6 Deer Harvest Statistics: [District 6 General Season Deer Harvest](#)

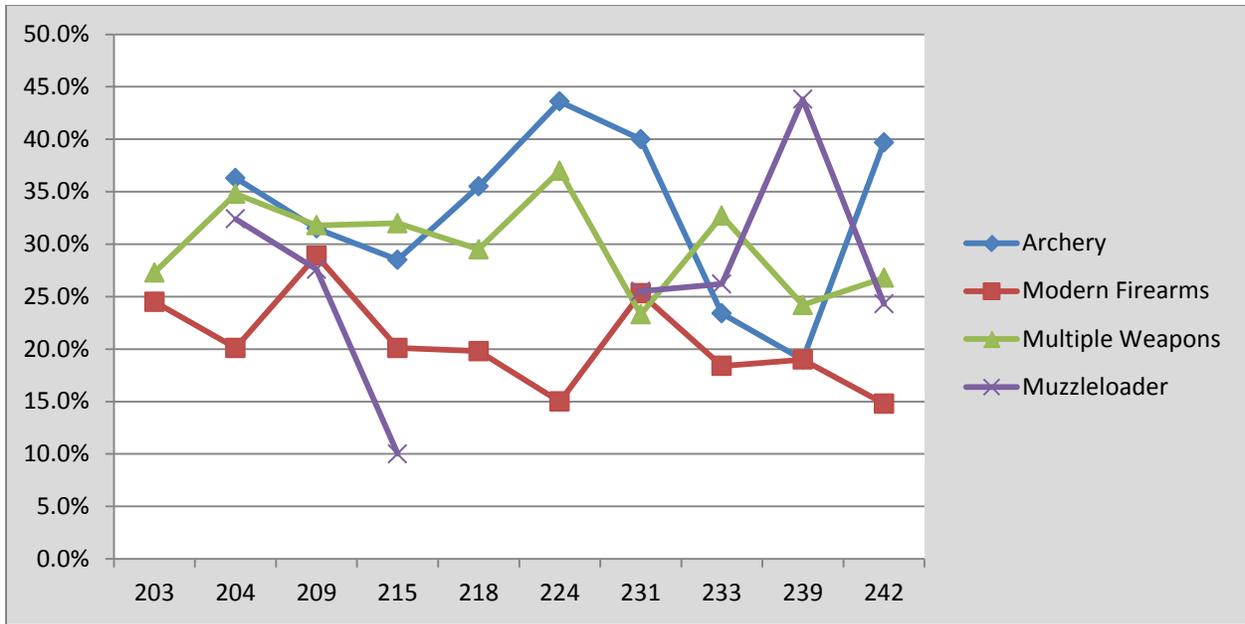


FIGURE 1. DISTRICT 6 2014 GENERAL SEASON HUNTER SUCCESS BY WEAPON TYPE AND GMU.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Prospects for mule deer look excellent this year. Better than average recruitment in recent years indicates a growing herd, and high buck escapement observed during surveys last winter means hunters should have good opportunities to harvest older age class bucks. The end date for the general modern firearm season is the latest it's been in years, so mule deer may begin migrating toward winter range (southerly facing slopes at lower elevations) during the later portion of that season. If so, this will start to concentrate deer in more accessible areas and improve hunters chances of locating legal bucks.

Unlike last year, District 6 has experienced minimal fire activity this summer and no major fire-related access closures are in place at this time. However, spring and summer weather has been exceptionally hot and dry and the potential for large fires will persist well into the fall, creating the potential for rapidly changing conditions and access. Currently a ban on all fires is in place throughout the district and is likely to remain in place for some time, possibly even well into the general modern firearm season. Make sure to check with local agencies on current conditions and restrictions before beginning your hunt.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT MULE DEER

During the early general seasons deer will be widely distributed on the landscape and not yet concentrated in migration areas or on winter range. The one possible exception could be the tail end of the general modern firearm season, as mentioned above. Mature bucks in particular are often at high elevations in remote locations as long as succulent vegetation is available. In this particularly hot and dry year, look for deer taking advantage of any remaining moist areas that are still holding green forage. In general, older, higher elevation burns, including the Tripod, Thirty-mile, Farewell, and Needles Fires, are also producing high quality summer forage and are a good bet for significant deer activity.

During the late permit seasons, the majority of deer will have moved to winter range areas at lower elevations on more southerly slopes. In District 6, WDFW Wildlife Areas and immediately adjacent federal lands are good bets for high deer numbers in late fall, although in low snow years, some mature bucks may linger at higher elevations.

Although mule deer will use a variety of habitat types, they will often forage well into fairly open environments, particularly at dawn and dusk. As a result, they can often be glassed and stalked from considerable distance.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT WHITE-TAILED DEER

White-tailed deer are typically far less migratory than mule deer and generally favor brushier country with denser cover. Look for whitetails along stream drainages and in other areas with riparian vegetation or thick cover. Like mulies, whitetails are most active at dawn and dusk, but often don't venture as far into larger openings unless under the cover of darkness. Look for whitetails in edge habitats where denser cover abruptly transitions into more open meadows. Many whitetail hunters will wait patiently at a station position along an obvious game trail or the forest edge, often employing the use of a blind or tree stand.

DEER AREAS

For those hunters with second deer permits in Deer Areas 2012 -2016, remember that those permits are good only on private land. Permit holders are responsible for making contact with private land owners to secure hunting access.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

This year the general modern firearm season has been extended to 11 days. This change, combined with the October 17 start date, means this season will extend farther into October than it has in many years, potentially providing an opportunity to hunt mule deer during the beginning

of the fall migration, depending on weather. Above average numbers of antlerless special permits are again being issued for those GMUs affected by the Carlton Complex Fires. However, the parameters of those hunts have returned to the pre-fire structure.

BLACK BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears are abundant and well distributed throughout District 6 and are managed for sustainable harvest and diverse age structure. Monitored demographic parameters suggest the local population and associated harvest appear to be relatively stable, so hunting prospects in the district should be good.

For hunters pursuing black bear in the northern Cascades, it is critical to positively identify the bear species, as endangered grizzly bears potentially also inhabit these areas. WDFW's website features some interactive training materials on how to tell the difference between black and grizzly bears. [Click here](#) to view the Interactive Bear Identification Program and take the Bear Identification Test.

WHICH GMU SHOULD BEAR HUNTERS HUNT?

All GMUs in the Okanogan District provide good black bear hunting opportunity. In 2014, hunters harvested 92 black bear from the western portion of the district in the Okanogan Bear Management Unit (BMU 5). This was almost identical to the 2013 tally. Last year, bears pursued robust berry crops throughout the district and harvest was spread accordingly across all GMUs. GMU 204 in the Northeastern BMU yielded 60 animals, a 43% increase in harvest over 2013.

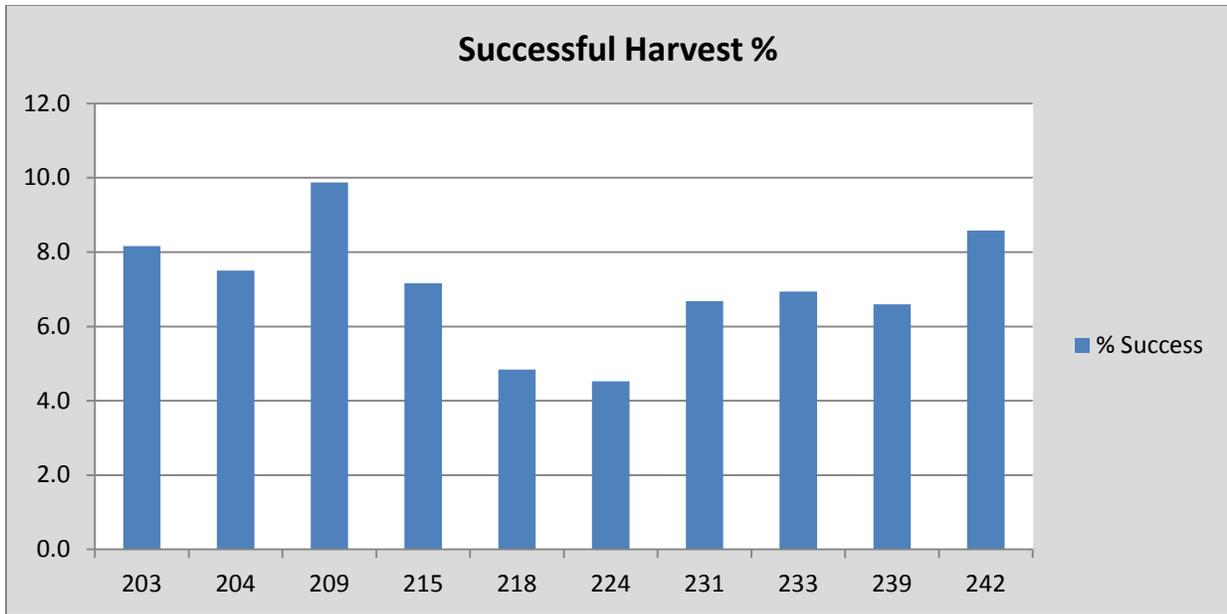


FIGURE 2. OKANOGAN DISTRICT 5-YR AVERAGE BLACK BEAR HARVEST SUCCESS RATES BY GMU.

2014 District 6 Black Bear Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan BMU Black Bear Harvest](#)
[Northeastern BMU Black Bear Harvest](#)

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

At the beginning of bear season, animals are likely to be found at higher elevations in moister areas where berries are already peaking earlier than normal. As the season progresses and berries fade, bears may be wandering further and using a wider range of elevations than normal in search of food given the extremely hot and dry conditions.



OKANOGAN DISTRICT BLACK BEAR – PHOTO BY SCOTT FITKIN

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The District 6 cougar population is healthy and well distributed across the landscape. In the Okanogan District, cougars are now managed by a harvest guideline at the individual GMU level to better promote stable population structure and high quality sustainable harvest, while also minimizing human-cougar conflicts.

Cougars follow the deer herds, which means they will be spread throughout the district through late October and then start to concentrate more at lower elevations as deer move to winter range. Much cougar foraging activity takes place at night, so the best opportunities to spot the cats on the move are at dawn and dusk.



COUGAR WITH KITTEN – PHOTO BY SCOTT FITKIN

WHICH GMU SHOULD COUGAR HUNTERS HUNT?

All Okanogan District GMUs support cougars and are open to hunting. After January 1, individual GMUs close on short notice once the harvest guideline has been reached, and hunters are responsible for knowing if a unit is open or closed. This information is available on the WDFW hotline (1-866-364-4868) or at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>.

Last season, harvest fell slightly short of the guidelines in most GMUs. In addition, last year saw a reduction in the level of control related mortality. As a result, cougar numbers should be robust and hunting opportunities in District 6 should be good in 2014-15. A summary table of the harvest guideline by GMU is presented below.

2014-2015 District 6 Cougar Harvest Statistics: [East Cascades North Cougar Harvest](#)
[Northeastern Cougar Harvest](#)

Hunt Area (GMUs)	Harvest Guideline	2012-2013 Harvest	2013-2014 Harvest	2014-2015 Harvest
203	4-6	0	0	0
204	6-8	5	5	1
209, 215	3-5	3	2	4
218, 231	4-6	2	3	2
224	2-3	1	2	1
233,239	3-4	2	0	1
242,243	6-7*	4	4	3

TABLE 1. DISTRICT 6 COUGAR HARVEST GUIDELINES AND 3-YR HARVEST BY GMU.

WATERFOWL

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Okanogan District offers modest waterfowl hunting opportunities as compared to many other areas of the state. The largest concentrations of birds occur at the southern edge of District 6 at the mouth of the Okanogan River and on the Columbia River. The main stem of the Okanogan and Upper Similkameen Rivers and the larger lakes and potholes in the Okanogan Watershed are good secondary sites. Good public river access can be found at the Washburn Island Unit of the Wells Wildlife Area, the Driscoll-Eyhott Island Unit of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, and the Similkameen-Chopaka Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.

Water levels in local potholes are likely to be very low following this extremely hot, dry summer. River levels will generally also be significantly lower than normal, with the pools of the Columbia River being a possible exception. Aside from water levels, waterfowl hunting opportunities are mostly dependent on the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska and how long water remains ice-free throughout the district.



BARROWS GOLDEN EYE PAIR – PHOTO BY SCOTT FITKIN

2014 District 6 Waterfowl Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan County Small Game Harvest](#)



CANADA GEESE IN A METHOW VALLEY GRAIN FIELD – PHOTO BY SCOTT FITKIN

FOREST GROUSE

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

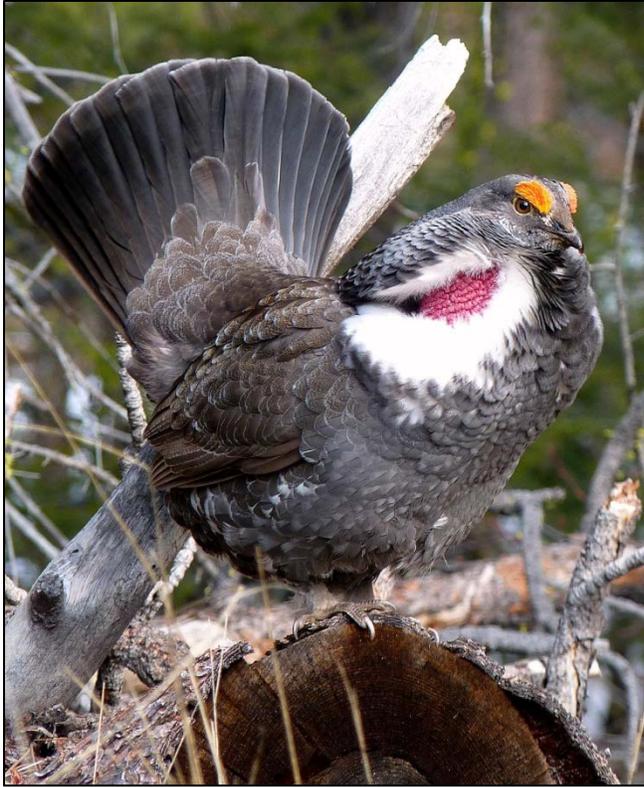
The Okanogan supports strong populations of ruffed, dusky (blue), and spruce grouse, which are found throughout the forested areas of the district. Ruffed grouse are generally associated with deciduous tree cover at lower to middle elevations, particularly in riparian habitats. During hunting season, dusky (blue) grouse are generally found in the mid to upper elevation conifer forests, often moving to ridges as snow begins to accumulate. Spruce grouse are located in higher elevation conifer forests throughout the district on a year-round basis.

Forest grouse populations are likely below historical norms within the boundaries of recent wildfires including the massive Carlton Complex and Tripod Fires. These fires burned in some of the best and most densely occupied forest grouse habitat in the district. However, grouse habitat within the burns is improving annually, and bird numbers outside of burned areas appear to be relatively stable.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

Despite the lingering effects of recent wild fires, sprawling Okanogan County remained the top forest grouse producer in Washington last year, yielding a mixed harvest of 7,480 dusky, ruffed, and spruce grouse. Similarly, grouse harvest per unit effort increased 12% in 2014. We do not have an effective way to comprehensively survey grouse in District 6. However, anecdotal observations suggest 2015 should be a fairly average year for grouse hunting opportunity. The number of displaying dusky grouse in the spring appeared to be down somewhat, but spruce grouse production appears to have been strong throughout their range in Okanogan County.

2014 District 6 Forest Grouse Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan County Small Game Harvest](#)



MALE DUSKY GROUSE AND FEMALE SPRUCE GROUSE – PHOTOS BY SCOTT FITKIN

PHEASANTS

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Pheasants occur at low densities and in a patchy distribution throughout the Okanogan Watershed portion of District 6, with the majority of harvested birds coming from pheasant release sites. This year pheasants will again be released at traditional sites on the Driscoll Island and Chilliwist units of the Sinlaken Creek Wildlife Areas. What little wild production exists within the county comes mostly from private land. Hunters should seek permission in advance of the season to access private property.

These sites are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website. Hunters are reminded that nontoxic shot is required for ALL upland bird hunting on ALL pheasant release sites STATEWIDE.

Hunters bagged 630 pheasants last year in Okanogan County. This harvest level and the corresponding harvest per unit effort remain significantly below the five-year average and are likely due to reductions in recent years of birds available for release.

2014 District 6 Pheasant Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan County Small Game Harvest](#)



PHEASANT RELEASE – PHOTO BY WDFW

QUAIL

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Quail are locally abundant and widespread throughout the district’s lower elevation shrub-steppe and open pine forest habitats. District 6 Wildlife Areas offer good access to quail habitat. Anecdotal observations this spring and summer suggest quail production has been very good this year, with some birds having at least three clutches. This suggests 2015 harvest opportunities may be a bit above average. In 2014, hunters took 6677 quail in Okanogan County, and quail harvest and harvest per unit effort rose modestly. Given current brood abundance, that trend may continue again this year.

2014 District 6 Quail Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan County Small Game Harvest](#)

TURKEYS

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Turkeys are found in scattered groups throughout the district and often concentrate on private land near agriculture areas. Prospective hunters should seek permission in advance of the season to access private land. The fall turkey permit season occurs within GMUs 218-231 and 242, with the majority of the birds being located in the latter two units. In recent years, winter conditions and declines in supplemental feeding by private individuals have reduced turkey numbers substantially in the Methow Valley, although most lower-elevation drainages in Unit 242 still harbor birds.

CHUKAR AND GRAY PARTRIDGE

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

In general, gray partridge populations are widely distributed and patchy throughout the district's shrub steppe habitats, but appear to be increasing in number and distribution over time. Birds are seen frequently on the Indian Dan, Chiliwist, and Methow Wildlife Areas. Scattered groups of chukars are found in the rocky areas in lower elevations of District 6. The steep hills along the Similkameen River in the north part of the Okanogan Valley hold good numbers of birds.

Combined harvest of chukar and gray partridge fell in 2014. This was likely due in large part to displacement and brood loss during the Carlton Complex Fire. We are expecting hunter success to rebound somewhat in 2015.

2014 District 6 Partridge Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan County Small Game Harvest](#)

DOVE

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

A large portion of the dove habitat in the Okanogan District burned in 2014 and dove hunting opportunities and harvest fell accordingly. Vegetation responded vigorously in much of the burn perimeter making the outlook for doves much better in 2015. Look for doves in planted food crops in the Sinlahekin and at lower elevations on other public land. Hunting success will depend on warm weather keeping the birds in the area through the season.

2013 District 6 Mourning Dove Harvest Statistics: [Okanogan County Small Game Harvest](#)

2015

DAVID VOLSEN, District Wildlife Biologist
JON GALLIE, Assistant District Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 7 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Chelan and Douglas Counties

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BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

This report was written before the full extent of this year's wildfires in northcentral and northeast Washington was known. We will update this information as soon as possible after the fires subside and their impact on hunting opportunities becomes clear.

While the department currently has no plans to close any hunting seasons due to wildfires, access restrictions are in place on many public and private lands in these areas. Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions and other emergency rules before you head out.

For more information see:

- [Wildfire status updates](#)
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [Chelan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Okanogan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Stevens County updates](#)
- [Contact list for major landowners](#)

Nate Pamplin
Assistant Director, Wildlife Program

DISTRICT 7 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Split in two by the Columbia River and comprised of Chelan and Douglas counties, the Wenatchee District is at the heart of Washington State. From the crest of the Cascade Range to the shrub-steppe of the Columbia Basin, District 7 offers an incredibly diverse range of habitats and hunting opportunities. Hunters in District 7 have access to a variety of small and big game species, with hunting opportunities ranging from agricultural fields and sagebrush to alpine basins tucked away deep in the wilderness.

Douglas County, the eastern half of the district, is a plateau of shrub-steppe and farmlands and deep basalt coulees. Ownership is mostly private, yet Douglas County offers incredible opportunities to hunt a variety of species. Hunters seeking pheasant, quail, doves, gray partridge, chukar, and mule deer will find ample areas to hunt across the county. Game management units in Douglas County are 248 (Big Bend), 254 (Saint Andrews), 260 (Foster Creek), 262 (Withrow), 266 (Badger), and 269 (Moses Coulee).

Chelan County descends from a high point of 9,500 feet along the Cascade Crest in the west downward to the Columbia River that is its eastern boundary. Composed of five mountain ranges (Sawtooth, Chelan, Entiat, Chiwaukum, and Wenatchee) providing unlimited terrain, the county raises less than 800 feet at its lowest point along the Columbia River roughly 40 miles east.

Home to some of the best mule deer hunting in the state, Chelan County is a destination for many hunters. With its large public land base, the county offers almost unlimited opportunity to find a place of your own. Four of the state's six high deer hunt wilderness areas are in Chelan County, as well as three bighorn sheep herds and an increasing mountain goat population. Game management units in Chelan County are 243 (Manson), 244 (Clark), 245 (Chiwawa), 246 (Slide Ridge), 247 (Entiat), 249 (Alpine), 250 (Swakane), 251 (Mission).

CURRENT SPECIES STATUS

Big Game: Almost all the deer harvested in District 7 are mule deer, with a few white-tailed deer harvested as well. Lesser known is that there are black-tailed deer in Chelan County, and that the mule deer share more black-tailed genes than hunters realize. Elk are present primarily along the southern edge and central portions of Chelan County. The elk are the northern extension of the Colockum Herd centered to the south in Kittitas County. Black bears roam across almost all habitats in Chelan County. Their densities are higher in the wetter timbered habitats near the crest of the Cascades, and at somewhat lower densities in drier habitats farther east. Hunters harvest few black bears in Douglas County but they do occur in small numbers in brush filled riparian draws along the Columbia River and other drainages. Cougar occupy all the

habitats where deer and elk are located, and while most cougar harvests take place during deer and elk seasons, the cougar population goes under harvested in most years. There are three California bighorn sheep herds in the district, including the Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson. The world's record California bighorn sheep came out of the Swakane herd in Chelan County in 2010. Mountain goats occupy most all of the high elevation habitat in Chelan County's mountains and numbers are increasing.

Upland birds: Upland bird hunting is available across the district. Turkey hunting occurs mainly in Chelan County, but numbers are growing in northern Douglas County. Hunttable grouse species are in forested environments in both counties. Hunters can pursue sooty, dusky, spruce, and ruffed grouse in different parts of the district. The three other grouse species, greater sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and white-tailed ptarmigan, are protected species in Washington. Chukar partridge require hunters climb steep ridgelines and traverse rocky slopes to bag their quarry. Valley quail, as their name suggests, prefer gentler terrain and usually in greater numbers near agricultural areas. Gray partridge, or huns, are found primarily in Douglas County. Doves are hunted in both counties, but most of the success is from Douglas County. There are two ring-necked pheasant release sites in Chelan County (Swakane and Chelan Butte Wildlife Areas), but Douglas County has self-sustaining populations where hunters are most successful.

Small Game: Coyotes are the most widely adaptable species in the state, and as such, found most anywhere. Bobcats are another widely distributed species that hunted across a wide range of hunting areas from high mountains to dry shrub-steppe. Fox are not a species that many hunters pursue, and some hunters may not know that Washington has a protected fox species called the cascade red fox that is rare across the west. Raccoons are almost everywhere, except the highest peaks and the driest desert. Crows are another small game species available, and likely little pursued. Rabbits and hares offer hunting opportunity throughout the district, with snowshoe hares at higher elevations mainly in Chelan County and cottontail rabbits in a variety of habitats in both Douglas and Chelan counties.

Waterfowl: Ducks and geese offer opportunities in different portions of the district. The bulk of the waterfowl hunting is along the Columbia River, with ducks being the primary focus. Goose hunts are mainly in Douglas County, but opportunities are also available along the Columbia River.

WILDFIRE

Fire is a natural part of the vegetation communities in eastern Washington and a common occurrence in the Wenatchee District, involving both timbered and shrub-steppe habitats each

year. Summer and fall are our primary fires seasons and this reoccurring pattern fire on dry landscapes has shaped the tree, shrub, and grass species that provide habitat for the game we hunt. A range of species as diverse as mountain goats to valley quail can either benefit or suffer from a fire within its habitat. Species are also impacted by excluding fire from landscapes where it normally plays a dominate role in maintaining habitat quality.

In recent years, fire has received a lot of attention in the district, as wildfires have threatened residences, property, and habitat not only in remote areas but also near larger communities. The combination of drier weather, changing vegetation, and the threat of multiple fire-start triggers (natural and human-caused) seem to have increased not only the numbers of fires, but also the reoccurrence of fires on recently burned habitat. While the history of wildfires in the district is not complete, we know there have been over 120 documented and recorded wildfires since 1912 in Chelan County. The smallest recorded fire was just two acres and the largest over 139,000 acres. Roughly 686,500 acres of habitat have burned during that time in Chelan County alone, with many of those same acres having burned multiple times. The documented history of wildfire in Douglas County is less complete, mainly due to the amount of private lands in the county and multiple firefighting responders, but the same patterns and trends exist.

The dangers of active fires and conditions remaining post-fire make land management and public safety a difficult issue for responsible agencies. Following a fire, many areas have restricted access due to safety and resource concerns, and because fire season precedes and or overlaps hunting seasons, hunter's plans may be impacted. Even when fires have been contained, or the fire is officially out, the impacts of fire and firefighting can and will restrict access in some areas. Road systems used to transport heavy equipment, gear, and firefighters during operations degrade despite best efforts, and in many instances, are unrepaired before hunting seasons open. Hunters need to expect access restrictions in areas of wildfire activity and plan accordingly.

It is smart to start making plans early, and to monitor conditions and access by contacting agencies and landowners. Cities, counties, companies, and resource management agencies all can place unexpected access restrictions on roads and hunting lands. Make plans, but also have an alternate plan in your back pocket in case conditions change and your new or favorite hunting area is closed. Remember, hunting seasons, game management units, and permit areas provide hunting opportunities, not guarantees. WDFW sets hunting seasons across the entire state with few restrictions. However, local laws, ordinances, and policies set by landowners and jurisdictions supersede WDFW hunting seasons.

Resources Management Agency Web Sites

Washington State Department of Fish and wildlife

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/>

Washington State Department of Natural resources

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/>

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/okawen/>

Bureau of Land Management

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/index.php>

Chelan County

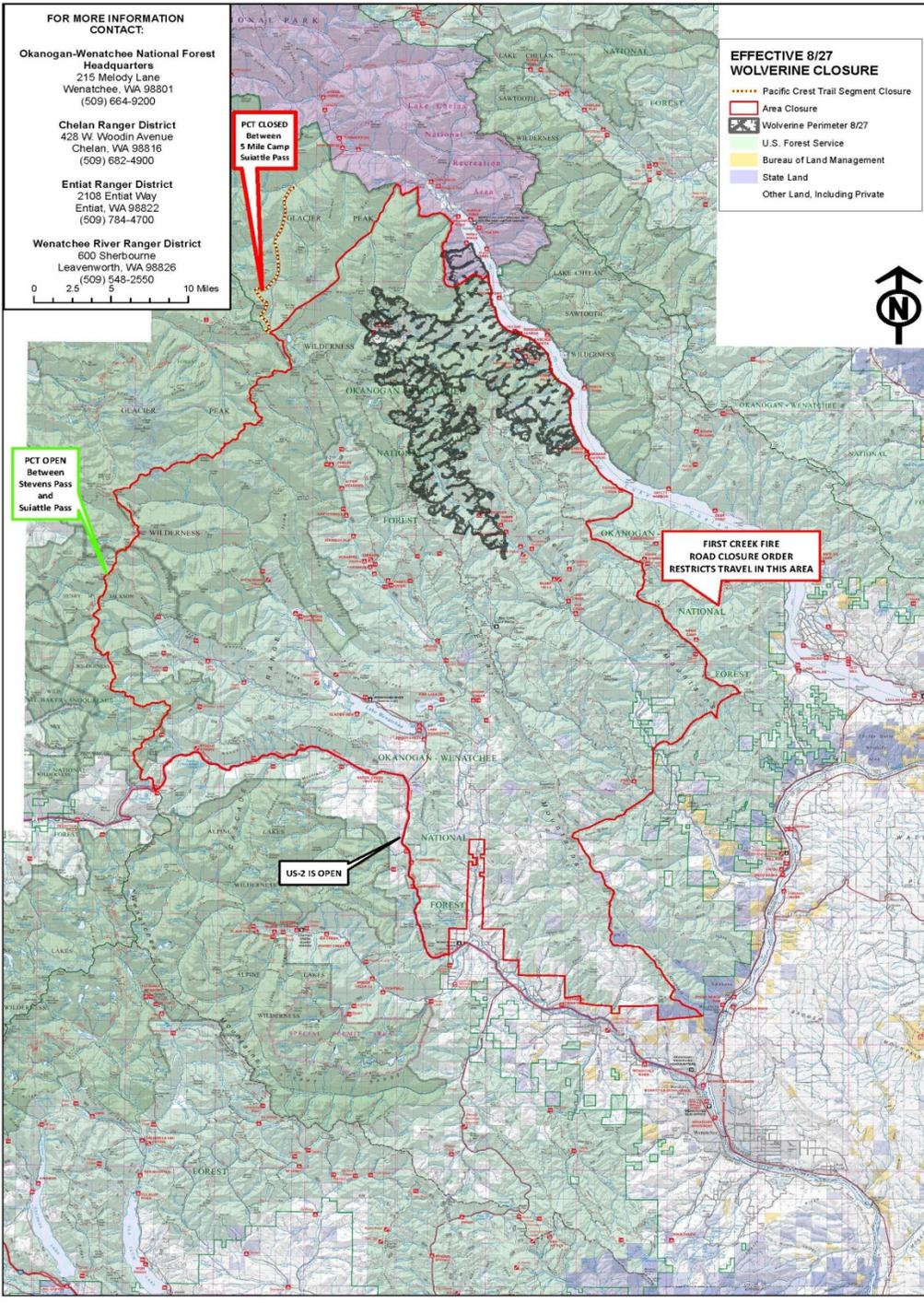
<http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/>

Douglas County

<http://www.douglascountywa.net/>



WILDFIRE CLOSURE



A MAP OF THE OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST'S WOLVERINE FIRE AND DUNCAN FIRE ENTRY CLOSURES DATED 23 AUGUST 2015. THIS IS THE MOST RECENT INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR THIS DOCUMENT. CONTACT THE OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST FOR UPDATED ENTRY AND ROAD CLOSURE INFORMATION WHEN PLANNING YOUR FALL HUNTS. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/okawen/>

ELK

Almost the entire harvest of elk in the Wenatchee District comes from that part of the Colockum herd in Chelan County. A few elk harvests are scattered across Douglas County each season, but that harvest is not consistent from year to year. Liberal harvest seasons are in place in Douglas County to keep elk from establishing herds in the farming dominated landscape where their presence is unwelcome. The Colockum Herd is currently over its population management objective and at an estimated number of 6,500 elk. While Chelan County elk are the northern extension of the Colockum herd, numbers, if increasing, have not been documented through formal surveys. Anecdotal information suggests that numbers may be increasing in the southeastern portion of the Stemilt Basin north of the Kittitas County line.

Hunters harvest roughly 45-55 elk in Chelan County each year, with 50 in 2014. Success rates between weapon types vary and overall success varies from year to year. In 2014, muzzleloader hunters had an 8% success rate while archers had a 9% rate and modern firearms hunters 4%. Hunters with multi-season tags had the greatest hunter success rates, with 14% of the hunters bringing home an elk. Most of the harvested elk come out of GMU 251, with the remaining few harvested in GMUs 244, 245, and 249, and very small numbers coming inconsistently out of other GMUs.

The past change to a true spike rule for the Colockum has shown increases in escapement of yearling bulls. Mature bulls use a portion of Chelan County as security and wintering habitat. Recent research has expanded understanding of the Colockum Herd and there are plans to look deeper into the ecology of the adult bull portion of the population.

Elk in GUMs 245 and 249 occur at low density and in small-dispersed bands. Local hunters that live and work the area are often the hunters that prove to be most successful in harvesting these elk. Elk hunting in GMU 249 consists of a large block of public land and is within the USFS Alpine Lakes Wilderness. While the GMU offers an opportunity for an over the counter archery tag for a branch-antlered bull, elk are at very low density and occupy extremely rugged terrain that does not allow the use of motorized vehicles. Hunters participating in the GMU 249 archery season report surprise at the numbers of other hunters chasing their elk.

GMU 251 offers elk opportunity throughout the majority of the unit. However, elk density is not very high and varies from place to place. General seasons fall under antler restrictions that make harvesting spike elk more challenging. Harvest occurs across the GMU, with the majority of the elk hunting occurring between Blewett Pass to the west, the city of Wenatchee to the east, and the mountainous and timbered habitat south of State Highway 2. The Mission Unit does have a significant amount of private lands and hunters need to know property boundaries when hunting elk near private ownership.

Hunters will notice the absence of the September general cow elk hunt in Elk Area 2033 for 2015. This hunt was established to allow orchard owners in a small portion of the district impacted by elk damage to put pressure on the herd during early fall. While the hunt was helpful, the annual harvest, as well as depredation reports, has decreased over time. Changes within WDFW have allowed us to place a Conflict Specialist position in the district. We now have dedicated staff whose job is to work with commercial producers to minimize damage from deer and elk, thereby eliminating the need for a broader depredation focused season.

DEER



Mule deer hunting is the bread and butter of the Wenatchee District. While the district does support a few white-tailed deer, mule deer dominate the attention from hunters. Chelan County has become a destination hunt for many mule deer enthusiasts across Washington, with late season limited entry permits being highly prized. Within District 7, a hunter has the opportunity to pursue deer across a range of habitats, including high alpine basins along the crest of the Cascades or expanses of sagebrush in Douglas County.

This should be another great opportunity year for harvesting adult bucks in Chelan County. The management goal of a minimum of 25 bucks per 100 does post season, as well as retaining a high ratio of adult bucks in the population, has been successful thus far. Across Chelan County, the post-season ratio was 23.3 bucks per 100 does, with a range from 20 to 28 in 2013. While these numbers are lower than they are traditionally, the lack of snow during surveys could have been a factor in detecting bucks. Despite the slightly lower ratio, an impressive 67% of the bucks surveyed were mature (3 and 4+ points). Fawn ratios were high, and winter conditions were mild, with snow levels across most of the winter range at low to normal levels. All these factors point to a good recruitment of yearling and adult bucks into the next hunting season. Survey numbers in Douglas County were encouraging, with overall buck to doe ratios of 26, one of the highest recorded in the county. Without the diverse cover provided by mountains and forests, buck escapement is lower in the sagebrush, and only 26% of the surveying bucks were mature. Productivity remains good in Douglas County, with a fawn to doe ratio of 59 fawns per 100 does, which is average for these units. This herd is increasing in size and will provide excellent hunting opportunity during general and antlerless permit seasons.

Hunters took 1989 deer off the district in 2014, including 1690 bucks and 299 antlerless. The highest harvest came off GMU 247 in Chelan County with 309 deer and off GMU 248 in Douglas County with 233 deer. The percentage of 3-point bucks in the antlered harvest was 40% for Chelan County and 53% in Douglas County. Both Chelan County and Douglas County had the same percent harvest of 4-point bucks at 36%. Chelan County produced a higher percentage of 5-point bucks at 23%, while Douglas the lower percentage at 11%.

Douglas County is a consistent producer of mule deer opportunity, and conditions should be similar in 2015. Unlike Chelan County, lands in Douglas County are mostly in private ownership, and as such, access controls the amount of impact a hunting season has on the population. Douglas County is composed of relatively open habitat with an extensive road network. These factors make deer more vulnerable than in the rugged closed canopy mountainous terrain of the Cascades.

The general modern firearm seasons seem to have been unseasonably warm and dry over the past few years, making deer hunting tough. This year in particular, drought conditions could prove

challenging for deer hunting in the Cascades. Under these drier conditions, deer push harder to find quality vegetation for forage, possibly altering their normal behavior and distribution on the landscape. The Chelan County mule deer herd is migratory, spending winters on the breaks along the Columbia River, but dispersing into the large expanse of the Cascades during summer.

As early as mid-September, deer start responding to changes in vegetation by moving downward in elevation and occupying north facing slopes where conditions are cooler and wetter and forage is of better quality. From mid-September through the onset of winter, deer respond to changes in the quality of the available forage and utilize those areas that best meet their needs. By mid-November, bucks are in a rut condition and focused on breeding. However, before that time (during our October general season), they focus on food and security, not on breeding.

A typical hillside of mule deer habitat in the Cascades over the growing season and through the fall will change from bright green in the spring and summer to light green to yellow, to orange, to red, to brown, then to bare branches. While we see changes in color, mule deer are perceiving changes in forage quality. The summer forage that support deer and give them the opportunity to produce young and grow antlers does not retain its high quality all year, so as it changes, so do the habitats that deer occupy.

While hunting on winter range is appealing because hunters can see long distances, the majority of deer will still be in areas of better quality forage and higher security. Most deer will be in thick cover where the food is better and they have protection. These are usually the brushy north facing slopes or at elevations much higher than typical open mule deer winter range.

Douglas County offers a different situation for deer hunters. Because of the private lands issue, hunters have less opportunity to pursue deer freely across habitats, as they have to pay attention to ownership boundaries. The drier nature of shrub-steppe habitat dictates that deer use those areas where forage quality remains higher longer while balancing the need for security. Optimal hunting areas will include a mixture of sagebrush cover or steep broken rocky terrain and adjacent agricultural fields for forage (mostly winter wheat and canola fields). Large expanses of sagebrush, while not providing the best forage, can give deer the security they need as well. In the broken coulee county, topography becomes security and riparian vegetation provides food resources. Deer in these areas often become experts at living in small, secure habitat pockets where they meet their needs and avoid hunters. While the majority of the county is private, over 106,000 acres are enrolled in WDFW's hunter access programs, including areas where hunters are free to access or access with written permission. Start scouting now for deer herds on private lands and opportunities to talk with landowners before the rush of other hunters descend on them days before the season starts. Many farmers are partial to allowing youth hunters in particular.

BLACK BEAR

Bear hunters in the Wenatchee District may have better opportunities in 2015 than last year. Drought conditions throughout the cascades have affected forage species, including berry production. With seasonal forage less available, bears will range farther in the search for food, and possibly down to lower elevations, making them more detectable. Bear populations in the district are monitored based on primarily harvest statistics and tooth data. In order to improve our ability to estimate and monitor bear numbers, WDFW's Carnivore Section initiated a black bear population study focused on both traditional trapping and collaring home range models based on GPS data and genetic modeling using hair snag data.



The project will help develop much better estimates of bear densities and provide information on the age class and sex structure of the population. As part of the study, hunters from the district are asked to submit a tissue sample along with a pre-molar tooth. The populations appear to be relatively stable within the district, with year-to-year habitat quality remaining constant. During years when huckleberry production is poor, bears will often be found searching larger areas for food. These increased forays expose them to higher rates of harvest when they encounter hunters.

Within Bear Management Unit (BMU) 6, the Wenatchee District is normally responsible for a significant amount of the harvest. In 2014, 211 bears were harvested from BMU 6. The BMU is comprised of 23 GMUs along the Central Cascades and District 7 produced 40% of the harvest in 2014. An additional 12 bears came out of GMU 243, which is included in PMU 5, bumping up the district total to 100 bears. GMU 245 is consistently a high producer of bears each year, and the area of focus for the current bear population study. Since 2001, BMU 6 averages 209 bears per year with a success rate of 4.5% and an average percent of females in the harvest of 34 %. Since 2001, the harvest of black bears has averaged roughly 65% males and 35% females, with roughly 4,900 hunters participating each year. While success relative to effort fluctuates from year to year, it is on an increasing trend since 2005 and points to a good upcoming season.

The vast majority of bears harvested in the district are taken during open deer and elk seasons. Dedicated bear hunters will often hunt early in the season when bears are foraging on predictable annual berry crops and can be located more easily. The incidental harvest that occurs during open deer and elk seasons is much more dependent on bear behavior and how widely they will have to travel for food.

There are no notable changes in black bear hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2015.

COUGAR

Similar to black bears, the population monitoring cougar management comes primarily from harvest data, rather than intensive surveys. In 2014, eighteen (18) cougar were harvested in the district, with eight of the cougars taken during general hunting and another other six cougars having been removed under a depredation or other situation. Two additional cougars were harvested out of the District7 portion of the Columbia Basin. Six of the 18 cats harvested were females.

The opportunity to harvest a cougar in the Wenatchee District expanded under the new season structure in 2012 that remains in place for 2015. In Chelan County there are four (4) Hunt Areas, which were created by combining existing GMUs. Within each of these new hunt areas, a harvest guideline has been established based on cougar population biology. These new harvest guidelines increased the number of cougar that can be harvested in the county and across the state, while maintaining the integrity of the population.

A two part season is in place, allowing harvest during big game seasons under an early cougar season, and a later season for a more focused pursuit of cougar when conditions make hunting easier. If the harvest guideline is reached early, then a decision is made about opening the late

season each year. Based on the harvest history in Chelan County, there is a great opportunity to increase a hunter's participation in this hunt.

Douglas County also offers good cougar hunting opportunities. Most hunters will focus on the breaks of the Columbia River, Moses Coulee, and Rufus Woods Reservoir. This rough country allows cougars access to deer herds while providing them stalking cover. Successful hunters often wait for snow and track cats on foot. Badger (266), Moses Coulee (269), and Withrow (262) have consistent cougar harvest.

There are no notable changes in cougar hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2015.

BIGHORN SHEEP



Sheep numbers have increased for both the Swakane and Chelan Butte. The Swakane herd survey accounted for 70 sheep in 2008, and increased to a minimum count of 132 sheep in 2014. The Chelan Butte herd produced a count of 74 sheep in 2008, increasing to a minimum count of 172 sheep in 2014. The Manson herd, which occupies the area along the north shore of Lake Chelan, has been the most difficult to monitor due to the lack of access and the rugged terrain that the sheep inhabit. Over the past several years, there have been counts from 89 sheep to 119 sheep. Because population numbers have not swung widely, 120 or more sheep is that herd's minimum count.

For 2014, there are five (5) California bighorn limited entry drawing permits issued for Chelan County. Since 2001, twelve permits have been offered for sheep in the Swakane Unit. In those years, 13 sheep have been harvested due to the inclusion of an auction hunt in 2002. A local resident under a drawing permit harvested the world record California bighorn from the Swakane herd in 2010. Since 2005, the Manson Unit has provided two drawing permits per year, and over those nine years produced 24 sheep. The additional sheep were harvested by hunters acquiring auction or raffle tags. The Chelan Butte herd has been hunted since 2010 and provides one drawing permit each year. During the first four years of harvest, four rams were harvested.

Overwinter survival for adult sheep remains high. Mortality of lambs of the year is characteristic of most sheep populations, where lambs suffer the highest rates of mortality during their first year of life, and the highest mortality of the year immediately after birth. Lamb counts were 27, 25, and 16 for the Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson herds. Sightability and conditions play a large role in these counts. With two herds increasing and one herd stable, the hunting opportunities should increase in the future to keep pace with the increase in rams.

A notable change in bighorn sheep hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2015 is the addition of three permit opportunities for hunters with disabilities. Two permits for ear-tagged or collared only ewes are available, and one permit for an ear-tagged only ram. These marketed sheep allowed WDFW to offer opportunity for hunters with disabilities in one of the few areas in Washington where access might allow harvest and the population had animals to offer.

Hunters selected under these drawings are encouraged to contact District 7 staff for additional information. All hunters harvesting a bighorn sheep in the state of Washington are required to have the horn sets measured and plugged by WDFW.



MOUNTAIN GOATS



While mountain goats occur in many higher elevation areas in Chelan County, they are currently only hunted along Lake Chelan where their population has increased over the years.

Opportunistic road surveys done in portions of the district indicate goats are increasing in number in areas where they were historically hunted. More formal survey efforts are planned to establish numbers and evaluate hunt opportunities.

In the Icicle Creek area, a high count of 57 goats was recorded between 2010 and 2014. In the Tumwater Canyon area, a high count of 33 was recorded. In the Nason Ridge area, there was a high count of 22, and in the White River, a high count of eight.

The Lake Chelan population is surveyed via boat by the Chelan PUD each winter during twelve surveys from late November through March. During the 2013-2014 survey, a high count of 190 mountain goats was made, with a minimum of 95 goats on each of the South and North Chelan

units. Counts are made along both the north and south shores of the lake. Year to year counts vary widely due to snow accumulation and weather conditions along the lake. In general, during heavy snow years, goats concentrate in higher densities along the lake to winter, providing a better opportunity to observe them.

Three (3) mountain goat tags were issued for the Wenatchee District under limited entry drawings this year. Since 2001, 19 drawing permits have been issued for the Chelan North, and 14 goats have been harvested. Two of the goats were harvested by auction/raffle hunters. Four of the 14 were female goats. A single permit was offered on the Chelan South, with the first goat being harvested in 2013. Every effort is made to educate hunters so they will focus their harvest on male rather than female goats. A significant amount of research work done on mountain goats in the US and Canada indicates that populations with sustained rates of harvest of females will decline significantly over time.

There are no notable changes in mountain goat hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2014.

Hunters selected under these drawing are encouraged to contact District 7 staff for additional information and to bring horn sets in to be measured. In addition, hunters will be asked to help collect biological samples from harvested goats this year to form a baseline of knowledge about mountain goat diseases in Washington State.

PHEASANT

The Wenatchee District does not have the reputation as a destination pheasant hunting area in the state, but local hunters have harvested from 1,500 to 3,000 birds each year since 2001. On average, both Douglas and Chelan counties produce roughly the same numbers of pheasants each year. In 2014, the district harvested 1,354 pheasants. Douglas County offers a couple of locations where wild populations of pheasants sustain themselves, both on public and private land. Hunters should focus on areas with a mixture of native shrubsteppe habitat, Conservation Reserve Program (appear as grasslands), and wet meadows/wetlands. Your first clue will be weedy and tall vegetation on the roadsides that provide good cover. Good pheasant hunts can be found in Foster Creek (260), St. Andrews (254), and Big Bend (248).

Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites on the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area and the Swakane WMA birds should visit the WDFW hunting web site for more information. The Colockum Wildlife Area release site is currently closed while vegetation recovers from the impacts of a recent wildfire. See the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#).

QUAIL

District 7 produces some of the best quail hunting in the state. However, harvest in 2013 proved somewhat lower than average with a total harvest of 12,494. Harvest numbers for Chelan County have been consistently higher than Douglas County.

Conditions going into the 2014-15 winter should have allowed for better over-winter survival of quail in Chelan and Douglas counties. Winter survival was comparable, with lower snow levels in quail habitat. The amount of insect production this year may have positive effects on broods as grasshoppers and other insects are important. Production appears stable this year and harvest should be similar to last year. There were good fall and summer conditions, and a relatively mild winter, especially in Douglas County, so numbers may see an upswing. While no surveys are conducted, field staff have noted larger and more numerous broods this year, which should make for a promising hunt.

Public lands can be tough places to find larger coveys well into the season. To improve success, hunters should seek out those areas without easy access and spend some time seeking permissions from private landowners.

GRAY PARTRIDGE

2014 was another poor year for huns, with only 539 birds taken. Douglas County provided more birds than Chelan. Since 2007, the high was 654 and the low 114. Within the district, gray partridge are encountered and harvested more in Douglas County. They occur at low density, with coveys dispersed across larger areas. Look to fields enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program with lots of grass cover extending into draws, these are often a good place to find coveys.

Covering a wide range of cover types is the best way to locate coveys. While most gray partridge are taken while hunting other species, with a little focus and dedication, you can be successful hunting for huns. Visit the [GoHunt](#) application on the WDFW web site and find areas in Douglas County enrolled in the hunting access program. Snow depths were light over the past winter, indicating that over-winter survival may have been good and gray partridge numbers stable.

CHUKAR

More chukar are shot in District 7 than any other district in the state. However, harvest numbers have been declining in recent years. However, this trend changed in 2015 in both Chelan and

Douglas counties in District 7. Harvest of chukar has been declining since 2006, but so has the number of hunters and the number of days spent chukar hunting (this may be due to winter weather conditions). Since 2001, the ratio of chukar harvested per days hunted has increased, indicating that birds are on hills if hunters are willing to chase them. In 2014, there was a harvest of 1,783 birds.

Winter conditions were mild on average, with low snow accumulation in winter habitat. The low snow levels may have affected chukar hunting later in the season by allowing birds to stay higher and making hunting tougher. Production appears to be good this spring with insect production being very good.

Opportunities for chukar hunting are numerous within the district due to the large amount of habitat that falls under public ownership. The breaks of the Columbia River provide the majority of the Chukar habitat, along with areas adjacent to Banks Lake and Moses Coulee. On the Chelan County side of the Columbia River, BLM, USFS, WADNR, and WDFW all control lands that provide chukar-hunting opportunities. Along the Douglas County beaks, almost all the appropriate chukar habitat falls under private ownership, and landowner permission is required.

Chukar hunting falls into two distinct seasons: without snow and with snow. While trying to negotiate chukar habitat with snow and ice on the ground can be hazardous, there is no doubt that birds become concentrated following the accumulation of snow. There should be an increase in chukar numbers in the district, helped along by fall forage productivity and relatively mild winter snow conditions at lower elevations.

FOREST GROUSE



Harvest has remained steady in recent years, with 2,320 birds, but has declined by half since 2007. Three species of forest grouse occupy the Wenatchee District: blue grouse, spruce grouse, and ruffed grouse. There are a few areas in Douglas County where forest grouse are regularly found. However, their densities are relatively low and few hunters concentrate on them specifically. The majority of harvest is incidental during other hunting.

Within Chelan County, forest grouse occupy habitat dominated by coniferous and riparian forests. Ruffed grouse can be found in healthy riparian forests and aspen stands at the margin of timbered habitat, and blue grouse will use timbered stringers that extend down into the shrub-steppe. Spruce grouse are restricted to higher elevation conifer forests, usually above the distribution of ponderosa pine.

Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by searching out areas where fewer hunters concentrate. Popular road systems can provide early season hunting. However, due to the numbers of hunters and the vulnerability of hatch-year birds, they often dry up quickly. Chelan County has a relatively limited road system within grouse habitat, and dedicated hunters know where they are, so hunters can increase the productive length of their season by hunting areas on foot away from roads and the bulk of the other hunters.

DOVE

Hunting success will be similar to the past several seasons within the district. Success rates were increasing over the past few seasons, then decreased last year. The harvest was 3,337 birds last fall from 296 hunters. Dove count routes have shown declines over time, with numbers down again this year.

Hunters should secure hunting opportunities by contacting growers and getting permission. Look to areas near wetlands, agricultural fields, and orchards, where birds find both roosting cover and food later in the season. The amount and distribution of CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) fields has increased in Douglas County over the past few years, with new seed mixes providing more diversity in forage within stands. Scouting for these habitats can be a productive way to find new unexploited hunting areas.

TURKEY

Turkey densities in the district are relatively sparse, but populations appear to be stable in Chelan County and may be increasing in the northern portions of Douglas County. Hunters should expect population numbers and harvest success similar to other years. Surveys over the past 3-4 years indicate that turkey numbers are stable. A low level of harvest occurs on public lands, with local hunters being the most successful as densities are low and finding seasonal habitat is important. Harvest rates are consistent, averaging around 45 toms each year

In Chelan County, the number of turkeys the landscape can support is determined primarily on the amount and availability of wintering habitat under typical snow depths. When winter snow depths reach 20 inches or more, wild turkeys have a difficult time making it through the winter. In areas where turkey can utilize ranches, barnyards, and farms of winter forage, they can show significant survival over winter. Chelan County is limited in its availability of such habitat, and as such, the number of turkeys in the county seems to remain at a stable level.

Hunters should look to several of the more consistent turkey producing areas for hunting opportunities, such as the Colockum Wildlife Area. The Stemilt Basin outside of Wenatchee,

canyons off the Wenatchee River from the Columbia River, and west through the town of Plain have low densities of turkeys. Most of these areas are private down low, but hunters can head up forest roads onto Forest Service land to find good turkey hunting opportunities. Remember to scout early and get permission to hunt private lands.

WATERFOWL



Local production of waterfowl is up from previous years based on annual surveys. Hunters should have good opportunities in traditional areas and where permission to access ponds and lakes can be secured. Hunting along the Columbia River is usually consistent but dictated by local weather patterns.

Most of the harvest in Chelan County (4,713 ducks for 2014) is focused along the Columbia River. In Douglas County, the Columbia River is the primary waterfowl hunting area as well.

However, northern Douglas County has a concentration of small lands and ponds that hold waterfowl. The county produced a harvest of 9,164 ducks in 2014. As in most years, the success of the season depends on the timing of migration through the area. This year, indicators point to good opportunities during the fall migration.

Local production of Canada goose has increased recently, leading to the re-establishment of the September season. In 2015, the season dates are September 12-13. Regular season hunting harvest has been declining, with numbers since 2002 normally under 2,000 geese harvested, and since 2008, under 1,500. Expect a similar season in 2015.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, [see “Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

HUNTER ACCESS

Hunter Access Program lands in District 7 are predominately in Douglas County where the majority of rural private lands occur. Chelan County, while having great public land opportunity, does not offer as much in the form of private lands hunting. WDFW lands staff work closely with agricultural producers to provide access for hunting. As a result, thousands of acres in Douglas County can be hunted throughout the season. Access lands are marked with signs displaying contact information, and many areas are listed on WDFW's GoHunt Mapping Program.

	Douglas County	Chelan County
Feel Free to Hunt	19,705	0
Hunt By Written Permission	85,241	0
Register to Hunt	1,640	0
Total	106,586	0

ACRES OF PRIVATE LANDS ENROLLED IN WDFW'S HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM IN DISTRICT 7 FOR 2015.

Species	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters
Quail	13,774	1,876	15,088	1,702	13,169	1,658	9,874	1,162	12,494	1,450	13,491	1,356
Chukar	2,865	1,233	2,452	1,093	2,201	846	1,210	589	999	781	1,783	760
Mourning Dove	4,984	484	5,979	447	3,506	402	2,957	285	4,058	318	3,337	296
Forest Grouse	8,375	3,571	3,290	2,522	2,418	1,412	2,758	1,592	2,320	1,284	2,284	1,181
Pheasant	1,812	1,221	1,768	892	1,506	827	1,563	802	956	731	1,350	671
Gray Partridge	114	228	444	262	411	279	1,151	330	438	253	549	270
Duck	9,626	1,063	13,947	998	14,528	1,123	14,777	1,055	14,451	1,136	13,877	981
Canada Goose	1,261	475	1,252	519	1,082	526	1,774	525	1,340	626	1,419	408
Sept Canada Goose	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	0	531	66	269	103
Cottontail Rabbit	221	212	397	171	375	127	346	158	469	153	237	173
Snowshoe Hare	10	29	0	18	48	47	0	10	109	66	11	11
Snipe	0	0	55	18	5	11	0	7	0	0	196	11

TABLE 1 DISTRICT 7 (WENATCHEE) UPLAND AND SMALL GAME HARVEST, AND HUNTER PARTICIPATION, 2009 THROUGH 2014.

* NO SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE SEASON WAS OFFERED DURING 2009-2012. OPENED AGAIN IN 2013.

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Washington Department of Natural Resources

Southeast Region

713 Bowers Road

Ellensburg, WA 98926-9301

509-925-8510

509-925-8522

southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov>

Public Lands Information Available

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Wenatchee Office

915 N. Walla Walla

Wenatchee, WA 98801

509-665-2100

BLM_OR_WN_Mail@blm.gov

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/index.php>

Public Lands Information Available

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Headquarters

215 Melody Lane

Wenatchee, WA 98801

(509) 664-9200

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/okawen/>

Public Lands Information Available

Chelan Ranger District

428 W. Woodin Avenue

Chelan, WA 98816

(509) 682-4900

Entiat Ranger District

2108 Entiat Way

Entiat, WA 98822

(509) 784-4700

Wenatchee River Ranger District

600 Sherbourne

Leavenworth, WA 98826

(509) 548-2550

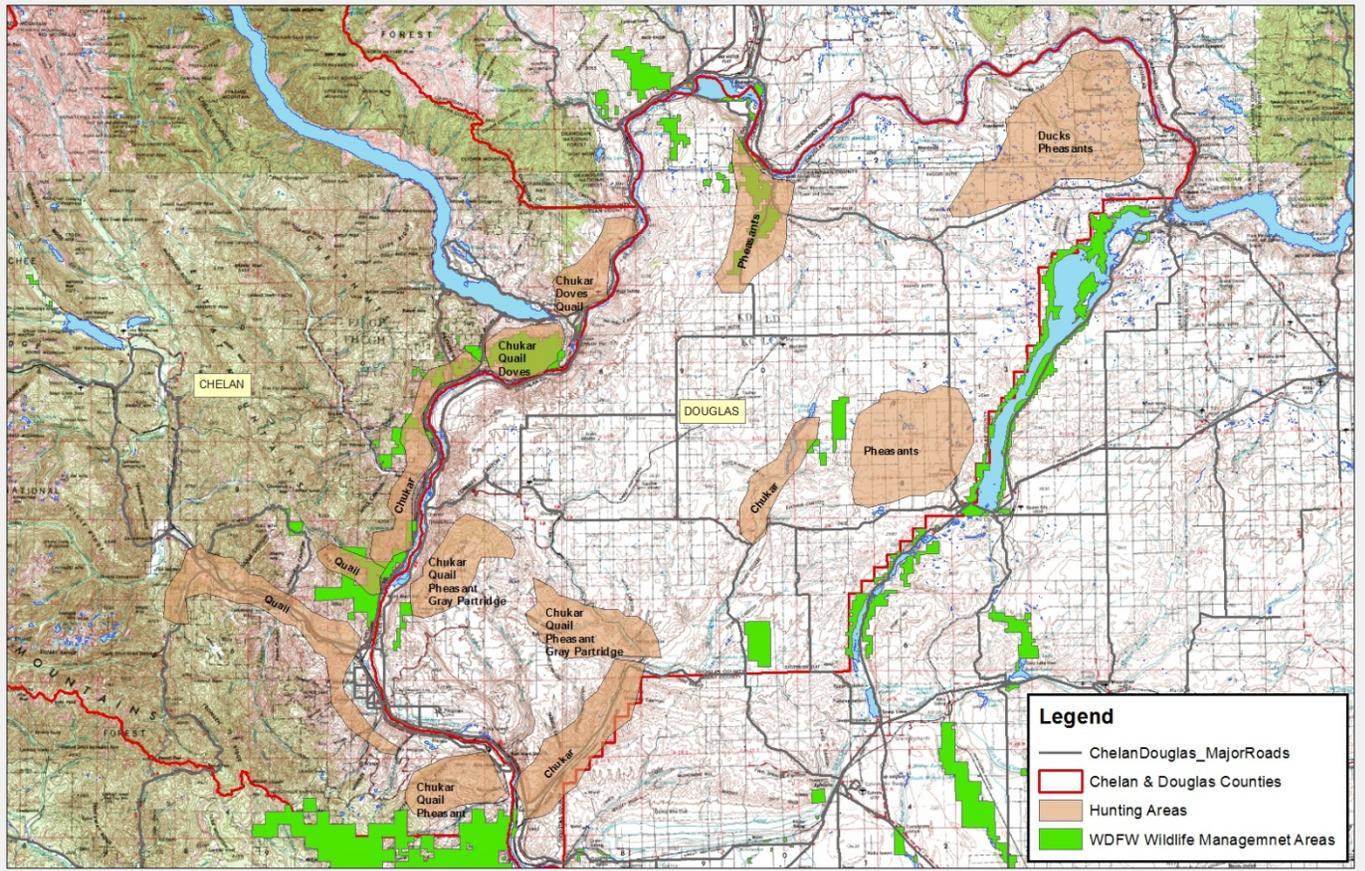


FIGURE 1. UPLAND GAME HUNTING AREAS IN THE WENATCHEE DISTRICT.

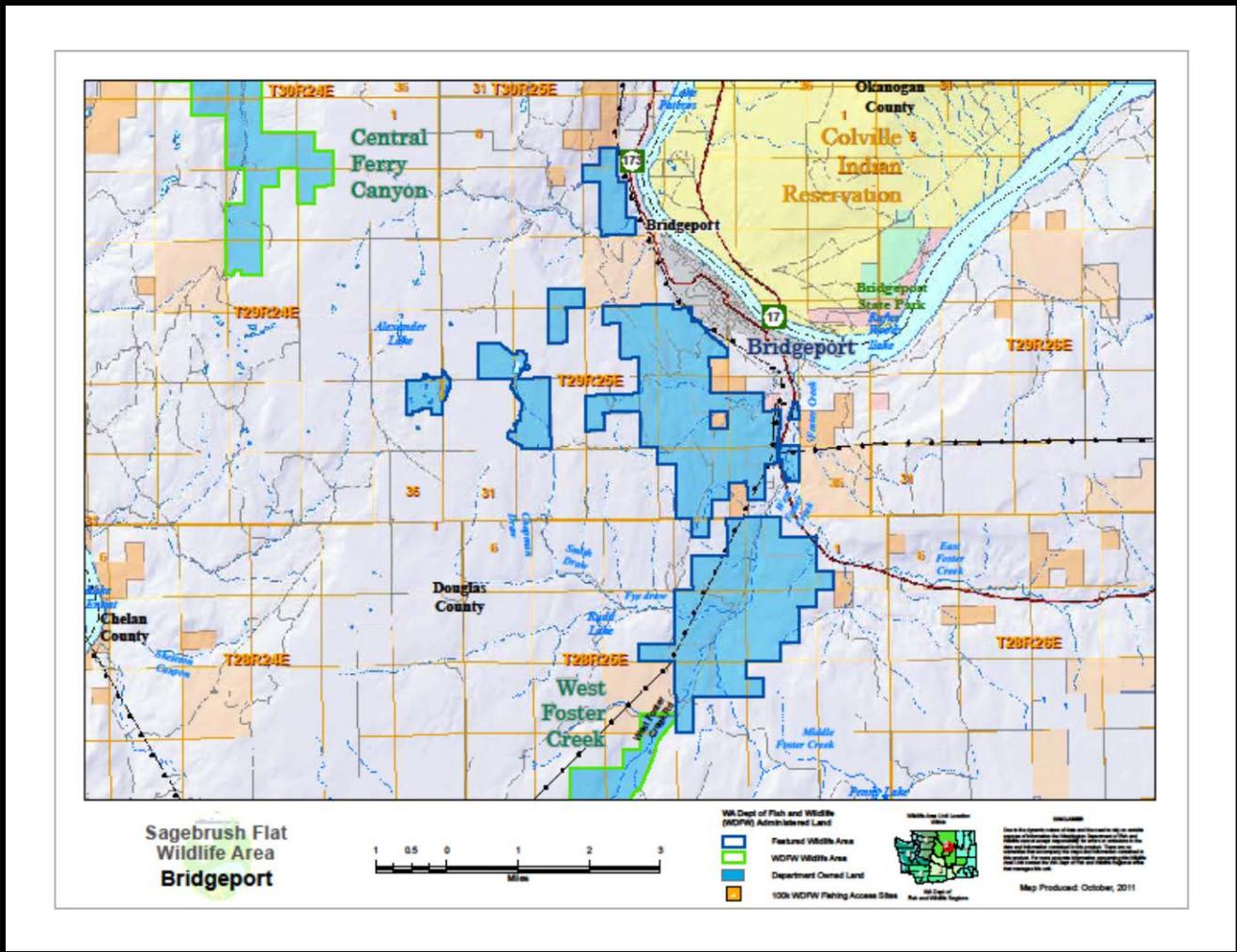


FIGURE 2. MAP OF THE WDFW BRIDGEPORT UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

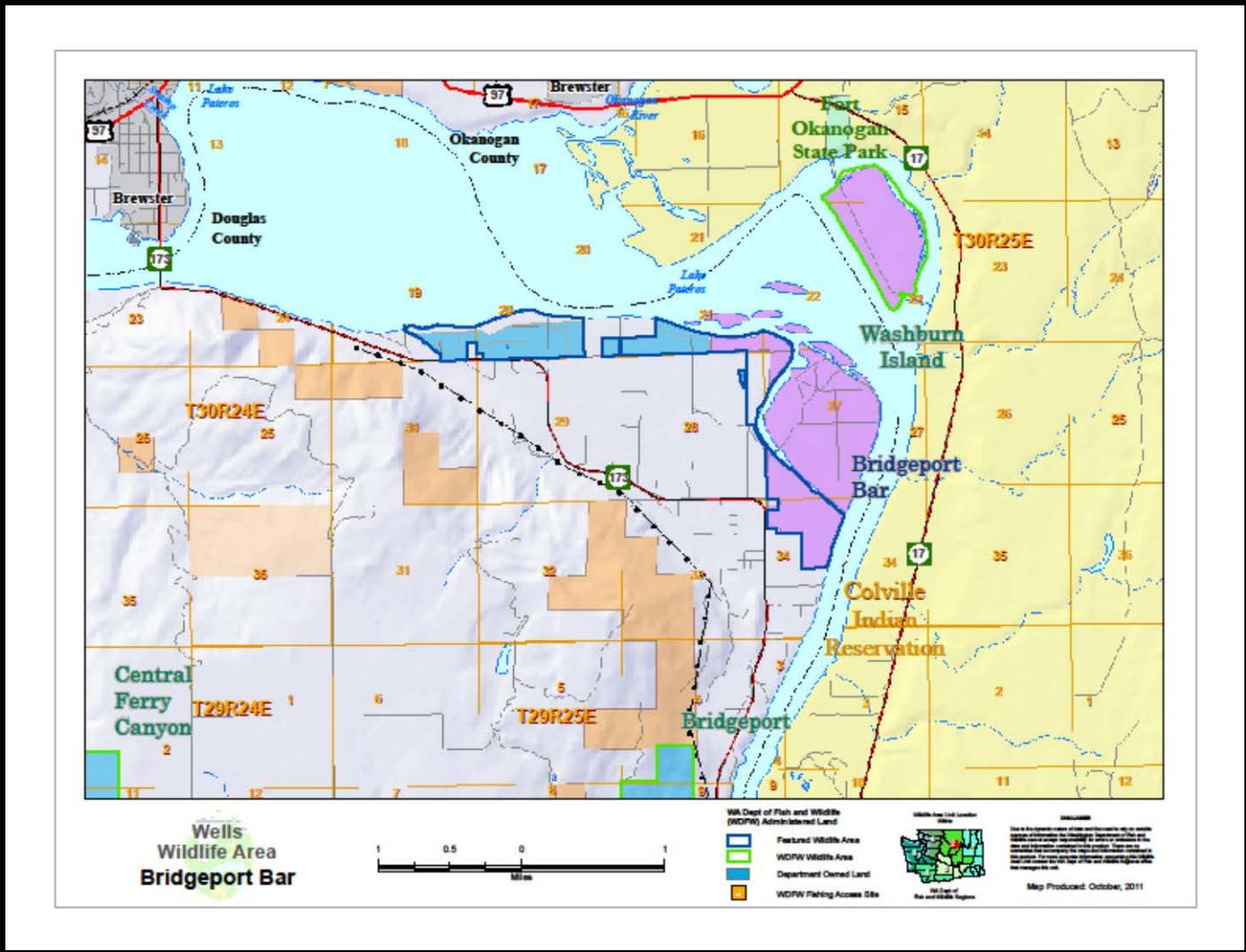


FIGURE 3. MAP OF THE WDFW BRIDGEPORT BAR UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

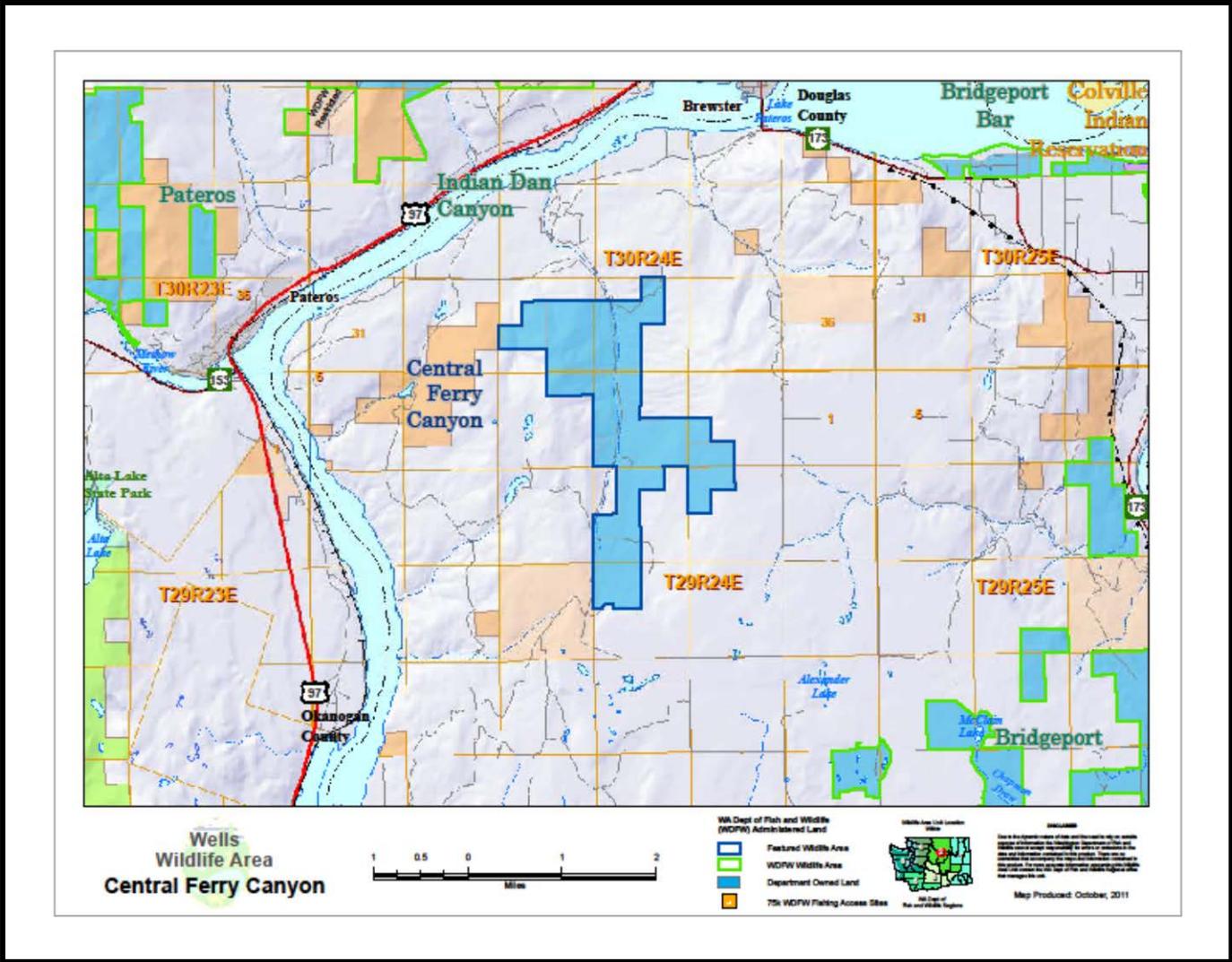


FIGURE 4. MAP OF THE WDFW CENTRAL FERRY CANYON UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY (EXTENSIVE HABITAT LOSS DUE TO WILDFIRE IN 2012).

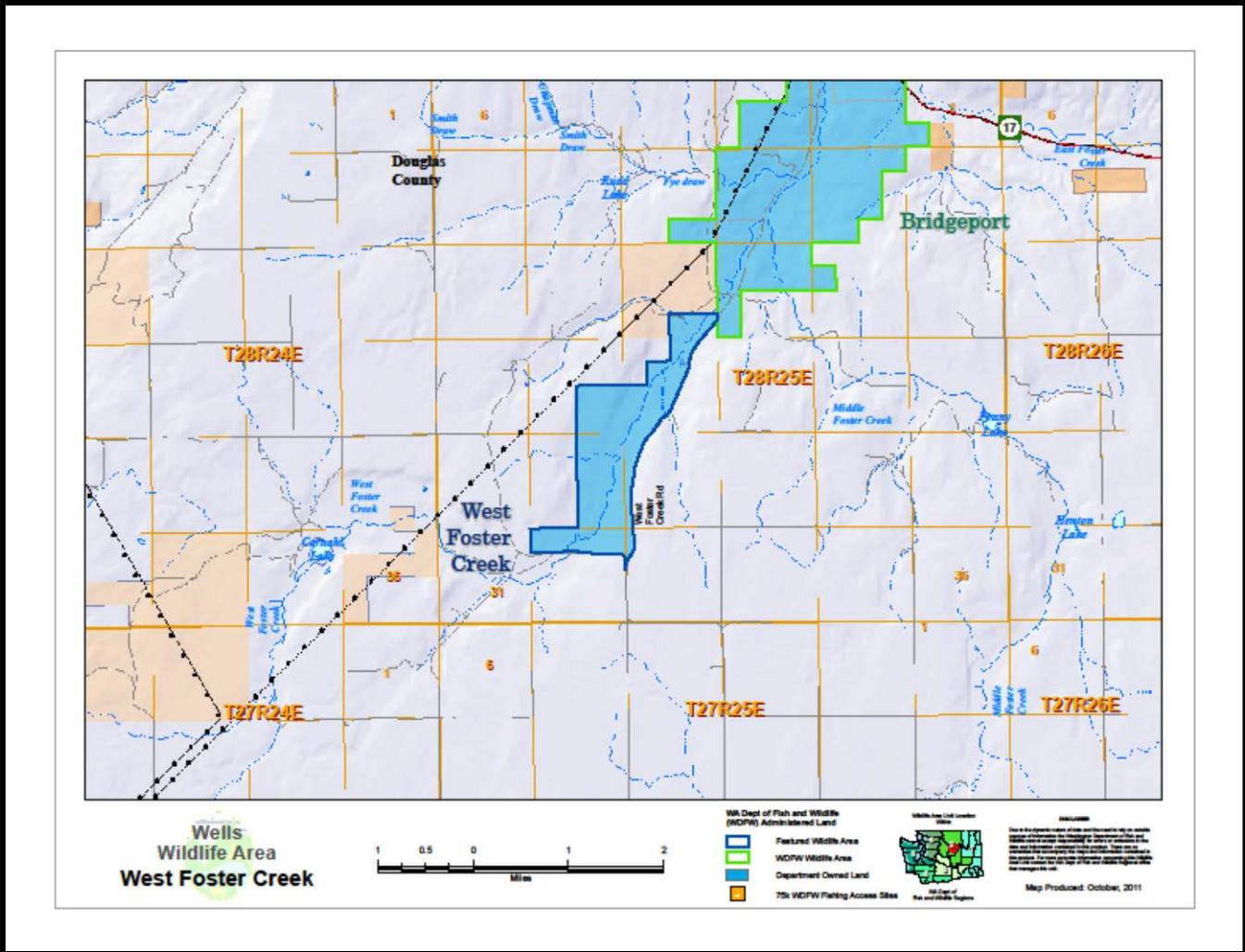


FIGURE 5. MAP OF THE WDFW WEST FOSTER CREEK UNIT, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

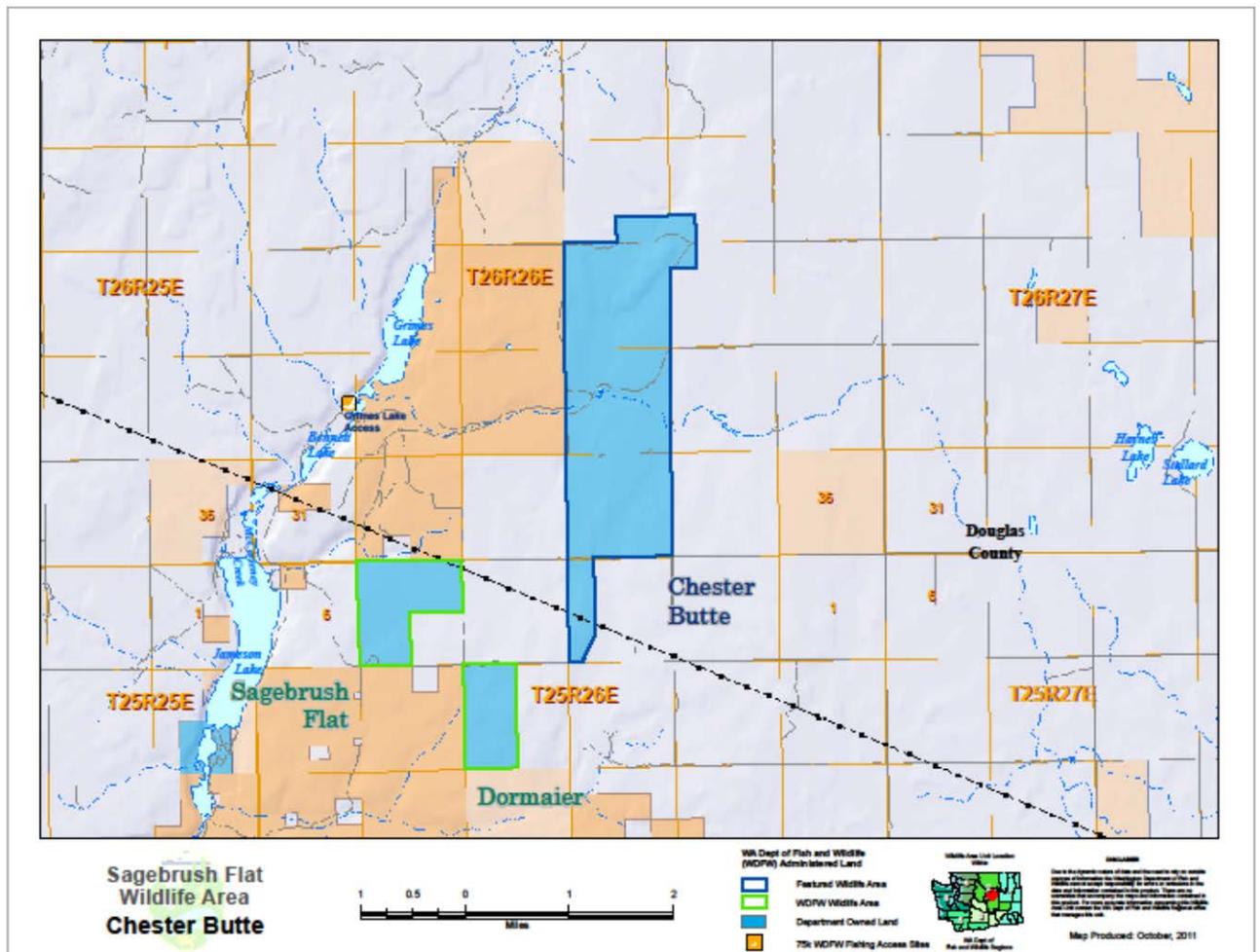


FIGURE 6. MAP OF THE WDFW CHESTER BUTTE AND DORMAIER UNITS, DOUGLAS COUNTY.

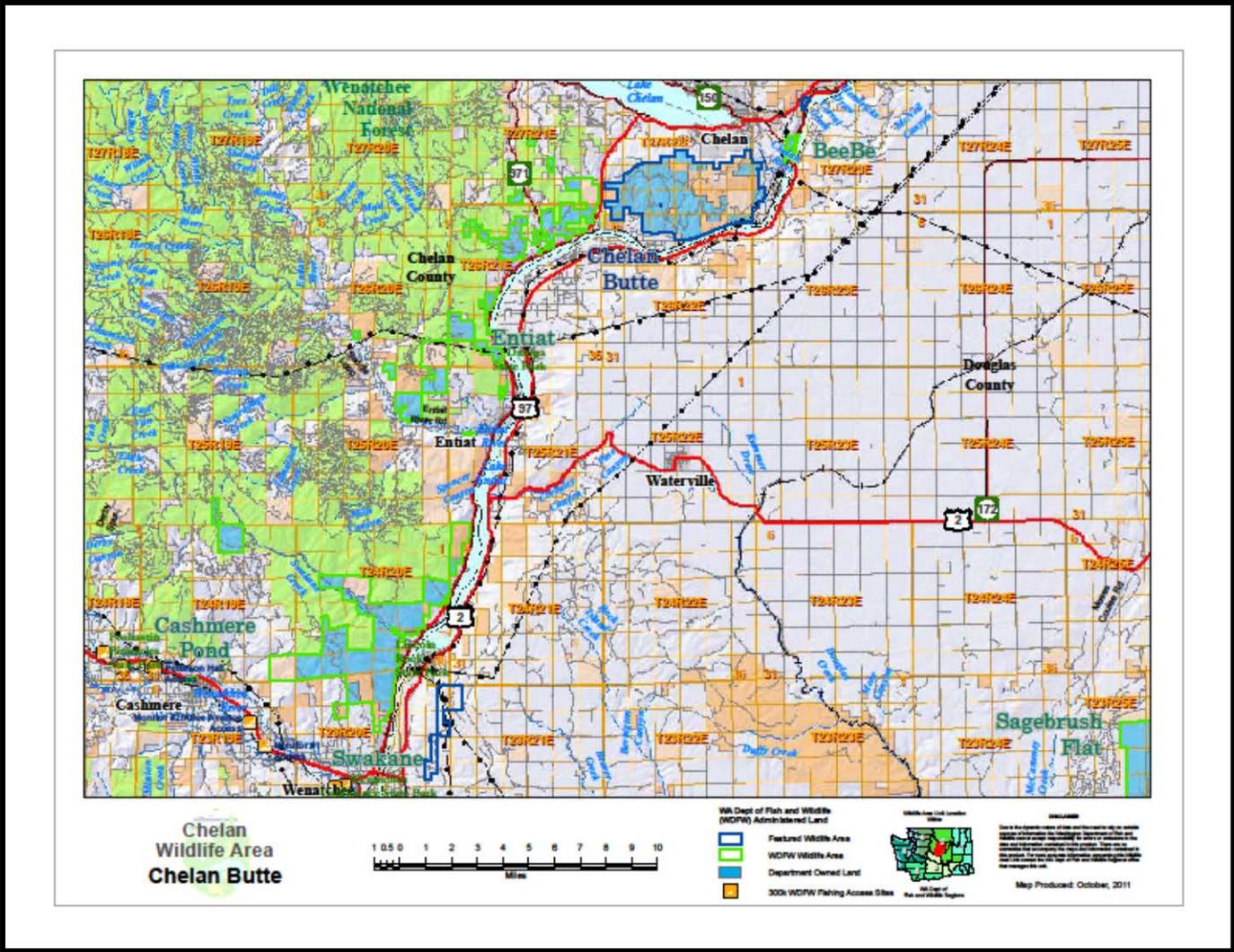


FIGURE 7. MAP OF THE WDFW CHELAN BUTTE UNIT, CHELAN COUNTY.

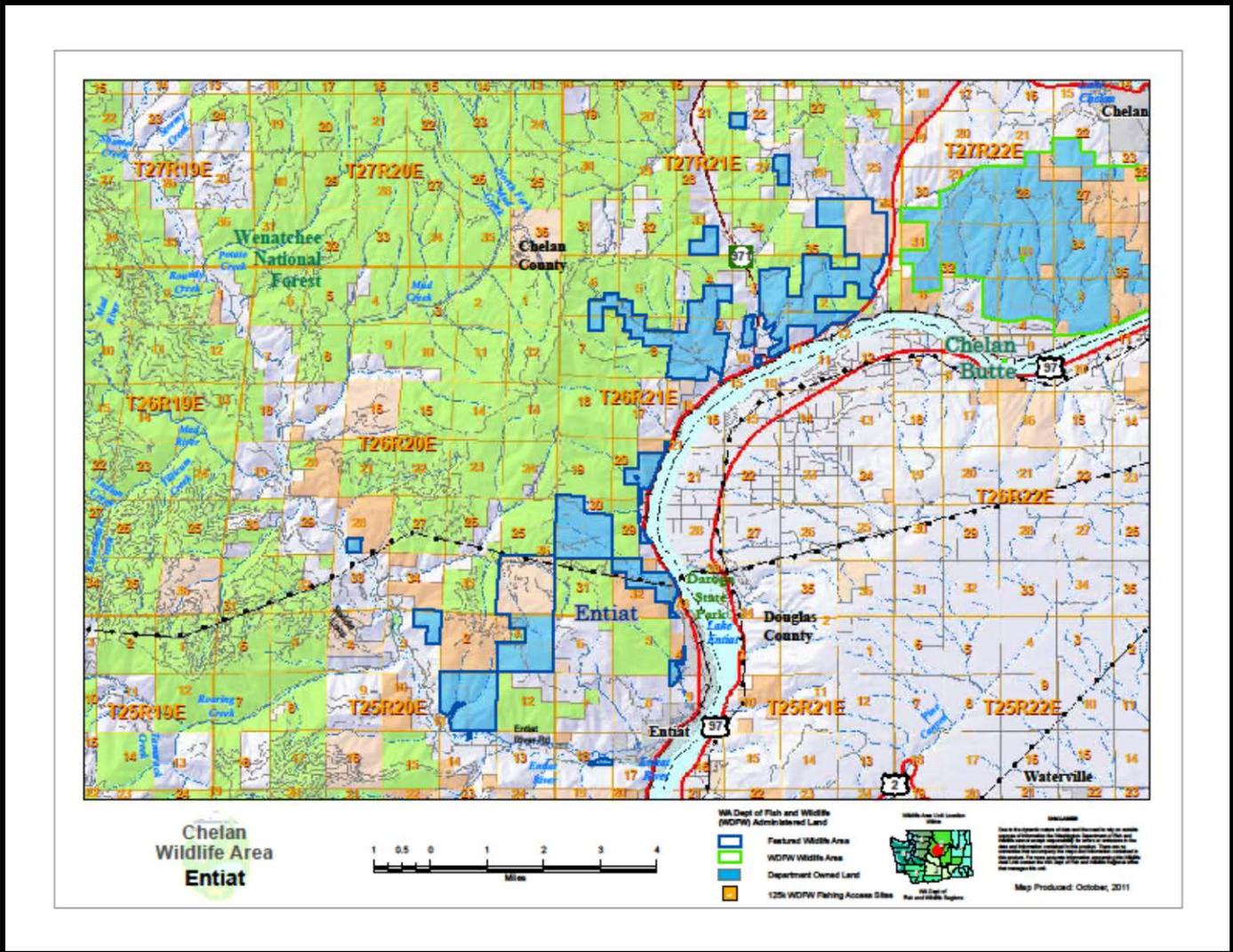


FIGURE 8. MAP OF THE WDFW ENTIAT UNIT, CHELAN COUNTY.

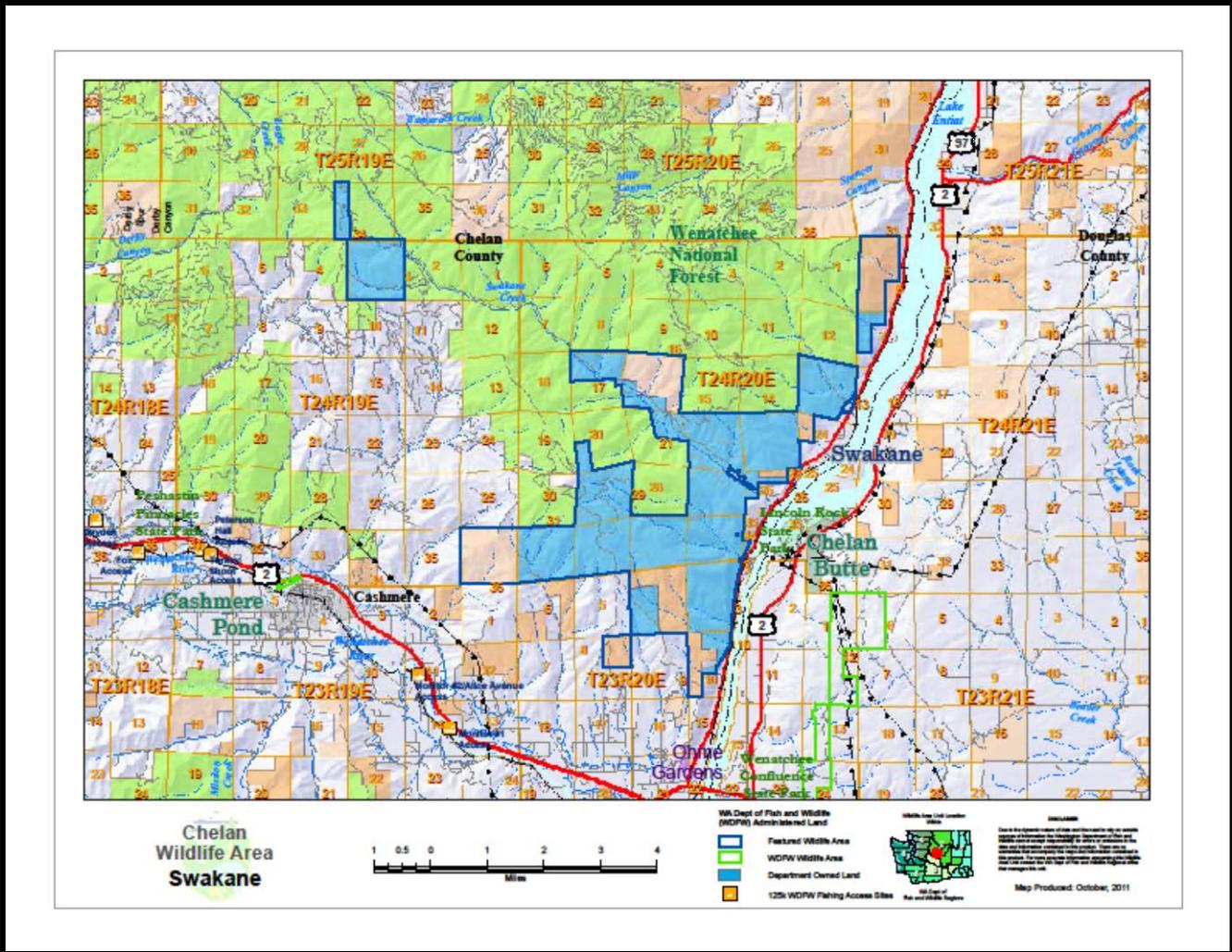


FIGURE 9. MAP OF THE WDFW SWAKANE UNIT, CHELAN COUNTY.

2015

JEFF BERNATOWICZ, District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 8 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Yakima and Kittitas Counties

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DISTRICT 8 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 8 is located in south central Washington. Game management units (GMUs) in District 8 include 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), 330 (West Bar), 334 (Ellensburg), 335 (Teaway), 336 (Taneum), 340 (Manastash), 342 (Umtaneum), 346 (Little Naches), 352 (Nile), 356 (Bumping), 360 (Bethel), 364 (Rimrock), 368 (Cowiche), 371 (Alkali) and part of 372 (Rattlesnake Hills). Hunters can choose a variety of habitats, ranging from lowland shrub steppe and farmland to high elevation alpine wilderness.

District 8 is dominated by large blocks of public land and abundant hunting opportunity. The district is probably best known for elk. The Yakima elk herd is one of the largest in the state, with over 12,000 animals roaming over 900,000 acres of public land. There are over 6,000 elk in the Colockum herd, which inhabit mostly public land north of Ellensburg.

There is also plenty of upland bird hunting opportunity in District 8. Yakima County is near the top of the list in the harvest of many bird species, ranking #1 for quail, #2 for dove, #3 for both duck and chukar, #4 for pheasant, and #5 for goose. Bird hunters wanting to wander over large areas with low hunter densities have many areas to choose from. Along the breaks of the Columbia, the Yakima Training Center consists of 327,000 acres south of I-90, while WDFW manages another 154,000 acres north of the freeway. West of the Yakima River, hunters can roam the 105,000 acre Wenas Wildlife Area. A motivated upland bird hunter with a good dog could pursue grouse, chukar, huns, quail, and pheasant in the same day.

Turkeys are a relative newcomer to the district. Birds were first introduced over 30 years ago, but populations remained low. In the late 1990s, a more extensive effort was made to augment existing pockets of birds. Post augmentation, the spring harvest had increased from 60 in 2001 to 413 in 2010. Harvest has recently hovered around 100 birds. The populations in GMU 335 (Teaway) have become large enough to allow for a fall permit season. Turkey densities may never reach those found in northeast Washington, but many hunters are finding decent hunting 4-5 hours closer to home.

District 8 is also home to over 70% of the bighorn sheep in the state of Washington. While it is still difficult to draw a permit to hunt, bighorns can certainly add enjoyment to a hunting trip. Rams are in rut mid-October through November, when many hunters are traveling through the area. There are robust populations of bighorns that can often be easily viewed along Highways 821 (Yakima River Canyon) and 410 (Clemans Mountain, north of the junction with Highway 12).

ELK



This district is the best in the state for elk hunting. However, with that distinction comes relatively high hunter densities. Opening weekend is usually crowded. However, a recent trend has been for hunters to pull up camp and head home before the season ends. As hunters have become less active, harvest had declined (Figure 1) and both the Yakima and Colockum herds are well over population objectives. Antlerless opportunity has been increasing, especially in the Colockum herd. If you are looking for a higher quality experience, consider hunting the last two or three days of the season, away from open roads.

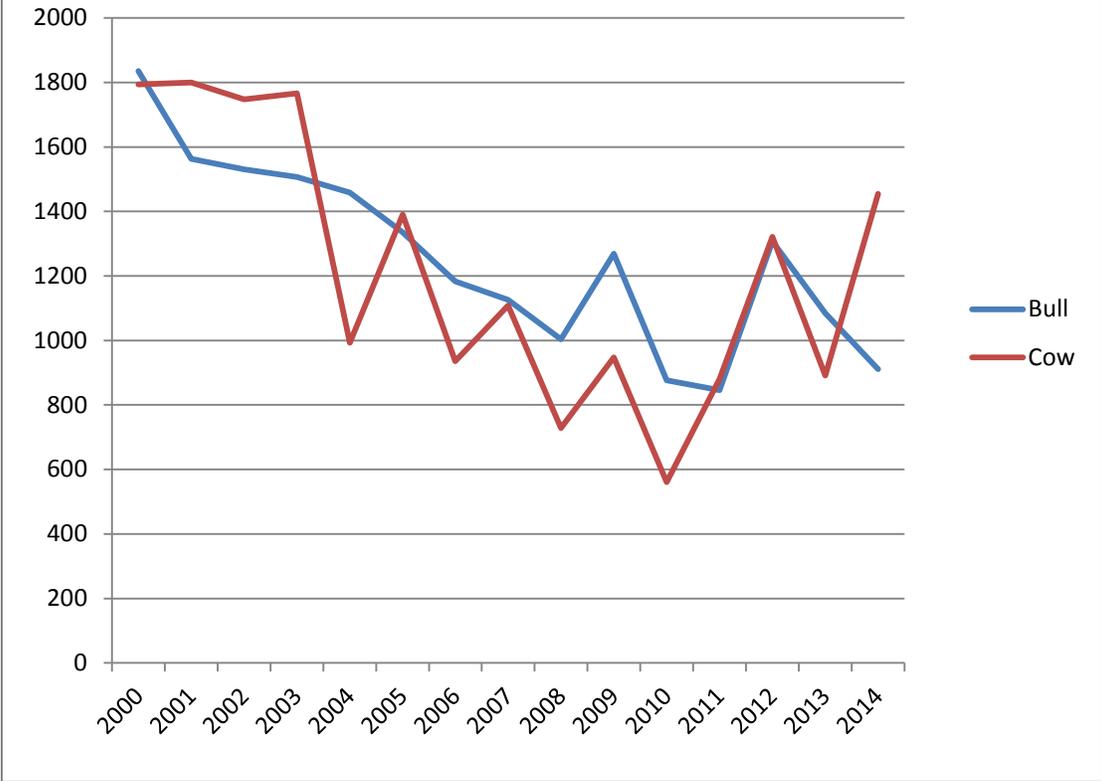
The winter of 2014-15 was very mild. Elk did not show up on feed sites or typical winter range areas in large numbers, so aerial surveys were not conducted in the Yakima area. There were fairly large numbers of elk going into the 2014 season and harvest was average. Elk populations are expected to be above average in 2015. Relatively high numbers of antlerless permits were issued for the 2015 season. New opportunities were added for youth, senior, and disabled hunters. Muzzleloader hunters have a high probability of drawing an antlerless permit. In 2015, there were more permits than applicants for youth antlerless muzzleloader. Archers should note GMUs 328 and 329 were added to the early season. Historically, archery success has been high in GMUs 328 and 329, and the elk population is at record levels. Expect opportunity to be maintained or increased for all users in the near future.

For big game hunters in eastern Washington, drawing a special permit in the quality elk category is the ultimate opportunity. That certainly applies to District 8, where the majority of quality elk permits are available in the south-central part of the state. Our advice to most hunters who come here is to continue to hunt the general elk season for spikes, but keep putting in for special permit hunts and accruing bonus points, so when they do draw a quality elk permit, they will already know the country. Quality elk hunting in this part of the state includes a very good chance of seeing several mature bulls in a season.

Elk hunting success in this district is often related to weather. Warm, dry falls without snow in the high country to move elk around often make for lower harvest and hunter success. When early snow comes, most hunters know that the elk hunting can be great in this part of the state, as elk begin to move lower towards their wintering areas. The 2015 season will be about a week later than normal. The elk migration typically starts about November 3. The modern firearm season is Oct. 31 – Nov. 8, with youth and senior antlerless permits Nov. 4-15.

Although a few hunters seem to believe the elk have all moved to Mt. Rainer during the fall hunting season, the reality is that most of the 12,000 elk in the Yakima herd are in units open to hunting. Hunters will find them at higher elevations and away from roads. The wilderness areas in the Yakima herd range can provide excellent hunting opportunity for those willing to invest the effort to chase elk in the high country.

Figure 1: District 8 Elk Harvest

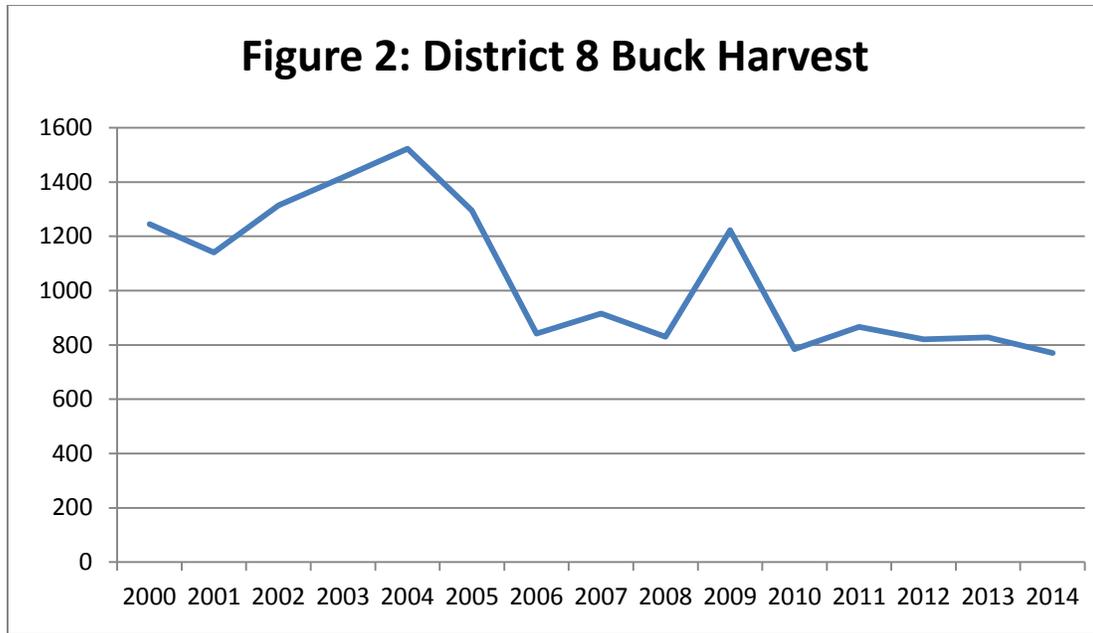


DEER



Deer harvest in District 8 has been down from historic highs for a number of years. The average hunter success the last five years has been 8% compared to a statewide average of 28%. Following a sharp decline from 2004-2006, the harvest has been relatively static (Figure 2). There was no change in 2014. There have been mild winters and good fawn recruitment, and recent population surveys indicate the population is increasing, but non-tribal harvest has not increased. Areas such as the Teanaway remain among the best prospects for deer hunting opportunity.

Hunter numbers have declined with the reduced deer population. Many of the remaining modern firearm hunters set up camp and claim their favorite spot for elk season. If you are looking for relatively low hunter densities, consider the higher elevations of District 8. Harvest and hunter numbers are typically highest in GMUs 335 (Teanaway), 340 (Manashtash), and 342 (Umtanum).



WATERFOWL

The USFWS flyway counts indicate 2015 breeding populations were the same as 2014 and 43% above the long term average. Mallard populations in the flyway were up 7% from 2014, and teal numbers were 19% higher. The prairie potholes were very dry, so ducks continued north into the boreal forest to nest. There is no data on production, but populations are expected to be good.

Yakima County has averaged over 31,000 ducks harvested the last five years, which is third best in the state. In 2014, harvest rebounded to near average levels in District 8 (Figure 3). While hunting was good in Yakima County, harvest in Kittitas County was low, probably due to Wanapum pool being closed the entire season.

Another El Nino winter is predicted for 2015, which usually means above average temperatures and duck numbers for District 8. The Boreal forest typically freezes early and there is less water available in the potholes. This could mean more birds arriving early in Washington.

The best waterfowl hunting is in the lower Yakima Valley. Public hunting can be found on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area and Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge (TPNWR). This is a drought year and water levels are very low. TPNWR has had difficulty filling wetlands in October, especially on the Pumphouse Unit. If the drought continues, most blinds could be dry in 2015. Before making a trip to TPNWR, it would be best to call the refuge at 509-865-2405 for conditions. Hunting can be excellent when wetlands are filled.



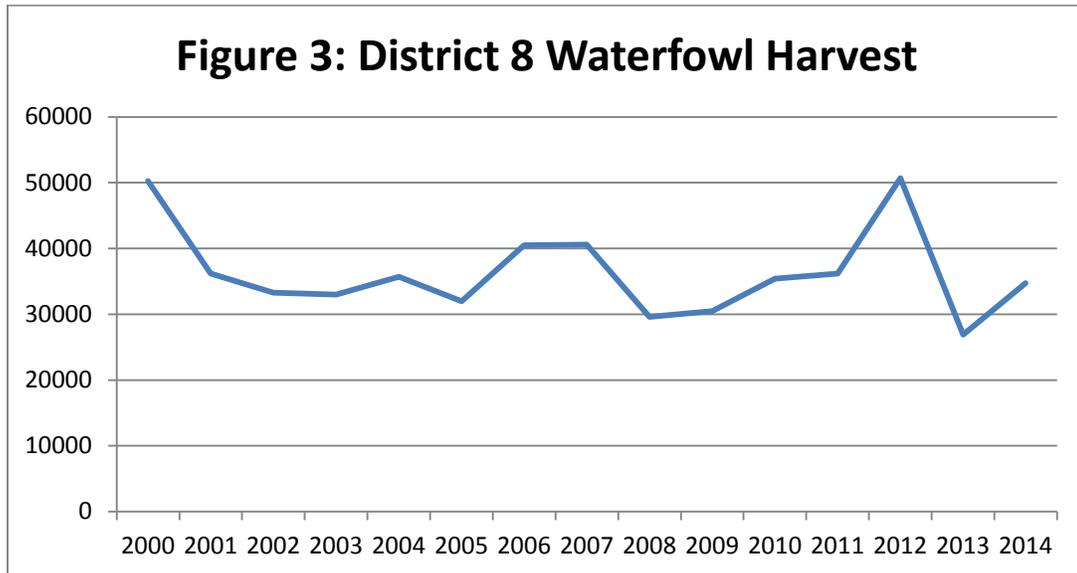
Hunters may find “No water” signs at blind parking spots common in 2015 at TPNWR

The Yakama Nation (YN) maintains a public hunting program and there are great duck hunting opportunities on the reservation. The YN-managed Satus Wildlife Area often averages over four birds per hunter opening weekend. The drought and low water level on the Yakima River has allowed YN to mow and open up more Satus wetlands than normal. The unknown will be river levels in fall. Water managers may be trying to fill reservoirs even if fall rains arrive. Watch for news releases about wetland conditions or check the YN website (ynwildlife.org).

Band returns suggest many locally produced ducks are staying in the Yakima Valley. Early-mid season often sees good hunting on locally produced and migrant naïve birds. Late season hunting can be difficult. Most ponds and sloughs often freeze over around Thanksgiving. When there are long periods of cold weather, the vast majority of ducks roost in the Lower Toppenish Reserve during legal shooting hours. Even if the Yakima River stays ice-free, few birds are flying around areas with public access. For late season hunting, watch for significant changes in

weather. If there is a quick thaw and rain, new ducks enter the valley and a week or so of good hunting can be had before the birds find the safety of private land and the reserves. A freeze and thaw may also fill wetlands that had been dry earlier in the year.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see: [“Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)



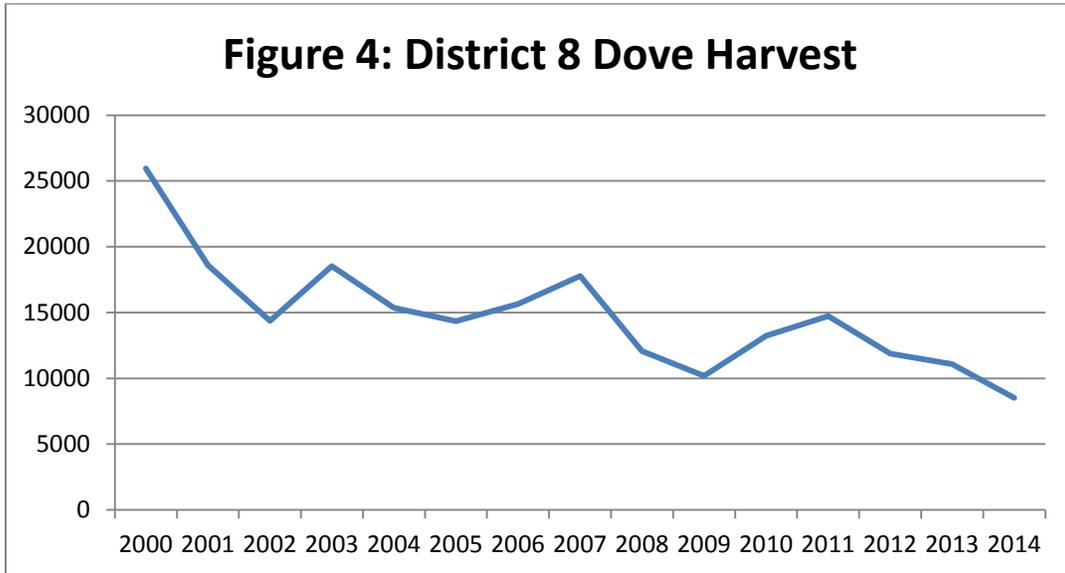
DOVE

Yakima County typically ranks second in the state for dove harvest. The best success is in the lower Yakima Valley. Good public hunting can be found on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area and the Yakima Nation (YN) Reservation. YN grows wheat on portions of their Satus Wildlife Area. For information on hunting YN, visit ynwildlife.org.

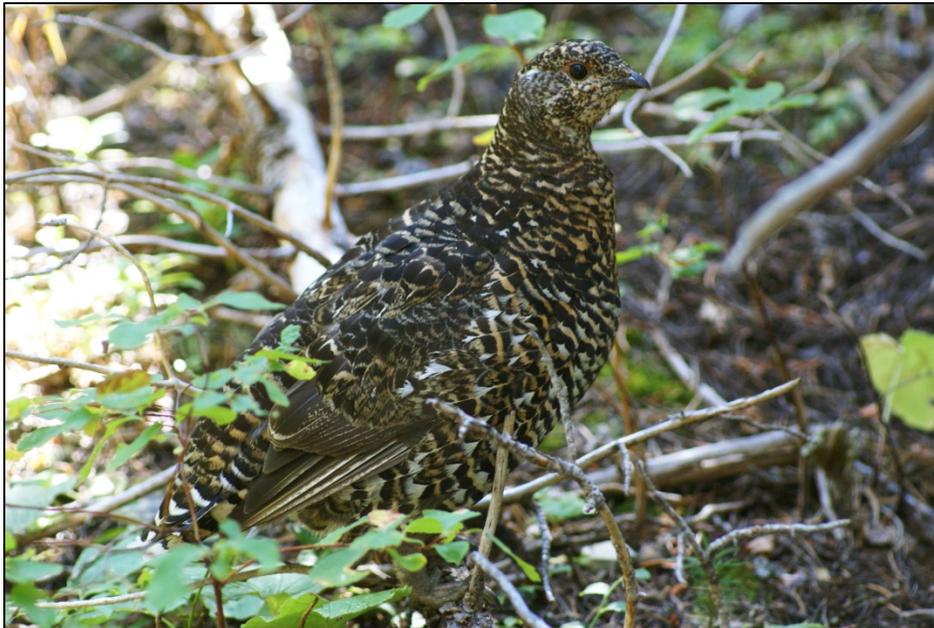
Dove hunting success depends on the weather pattern. Warm weather is needed to keep the majority of birds from migrating out of the valley. Cooler weather often hits the area by late August or early September. Despite a 30 day season, the average dove hunter only spends three days (opening weekend) pursuing doves. Harvest and hunter numbers have been declining the last few years (Figure 4).

Many hunters ask about Eurasian collared dove hunting opportunity, as the season is 365 days, no limits. Eurasian collared dove numbers have increased dramatically in the last five years. No information is collected on harvest, but collared doves are now very common. The problem for hunters is that the majority of collared doves are in urban areas. Collared doves seem to act more like rock doves (*i.e.*, pigeons) than mourning doves. Some hunters occasionally find some opportunity at roost sites and in a few fields, but good hunting is rare. Eurasian collared dove

harvest is more of a bonus while hunting other birds, rather than a target for most hunters. Making a trip hoping to find Eurasian collared dove opportunity may be frustrating.



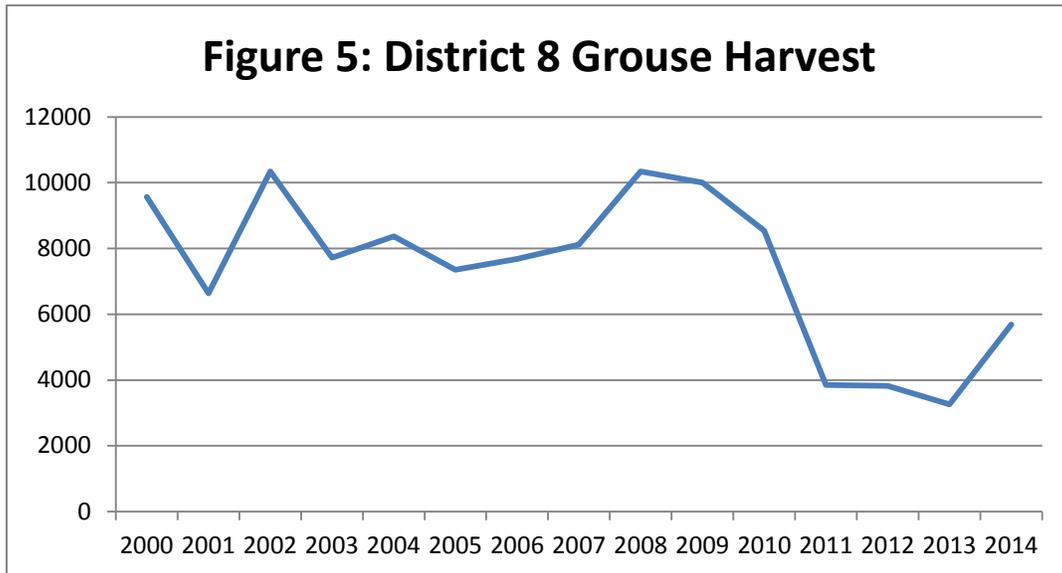
FOREST GROUSE



The 2014 grouse harvest in District 8 increased slightly from the lowest in recent history (Figure 5). Hunters averaged 0.2 birds per day, but there were more hunters reporting hunting more days in 2014. No data is available on the 2014 hatch. The spring was warm and dry. Birds nesting in

higher elevations with access to moist meadows probably had higher nesting success than those in low, dry terrain.

Many grouse hunters drive roads morning and evening, especially when the season first opens. Research suggests brood hens and young are the most vulnerable in early September. Hunters serious about finding grouse should look for areas with low densities of open roads and hike.



PHEASANT

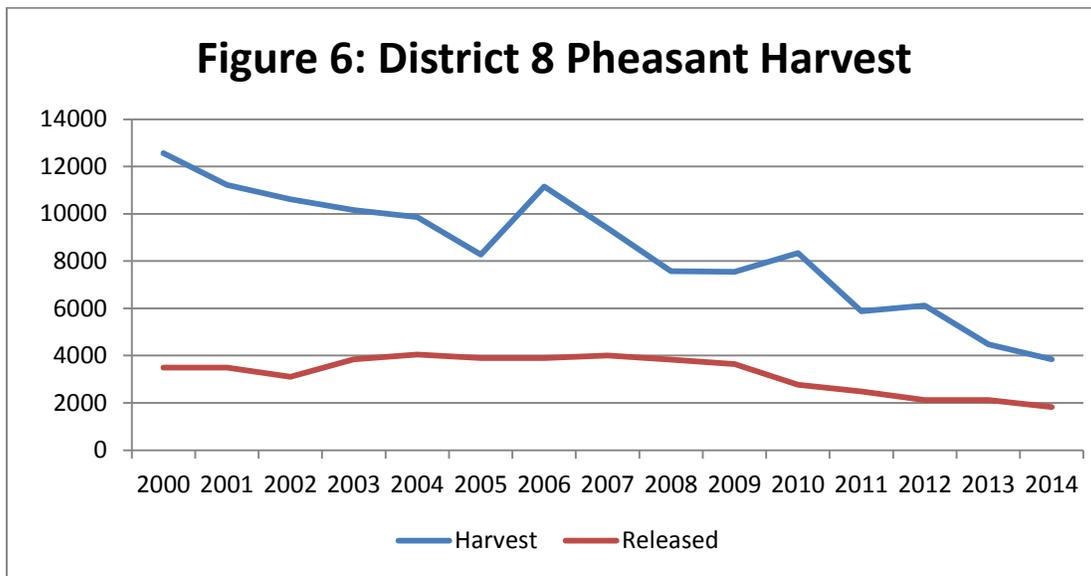
The 2014 pheasant harvest in District 8 was one of the lowest in recent history (Figure 6). There are very few wild pheasant in the district outside of the Yakima Valley on the Yakama Nation (YN) Reservation. The trend on the YN Reservation has been for declining pheasant populations due to conversion from idle land to crops, especially grain farming. The main reason for loss of pheasant habitat is the Energy Independence and Security Act (2007) which mandated increased use of renewable fuel. Ethanol production increased from 1.6 billion to 13.9 billion gallons between 2001 and 2011. Much of the ethanol is produced from corn. The act set a goal of 15 billion gallons of ethanol from corn by 2015. Approximately 2.4 million acres of additional corn will be needed. There will be considerable pressure to convert any land capable of production into crops and the downward trend in pheasant will likely continue.

Predicting changes in pheasant numbers based on weather is difficult. More moisture is usually better than less. For example, after the severe winter of 1996-97 and a cool 1997 spring, pheasant harvest increased 40% in Yakima County. All upland game birds re-nest. Even the worst spring weather can provide excellent cover and insects for the late hatch.

A warm spring can provide good nesting cover and insect production for the early hatch, provided there is enough soil moisture. The weather in the Yakima Valley this past winter and spring has been warm and dry. The early hatch pheasant, especially those near moist soil, should have done well. June and July were very hot and dry. There were also water restrictions and some canals went dry. The canals leak, creating moist areas for broods to find green vegetation and insects. Late hatch, especially those on drier sites, could be poor.

No pheasant surveys are conducted in District 8. YN conducts production surveys and posts their data in late summer. For information on hunting the YN Reservation and their surveys, visit ynwildlife.org.

Released pheasants are becoming a significant source of recreation for many hunters. About 2,000 roosters will be released in District 8. The 2015 allocation has not been set, but about 1000 birds are expected at the Sunnyside Wildlife Area, 600 at Cottonwoods, and 400 at Whiskey Dick. For the youth hunt, birds will only be released at Sunnyside and Cottonwoods. The local chapter of Pheasants Forever (PF) has been raising pheasant in surrogators and releasing at Sunnyside and on the YN Reservation. YN raised and released 3,000 birds over the summer. Research in Nebraska found only 12% of surrogator raised pheasant survived to hunting season, 3.5% were harvested, and only 1% survived one year. The surrogator raised birds will probably only modestly affect harvest and population.



QUAIL

California Quail can be found in most non-timbered portions of the district. The best habitat and highest number of quail can be found in the lower Yakima Valley. This is evident in the harvest statistics where Yakima County leads the state in quail harvest with an average of 24,000 birds over the last five years. In Kittitas County, the average quail harvest is only 2,700.

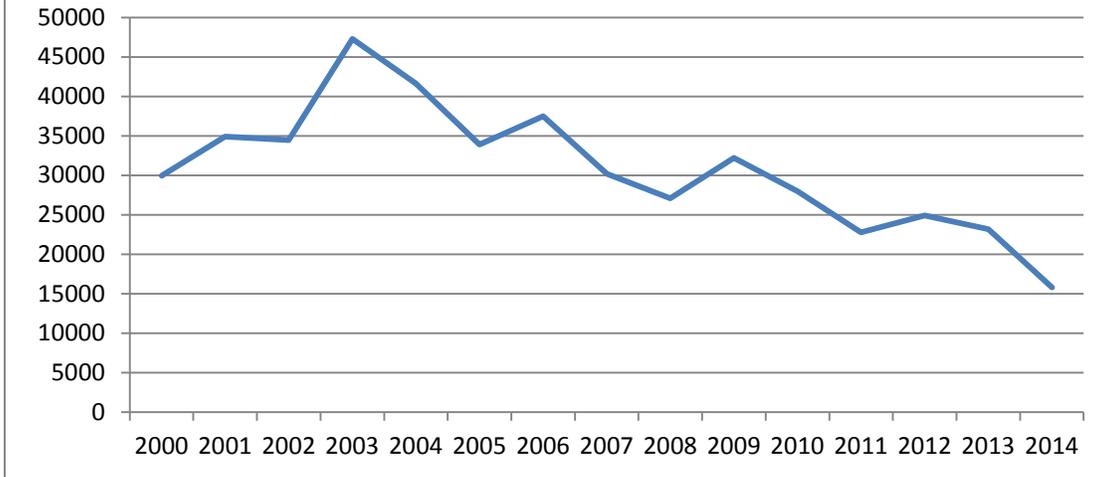
The trend has been for declining total quail harvest (Figure 7). This trend may not represent actual quail populations, as surveys on the YN Reservation have found increasing numbers of birds. Quail are often secondary quarry to pheasant hunters. The lack of pheasant and pheasant hunters might be contributing to the decline in total harvest. YN will post quail survey numbers later this summer.

There has been no significant winter weather in the Yakima Valley to impact quail populations in over 15 years. Quail hatches are particularly hard to estimate based on weather. The best populations are along the Yakima River corridor. Even in the driest years, many nests can be wiped out by flood water due to mountain snowmelt in May-June. Quail are persistent re-nesters and will take advantage of the new vegetation and insect production once the river drops. It's not unusual to see good hatches in late August or early September.

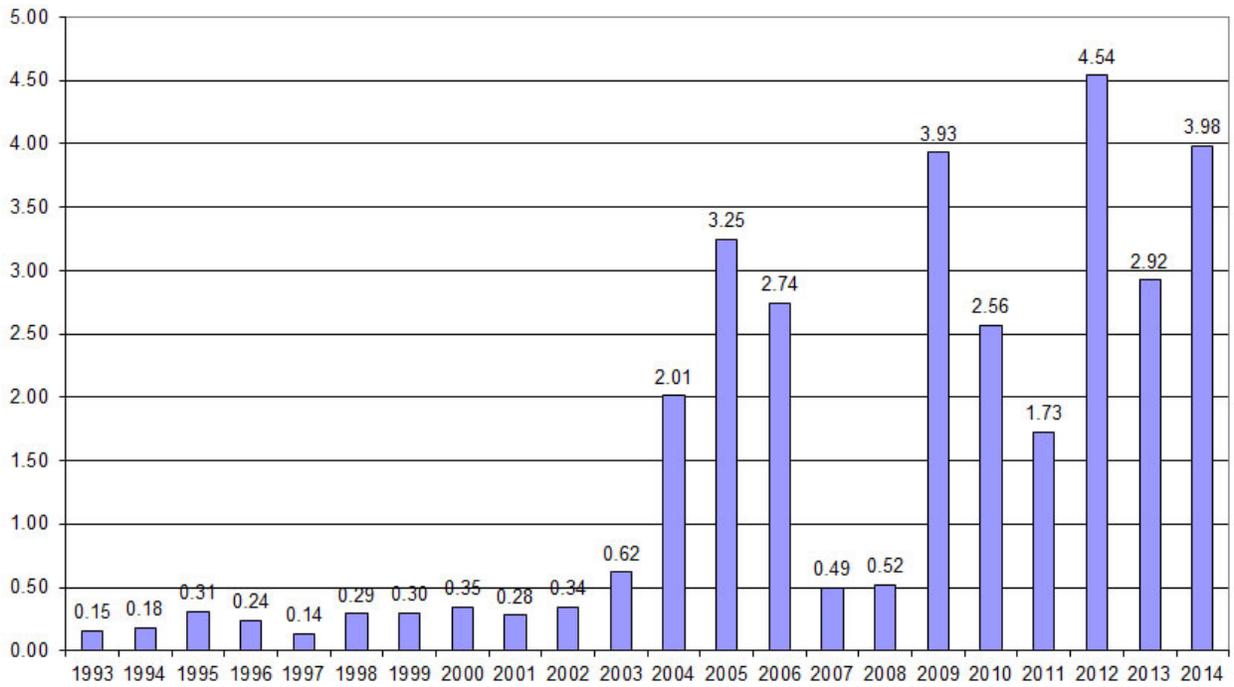
In 2015, no floods occurred, and the weather was warm and relatively dry. Hatches may have been good, especially in areas with good riparian habitat. Quail in more arid locations might not have done as well. There were long periods of time with temperatures exceeding 100⁰ F. Birds can't sweat like humans or pant like dogs to cool off. Birds need shade and will reduce activity (i.e., feeding) in the heat.

WDFW owns various parcels along the Yakima River that hold good numbers of quail and that are part of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. YN runs an excellent hunting program and has great quail hunting opportunity. For information on hunting YN and their surveys, visit ynwildlife.org.

Figure 7: District 8 Quail Harvest



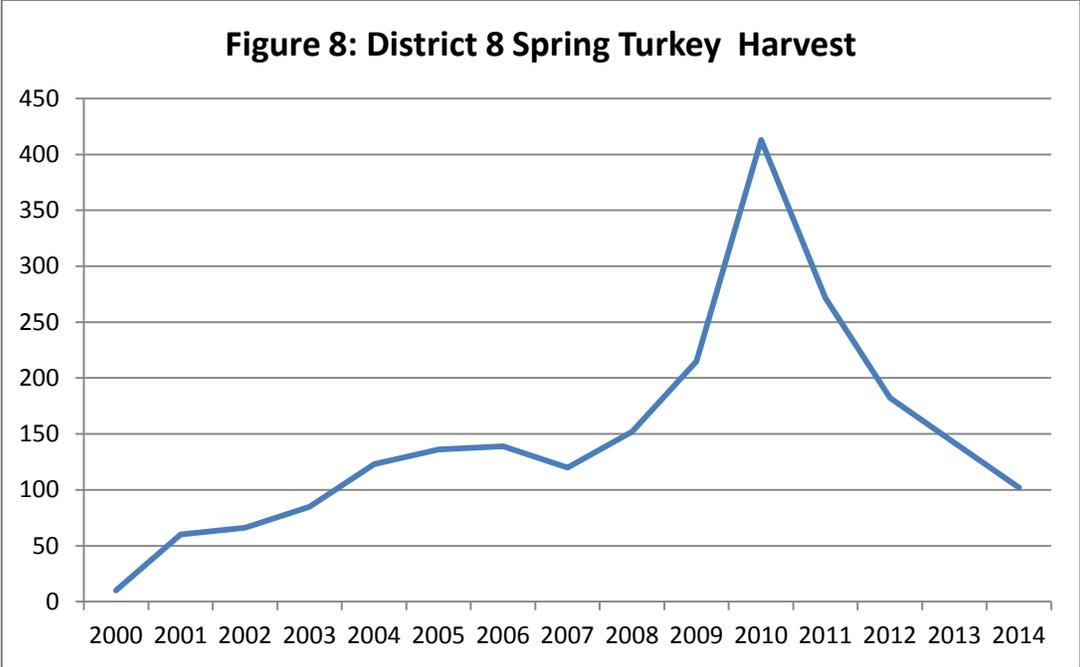
Average number of quail per mile observed during brood counts on the Yakama Reservation



TURKEY



Turkey populations had been doing fairly well in the district following releases in the late 1990s, but are now declining (Figure 8). It isn't unusual for newly established populations to reach high numbers before declining to a lower level. Most of the harvest in the district comes from the northern portion (GMUs 328 [Naneum], 329 [Quilomene], and 335 [Teaway]). The best populations early in the spring are on private lands in the lower elevations of GMU 335. By May, some birds will be moving into higher elevations on the Teaway Community Forest.



PARTRIDGE (CHUKAR/HUNGARIAN)

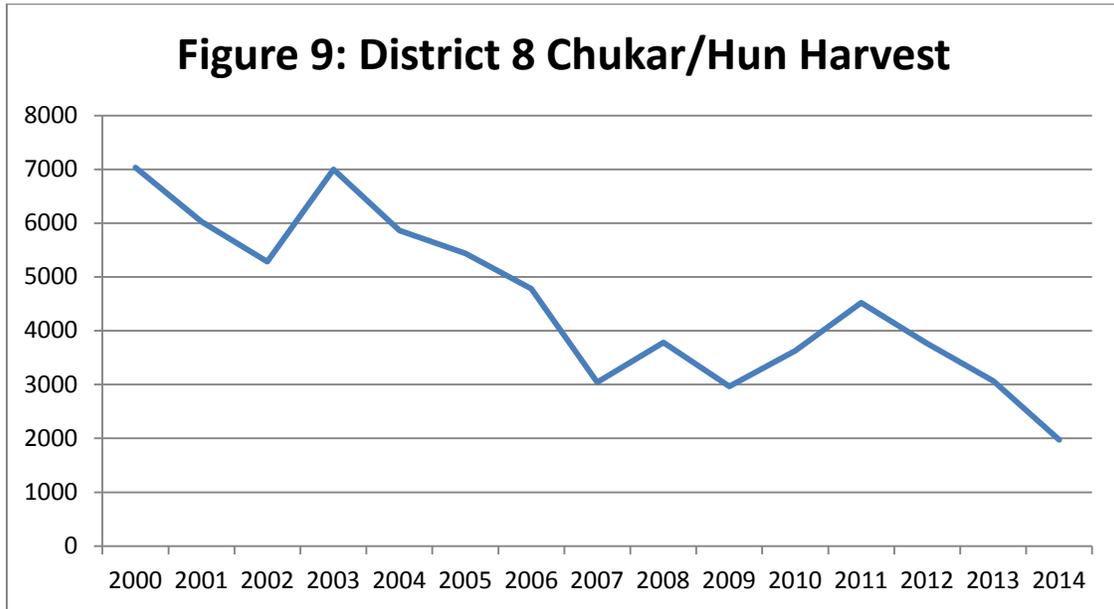


Partridge harvest in 2014 was poor (Figure 9), especially in Yakima County. No population surveys are conducted, but observations by partridge hunters suggest low populations. Winters have been mild, but summers hot and dry. Partridge populations in District 8 typically increase with precipitation. The last few years have been very dry. The dry trend has continued in 2015.

Fires have also reduced the quality of partridge habitat across District 8. Fires reduce nesting cover and the diversity of plants. The Yakima Training Center (YTC) has had frequent fires the last ten years. In 2013, 72,000 acres of partridge habitat burned on the Colockum and Quilomene Wildlife Areas in Kittitas Counties. In 2014, over 38,000 acres burned on YTC and 9,000 acres on the Wenas Wildlife Area.

There is plenty of public land for partridge hunting in the district. The WDFW-managed Wenas, L.T. Murray, and Colockum Wildlife areas all have habitat for both Chukar and Hungarian partridge. Yakima Training Center (YTC) is over 300,000 acres of potential partridge habitat. Chukar can also be found on the eastern portions of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area.

YTC used to be a very popular spot for upland bird hunters. Decreased access due to military training and increased restrictions has limited the number of YTC upland bird hunters the last five years. Access to YTC in fall 2015 is unknown at this writing. Hunters must go through a brief orientation, pay a \$10 fee, and register their firearms with YTC. For more information on the orientation and rules on YTC, call 509-577-3208 or 509-577-3209.



2015

DAVID ANDERSON, District Wildlife Biologist
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Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



2014 buck harvested in the Washougal GMU – Photo courtesy of Randy Lawffer

DISTRICT 9 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Skamania, Clark, and Klickitat Counties

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DISTRICT 9 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 9 is located in the southwest/central part of Washington and is the only district in the state that includes significant amounts of both west and east-side habitats. Game management units (GMUs) in District 9 include 554 (Yale), 564 (Battle Ground), 568 (Washougal), 560 (Lewis River), 572 (Siouxon), 574 Wind River), 578 (West Klickitat), 388 (Grayback), and 382 (East Klickitat). Hunters can choose a variety of habitats, including areas covered by west and east side season dates and permit regulations.

The geography of District 9 is dominated by the Cascade Mountain Range, which divides the district into west and east sides zones. Topography varies from near sea level along the Columbia River and its lower tributaries to alpine habitats associated with Mount St. Helens and Mt. Adams in the Cascade Range.

Dominant west-side river drainages include the Lewis, Washougal, and Wind Rivers. Major east-side watersheds include the White Salmon and Klickitat Rivers. Rock Creek in eastern Klickitat County is the primary watershed in ponderosa pine/oak and shrub steppe portions of the district. The southern border of the district is bounded by the Columbia River.

District 9 is one of the most diverse habitat areas of the state that includes west-side coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir and western hemlock. These forests give way to Oregon White Oak and Ponderosa Pine as you travel to the east side of the Cascade Mountains. In eastern Klickitat County, pine and oak habitat transition into shrub steppe dominated by grassland and sagebrush.

The majority of the west-side forest land is dominated by the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources. These are public lands open to public access. Weyerhaeuser owns a block of land in GMU 568 (Washougal) and typically allows motorized access to this area during the general hunting season. Information about recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land can be found [here](#).

Eastside forest and shrub steppe/grassland habitat is primarily in private land ownership with limited public access. Industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but generally not open to private motorized vehicles. Access to these lands may be impacted during the months of August, September, and in some cases October due to high fire danger. Most timber companies maintain recreational access hotlines where hunters can find out if the land is closed to fire danger prior to hunting. You can find a list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by private industrial timber companies at the end of this document.

Hancock Timberlands in GMU 578 (West Klickitat) are popular for hunting deer, elk, and turkey. More information about hunting on Hancock Klickitat Timberlands can be found at the end of this document. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has a Feel

Free to Hunt access agreement with Western Pacific Timber in GMU 388 (Grayback). This land is popular for deer hunting. More information about hunting on Western Pacific Land can be found at the end of this document. More information about hunting opportunities on private land can be found on [WDFW's Private Lands webpage](#) or at our [GoHunt mapping](#) site. The GoHunt mapping program has useful layers like GMU and elk/deer area boundaries, roads, Wildlife Areas, and different basemaps (public land, aerial photos, topography).

ELK

Elk in District 9 are managed as part of the Mount St. Helens Herd. Please see the [St. Helens Elk Herd Plan](#) available on the WDFW website for more information. Also see both the [Game Harvest Statistics](#) and [Game Status and Trend Reports](#) on the Hunting page of the WDFW website for much more information on elk management in District 9.

Elk hunting within District 9 is managed under a variety of seasons, so check regulations closely before going afield. Two specific details of elk management include the fact that GMUs 388 (Grayback) and 382 (East Klickitat) require eastern Washington elk tags, while the remainder of District 9 is within the western Washington elk tag area. Additionally, GMU 564 (Battle Ground) and 554 (Yale) are Firearm Restriction GMUs.

GMU 560 (Lewis River) offers the most opportunity for elk hunting in District 9. The majority of this area is public land and within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Access during the modern firearm season and hunter success can be dependent upon early season snow levels. GMU 574 (Wind River), 572 (Siouxon), and 578 (West Klickitat) are all good elk units. GMUs 574 and 572 are primarily USFS public lands, while GMU 578 is primarily private land, so make sure you have good maps for identifying ownerships.

GMUs 388 and 382 in Klickitat County have very few elk and are more often considered better for deer hunting. GMU 564 in Clark County only has elk in the extreme northern portion of the GMU. This area has a mix of public and private lands and knowledge of ownership is important before planning your hunt in this area.

This fall's elk hunting has the potential to be impacted by the severe drought conditions. Some areas may be closed to both motorized and non-motorized access. It is recommended to do extra scouting even in areas that are familiar because elk distribution may have changed and normal hunting lands may be closed for fire danger.



Photo courtesy of Pete Nelson

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 that are severely affected by hoof disease are commonly slaughtered, and hoof disease in domestic animals does not cause federal meat inspectors to condemn the meat as unsuitable for human food. If the meat looks and smells normal, and if common sense and good hygiene are practiced during the harvesting, processing, and cooking, the meat is most likely safe to eat. Please see the Department's website [Wild Game Meat Food Safety](#).

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.

Wildlife managers 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](#).



Example of elk hooves deformed by TAHD

DEER

Deer populations are generally stable in lower elevation units such as Washougal (568) and Battle Ground (564), as well as the Klickitat County GMUs West Klickitat (578) and Grayback (388). Deer hunting in East Klickitat (382) may not be at potential, as post season buck numbers have been poor over the past few years. Expect success rates to stay lower than normal until populations rebound. Deer populations are generally low in the Cascade Mountain GMUs, i.e. Lewis River (560), Wind River (574), and Siouxon (572).

Deer harvest and success is remarkably consistent within District 9 and a general season total harvest of approximately 2,500 bucks representing 15-20% hunter success is again anticipated during the 2015 hunt. Please see both the [Game Harvest Statistics](#) and [Game Status and Trend Reports](#) on the Hunting page of the WDFW website for much more information on deer management in District 9.

Successful hunting for black-tailed deer is primarily a function of the effort, focus, and energy that hunters put into the hunt. Black-tailed deer thrive in heavily vegetated habitats and are often very nocturnal in nature. This means that successful black-tail hunters must be in position early in the morning and carefully hunt near sources of food and in secure cover.

Bucks travel more during the rut when they cover large amounts of territory searching for does in estrus. This makes bucks more vulnerable as they spend less time hiding and are sometimes found in “open” habitats, i.e., clear-cuts and meadows. Not surprisingly, approximately one-third of the annual buck harvest in Region 5 occurs during the four-day “late buck” hunt held each November.

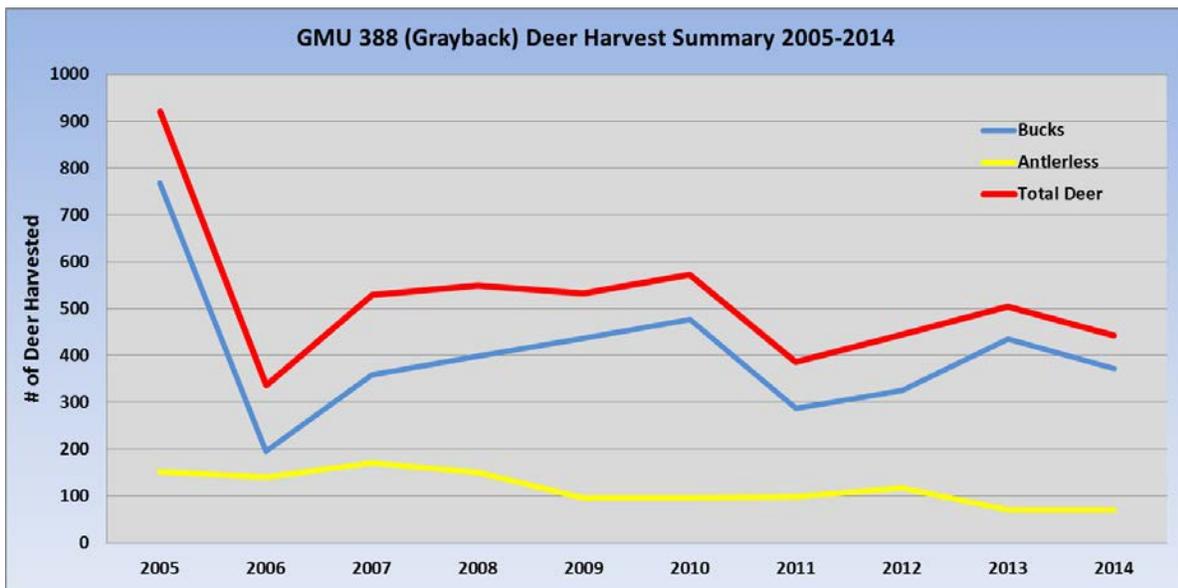
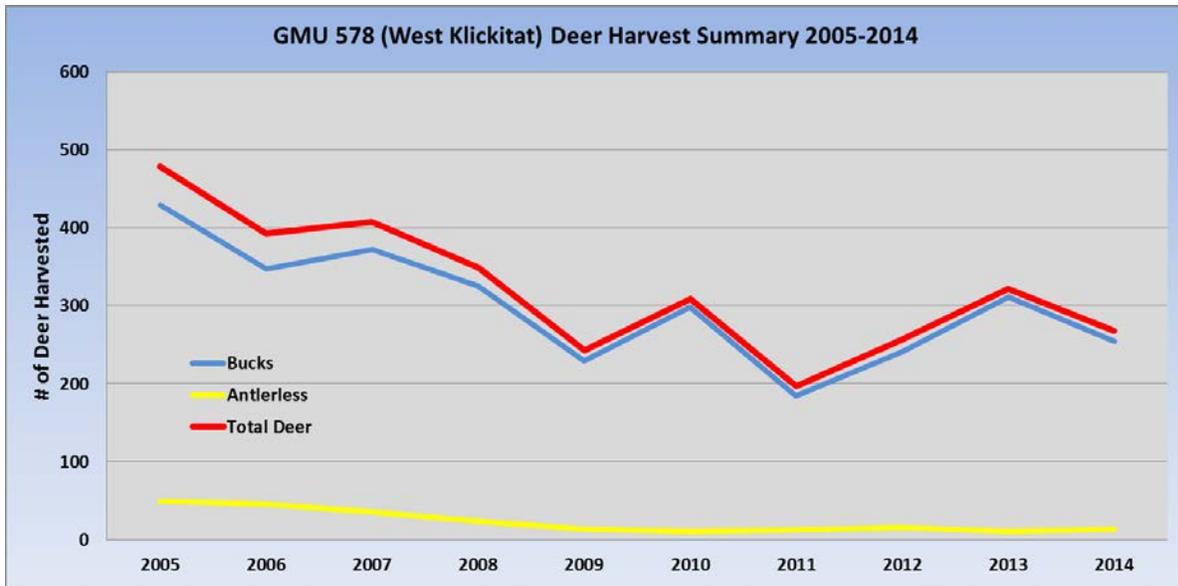
Within District 9, GMUs 554 (Yale), 560 (Lewis River), 564 (Battle Ground), 568 (Washougal), and 572 (Siouxon) offer an attractive general-season hunting opportunity. Hunters should note, however, the firearm restrictions in GMUs 554 and 564 (see page 90 of the 2015 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations.)

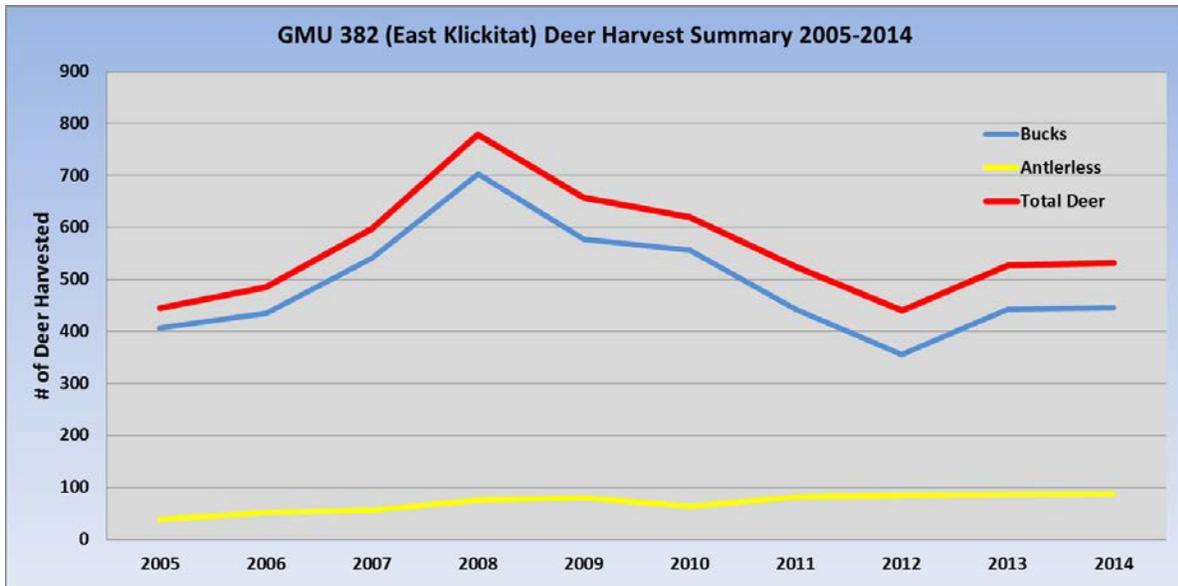
Those interested in a more trophy-oriented deer hunting opportunity might consider any of the Klickitat County units. GMU 578 (West Klickitat), GMU 388 (Grayback), and GMU 382 (East Klickitat) are all managed under a 3-point or larger antler restriction. Collectively, the Klickitat GMUs support an annual harvest of over 1,000 3-point or larger bucks. Please see the graphics below illustrating the annual harvest in each of the Klickitat Units. Also, please review the deer hunting regulations closely before going afield, as the rules differ in each unit and none of the Klickitat GMUs allow general-season late-buck hunting.

This fall's deer hunting has the potential to be impacted by the severe drought conditions. Some areas may be closed to both motorized and non-motorized access. It is recommended to do extra scouting even in areas that are familiar because deer distribution may have changed and normal hunting lands may be closed for fire danger.



2014 buck harvested by a youth hunter in the Washougal GMU. Photo courtesy of Randy Lawffer.





BEAR



District 9 is split between two black bear hunt zones for the fall bear hunting season: the South Cascades (GMUs 574, 572, 568, 564, and 560) in which the season runs from August 15-November 15, and the East Cascades (GMUs 578, 388, and 382) which runs from August 1-November 15. Harvest numbers and hunter success for 2014 in the South Cascades and East Cascades zone were 141 (3.9% success) and 211 (4.5% success), respectively. These success ratios are below the statewide average (6.5%).

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

COUGAR

Cougars are difficult to hunt and are typically harvested opportunistically by deer and elk hunters. The early cougar hunting season runs from September 1 - December 31. A season harvest guideline system was initiated in 2012, which closes hunt areas after January 1 if the harvest guidelines have been met or exceeded. For more information on these new guidelines and to check if the area you are interested in hunting is closed or not, please see the [cougar webpage](#). All cougar pelts must be sealed by WDFW within five days of harvest. Contact a WDFW office to make an appointment to have a cougar pelt sealed.

WATERFOWL

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, in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the states of Oregon and Alaska, the Fish and Wildlife Commission has 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.

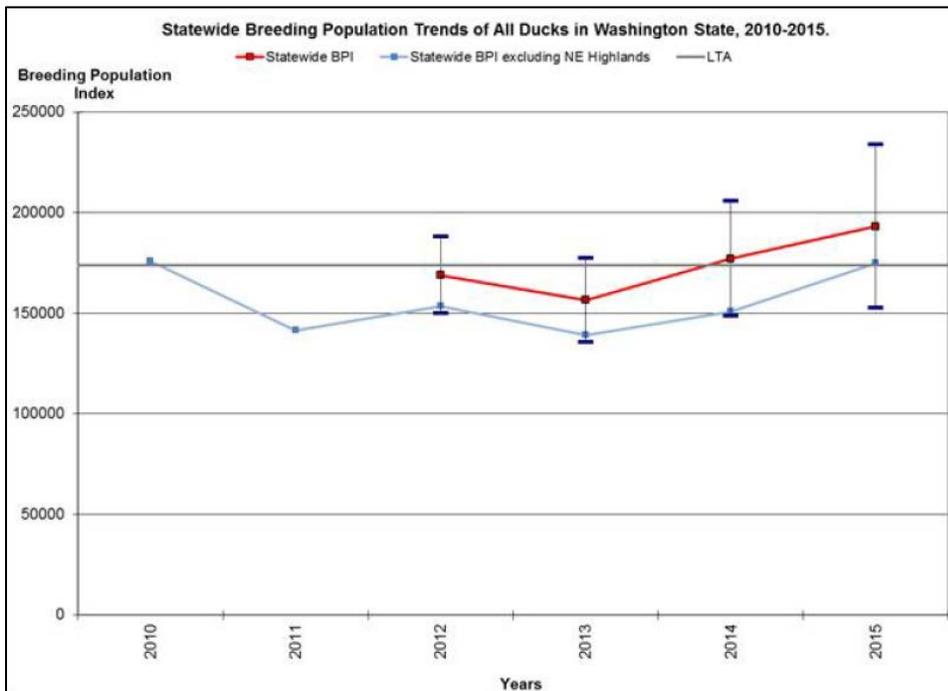
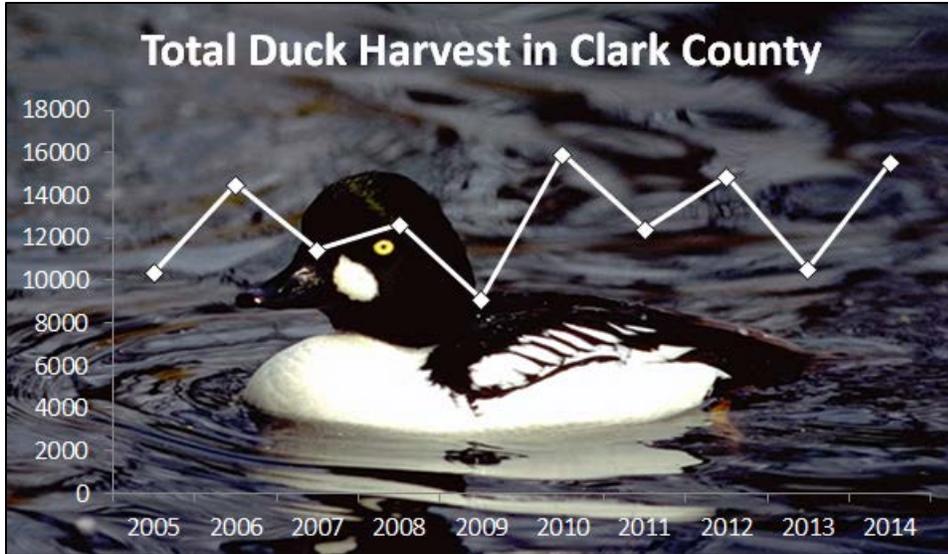
Please review the revised goose identification training program at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/canada_goose/ prior to hunting this season, and see the 2015-16 WDFW Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for more information. We are relying on southwest goose hunters to make this new season 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.

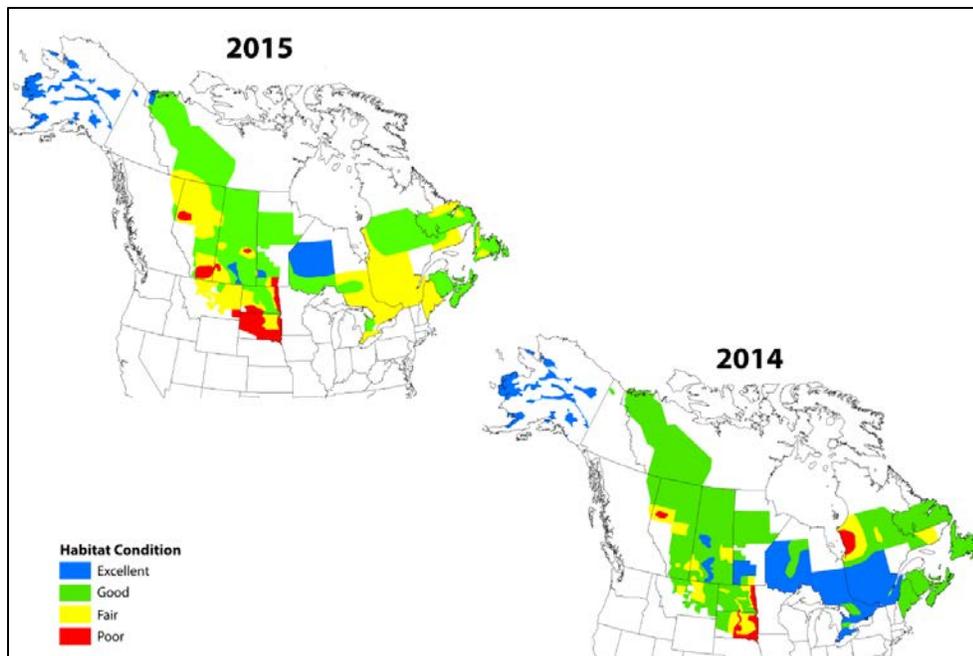
Very little goose hunting is available in Skamania County. Goose hunting in Klickitat County is limited and primarily associated with private lands. Keep in mind that permission is always necessary for access to these sites. Dusky Canada geese are not generally found in Skamania or Klickitat counties and fall under more liberal goose hunting regulations. Check the [waterfowl pamphlet](#) for more information on season length and bag limits.



Duck Hunting: Duck hunting this fall should be good based on breeding season reports from British Columbia and Alaska. The Commission has approved a “liberal” season of 107 days (two-day youth hunt, 105 day general hunt) and a daily bag limit of seven ducks. Within the daily bag limit, one change from last year is that hunters are now allowed two canvasbacks. Like Canada goose hunting, most public access for duck hunting in Clark County is limited to the Vancouver lowlands and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.



Washington's Statewide Breeding Population Index survey for all ducks shows an upward trend for 2015



2015/2014 Waterfowl Habitat Conditions Comparison Map from the flyways.us website

Please see the following sources for excellent 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>

DOVE

Dove hunting in District 9 is primarily associated with Klickitat County, although there is a limited number of dove harvested in Clark County. Klickitat County has a few areas for dove hunting, but the majority of quality sites are found on private hunt clubs. Opportunity is limited as little quality public land exists for dove hunting in Klickitat County unless one has access to private lands. Recent surveys in the spring of 2014 indicate a decline in dove numbers and fall hunting should be below average to poor. Dove harvest in Klickitat County during the 2014 season was down substantially from the previous season and indications are that similar conditions will be present in the fall of 2015. For Clark County, some dove hunting opportunity exists on WDFW lands in the Vancouver lowlands, i.e. Shillapoo Wildlife Area.

FOREST GROUSE

Grouse numbers should be good in select areas going into the 2015 hunting season, as we have experienced two mild winters. In 2014, a total of 1,472 forest grouse were harvested in Skamania County, an increase from the 2013 season. Grouse harvest in Clark County also increased in 2014, with 426 birds harvested, a substantial increase from the 2013 season. Klickitat County grouse harvest continues to be below historic averages and hunters will find birds more scarce in those habitats due to the extreme drought conditions.

Most grouse harvest in District 9 is associated with general deer and elk hunting seasons as birds are hunted opportunistically. Prospective hunters should focus hunting efforts on brushy riparian zones or overgrown abandoned logging roads for the best chance at success, especially ruffed grouse. Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by scouting areas prior to their hunt. In District 9, the predominance of quality grouse habitat is located on USFS lands in Skamania County and selected areas of the Simcoe Mountains west of Highway 97 in Klickitat County.

PHEASANT



District 9 has very little wild production of pheasants, especially compared to other areas of eastern Washington. In the western Washington portion of the district in Clark County, most pheasant hunting is associated with the Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release areas. Essentially all hunting opportunities are associated with pen-raised birds and the formalized release sites in Klickitat County (Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Sites) and Clark County (Western Washington Pheasant Release Sites). Additional information about these sites, as well as others

in the state of Washington, can be found at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/upland_birds/pheasant.html

Details about each of the pheasant hunting sites are listed below.

Clark County Pheasant Release Sites

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

The Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release sites are on WDFW owned land and comprise approximately 1,450 acres. To reach both the Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release sites take the Fourth Plain Blvd. exit (exit #1D) off I-5. Go west on Fourth Plain Blvd. For the Vancouver Lake release site, head north on Fruit Valley Road, then west on La Frombois Road to the site. For the Shillapoo Release site, stay on Lower River Road to the site. Keep in mind that these areas are extremely popular on Saturdays, with typically more than 100 vehicles using the Shillapoo release sites.

Woodland Bottoms

This 270 acre site is partially owned by DNR and partially privately owned. To find the Woodland Bottoms release site, take the Woodland exit (exit 21) off I-5. Head west on Goerig Road and Davidson Ave. Go around Horseshoe Lake on South Pekin Road to Whalen Road. Travel west on Whalen Road, then south on Kuhns Road to the release site.

Klickitat County Pheasant Release Sites

A total of approximately 400 pheasants are released at three sites in Klickitat County each year. One is located on Department-owned land, and the others are on land owned by a private individual. Please treat the properties respectfully, so that future visitors may enjoy these sites as well. All sites are for day-use only, and no overnight camping is allowed. These sites are relatively undeveloped, with primitive road access. Roads may become slippery when wet, and soil will become extremely soft with fall rains and snow. Be cautious in selecting parking places next to roads in order to avoid becoming stuck. Driving off-road across fields is never allowed regardless of season.

Goldendale Hatchery Pheasant Release Site

This 240 acre site is owned by WDFW. It is bounded by Hill Road on the west side and Fish Hatchery Road on the north side.

From Goldendale, drive west on Highway 142 approximately four miles to the intersection with Hill Road. Drive about one half mile north on Hill Road, across the bridge over Spring Creek,

then turn east on a dirt road onto WDFW property. This road goes into the center of the property. Note: The hatchery facilities are located along the east boundary of the parcel. Please stay away from the immediate vicinity of the buildings to protect worker safety.

Gun Club Property

This 480 acre site is privately owned. It is bounded by Rogers Road on the north and Fenton Lane to the east.

Directions: From the intersection with Broadway Street in Goldendale, drive east on the Bickleton Highway 5.6 miles to the intersection with Purvine Road. Turn right (south) on Purvine Road and drive 0.9 miles to the T intersection with Rogers Road. Go either left or right on Rogers Road and look for wire gates accessing the property. There are two gates. Both are marked with signs exhibiting the WDFW logo. Park along Rogers Road, outside the fence, and walk in. Purvine Road may be impassible when wet. For an alternative access, go east another one mile on the Bickleton Highway, and turn right (south) on Fenton Lane. Follow Fenton Lane south one mile to its intersection with Rogers Road. Turn right (west) onto Rogers Road, and drive about 0.1 mile west to a gate and parking area.

Finn Ridge Road Property

This 160-acre site is privately owned. It is bounded by the Finn Ridge Road along the south property line and Ahola Road to the west.

From Centerville, drive two miles west on the Centerville Highway to a 90 degree bend in the highway to the south. Turn right (north) on Erickson Road. Drive one mile to the intersection with the Finn Ridge Road. Turn left (west) onto Finn Ridge Road and follow it about 1.5 miles to the first sign marking the corner of the site, on the right. It is marked with green "Feel Free to Hunt" signs.

QUAIL, GRAY PARTRIDGE, AND CHUKAR



2015 spring conditions have been extremely dry and landowner reports indicate that upland bird populations in eastern Klickitat County continue to be suppressed. Expect upland bird hunting in GMUs 388 and 382 to be below historical averages this fall. Most access for upland bird hunting is restricted to private lands and hunt clubs in eastern Klickitat County. Hunters interested in hunting this area should seek permission in advance of the season to access upland bird hunting areas. Most hunt clubs have waiting lists for new members so access is difficult without membership for those lands.

TURKEY



Wild Turkey populations in Klickitat County continue to be healthy and hunting conditions for the fall of 2015 should be typical for this area. Although turkey harvest in 2014 declined somewhat from the previous year, overall harvest numbers and success should continue to be good. In 2014, the hunter success rate was 24% compared to the statewide average of 33% for the spring hunt. Hunters interested in fall hunting in Klickitat County are reminded that this is a special permit season and hunters must apply to be drawn for this hunt. Fall hunt dates are Sept. 19 – Oct 16, 2015.

The majority of quality hunting areas in Klickitat County are below 1,500 ft. Popular hunting areas are generally associated with the Big White Salmon and Klickitat River drainages. East of the Klickitat River, small turkey populations are found in the Simcoe Mountains north and west of the town of Goldendale. Numerous landowners have issues with turkey damage on private property in the lower Klickitat River drainage, from the town of Klickitat south. WDFW periodically receives reports from landowners in the White Salmon area that are having issues with turkeys on their lands. Private landowners may be willing to provide access to turkey hunters that ask for permission and practice good hunter ethics.

Outside of Klickitat County there is little opportunity for turkey hunting within the district. In Skamania County, turkey populations are located primarily in the eastern part of the county between the Wind River and Underwood. Most turkeys are found below 1,000 feet in elevation. In most cases, hunters interested in this area will need to contact private landowners. Clark County offers little to no turkey hunting opportunity.



TURKEYS IN THE KLICKITAT RIVER DRAINAGE

PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)

601 Bond Road
PO Box 280
Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov

Link to purchase DNR quad maps:

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

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Link to purchase ranger district maps:

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

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

Green Diamond

- Use red dot-green dot system of identifying roads that are open to motorized access and those which are closed
- Fee access program in place 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/ORM

- Generally open to walk-in access

Port Blakely

- Generally open to walk-in access

Rayonier

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

SDS (Stevenson Land Company or Broughton)

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

Sierra Pacific

Ryderwood Tree Farm

- Access hotline 360-623-1299

Weyerhaeuser

- Recreational access hotline-866-636-6531, recreation webpage <http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/Businesses/RecreationalAccess/Washington>
- Access varies by tree farm
 - St. Helens Tree Farm
 - Access is primarily permit only. Permits can be purchased on website above. Select blocks are also open for free walk-in access. Please see website for details including maps.
 - Yacolt- Yacolt- Washougal GMU 568
 - Yacolt Burn Sportsman Club opens and closes gates in morning and evening, beginning early October (after fire danger has subsided) until mid-December. Road #s 8200, 8600, & 8500. Don't remain behind gates after sunset, or you will be locked in.
 - Vail- Permit and lease access
 - Pe Ell- Permit, lease, and some free access
 - 56,000 acres of free public access around Doty/Coyote crest, which is around the north end of the eastern border between Lewis and Pacific Counties.
 - Columbia Timberlands (formerly Longview Timber)

- Access is primarily permit only. Permits can be purchased on website above. Select blocks are also open for free walk-in access. Please see website for details including maps.

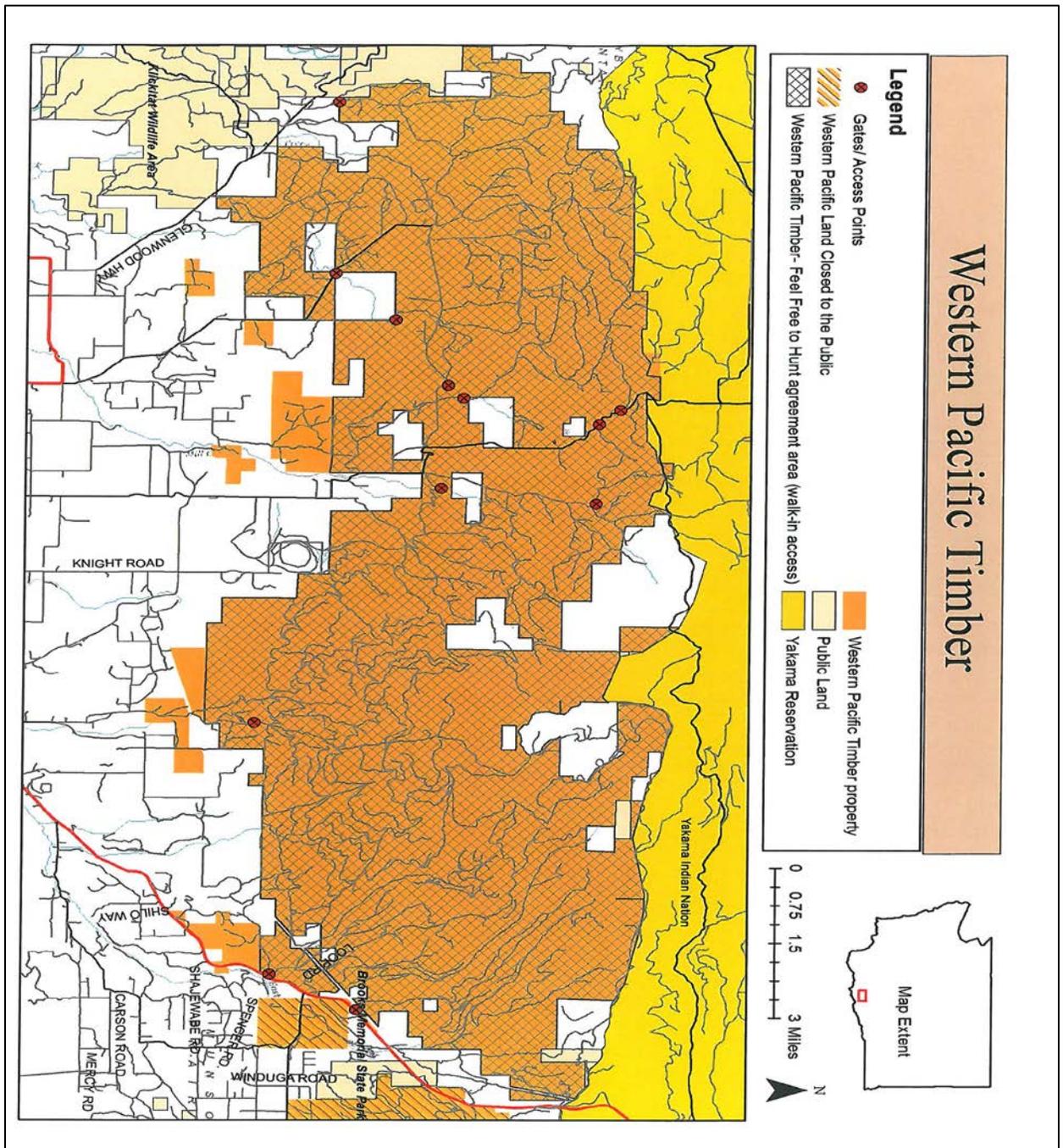
Western Pacific Timber

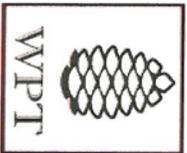
- The majority of these lands are enrolled in WDFW's Feel Free to Hunt Program (FFTH). The lands are open to walk in access only, with the exception of county roads that run through the property and remain open for motorized access.
- More information can be located at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_land/hunt/128/
- Western Pacific lands East of HWY 97 are CLOSED to public access
- Contact WPT Boise office (208) 343-6074 for closure updates



West Fork Timber

- Generally open to walk-in access





Western Pacific Timber



Welcome to Western Pacific Timber

Western Pacific Timber maintains over 65,000 acres of private land open to the public in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Help us all to maintain access to these lands by being a respectful and courteous visitor. Treat them as you would your own property.

- ***Obey road closures. No vehicles are permitted behind gates. Do not block or obstruct gates.***
- ***No firewood cutting is permitted without a written permit from Western Pacific Timber.***
- ***No campfires or other open fires are permitted.***
- ***No littering or dumping***
- ***If you camp, leave no trace, clean your campsite.***
- ***Do not drive nails into trees or shoot at trees***
- ***Drive roads with caution – watch for log trucks and other traffic.***
- ***Western Pacific lands East of US97 are Closed to public entry.***

Help us by reporting vandalism or other violations. The misdeeds of a few may mean loss of access for everyone! For non-emergency poaching/violations call 1-877-933-9847

For other questions or concerns please call Nicholle Stephens, WDFW, (360) 906-6724

Enjoy your visit to Western Pacific Timber

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

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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.

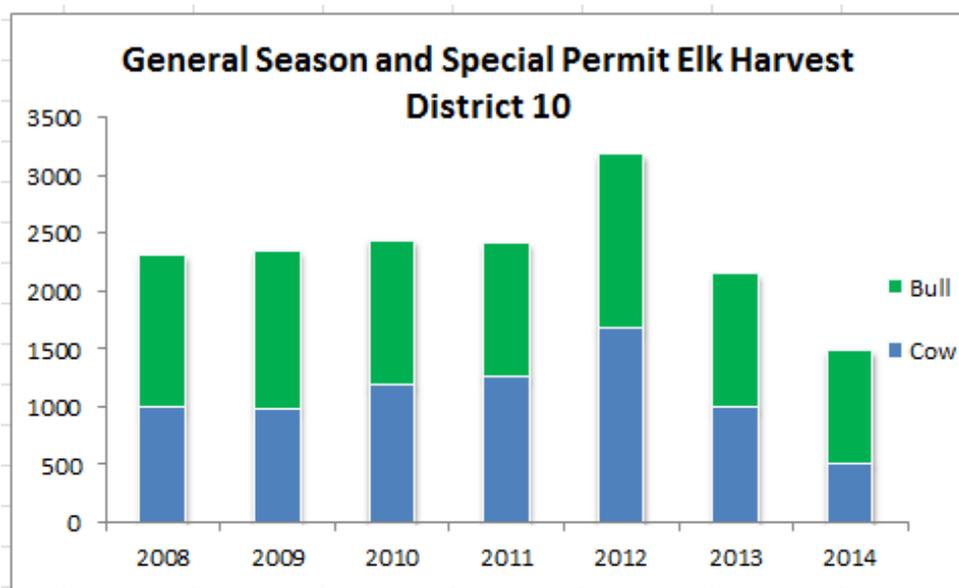
Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but may have limited motorized vehicle access. Other major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Hancock Forest Management, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond, Olympic Resource Management, West Fork Timber, 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.

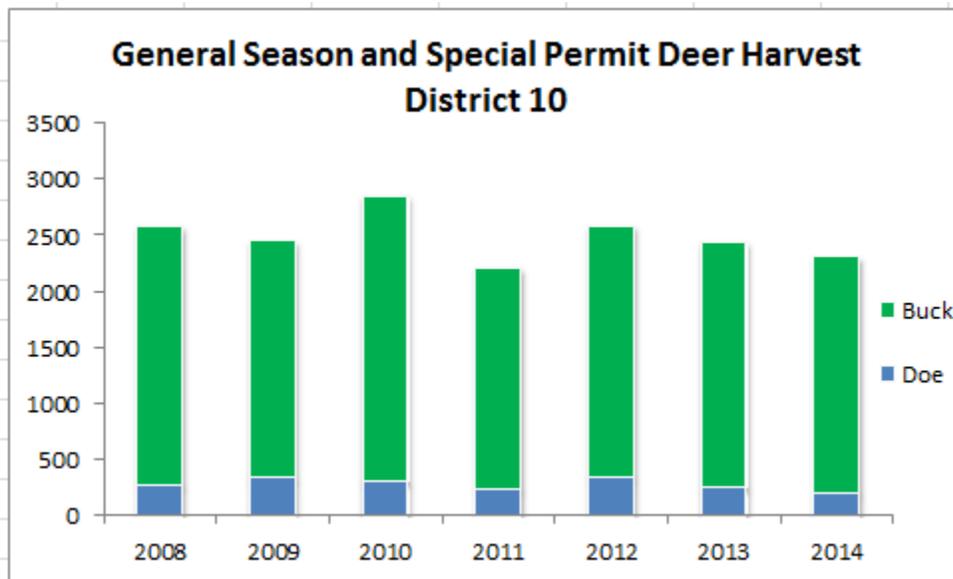




PHOTO BY GARY BELL (WDFW)

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.>

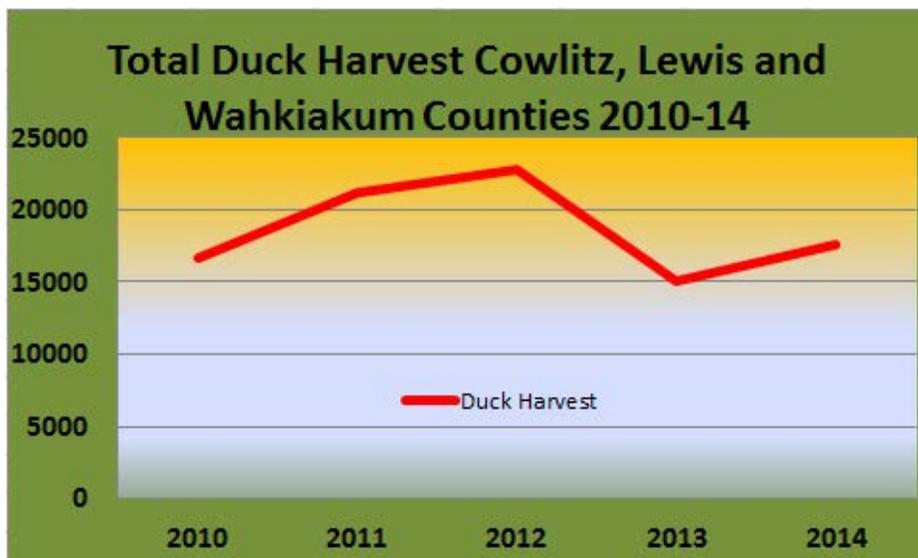
Hunters are reminded to consult the regulations pamphlet for details. Prospective hunters should take special note of the late September season open only to youth hunters. Check the regulations closely for the details on this mentored hunting opportunity for early season ducks.



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.

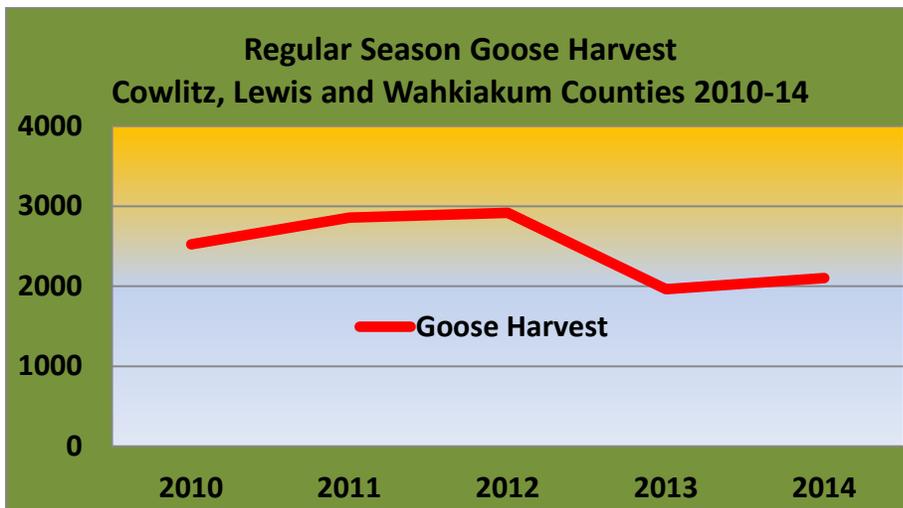
Please review the revised goose identification training program at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/canada_goose/ prior to hunting this season, and see the 2015-16 WDFW Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for more information. Wildlife managers are relying on southwest goose hunters to make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

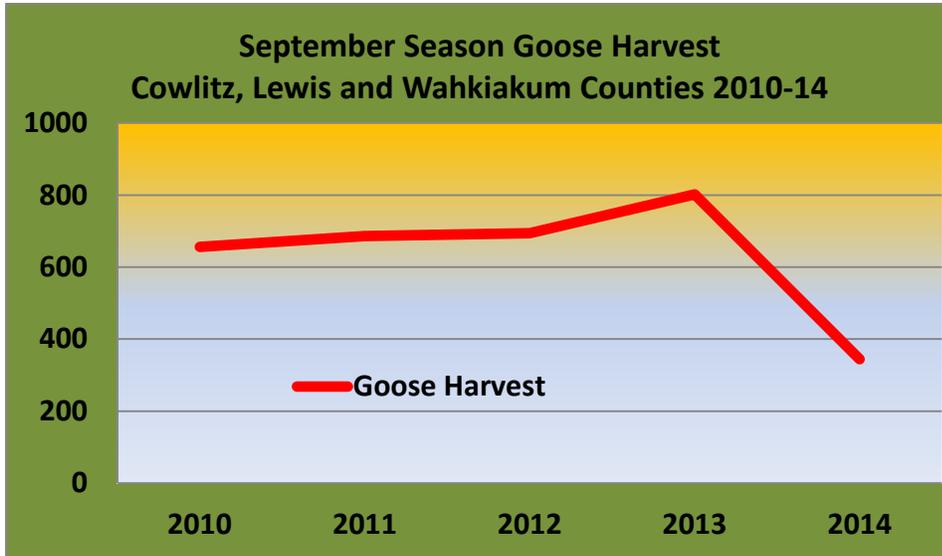


PHOTO BY KELLY MCALLISTER WDFW

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:

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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

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- 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

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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

2015

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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 11 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Thurston and Pierce Counties and GMU 667 of Lewis County

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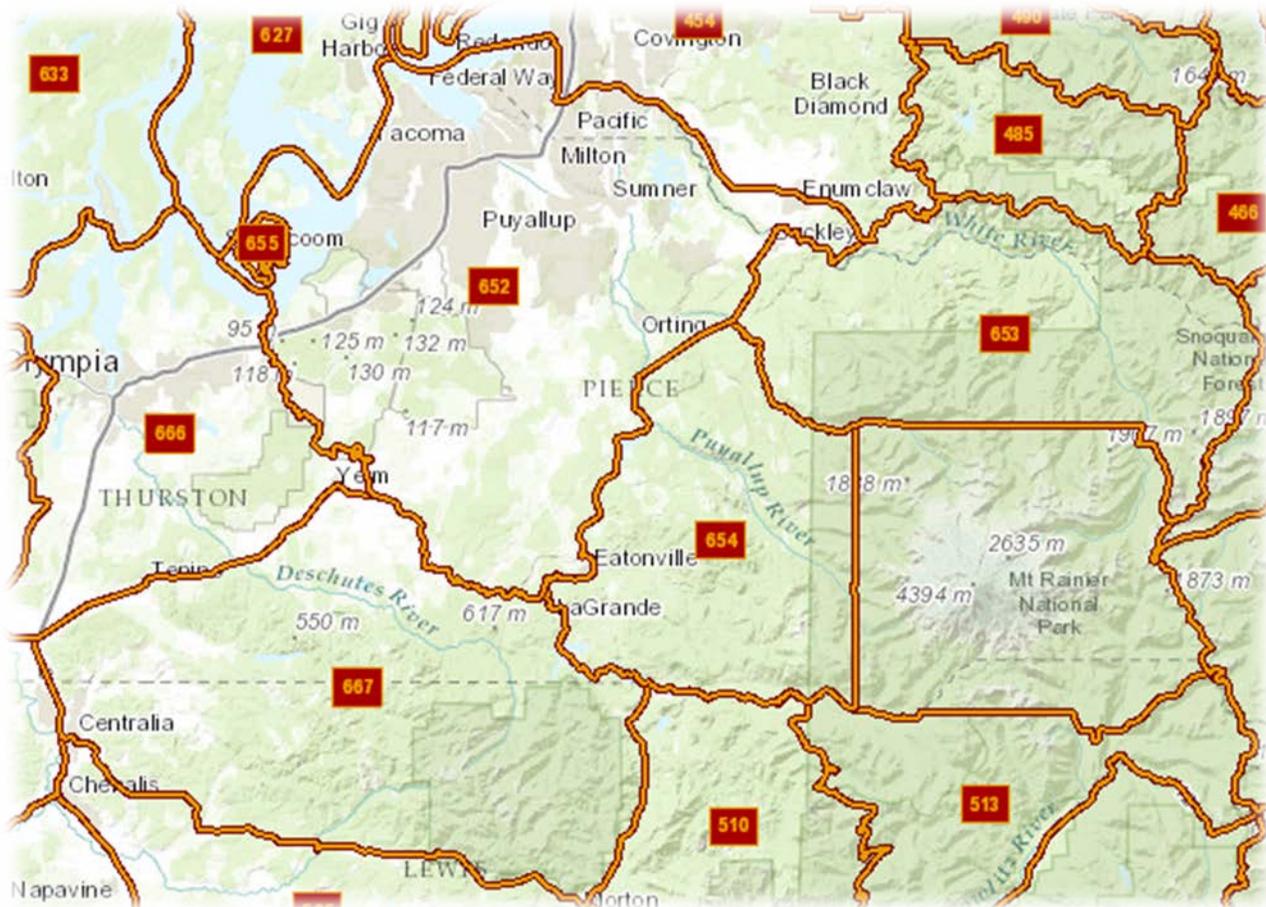
DISTRICT 11 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The game management units (GMUs) that comprise District 11 are Puyallup (GMU 652), Anderson Island (GMU 655), White River (GMU 653), Mashel (GMU 654), Deschutes (GMU 666), and Skookumchuck (GMU 667). Land ownership in the district includes private residential and agricultural lands (e.g. GMUs 652 and 666), and both private and public industrial timber lands (e.g. GMUs 653, 654, and 667). The eastern portion of GMU 653 contains higher-elevation alpine conditions bordering Mount Rainier National Park.

Varied hunting opportunity exists within District 11 from waterfowl hunting on waterways of Puget Sound to deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on commercial forest land. WDFW's Scatter Creek (GMU 666), Skookumchuck, and West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Areas (GMU 667), and DNRs Capitol State Forest (GMU 663) and Elbe Hills State Forest (GMU 654) provide ample opportunity for small and big game hunting. Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm in GMU 667 and Hancock Timber Resource and Muckleshoot Indian Reservation (managed by Hancock) properties in GMUs 653 and 654 all provide excellent big game opportunities, but they require the purchase of access permits to enter (obtained thru those respective companies).

Both the North Rainier and South Rainier Elk Herds are partially contained in District 11, providing an opportunity to harvest elk as they migrate out of Mount Rainer high country and follow river drainages to low elevations during the hunting season. Waterfowl hunting on Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, off Anderson Island (GMU 655), and inland lakes in the district are some of the best opportunities in the South Puget Sound Region.

Hunters should be aware of firearm restrictions in certain localities of Pierce and Thurston counties. Maps of Pierce County firearm restriction areas can be seen on the Pierce County website's Public GIS tool at <http://matterhorn3.co.pierce.wa.us/publicgis/> (open Public Safety, check Sheriff's Restrictions) and the Pierce County firearm regulations can be found here: www.co.pierce.wa.us/documentcenter/view/3810. Maps of no-shooting and controlled shooting zones in Thurston County can be seen here: <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/sheriff/docs/ShootingZones20090818.pdf>.



MAP DEPICTING THE SIX DISTRICT 11 GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS AND SURROUNDING UNITS IN NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS (400 FOR REGION 4 AND 500 FOR REGION 5).

ELK

Both the North Rainier and South Rainier elk herds are partially contained in District 11, providing ample opportunity to harvest elk. Elk availability should continue to increase in GMUs 652, 653, and 654 as the North Rainier Elk Herd continues to recover, having met recovery goals over the past ten years. Antlerless restrictions, winter elk habitat closures, and permit hunt restrictions in GMU 653 continue to benefit herd recovery in that unit. Hunters report a quality hunting experience and quality bulls for those fortunate enough to be drawn for the GMU 653 bull only permit hunt.

The larger portion of each elk herd migrates down from high alpine meadows in Mt. Rainier National Park to lowland winter range. Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Hunters are encouraged to scout for elk leaving the Mt. Rainier National Park and following the Carbon River northwards into the Clearwater Wilderness Area and the White River into the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Lands surrounding the Crystal Mountain Ski Resort (outside ski boundaries once ski season officially opens) offers good opportunity for high-elevation, rugged elk hunting with plenty of robust elk. The US Forest Service, which permits the ski resort, wants to remind hunters that service roads built and maintained by Crystal Mountain Ski Resort are not open to the public, but hunters may ask for permission from the ski resort to haul out a harvested animal.

The Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forests University of Washington Charles Lathrop Pack Experimental and Demonstration Forest (Pack Forest) in GMU 654 are good prospects for deer or elk and can be accessed by boot, bike, or horse during the general deer or elk season. Vehicle access during the hunting season in Elbe Hills is allowed only for hunters who possess a disabled access permit (see Disabled Hunting on the WDFW website for more information). UW Pack Forest managers caution hunters to be aware of students conducting research in the forest any time of the year. Maps of Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forest as well as other Washington Department of Natural Resource public lands in the South Puget Sound can be found at <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Pages/PubMaps.aspx>.

Sub-herds of the South Rainier elk herd continue to increase and expand on and around the Centralia Coal Mine and Skookumchuk Wildlife Area (GMU 667). Hunters are encouraged to



ELK GROUP ON THE CENTRALIA MINE IN GMU 667, DISTRICT 11.

scout the area from the [Skookumchuk Wildlife Area](#) south to the northern boundary of the Centralia Coal Mine (GMU 667). Hunting on the coal mine is only allowed under specialized permits which require a mining escort (two senior and two disabled permit hunts will be offered in 2015, five permits each, see WDFW hunting regulations). Limited elk can occasionally be found and hunted on the West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area in south Thurston County (GMU 666), on JBLM property in Pierce County (GMU 652, see previous discussion on

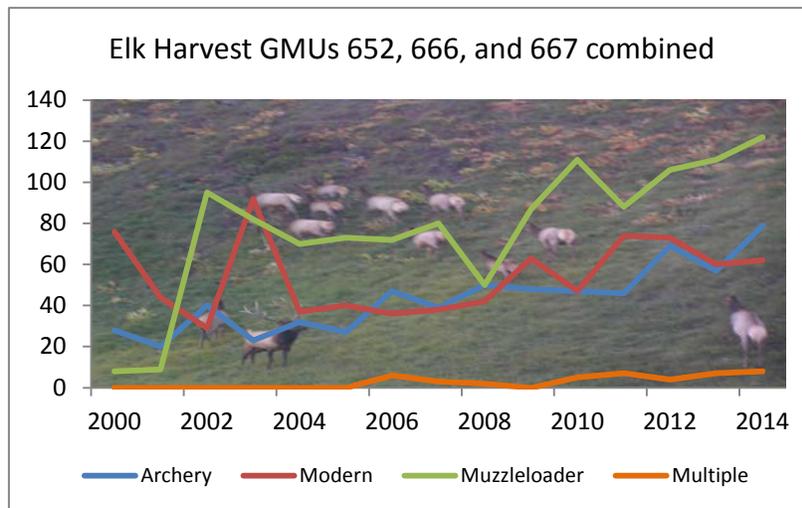
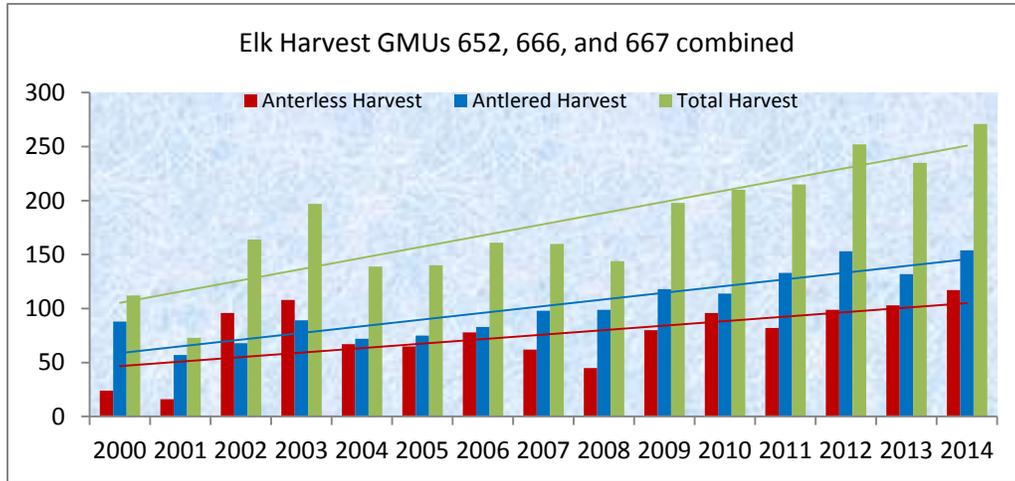
hunting requirements), and off Delphi Road SW in western Thurston County (GMU 666). Elk cannot be hunted on property owned by USFWS in the Black River refuge of GMU 666 (e.g. former Weaks Dairy).

Elk continue to increase on private farmlands and properties in GMUs 652 (around Graham, Buckley, and Enumclaw), GMU 667 (Yelm and Hanaford area), and GMU 666 (foothills of Capitol State Forest to Delphi Road SW and Waddell Creek Road SW). However, hunters must request permission to access private lands, and are encouraged to obtain permission weeks in advance of the season from the landowner (e.g. visit property and ask for permission). New in 2015, elk management area 6013 in GMU 652 has been reduced in size to primarily encompass the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation with several new hunting restrictions aimed at conserving elk for tribal purposes on the reservation. In response to increasing elk and elk-associated damage off-reservation in Buckley and Enumclaw, Elk Area 6014 was created in which a 3-point minimum or antlerless general modern firearm season will be provided, as well as three separate winter antlerless hunts allowing up to 10 elk per hunt. Elk Area 6014 is comprised primarily of agricultural lands, hobby farms, and ranch homes, and supports approximately 100-150 total elk. Access can be limited and hunters interested in these hunts are encouraged to seek access onto private property in the hunt area. The WDFW conflict specialist may be able to assist.

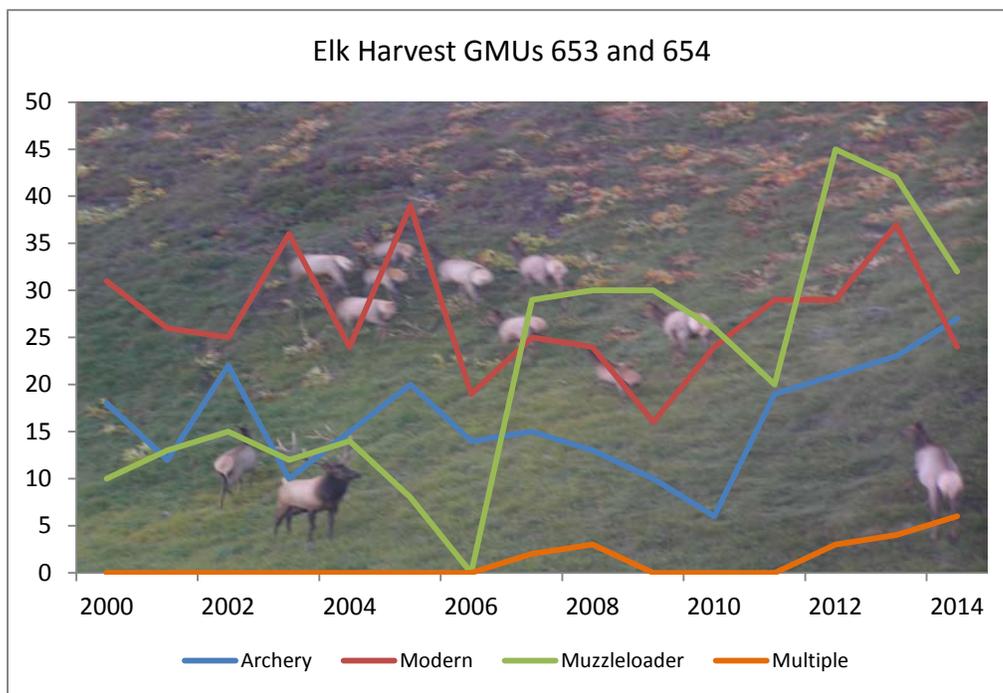
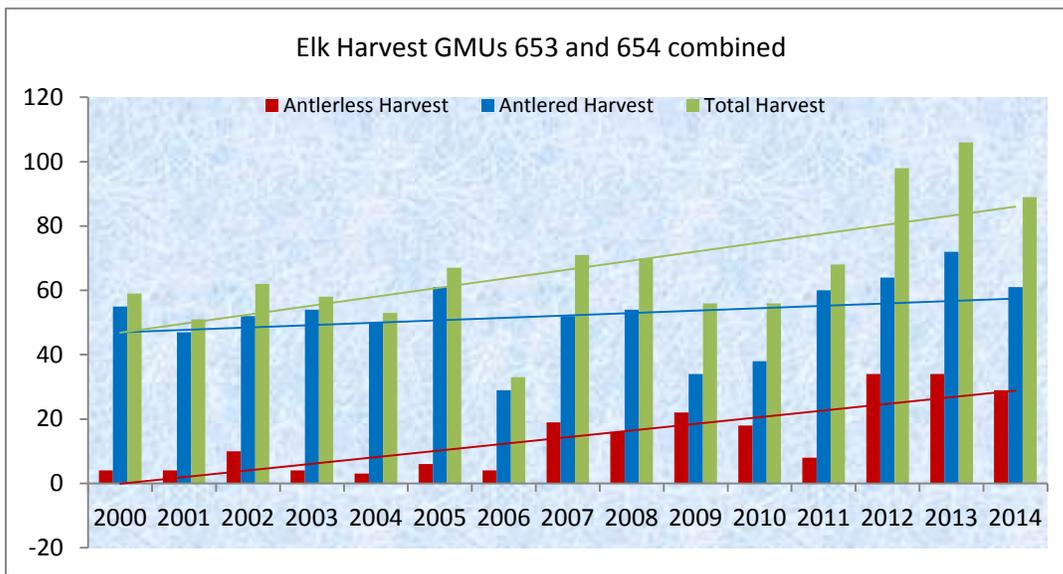
Three damage permit hunts are also provided in the Hanaford area (designated elk area 6069, five permits each). Finally, regional master hunter elk permits (hunt number 2717 in 2015) have

been used in the district when additional harvest was needed. Overall, opportunity to harvest an elk is high in these damage areas considering the increasing trend in elk, with access being the primary limitation.

General season elk harvest has been gradually increasing over the past several years for all weapons within GMUs 652, 666, and 667. This makes for good prospects for harvesting an elk in those GMUs in 2015. Muzzleloaders are experiencing the strongest increasing trend in harvested animals in those GMUs, followed by archery and, to a lesser degree, modern firearm.



Although the overall harvest trend has been gradually increasing in GMUs 653 and 654 since 2000, muzzleloader and modern firearm harvest actually declined. This is partly reflected in changes in hunting regulation opportunity for muzzleloaders over the years.



DEER

Black-tailed deer population surveys in District 11 are limited. Surveys are not done annually, and when they are done, they have consisted of one survey done in the highest quality location (Vail Tree Farm). Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best opportunity for deer hunting. Hunters are encouraged to scout regenerating clear cuts. In particular, Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667) and Hancock Timber Resources Group managed properties (Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMU 654 and Buckley and White River Tree Farms in GMU 653) continue to be worthy hunting areas for both deer and elk.

A limited access recreation program is in effect for Vail Tree Farm. Hunters are required by Weyerhaeuser to purchase an access permit in order to access Vail Tree Farm. Permits allow access from August 1 to January 31. A maximum of 800 permits will be sold in 2015, beginning May 26, to access the 159,716 acres of the tree farm at a cost of \$250 each. Weyerhaeuser also offers for bid six leases allowing access rights for one full year. All forestry operations will continue during the permit and lease season. Additional information can be found on the [Weyerhaeuser website](#) or by calling 866-636-6531. Hancock Timber Resources also require an access permit for motorized access to the Kapowsin and Eatonville Tree

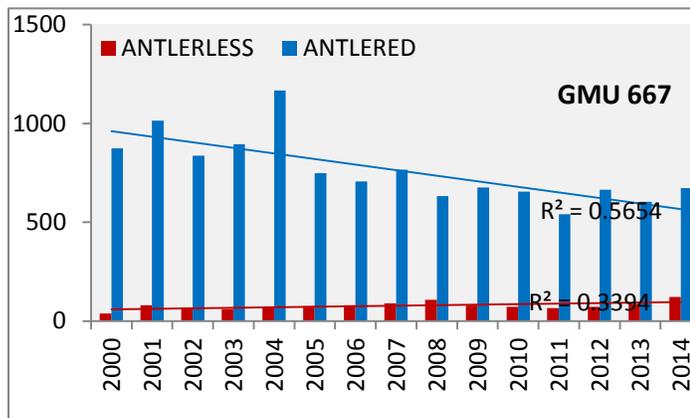
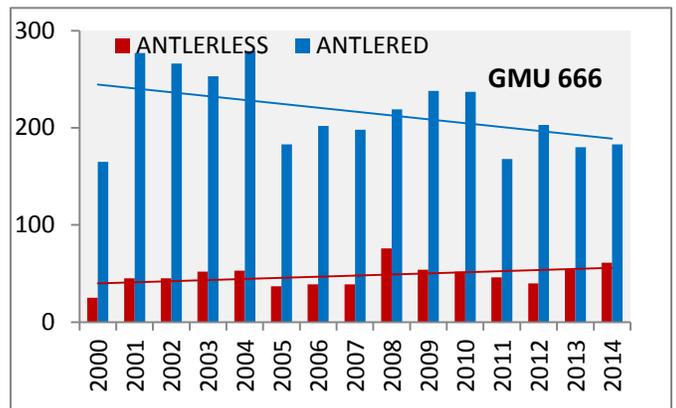
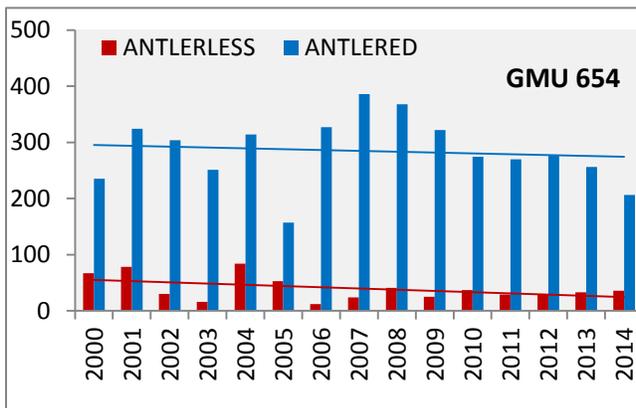
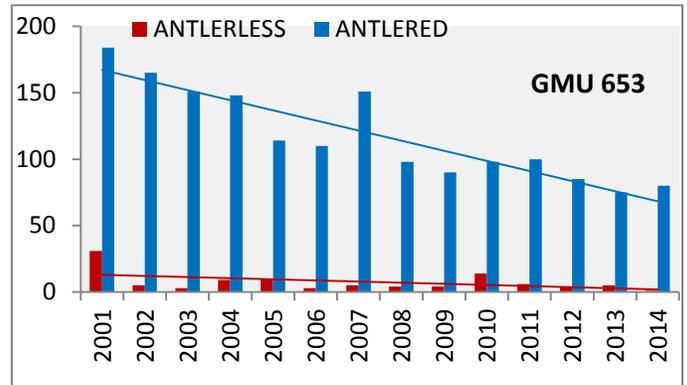
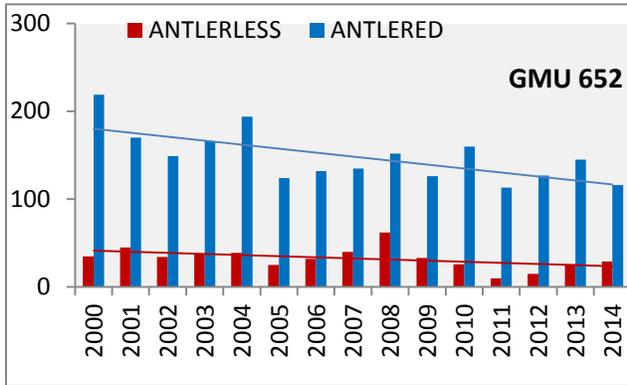


DISTRICT BIOLOGIST WITH SUCCESSFUL DEER HUNTER IN THE SKOOKUMCHUCK UNIT 667

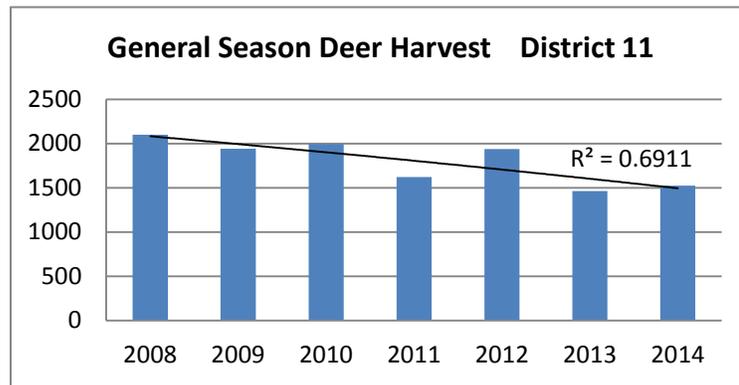
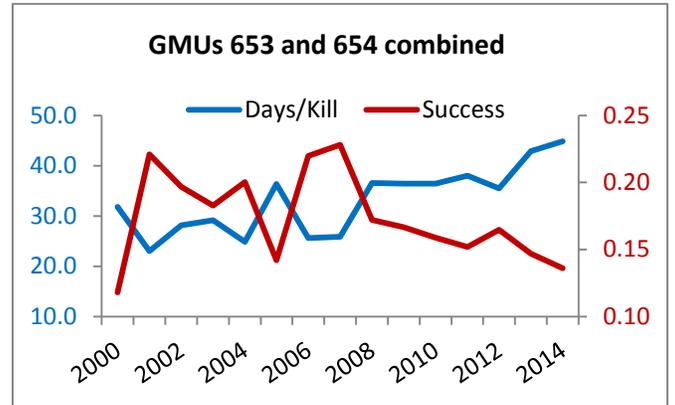
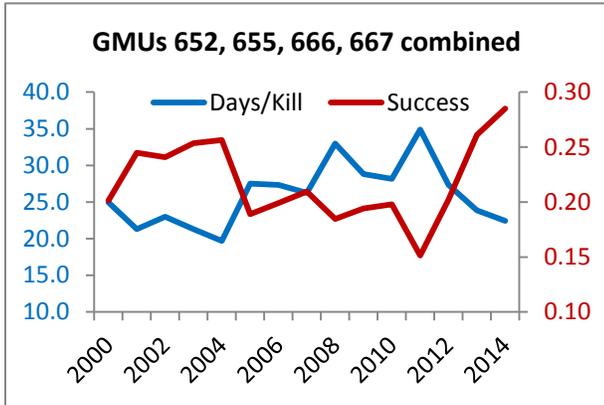
Farms (owned by Hancock) and the White River Tree Farm (owned by Muckleshoot Indian Reservation but managed by Hancock). Prices (total permits) for 2015 are as follows: **Kapowsin** = \$375 (1200), **Eatonville** = \$275 (300), and **White River** = \$250 (500). Note that a “restricted use area” has been implemented on the White River Tree Farm which limits non-motorized access compared to previous years. For more information on hunting/accessing Hancock Timber Resource managed land use their [website](#) or call 800-782-1493.

High elevation trophy black-tail hunting experiences can be found in the eastern portions of GMUs 653 and 654 accessed by US Forest Service road and trail systems that lead to high mountain hunting areas, including portions of the Norse Peak, Clearwater, and Glacier View

Wilderness Areas and Crystal Mountain Resort (see description under Elk). Deer harvest has been decreasing in most GMUs in District 11 since 2000, with the exception of GMU 654, which began its decline in 2007. Harvest regulations have been altered somewhat in District 11 GMUs over the years, which plays a role in harvest trends. However, there is a general consensus that overall deer harvest is decreasing throughout the district. This decline is likely attributed to declines in harvest on the Vail Tree Farm in the early 2000s as well as the manipulation of permit availability.



Despite a decreasing trend in harvest, hunter success rates increased and catch per unit effort decreased in the GMUs in the western portion of the district (652, 655, 666, and 667). Unfortunately, the opposite trends are being seen in the eastern GMUs 653 and 654.



HUNTERS'S FIRST DEER HARVEST, GMU 654, LATE SEASON (S PAZ, 2015).

BEAR

District 11 comprises GMUs in two Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs): Puget Sound (GMU 652, 666, and 667) and South Cascades (GMU 653 and 654). There is opportunity within District 11 to hunt bear both in the fall general and spring special permit hunting seasons. However, overall trends in both hunts have been declining and prospects in the district may not be as good as previous years.

Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best availability for bear hunting. Hunters are encouraged to scout sign (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), Hancock Timber Resources Group managed lands (Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMU 654 and Buckley and White River Tree Farms in GMU 653), Capitol State Forest (GMU 663), and Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Parks (GMU 654) offer the best prospects for bear hunters in the district. (See comments earlier regarding access permit requirements for Weyerhaeuser and Hancock properties).

A spring black bear special permit season is provided on Hancock's Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMUs 653/654 within the South Cascades BBMU. A total of 150 permits for the April 15 to June 15 season will likely be available once again in 2016. Those successfully drawn for a permit must purchase an access permit from Hancock (see costs above under Elk). Nineteen hunters

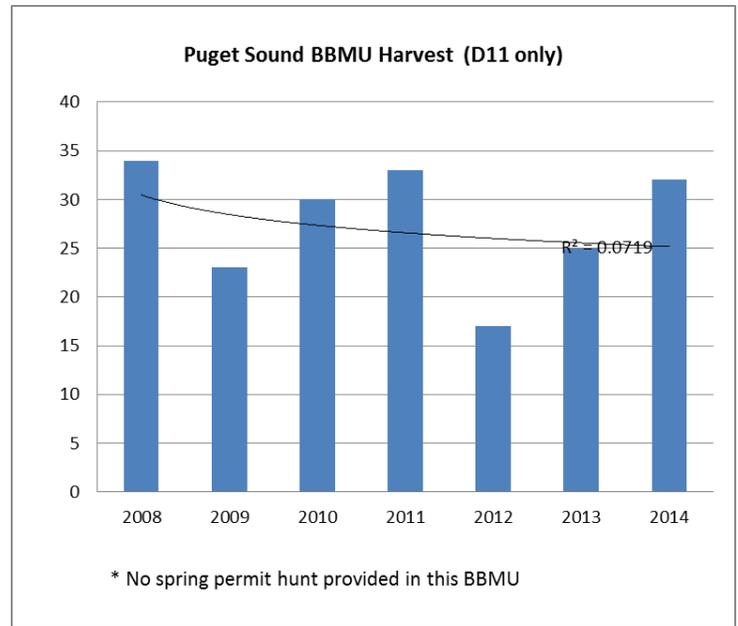
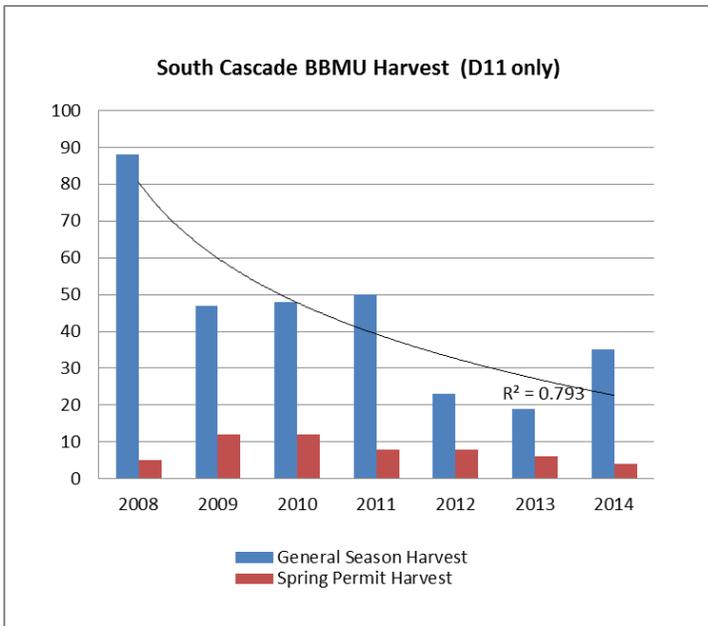
successfully harvested four black bear in 2014 under the Kapowsin spring permit hunt for a hunter success rate of 21.1% (compared to 91 hunters harvesting six bear in 2013 and a 6.6% success rate). The 2014 success rate was the highest since 2009 and comparable to, although on the lower end of, other spring bear hunts statewide whose success rates range from 20-50%.



First Big Game Harvest (S. Holzngel 2014)

Prospects for harvesting black bear in spring may be improving on the Kapowsin Tree Farm, but remain marginal compared to the rest of the state.

General season bear harvest trends in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BBMU (e.g. GMUs 653 and 654) have been generally declining over the past several years. Harvest declined 46% from 2011 to 2012 and then continued to decline slightly in 2013, but nearly doubled in 2014. Regardless, general season bear harvest in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BBMU shows a continuing strong decline over the past seven years. The Puget Sound BBMU (e.g. GMUs 652, 666, 667) general season harvest trend is also showing a weak declining trend over the past several years, but has shown signs of improving since a low in 2012. The number of hunters hunting this BBMU has declined along with harvest, but their success rate per hunter is slightly increasing each year.



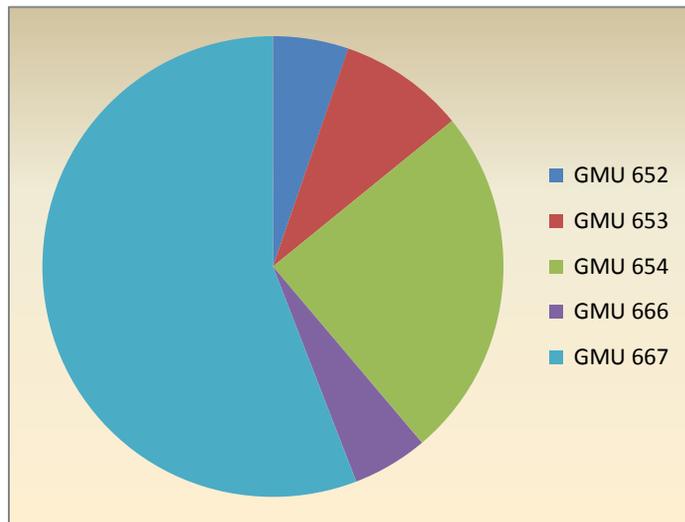
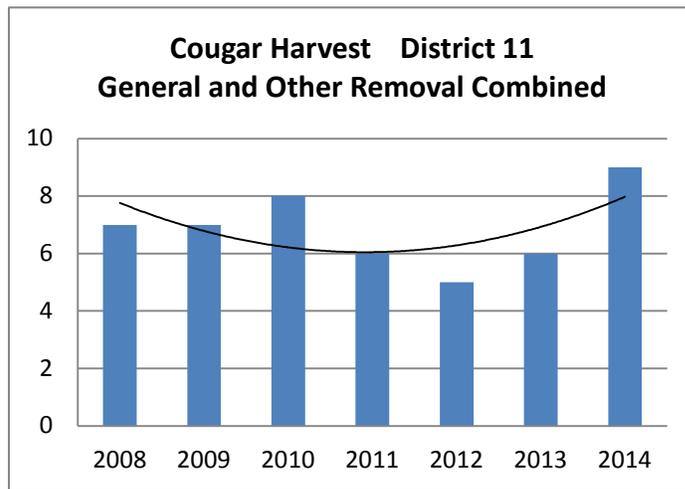
COUGAR

Cougar are widespread in the forest lands of District 11. Areas supporting high numbers of deer and elk also provide great opportunity for cougar. WDFW changed cougar hunting season design in 2012 with a liberalized season coupled with harvest guidelines (see wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar). Two general cougar seasons are offered:

- Early: Sept. 1 - Dec. 31
- Late: Jan. 1 - Apr. 30 OR when the harvest meets or exceeds the GMU harvest quota as listed in the game pamphlet.

Be aware that a 2016 cougar license is required to hunt the April dates of the late cougar season. GMUs 652 and 666 have no quota limit, GMUs 653 and 654 have a quota of four to six cougar, and GMU 667 has a quota of three to four cougar.

A significant increase in cougar harvest in District 11 occurred in 2014 compared to the three previous seasons, including the highest reported harvest since 2008. A total of nine cougar were reported harvested in the district from all sources in 2014 (compared to six in 2013). The Skookumchuck (GMU 667) annually provides the highest cougar harvest in the district and one of the highest cougar harvests of all western Washington GMUs. Thus, prospects for hunting cougar in the district are very good.



WATERFOWL

The majority of [Pacific Flyway](#) waterfowl are born on the prairies of the United States and Canada, as well as in Alaska, northwestern Canada, and other western states. With the exception of 2013, waterfowl numbers have been on the upswing in the United States and that trend continued in 2015. According to USFWS, the total duck population (includes freshwater and saltwater species) as counted on traditional survey areas was 49.5 million breeding ducks, which is similar to the 2014 estimate of 49.2 million breeding ducks and which is 43% higher than the long-term average.

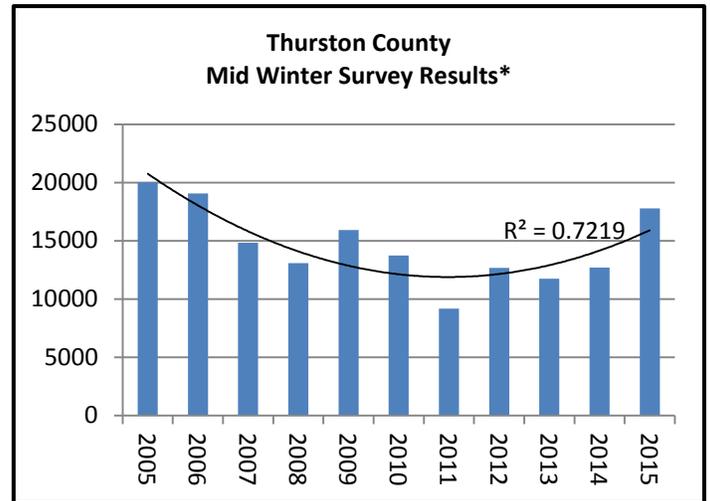
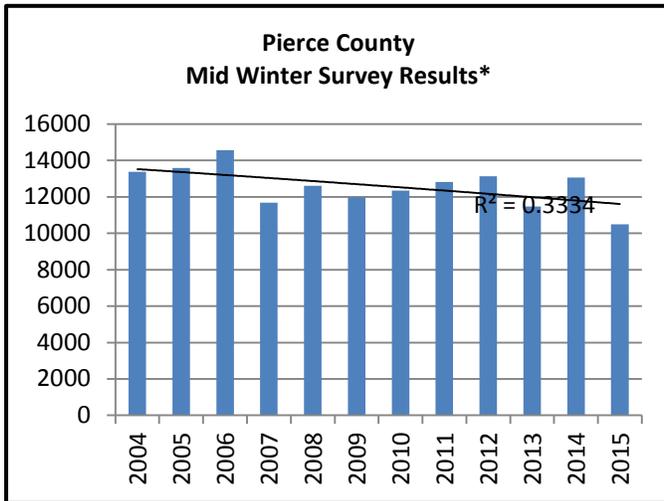
Additionally, most breeding population estimates of several species commonly found in District 11 remained stable from 2014 to 2015 in the primary North American breeding areas as follows (USFWS; <http://flyways.us/content/2015-trends-breeding-duck-populations-report-now-available>):

Species	Breeding Population Estimate Trend
Mallard	similar to 2014 but up 51% over long-term average
Green-winged teal	similar to the 2014 estimate and 69% above the long-term average
Gadwall	19% above the 2014 estimate and 98% above the long-term average
American widgeon	similar to 2014 but up 17% over long-term average
Northern shovelers	similar to 2014 estimates and 114% above the long-term average
Northern pintails	similar to the 2014 estimate and 24% below the long-term average
Scaup (combined)	Similar to the 2014 estimate and was 13% below the long-term average

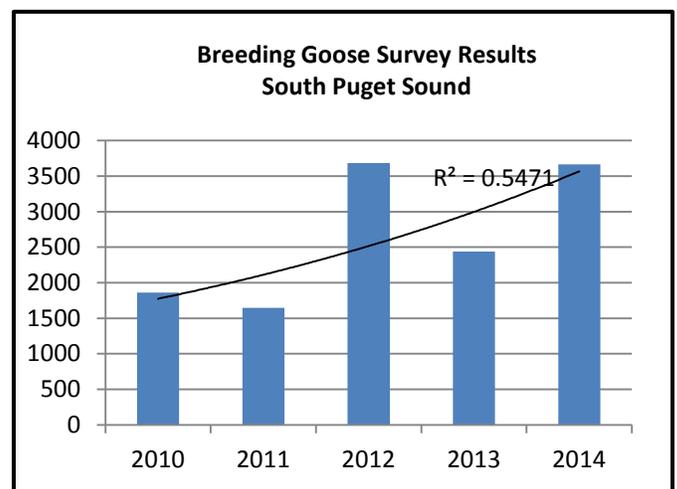
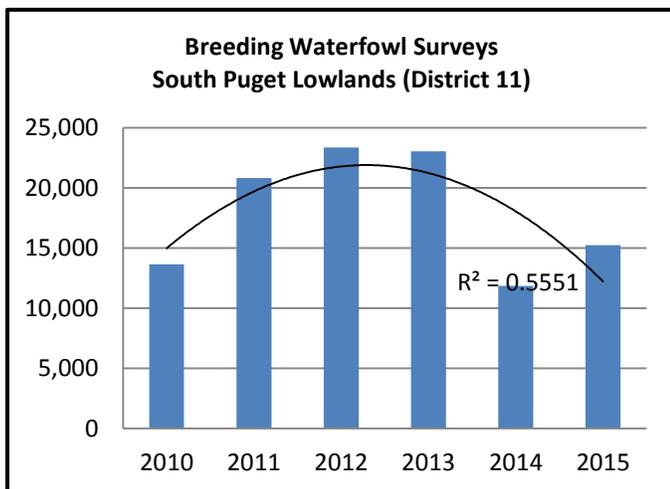
Thurston County supports significantly more waterfowl than Pierce County, primarily as a result of Nisqually Wildlife Refuge and other Puget Sound inlets. However, District 11 continues to see a decline in mid-winter waterfowl counts in Thurston but not Pierce County, which has remained relatively stable. This may be a result of changing hydrology patterns that have resulted in less water on historically flooding agricultural fields and more water on smaller sized ponds in Thurston County. Overall, the South Puget Sound lowlands support almost twice as many waterfowl as any other western Washington location. Breeding season waterfowl survey results for the South Puget lowlands was roughly half the total over the past three seasons. This may be attributed to an earlier than normal spring migration and nest season in 2014, which resulted in a reduction in migratory waterfowl visible during the survey window rather than a true reduction in waterfowl.

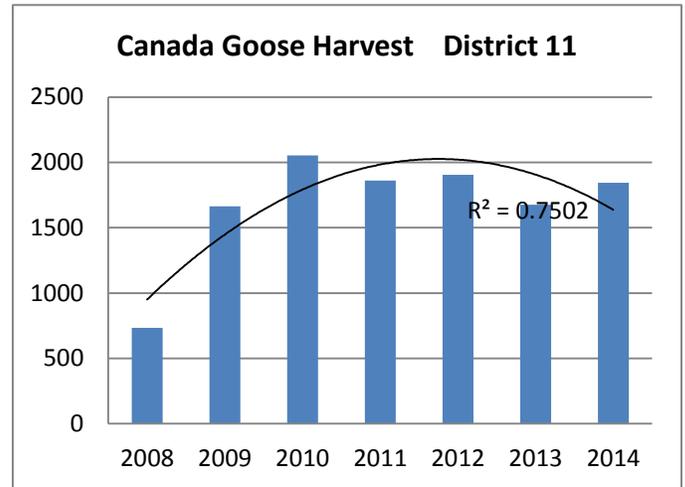
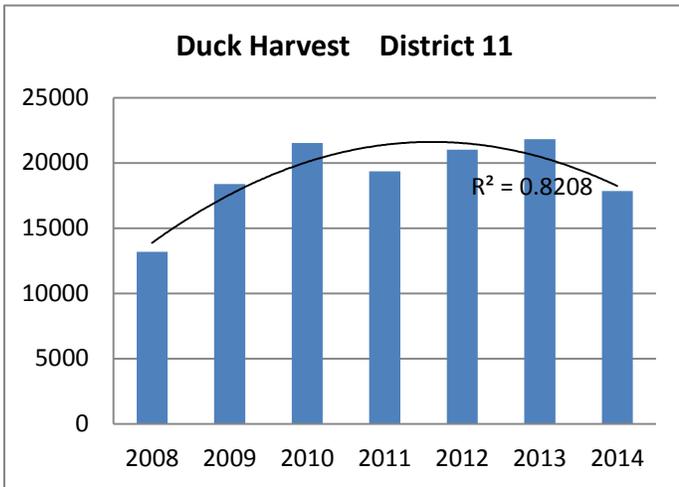
Midwinter counts within District 11 have shown a slight decline over the past ten years in Pierce County. Thurston County's counts declined significantly to a 10 year low in 2011, but appear to be recovering, likely as a result of increasing counts on the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. Breeding waterfowl surveys in the South Puget Sound showed a significant decline in 2014 after a three

year increasing trend, with only a slight increase in 2015. After increasing over the last five years, duck harvest slightly declined in 2014, although it's too early to know if this represents a decreasing trend. Goose harvest in the district remained steady after increasing significantly in 2009. Overall, duck and goose populations in District 11 and their harvest appears to be remaining stable, which should provide adequate harvest opportunity for waterfowl hunters.



*INCLUDES ONLY THOSE SITES THAT WERE CONSISTENTLY SURVEYED OVER THE YEARS REPORTED. ACTUAL WATERFOWL NUMBERS IN DISTRICT 11 WILL BE SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN REPORTED HERE.





Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies in the district that are surrounded by housing. Hunters are urged to obey all hunting regulations at such sites to avoid potential future closures. All bodies of water are open for hunting unless located within a county firearm restriction area (see introduction). Rapjohn Lake in Pierce County has a register-to-hunt program and requires hunters to hunt from two established blinds. Registration for the blinds is on a first come basis and is established by parking in one of the two mandatory parking lots at the WDFW Rapjohn Lake Access Site.

Best waterfowl hunting areas: [Nisqually Wildlife Refuge](#), Puget Sound marine inlets associated with western islands of Pierce County and Henderson, Budd, and Eld Inlets of Thurston County, and the Centralia Mine in Lewis County. Flooded agricultural fields in the western half of the district can be good prospects for waterfowl hunting. However, hunters must seek landowner access permission prior to hunting these sites. Note that a majority of the water bodies on Key Peninsula, Pierce County, are within a firearm restriction zone, thus prohibiting waterfowl hunting. The Centralia Coal Mine has a limited, high quality hunt. Hunters are urged to contact TransAlta directly with questions regarding participation

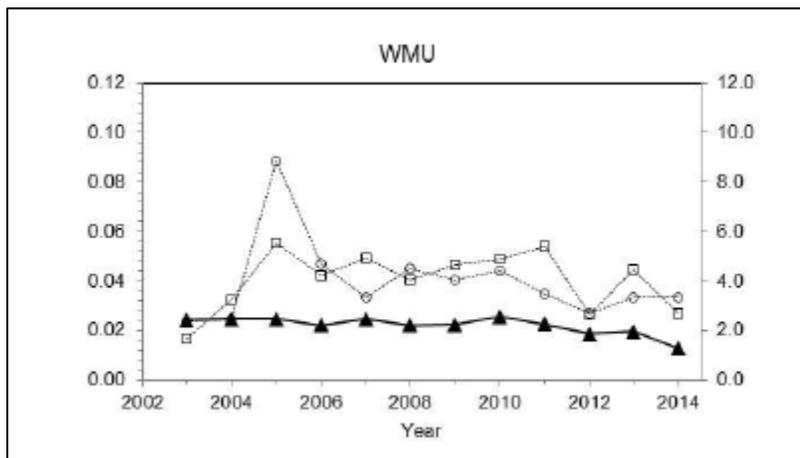


YOUNG HUNTER WITH HER COLLECTIONS IN THE BLIND (PHOTO BY T. FRANK, WEST RICHLAND, WA)

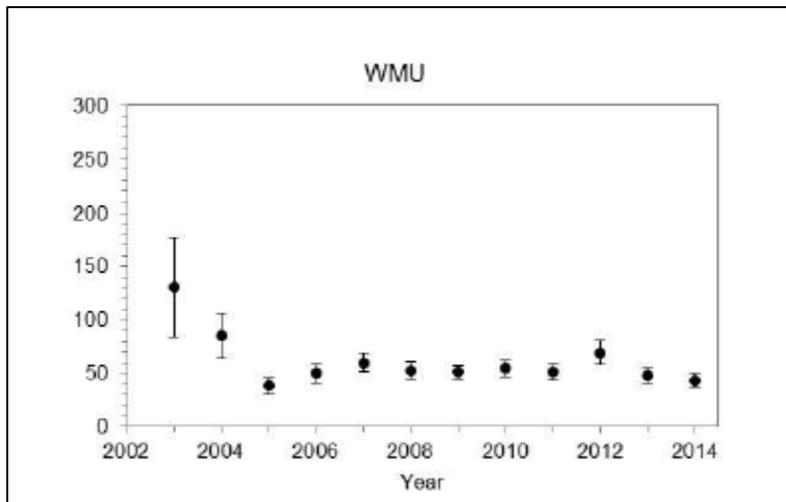
(360-736-9901). For information on hunting Nisqually Wildlife Refuge go to http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Nisqually/visit/visitor_activities/hunting.html or call (360) 753-9467.

MOURNING DOVE

The Department uses the annual USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status Report to analyze trends in mourning dove populations. The report summarizes trends in the number of doves heard and seen per route from the all-bird Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), and provides absolute abundance estimates based on band recovery and harvest data. Harvest and hunter participation are estimated from the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP). BBS data suggested that the abundance of mourning doves over the last 49 years decreased in the western management unit, which is composed of the seven western states including Washington. Estimates of absolute abundance varied among management units in 2014, with the western management unit having the least doves nationally at 43,697,391 (SE=3,252,203). Approximately 1,265,000 ± 52,600 birds were hunted by 102,300 dove hunters across the western management unit. Hunters reported 261,800 ± 10,500 days spent afield hunting doves.

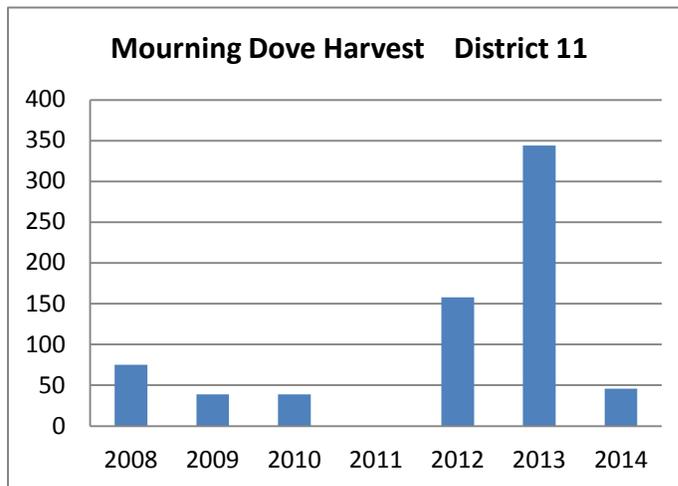


ESTIMATED HARVEST (▲) AND HARVEST RATES OF MOURNING DOVE 2003–2014 IN THE WESTERN MANAGEMENT UNIT. HARVEST RATES PRESENTED SEPARATELY FOR HATCH-YEAR (■) AND AFTER-HATCH-YEAR (●) (USFWS 2015)



ESTIMATES AND 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS OF MOURNING DOVE ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE IN THE WESTERN MANAGEMENT UNIT, 2003–2014. ESTIMATES BASED ON BAND RECOVERY AND HARVEST DATA (USFWS 2015).

District 11 is not a prime dove hunting area in Washington and averages approximately 100 doves harvested per year. A significant increase in dove hunting was reported by hunters in the district in 2013, but it declined in 2014 to normal levels. Lewis County traditionally provides higher harvest numbers in the district, with Thurston and Pierce County far behind. In 2014, harvest was 89, 15, and 31 for Lewis, Thurston, and Pierce counties, respectively.

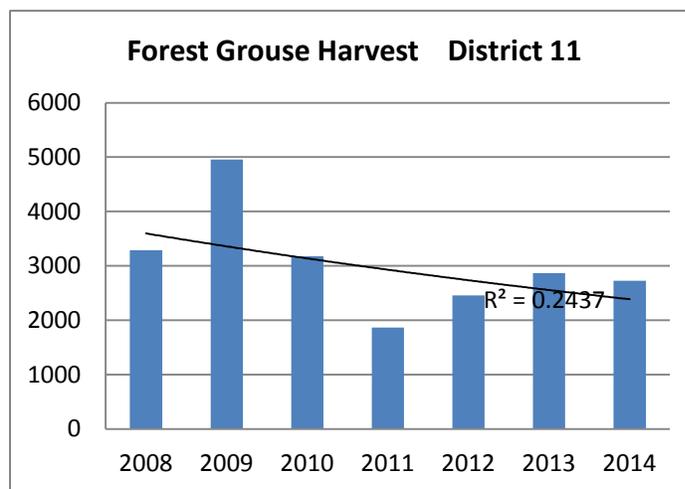


FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 11. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along logging roads, trails, and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands. The best hunting will be near fruiting shrublands such as huckleberry, grouse whortleberry, elderberry, and other species. Logging roads are particularly good locations since they provide the sand that grouse need to eat for digestion and the dust grouse seek to discourage mites and other biting infestations. In particular, look for inaccessible or closed roads and walk behind gates (with permission by owner) to get the best chance of finding grouse.

Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Prime forest grouse hunting may be found on JBLM (GMU 652), Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), and Capitol State Forest (GMU 663).

Forest grouse experienced a weak downward trend in District 11 over the past seven years, caused primarily by a spike in harvest in 2009. Removing the 2009 spike, an average of 2,700 grouse are harvested annually in the district. Pierce County provides an average of 2,000 grouse harvested per year, while Thurston County averages 1,000 annually.



A hunter must purchase either a big game license or a small game license to hunt grouse. Grouse hunting is also included in the purchase of any big game license purchase. Forest grouse season in District 11 runs September 1 thru December 31, with a daily bag limit of four, but not more than three of any one species.

PHEASANT

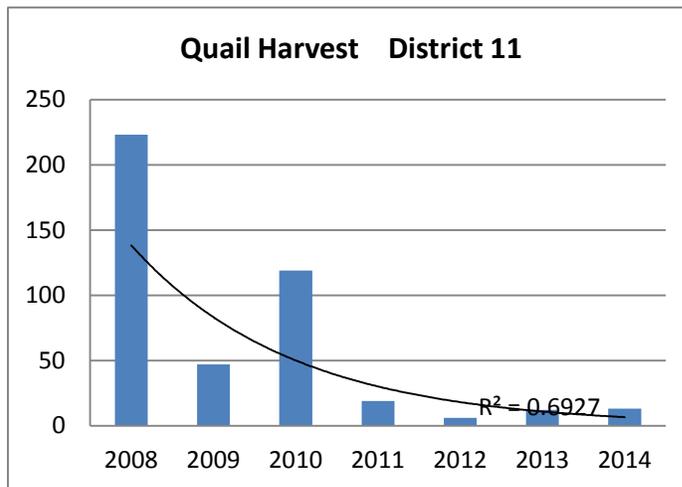
Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#). The release program utilizes state (Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck) and federal (JBLM) managed lands. There are special access processes in place for [JBLM](#), so please visit their web site. Note that [non-toxic shot](#) is required on all pheasant release sites statewide. The general pheasant season is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., September 26 to November 30, 2014, with a daily bag limit of two (either sex) and a possession limit of 15 (either sex). An extended pheasant season is also provided in District 11 at Skookumchuck and Scatter Creek Wildlife Areas from December 1-15, under the same hours and daily/possession limits as general season. Pheasants are not released as part of the extended season. Hunters need a western Washington pheasant license to hunt pheasants. An overview of the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, including a description and maps of all release sites, can be found on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/western/>.

Pheasant production in the South Puget Sound will be similar to 2014, with an estimated 4,500-5,000 pheasants to be released in 2015 across southwestern Washington pheasant release areas. This represents a 2,000 bird increase over 2013 releases. Be aware that total production could still be affected by high temperatures and other mortalities in 2015 and these are estimates only. Approximately 1,500-2,000 pheasants (5% of total production) will be released at the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area this season, with 50-75 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays beginning September 17 thru Thanksgiving Day morning. Approximately 3,500-4,000 pheasants (10% of total production) will be released at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, with 60-70 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays. Some areas of Scatter Creek are off limits to hunters due to endangered species recovery work so please obey all posted signs. Approximately 4,000-5,000 pheasants (13% of total production) will be released on JBLM. Military training dictates which fields will be open in any given week for both release and hunting access on JBLM. Hunters must register to hunt on JBLM thru NW Adventure Center (253-967-8282 or 253-967-7744), at which time they will be informed about the pheasant hunting process, including which fields are open for hunting.

QUAIL

Quail are as limited in District 11 as they are throughout western Washington. Quail harvest in District 11 has been trending downwards since a seven-year high in 2008. 2014 harvest was similar to 2013 (13 vs 12 quail reported harvested), with all quail harvested in Pierce County, which had not reported a harvest for the previous three years.

Regardless of this downward trend, quail harvest in the district is not significantly lower than the other ten counties in western Washington in which hunters hunt quail. California quail can be found in scattered locations throughout District 11, with the greatest opportunity in grasslands and woodlands of South and East Thurston County and northern Lewis County. Mountain Quail are more prevalent in the brushy areas of Key Peninsula, Pierce County, and the southeast portions of Thurston County. However, access may be limited. The western Washington California quail season runs September 27 thru November 30, with a daily mixed bag limit of ten and a possession mixed bag limit of 30. The mountain quail season runs September 26 thru November 30, with a daily bag limit of two and possession limit of four.

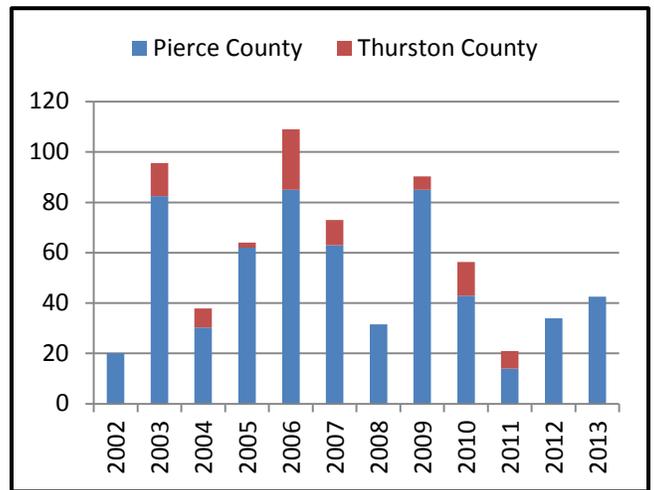
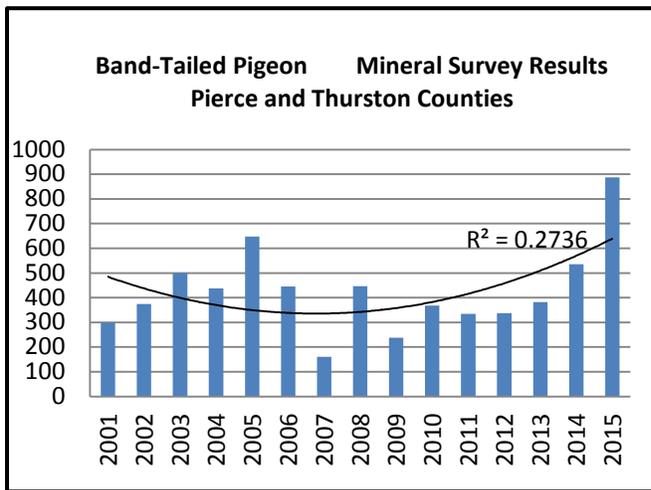


TURKEY

District 11 is not managed for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare. Although 50 hunters reported hunting turkey in District 11 in 2014, only one turkey was reported harvested in the district (GMU 667). This was a significant decline from the average harvest of six per year across the district. WDFW receives occasional reports of individual or small groups of turkeys in Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula, Pierce County, Rochester, Thurston County, and along the Johnson Creek Corridor, Lewis County. However, the overall scarcity of turkeys in District 11 equates to extremely poor prospects for harvest. Annually, the majority of turkey harvest occurs in the Skookumchuck Unit (GMU 667), followed by a few in Deschutes (GMU 666). The statewide turkey season runs April 15 thru May 31 in any given year, with a youth-only hunt the first weekend of April. Male turkeys and turkeys with visible beards are only legal with a western Washington limit of one (except for a two turkey limit in Klickitat County).

BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

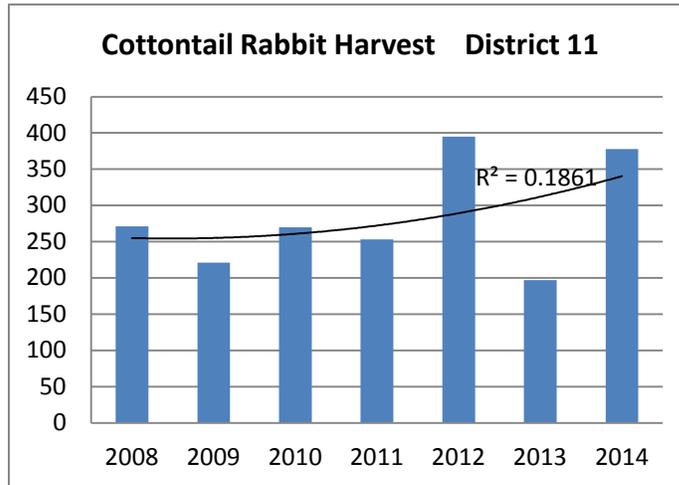
Band-tailed pigeon harvest information for 2014 was not available at the time of this report. Total harvest in Washington in 2013 was 129 pigeons, with Pierce County (District 11) providing the third highest harvest at 42 birds, just behind Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. Pierce County also supports the third highest average annual harvest of pigeons since 2002. No pigeons were harvested in Thurston County in 2012 or 2013, and it ranks low in regards to harvest compared to other western counties. Band-tails observed during July surveys at traditional mineral sites rose significantly from 2013 to 2015 across District 11, with the long-term trend showing a weak increase. Thus, prospects remain decent for pigeon hunting in Pierce County, but not necessarily in Thurston County. The best hunting locations for band-tails in District 11 are Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and Luhr Beach area (Pierce/Thurston county boundary), Mud Bay (Thurston County), Totten Inlet/Oyster Bay (Thurston County), and along marine shorelines of District 11.



COTTONTAIL RABBIT

District 11 provides some of the best cottontail rabbit hunting opportunities in western Washington. Rabbits are prolific in the shrub and grassland habitats found throughout Pierce and Thurston counties. Cottontail rabbit harvest in the district remained stable from 2008 to 2011, then spiked significantly in 2012 and 2014. The average harvest since 2008 has been 284 cottontails harvested across the district annually.

Success (harvest) per unit effort has declined in Thurston County, but increased in Pierce County over the last five years, suggesting that Pierce County offers better prospects for hunting cottontails. Note that some of this trend is likely due to lack of hunter participation in Thurston County. With the increasing trends in Pierce County, it remains one of the best places in the south Puget Sound to hunt cottontails.



2015

CHRIS ANDERSON, District Biologist
MIKE SMITH, Assistant District Biologist



Washington
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DISTRICT 12 HUNTING PROSPECTS

King County

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DISTRICT 12 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 12 is comprised of six Game Management Units (GMUs), including GMU 422 (Vashon/Maury Islands), 454 (Issaquah), 460 (Snoqualmie), 466 (Stampede), 485 (Green River, open to appropriate deer and elk permit holders only), and 490 (Cedar River, currently closed to hunting). Land ownership in the district is a checkerboard of private, state, and federal holdings. The densest private (urban and suburban) developments are found in the Issaquah Unit (GMU 454), while private agricultural holdings are primarily located in the northwestern part of the Snoqualmie Unit (GMU 460).

The cities of Tacoma and Seattle each own and operate a municipal watershed in southeast King County totaling about 188,220 acres that supplies the drinking water for their cities. One is in the Green River drainage (GMU 485), and the other is in the Cedar River drainage (GMU 490).

The largest percentage of huntable area is U. S. Forest Service land, but industrial timber companies have large land holdings in the area. Private, state, and federally owned lands are managed primarily to produce timber. U.S. Forest Service lands are managed for multiple uses, including timber, recreation, and wildlife with a current emphasis on growing and managing old growth forests.

Remember to be a good hunting and outdoor recreation steward. Be respectful of others. Don't hunt areas where there is heavy, regular recreation use. Pick up after yourself and don't leave a gut pile.

ELK

Hunters should place greater emphasis on riparian forest habitats and agricultural areas throughout the district. Many of District 12's elk reside on private land, so please make sure you have permission before you hunt.



ELK IN AGRICULTURAL FIELD IN GMU 454. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.



BULL ELK IN GMU 460. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Elk Harvest Reports](#).

DEER

Population surveys have not been conducted for several years throughout District 12, but hunting prospects are believed to be quite good on private and public lands, where hunting is allowed, from anecdotal observations.

GMU 422 covers all of Vashon and Maury Islands. Hunting access on Vashon and Maury islands is largely on private agricultural and hobby farm properties. Hunters must take time to network with communities and property owners for opportunity and access. Island Center Forest, operated by King County Parks, offers modern firearm season access to the public. Please see here for location information, King County Department of Natural Resource announcements, and any hunt restrictions in the few weeks prior to the opening of modern firearm season:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/recreation/parks/trails/backcountry/islandcenterforest.aspx>

There have also been additional opportunities added in the second deer special permit category for GMU 422. Please refer to the current Big Game Pamphlet for up to date listings of these opportunities at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/>.

Deer in GMU 454 (Issaquah) continue to be managed with liberal seasons designed to prevent road kills and keep damage issues at acceptable levels in highly-developed areas. This unit is approximately 90 percent private land and access continues to be a problem for hunters. Success in this unit may well depend on getting to know your neighbors and broaching the subject of hunting as a means of protecting their fruit trees and vegetable beds. Firearm restrictions are in place because landowners are concerned about safety. Bow hunters should have an advantage in gaining permission.



A BLACK-TAILED DEER BUCK IN GMU 454, DAMAGING LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS. PHOTO SUBMITTED TO WDFW IMAGE GALLERY.

GMU 460 (Snoqualmie) provides good hunting opportunities throughout most of the unit. However, hunters are advised to scout their preferred hunting areas well in advance because state and private timberlands are gated, with restricted access. Forest management on these lands is largely favorable to deer and high quality opportunities are available for those willing to lace up

their boots. Hunters should focus on early seral forests (< 30 years old) adjacent to mid (40-80 years old) or late successional (> 80 years old) stands. Additional emphasis should be placed on riparian forest habitats that provide ample forage and cover.



A DOE AND TWINS ON THE SNOQUALMIE TREE FARM, GMU 460. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.

GMU 466 (Stampede) is a patchwork of private land, state lands, and U.S. Forest Service lands (Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest). It consists largely of second growth timber with some old growth on U.S. Forest Service lands. This unit consists of a lot of steep ground, with about 2,500 feet in elevation change. Be prepared for early winter snowfall, which has the potential of stranding hunters, but also the potential to improve success.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Deer Harvest Reports](#).

BEAR

Bears inhabit areas of District 12 but, like elk, many are on private lands. Hunters should ensure they have the proper permissions to hunt the area they are interested in. Berry production throughout the district has been adequate this year. Bears may be found at lower elevations earlier and moving higher as the season progresses.



BEAR IN GMU 460. PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics can be found at [Bear Harvest Reports](#).

PHEASANT

Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website. Nontoxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites.

Hunting hour restrictions for pheasant and quail in western Washington are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. This includes the Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. For the rest of the hunting season normal hunting hours, half hour before sunrise to half hour after sunset, will apply.

QUAIL

There are relatively few quail in District 12.

FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed and sooty (blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forests of District 12. Warmer weather experienced this spring combined with anecdotal observations collected this summer suggests grouse populations increased slightly compared to last year.

Forest management in much of District 12 remains favorable for grouse. Hunters looking to harvest ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', early seral forests (5-25 years old) with ample berry crops present in the understory, and riparian forest habitats. Sooty grouse hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands with abundant huckleberries.



A MALE SOOTY GROUSE DISPLAYING ON THE SNOQUALMIE TREE FARM, GMU 460. PHOTO BY CHRIS ANDERSON.

TURKEY

Wild turkeys remain relatively rare in District 12 and without predictable concentrations of birds. Accordingly, harvest prospects remain low even with considerable effort. Note: Hunters must use #4 shot or smaller to hunt turkey.

WATERFOWL

Population estimates are looking good for the Pacific Flyway this year. Opportunity of harvest should be good, dependent on weather conditions through the season. The best waterfowl hunting opportunities continue to be found in the lower Snoqualmie Valley with public access

provided on WDFW's Snoqualmie Wildlife Management Area (Cherry Valley, Stillwater, and Crescent Lake units). Additional opportunities can also be found in the Kent Valley. Hunters are encouraged to work with local private landowners to secure access in one of District 12's many river and agricultural valleys to improve their waterfowl hunting success. Refer to the [Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Regulations](#) for season dates and hours.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting see, ["Let's Go Waterfowling."](#)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

District 12 occurs within the ceded area of several Northwest Treaty Tribes and tribal hunting. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal enforcement personnel ensure that tribal hunting regulations, which are sometimes very different from state regulations, are followed.

FIREARMS RESTRICTION AREAS IN KING COUNTY

Centerfire and rimfire rifles are not legal for hunting in the area west of Highway 203 (Monroe-Fall City), then Fall City-Preston Road to I-90, I-90 to Highway 18, Highway 18 to I-5, I-5 to Pierce-King County line; also Vashon and Maury Islands. For additional information, see page 90 of the [2015 Big Game Hunting Regulations](#). Through King County ordinances, no shooting areas have been established in many areas in the county. Please contact your local sheriff for specific locations.

2015

RUTH MILNER, District Wildlife Biologist



Washington
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DISTRICT 13 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Snohomish, San Juan, and Island Counties; Skagit County
Islands

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the [DNR Recreation](#) web page. Unusually hot and dry conditions have resulted in camp fire restrictions on state-owned lands. Due to the extreme drought in the summer of 2015, some DNR lands may be closed to all access. Contact DNR for updated fire information.

A number of private industrial timber land owners also manage land in GMU 448 (Stillaguamish). Many of their roads are closed to motorized vehicle traffic, but walking or biking access is allowed. Hunters are advised to scout their areas early and be aware that parking at access gates may be very limited, and gates should never be blocked. Hunters are further advised not to drive beyond any gate that is open unless they are certain the gate will remain open on their return. Active logging is taking place in some areas, so gates may be open in the morning, but closed and locked later in the day. Some access gates on private industrial timber lands will have signs that specify ownership and the rules that apply to the property. Hunters should strictly observe “No Parking” signs as local landowners will tow vehicles found on their property.

Early scouting will be particularly important this year due to the extreme drought conditions. If fire danger is extraordinarily high, access may be closed to the public for all activities. If this happens, notices may be posted at property gates.



TYPICAL NO PARKING/NOTRESPASSING SIGNS IN RURAL AREAS OF DISTRICT 13

Weyerhaeuser Corporation has recently acquired lands formerly owned by Longview Timber throughout western Washington. This includes holdings in Snohomish County. Weyerhaeuser has indicated that it is their intent to convert the lands to a “fee access” management system, wherein hunters would have to apply for and purchase a permit to access their lands. The timing for implementation of a fee access program in District 13 remains unclear.

Much the Snohomish County portion of GMU 407 (North Sound) is dominated by homes on small acreages or relatively small farms. Hunters should obtain permission from landowners to hunt on private land and should be very mindful of where houses, livestock, and outbuildings are situated in relation to the areas where hunting will take place. Portions of the GMU are under firearm restrictions. Hunters should research landownership, and understand firearm limitations prior to hunting. A map showing “no shooting” areas and shotgun only areas within Snohomish County is found at: [http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff's Office/Maps.htm](http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff's_Office/Maps.htm).

ELK

District 13 does not have an established elk herd within GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) or 450 (Cascade) boundaries. Small bands occur sporadically along Highway 2 at the south end of GMU 448. These groups typically range between the towns of Baring and Grotto, but occasionally move north as far as Sultan. Elk also sometimes come south of GMU 437 (Sauk) onto the Sauk Prairie in the north end of GMU 448. Three elk were harvested from GMU 448 in 2014 (two 4-point; one 2-point) and 36 hunters reported hunting there. We recommend scouting these areas early and thoroughly because elk occurrence in GMU 448 is spotty and unpredictable. GMU 450 is closed to elk hunting because elk do not occur there.

DEER

BLACK-TAILED DEER GMU 448

District 13 includes GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) and GMU 450 (Cascade), and the majority of the harvest comes from GMU 448. In 2014, 1090 hunters reported harvesting 171 deer in GMU 448, and 81 hunters took 17 deer from GMU 450. Hunters who take the time to scout and learn the area will increase their likelihood of success. We strongly encourage planning and familiarization with local conditions well in advance of hunting season.

Much of GMU 448 is forested, with trees in a 30-50 year age class on public lands. This results in relatively tightly stocked stands where seeing deer may be challenging. On private timberlands, clear cutting has increased dramatically. However, food may be limited in clear cuts, so deer may be harder to find than anticipated. For hunters who enjoy walking or hiking in un-crowded conditions, GMU 448 offers a very rewarding opportunity to get outside and enjoy the season. Parking and walk-in access to DNR and private forest land is available at the intersection of Menzel Lake Road and the P-5000 Road. This gate is located 4.6 miles south of the intersection of Alder Place and Menzel Lake Road in Granite Falls. Parking at other gated access areas in this general area may be limited.



P-5000 ROAD ACCESS GATE

At the south end of GMU 448, walk-in access is available off the Sultan Basin Road. This area has mixed public and private ownership, and hunters should pay close attention to signs designating areas where discharge of firearms is prohibited. Access to DNR lands requires a Discover Pass, and these areas will be signed. DNR properties are gated, and shooting is permitted only during legal hunting seasons.

Vehicle access is available on US Forest Service Roads around Snohomish County.



TYPICAL DNR SIGNS

BLACK-TAILED DEER ISLAND UNITS

Beginning in 2013, GMU 410 was divided into several distinct new units assigned to individual islands. This change will provide more accurate harvest information and assist with the development of management strategies on the islands. GMU 410 is now comprised of those remaining islands that were not assigned a specific number. New GMUs are as follows:

GMU 411	ORCAS ISLAND	GMU 412	SHAW ISLAND
GMU 413	SAN JUAN ISLAND	GMU 414	LOPEZ ISLAND
GMU 415	BLAKELY ISLAND	GMU 416	DECATUR ISLAND
GMU 417	CYPRESS ISLAND	GMU 420	WHIDBEY ISLAND
GMU 419	GUEMES ISLAND	GMU 421	CAMANO ISLAND

We ask that hunters pay close attention to the GMU they hunt and report accurately so we can improve our understanding of harvest in each island.



PHOTO BY DOUG HARMS

GMUS 410-419

Public access on islands within the San Juan Archipelago (San Juan and Skagit counties) is extremely limited. Deer in the islands are plentiful, but typically smaller than their mainland cousins. Most hunting occurs on private property. In San Juan County, written landowner permission is required in order to hunt on private property.

Small parcels of public land are open to hunting on Lopez Island (GMU 414) on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ownership within the National Monument. BLM lands in the San Juan Islands are administered out of the Wenatchee field office. Hunters should call (509) 665-2100

for information. Additional information is available at: <http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/sanjuans/>.

The San Juan County Land Bank manages Lopez Hill, which continues to allow limited hunting. Lopez Hill will be open for hunting from September 1 through October 31. More information can be found at: http://sjclandbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/LopezHill_map.pdf, and at <http://lopezhill.org/directions-and-maps/>. Questions can be sent to timc@rockisland.com or timc@sjclandbank.org.

Overnight camping is not allowed in the National Monument or on Lopez Hill. Please check state (<http://www.parks.wa.gov/844/San-Juan-Islands-Region>) and county parks (<http://www.co.san-juan.wa.us/parks/camping.aspx>) for camping.

Cypress Island (GMU 417) is largely owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), but some parcels are privately owned. Maps, trails, and access rules can be found at: http://www.dnr.wa.gov/AboutDNR/ManagedLands/Pages/amp_na_cypress_island.aspx.

GMU 420 (WHIDBEY ISLAND) & 421 (CAMANO ISLAND)

Deer are abundant on both islands. However, very little public land is available for hunting on any island, including Whidbey and Camano Islands. Hunters should obtain permission from landowners prior to hunting private property. [The Island County Public Works Department](#) owns a few small parcels on Whidbey and Camano islands that are open to hunting. Hunters should contact them directly for maps and restrictions.

Limited deer hunting will also be allowed on the Trillium Community Forest property, owned by the Whidbey/Camano Land Trust. Hunters should contact the Whidbey Camano Land Trust for additional information regarding access dates, maps, etc. at <http://www.wclt.org/stewardship-trillium-community-forest/>.

Note: hunting on this property is for the purpose of habitat improvement, thus hunting is limited to a few specific days within the total deer season. Deer hunting at Naval Air Station Whidbey is restricted to military personnel.

Hunters reporting incorrect GMU numbers continued to be a problem in the 2014 harvest report. Two hundred sixty-eight deer were reported as taken from GMU 410, an unlikely number probably due to incorrect reporting. In general, the more populated islands with automobile access showed higher harvest trends, with 293 deer reported from GMU 420, 84 deer reported from GMU 411, 75 reported from GMU 413 and 60 reported from GMU 414.

BEAR

This year's drought could affect how and where bears move through their environment as we are seeing unprecedented low water levels in streams and rivers, along with bone dry springs and seeps. As a result of the extremely dry summer, berries are expected to peak and dry out earlier than usual. In fall, bears typically key in to huckleberry fields as a primary food source, and then move to lower elevations as weather cools or snow arrives. This year berries will likely be patchily distributed and less abundant compared to normal years, potentially causing bears to move farther and more often than usual in search of high calorie foods. About 10% of hunters in GMUs 448 and 450 were successful last year, taking 50 animals from GMU 448 and eight from GMU 450.

COUGAR

GMUs 448 and 450 are hunt areas with a harvest guideline of 9-13 animals. In these GMUs, the Director may close the cougar late hunting season after January 1 if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. Cougar hunters may hunt cougar from January 1 until the hunt area harvest guideline has been reached and the GMU is closed by the Director, or until April 30, whichever occurs first. It is each cougar hunter's responsibility to verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in GMUs 448 and 450. Cougar hunters can verify if the season is open or closed by calling the toll free cougar hunting hotline (1-866-364-4868) or visiting this website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>. The hotline and website will be updated weekly beginning January 1, 2016. Last year, the cougar harvest did not exceed the guideline and the units remained open throughout the season. A 2016 cougar tag is required to hunt cougars in April 2016.

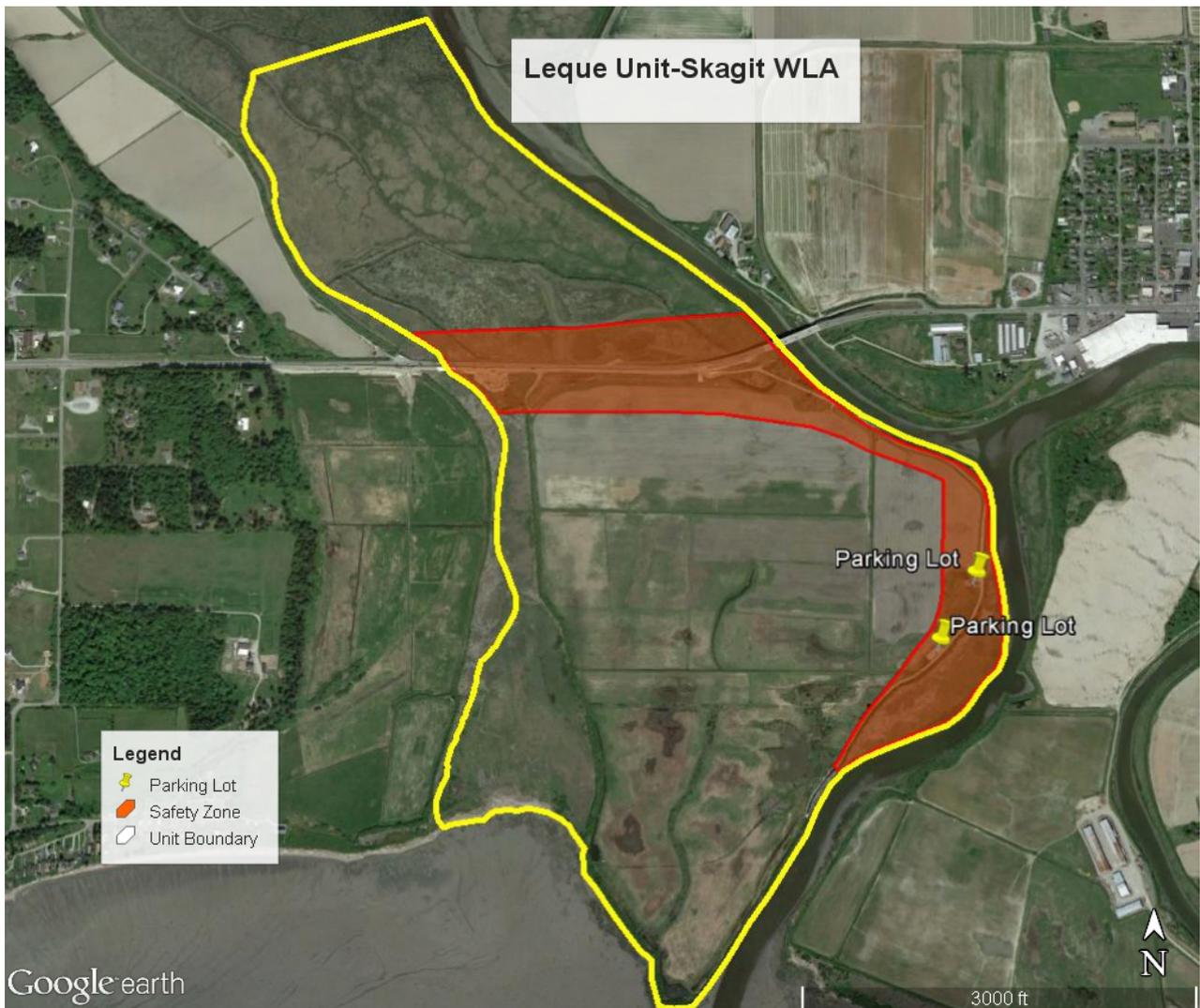
PHEASANT

Game farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington pheasant program booklet](#).

In Snohomish County, public pheasant and waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area, and on Leque Island on the Skagit Wildlife Area. There are two access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the northeast side of the property. The second access site is off of Home Acres Road just off of Highway 2. Access will be open on the west side of the property in the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43rd St SE. Pheasants will be released on both the west and east parcels of the unit. The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road that provide access to this unit. The Ebey Island and Crescent Lake Units will each receive 35-45 birds that will be released on Friday and

Saturday evenings, and on a varied schedule for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. All pheasant release sites on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be open following the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. hunting hours.

Leque Island will receive 45-60 birds that will be released on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. Eide Road will be the only access to Leque Island for this hunting season. The Davis Slough parking area will be closed during the remainder of road and bridge construction on Highway 532. Cover on the unit is in good condition comprised of a mix of native grass fields and agricultural crops planted (barely and fava beans).



LEQUE ISLAND PARKING LOCATIONS



PARKING AND PHEASANT RELEASE AREAS AVAILABLE AT EBHEY ISLAND

In Island County, pheasant release sites on Whidbey Island include a new site off Zylstra Road, along with the Bayview, OLF Coupeville, and Sea Plane Base (SPB) sites. Hunters should check <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/pheasant/western/> for the location of specific sites. Fifteen to 20 birds will be released on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings, except for Bayview, where releases will be Saturday and Sunday mornings.

The SPB (Upper and Lower Game Ranges) and OLF Coupeville on the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station will be open this year. Access to the Sea Plane Base pheasant release sites is open to all hunters. All hunters (military and civilian) need to purchase the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Check-in is done at the Torpedo Road gate by signing in and out of the logbook. Pheasant hunting is open to non-military hunters. However, civilian hunters may only hunt waterfowl as a guest of a military hunter. Civilian hunters will be required to submit to a background check prior to hunting Navy property. As a result, hunts should be planned well in advance and all hunters are advised to check with WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873) for the most up to date rules and requirements.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON

Band-tailed pigeons may be hunted in late September. A migratory bird authorization card is required and the daily bag limit is two birds. The birds can be found in managed forest lands with mixed conifer age classes that provide feeding areas adjacent to roosting areas. These types of habitat are often found on private timber lands or DNR lands, so expect the same gated conditions described above. Band-tailed pigeons have strong affinities for the same areas, so scouting before your hunt is important.

GROUSE

Ruffed grouse is the common species in District 13, with blue grouse found at higher elevations. Ruffed grouse are typically found at elevations below 2500'. Both species favor mixed timber habitats, often near water. Hot, dry weather in 2015 may negatively affect grouse hunting this year. Hunters should look for mixed conifer and hardwood areas, especially in riparian areas, for the most likely place to find grouse. Abandoned or low use logging roads are good places to look for grouse as well.

WATERFOWL

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

Strong spring and summer reproduction numbers in British Columbia and Washington suggest a strong 2015-16 season for numbers of birds potentially in the region. However, this year's drought will influence where birds congregate.

Waterfowl hunting in District 13 is expected to be productive as long as weather conditions are favorable. The weather outlook for the coming fall and winter is for continued warm, dry conditions, so we anticipate a slow start to the hunting season. During mild winters, ducks tend to stay in more northerly areas of British Columbia. However, as colder fronts move in and conditions become colder and wetter, hunters can expect increasing numbers of waterfowl to arrive in District 13.

SNOHOMISH COUNTY

Waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area, and on Leque Island on the Skagit Wildlife Area. There are two access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the northeast side of the property. The second access site is off of Home Acres Road just off of

Highway 2. Access will be open on the west side of the property in the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43rd St SE. The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road that provide access to this unit.

At this time, we have tentative agreements with landowners for six waterfowl quality hunt units located primarily in the Stillaguamish Delta and five snow goose units in the same general area in the coming season. These sites are all located on private lands that are enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. Additional units may be added in the fall. More information about individual sites as they are finalized, including maps and access rules, as well as the program in general, may be found at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/. Waterfowl hunt units on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every unit will be available on opening day. We anticipate that all units will be open by mid-November.



Reports from Wrangal Island, where our lesser snow geese breed, indicate extremely high numbers of chicks hatched and survived to fledging. Therefore, we are expecting higher numbers of geese coming into Washington than were seen last winter. In addition to the traditional high concentrations in the Stanwood area, snow geese appear to be expanding in Snohomish County and it is likely that at least 5,000-10,000 birds will spend

some time in the Snohomish system.

The Spencer Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be boat access and walk-in this year. Parking for the Spencer Island Unit will be one quarter mile back from the bridge to the island near the sewage treatment facility buildings.

There are two access sites to the east parcel of the Ebey Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the northeast side of the property. The second access site is off of Home Acres Road just off of Highway 2. Access to the west parcel of the unit is from the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 51st St SE.

WHIDBEY AND CAMANO ISLAND

Access to public lands on Whidbey Island is extremely limited. Hunters should be aware that Deer Lagoon is closed to hunting. Hunters interested in accessing Dugualla Bay should contact

the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#), which now owns portions of the upland area, for information on property boundaries and whether or not hunting is permitted on their ownership.

Waterfowl hunting on Naval Air Station Whidbey Island is open to military personnel and their guests. All hunters (military and civilian) need to purchase the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Duck blinds are accessed by entering the SPB gate and non-military guests must be in the same vehicle as the military hunter. For additional information, contact WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873).

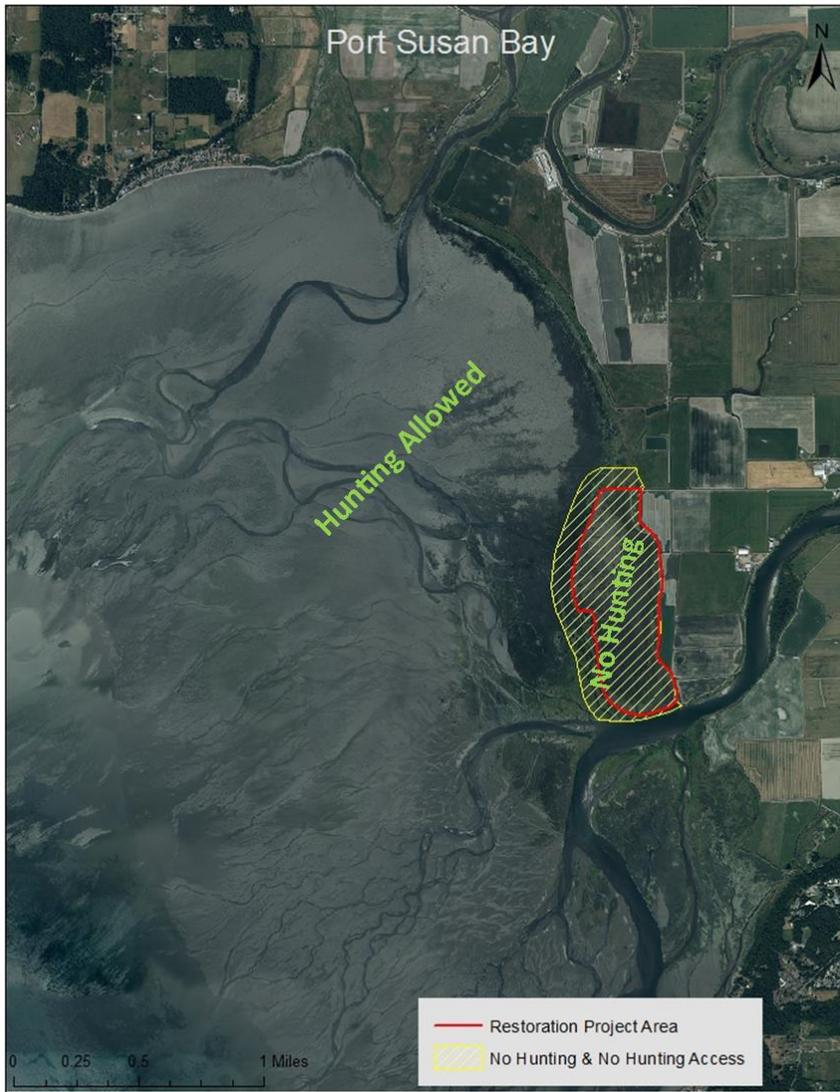
Iverson Spit Preserve is managed by Island County Parks staff within the Island County Public Works Department. Per Island County Code 9.40.320, firearms, weapons, and hunting are prohibited. The signs below were posted in 2014. Questions regarding the preserve should be directed to the Island County Public Works Department (360-679-7331).



IVERSON SPIT PRESERVE PARK BOUNDARIES AND SIGNAGE

PORT SUSAN BAY

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) allows hunting over a majority of tidelands under their ownership at Port Susan Bay. However, the restored area, which used to be diked, and a 150-yard buffer around it is off limits to hunting, and there is no hunting access from TNC property (see map below). For further information regarding hunting TNC ownership contact Jolene Boyd, TNC Puget Sound Stewardship Coordinator, at jboyd@tnc.org or by phone at (360) 419-3125.



Basemap Source: Bergman Photographic Services, 2014

MAP OF RESTRICTED HUNTING AREA OWNED BY THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

2015

FENNER YARBOROUGH, District Wildlife
Biologist
PAUL DEBRUYN, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 14 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Skagit and Whatcom Counties

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DISTRICT 14 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 14 is comprised of Skagit and Whatcom counties and lies in the far northwestern mainland part of Washington. The western extent of the district is associated with the marine waters of Puget Sound and features a vibrant agricultural land base. These lowlands support an abundance of wildlife in the “Skagit Flats” and western Whatcom counties, including a diverse and abundant assemblage of resident and overwintering waterfowl species. The Skagit and Nooksack rivers are the two main river systems in the district. Lower elevation forested uplands within the Skagit and Nooksack watersheds are owned and/or managed by private timber companies and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). At timber production areas, these lower elevation working forests provide good to excellent big game hunting opportunities. Higher elevation forest lands within the district are managed by the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and North Cascades National Park (hunting is allowed in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area). These federal lands are associated with the North Cascades Mountains and support game species such as mountain goats, black bear, and black-tailed deer.

From north to south, the core game management units (GMUs) that comprise District 14 are Nooksack and Diablo (i.e. GMUs 418 & 426), which are mostly in Whatcom County, and Sauk (i.e. GMU 437), which is almost entirely within Skagit County. Additionally, portions of North Sound, Stillaguamish, and Cascade (i.e. GMUs 407, 448 & 450) are also within the district.

Among the many hunting opportunities within this district, perhaps the most notable are:

- Saltwater and inland waterfowl hunting opportunities with the highest concentration of waterfowl in western Washington.
- Diversity of waterfowl hunting options, including lesser snow geese, Canada geese, Pacific brant, harlequin ducks, long-tailed ducks, and scoters.
- Extensive non-vehicular access to public and private forest lands that do not currently charge an access fee for hunting big game and forest grouse.
- “Special Permit Only” quality bull elk hunts within the recovering North Cascades elk herd with trophy quality animals, liberal season dates, and high success rates.
- Once-in-a-lifetime mountain goat harvest opportunities for six permit holders within the Mount Baker Wilderness Area.

CURRENT SPECIES STATUS

The primary big game species in District 14 are black-tailed deer, elk, black bear, cougar, and mountain goat. Each of these species remains open for hunting with restrictions as outlined in Washington’s 2015 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations, which can be found at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01712/wdfw01712.pdf> . Black-tailed deer, black bear, and cougar continue to provide over the counter tag opportunities. Elk, spring black bear, and mountain goats are managed as “draw only” hunts because of the sensitivity of each of these populations to hunting, either because they are below population objective (elk), more vulnerable to harvest (spring black bear), or have lower reproductive rates (goats).

Like most of western Washington, District 14 does not have native upland game bird populations

and is not managed for these species. The exception to this is that WDFW will continue to implement a pen-raised pheasant release program in Skagit and Whatcom counties in 2015 – 2016. Other game birds that WDFW manages collectively as forest grouse include the ruffed grouse and dusky and sooty grouse. Ruffed and sooty grouse (formerly referred to as blue grouse) occur in District 14 and continue to have long seasons (Sept. 1 – Dec. 31) with a daily bag limit of four of any species.

Due to high overall population sizes and stable reproductive rates of waterfowl, the Pacific Flyway states continue to enjoy extremely liberal hunting seasons in terms of number of hunting days and bag limits. Like the remainder of the state, there has been no change in the status of any of the waterfowl species in District 14. Within District 14, lesser snow geese, Pacific brant, and sea ducks (e.g. harlequin, scoter, long-tailed, and goldeneye) require that hunters apply for and possess a special migratory bird authorization while hunting and submit a harvest report card at the end of the season.

ELK

The North Cascades (Nooksack) elk herd continues to grow and expand into areas of formerly unoccupied habitat. This includes agricultural areas where they cause damage to crops and farming infrastructure. Until recently, data from post-hunt surveys (conducted in late March to early April) indicated that the population was expanding at a rate of six to seven percent.

Based on post-hunt surveys conducted in March and April of 2015, the total population size of the North Cascades herd is approximately 1,000–1,200 animals within the herd core population area. Bull:cow and calf:cow ratios from 2015 surveys were between 30–40:100, indicating that winter survival was similar to previous years. Roughly 40 percent of all bulls (including spikes) observed during spring flights were mature bulls (i.e. 5X5 or better).



Although the North Cascades elk herd continues to recover, the desired population of 1,950 elk, which was established in 2002, has not been met. Since the resumption of very limited hunting of this elk population in 2007, opportunities have been limited to bull-only hunts. This provides some recreational harvest while allowing the population to continue to grow.

The North Cascades elk herd offers one of the premier bull elk hunting opportunities in western Washington. Archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm hunters each have the chance to harvest bull elk with “any bull” or “spike only” tags. The harvest success rate is high for all three firearm types due to limited hunting pressure and lengthy seasons. Since this hunt began in 2007, hunter success has ranged from 61 to 93 percent. In 2014, the harvest success rate in GMU 418 was 83 percent, with 19 of 23 hunters who participated harvesting a bull elk.



Elk hunting prospects for 2015 will again be restricted to limited entry bull hunts in GMU 418 and Elk Area 4941 (which is within GMU 437). A total of 23 “any bull” and “spike only” tags have been allocated. In Elk Area 4941, more special permit opportunities are available for youth, seniors, and hunters with disabilities. These opportunities are primarily on private land, so coordination with landowners and WDFW is vital in making this hunt successful.

General season elk harvest opportunities in GMU 407 (North Sound) and that portion of GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) in Skagit County exist on both private and state lands. However, elk densities in these two units are low and hunting pressure quickly pushes those animals into adjacent GMUs that remain closed to general harvest. GMU 407 tends to have greater numbers of elk, but access to private property is the key to getting a real opportunity here.

Changes to the 2015 hunting regulations specific to the North Cascades elk herd are:

- Elimination of antler restrictions for modern firearm hunters in GMU 407 (North Sound)
- Return of the “Skagit River” master hunter, youth, hunters with disabilities, and elderly hunters in Elk Area 4941

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at:

[Game Harvest Reports.](#)

DEER

WDFW does not currently conduct black-tailed deer surveys in Region 4. Biologist observations and other anecdotal reports support the general notion that black-tail population numbers and densities are down in GMUs 418 (Nooksack), 426 (Diablo), 437 (Sauk), and 450 (Cascade). Conversely, in portions of GMU 407 (North Sound), the most urbanized GMU in the district, local deer densities can be quite high and can be a nuisance for some property owners and agricultural operations.

From a hunting perspective, GMU 407 provides the best opportunity for successfully harvesting a deer in District 14. In 2014, 609 deer were harvested in GMU 407 during the general season hunts. This was a decrease from the 2013 harvest (659) for this GMU. The combined general season deer harvest within the other GMUs in the district (i.e. 418, 426, and 437) amounts to less than half of the harvest in GMU 407, with only 311 deer harvested.

The drastic difference in harvest rates between GMU 407 and other GMUs within the district is related to the number of hunting days available, deer densities, and ease of access. GMU 407 provides hunting opportunities that the other GMUs do not and today's hunters have learned to adapt to this and take advantage of it. The key to a successful harvest in this GMU is securing the appropriate permission to hunt on private land and scouting the area prior to the hunting season. Hunters who intend to target deer in developed areas would be well advised to check with local jurisdictions regarding firearm restrictions. Also, hunters should see page 90 of the 2015 Big Hunting Seasons and Regulations.

Elsewhere in District 14, private industrial timber lands and property managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources are largely gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism, and other problems. However, many of these roads can be accessed on foot or with mountain bikes, allowing those willing to do the work access to deer that don't get as much hunting pressure. Be sure to check with the appropriate land owner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

Finally, for those seeking a high elevation trophy black-tail hunting experience, areas within GMUs 418 (Nooksack), 426 (Diablo), and 437 (Sauk) that can be accessed by Forest Service road and trail systems lead to high mountain hunting areas such as the Mount Baker Wilderness Area in Whatcom County and northern portions of the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area in extreme southeastern Skagit County. Both of these wilderness areas are open for the "high buck hunt" (September 15–25).

Modern firearms hunters are currently offered a permit only buck hunt opportunity in GMUs 418, 426, and 437. These tags give hunters an opportunity to take to the field to attempt to harvest a quality buck during the rut (November 14–19). Recent success has been in the 40 to 60 percent range for hunters who end up participating. WDFW was able to negotiate behind the gate access for the 25 permit holders in GMU 418. Quality buck tags for modern firearm hunters currently provide the best opportunity in these GMUs. Of these 60 tags issued in 2014, harvest

success rates among those that reported ranged from 24 percent (GMU 418) to 40 percent (GMU 426).

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Game Harvest Reports](#).

BEAR

Black bear surveys are not conducted in District 14. Instead, hunter harvest reports and age data obtained from teeth submitted by successful hunters is used to monitor population trends. The total number of bears harvested during the fall of 2014 in GMUs 407, 418, and 437 increased by nearly 15 percent from the previous year. 59 bears were harvested in these GMUs during the fall, with an increased amount of hunters from the previous year.

GMU 418 is one of the few western Washington areas where a spring bear hunt is promoted to address damage caused by bears peeling young trees (primarily Douglas fir) on managed forest lands. Additionally, the private lands hunter access managed by WDFW helps get this small pool of hunters behind gates where bears are otherwise not disturbed by hunters.

In the spring of 2014, nine of 30 permit holders successfully harvested a bear in the damage area.



Hunter prospects for harvesting a black bear in District 14 has more to do with access and berry production than it does the previous years' harvest. With exceptionally warm spring and early summer temperatures, berry production has been early and bountiful. While patchy in places, the mountain huckleberry crop should be abundant.

Access behind gated roads is largely available to those willing to walk or mountain bike, and there are ample numbers of clear cuts with younger age class regeneration units that will attract bears. At higher elevations, those willing to hike in-pack out can pursue bears in classic alpine environments where spot-and-stalk opportunities await.

MOUNTAIN GOAT

The Mount Baker area continues to have one of the largest concentrations of mountain goats in Washington State. Mountain goat hunting in Washington is a once in a lifetime harvest opportunity and is a limited-entry tag that only a few lucky individuals draw in any year. Aerial surveys in 2014 counted 475 goats in the Mt. Baker area.

For 2015, six special permits were issued for the area. A single tag holder will have sole access to the Chowder Ridge hunt unit north of Mount Baker. The remaining five permit holders (two in Lincoln Peak and three in the Avalanche Gorge hunt units) may be sharing these units with the winners of the state wide auction and raffle permits. An early snow melt and warm spring and summer conditions have dispersed the goats into a large area and a certain amount of boot work will be necessary prior to the hunt.

Statewide harvest success rates for mountain goats are generally 75% or greater in any year and Mount Baker has produced some mature goats of exceptional quality. WDFW strongly encourages hunters to refrain from shooting nannies. Although nannies can be legally taken by permit holders, mountain goat populations are very sensitive to removal of adult females. Goat hunters: Please review the educational material sent to you and make all efforts to harvest a male goat. In 2014, six of the seven goats harvested in the Mount Baker area were billies.



Mountain Goats in Typical Terrain in The Lincoln Peak Area – Photo by Doug Huddle

Beginning with hunting season 2015, a hunter who kills a mountain goat in Washington must present the head with horns attached for inspection within ten days to a WDFW Regional or District office or a location designated by a Department representative. Call a WDFW Regional or District office to schedule an appointment with a biologist for inspection. After inspection, the head/horns of a lawfully harvested mountain goat in Washington may be kept for personal use.

UPLAND BIRD

As mentioned above, District 14, like much of western Washington, has virtually no native upland game species. Both mourning dove and (California) quail harvest is reported for Skagit and Whatcom counties. However, the total harvest is generally fewer than 100 birds per year for either county. The few turkeys reported to WDFW in the region each year are invariably a result of accidental escape or intentional release by private parties. With such small and scattered populations of upland game birds, population dynamics such as winter survival and production cannot be estimated. For similar reasons, it is impractical to relate habitat conditions to population size and hunting opportunity.

The two upland game hunting opportunities that do exist in the district are game-farmed produced pheasants and an ever growing population of Eurasian collared doves.

PHEASANT

Game-farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are mapped on the [Go Hunt](#) website. In Skagit County, WDFW intends to move forward with pheasant release at the Samish Unit this year for the youth and senior hunts only. The three pheasant release sites in Whatcom County are WDFW's Lake Terrell Wildlife Area, Intalco, and British Petroleum release sites. Depending on the site and availability of pheasants, somewhere between 30 and 65 birds are released on a two- or three-day/week schedule. Non-toxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites.

FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed grouse and sooty (formerly called blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 14. Exceptionally warm and dry spring weather has had a positive effect on grouse brood production and survival this season. Sooty grouse in particular have shown up this summer with an abundance of large broods in alpine meadows. A pointing dog and shotgun in a mountain meadow would make for a unique upland hunting experience. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000–3,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands with huckleberry, grouse whortleberry, and other species.

Ruffed grouse tend to occupy deciduous dominant forest types associated with riparian areas, as

well as low elevation conifer forests.



Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500 feet, particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (e.g. 5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Abandoned logging roads provide good habitat for grouse and opportunities for hunting. Be mindful of rules regarding loaded weapons in vehicles and shooting on roadways. Season overlaps make grouse hunting a good diversion when big game is slow. Relaxed firearm restrictions (you can use a rifle or pistol) put the onus on the hunter to make sure of the target and backstop.

EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE

While not a managed game species, Eurasian collared doves (an exotic species) are increasingly common throughout District 14. Locally, this species appears to be growing in size and expanding distribution, which includes both agricultural areas and, increasingly, within urban area neighborhoods. This species can be hunted year-round. The best situation for hunting this species is to seek landowner permission in lowland agricultural areas that have a barnyard

setting, where birds roost in trees, but go to the ground to feed. Hunters should be sure that they are hunting in an area that does not have firearm restrictions and in a manner that is compatible with existing infrastructure (e.g. buildings, farm equipment, power lines).

BAND-TAILED PIGEON

The general trend of decreasing band-tailed pigeon harvest is most likely associated with a decrease in hunter interest. Single day surveys from July 2015 at historic mineral sites in Skagit County suggest the normal abundance of these pigeons is present. The late September season provides an eight to ten day hunting opportunity that coincides with the migration. A migratory bird authorization card is required and the daily limit is two birds. One solid strategy is to target managed forest lands with mixed stand age classes that provide feeding areas with adjacent roosting areas. Band-tailed pigeons have strong affinities for the same areas, so scouting before your hunt is important.

WATERFOWL

DABBLING DUCKS

More waterfowl are harvested in Region 4 than any other region in the state, with District 14 providing some of the best waterfowl hunting opportunities in the region. In 2014, Skagit County was again the state's second best duck producing county (following Grant County). Total harvest in 2014–15 was 47,752, up about 17% from the 2013–14.

Harvest in Whatcom County in 2014–15 was 27,516, up 15% from 2013–14. Reports from breeding areas important to our area indicate a good year for brood production, and duck hunting should continue to rebound if good rainfall is present early in the hunting season.



Early season hunting opportunities in District 14 are generally much more favorable on the saltwater marshes. Boat access greatly improves hunting options and prospects. Both private and public uplands in Skagit and Whatcom counties with good food resources (e.g. corn, barley) provide good hunting prospects for dabbling ducks when harsh winter conditions ultimately arrive.

BRANT AND SEA DUCKS

Brant that winter in Padilla Bay mostly belong to a race that nests in a small area in the western Canadian high arctic. These gray-bellied birds resemble east coast brant more than typical western black brant. Because of their limited nesting and wintering grounds this population is vulnerable to over harvest. In the past, if surveys showed there were fewer than six thousand birds in Skagit County, the season was canceled. After two years of low reproduction, numbers fell below this threshold and the season in January of 2015 was cancelled.

For this coming season, it has been decided that if survey numbers fall between 3,000 and 6,000, a shortened season will be held. The season for this specialized hunt would be on some weekends and Wednesdays in January and will be announced when finalized. Brant hunters also have opportunities to harvest sea ducks, including harlequin and long-tailed ducks, as well as scoters. A special migratory bird authorization card is required to hunt both brant and sea ducks.



LESSER SNOW GEESE

As one of the mainstays of Skagit waterfowling, snow goose hunting provides yet another alternative to dabblers in District 14. Harvest of snow geese from the Washington State component of this population has declined over the past two years. While about 5800 birds were harvested in both 2012–13 and 2013–14, only 2758 were harvested in 2014–15. Low numbers of juvenile birds (indicating a poor breeding season) was probably to blame for last year’s low harvest. To a large extent, the harvest rate of snow geese is tied to the proportion of juvenile birds that arrive from their Siberian breeding grounds. Reports from the breeding grounds on Wrangell Island indicate high reproductive success this summer, and we expect record numbers of juvenile birds for the upcoming hunting season.



Another important contributing factor is the fact that the distribution of snow geese in the Skagit has been undergoing changes as these white geese adapt to changing land use and crop conditions.

Hunters interested in harvesting snow geese will also have to adapt and work to stay ahead of the game. It is critical to gain access before the season (be prepared for landowners to say no). Early season is the best time to lure geese (particularly juveniles) with decoys. Corn stubble has become the early season favorite. As the season progresses, the diet appears to diversify with everything from winter wheat to hay/silage fields to potatoes. Public and private land on Fir Island remains the center of abundance for snows in District 14. However, geese continue to spend time in areas on either side of Interstate 5 north of Burlington and also in the Edison area. Be sure to have permission before hunting private lands and be aware of special snow goose hunting rules for Skagit County.

For a thorough discussion on how and where to hunt waterfowl, see [“Let’s Go Waterfowling!”](#)

HUNTER ACCESS

Access on private lands for big game hunting opportunities remains limited. Because of past experience with theft, vandalism, dumping, and other problems, private industrial timber companies generally do not allow vehicular access. Many limit access to walk-in only, while some do not allow access of any kind. With less hunting pressure, this can result in good hunting opportunities for those willing to use bicycles or hike behind locked gates.

One exception to this is Sierra Pacific Industries, which owns significant private industrial timber lands in Skagit and Whatcom counties. A landowner access agreement between Sierra Pacific and WDFW continues to facilitate hunter access for limited-entry bull elk and spring bear permit holders. For 2015, WDFW staff will also facilitate access on Sierra Pacific's lands for spring bear, elk, and the modern firearm black-tailed deer quality buck permit holders.

Weyerhaeuser has recently acquired lands formerly owned by Longview Timber throughout western Washington. This includes inholdings in Skagit and Whatcom counties. Weyerhaeuser has also indicated that it is their intent to convert all of the lands to a fee access management system, wherein hunters would have to apply for and purchase a permit to access their lands. At this time, the situation in District 14 remains unclear.

The Private Lands Access Program working out of the La Conner Field Office has once again negotiated access for hunters on dozens of private properties throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties. The program currently has 58 sites lined up on private lands for the upcoming waterfowl season (34 in Skagit County and 24 in Whatcom). Many of these are sites that landowners have again enrolled in this program, while others are new. These sites offer either "open field" or "blind only" hunting, primarily targeting dabbling ducks. While most of these sites are first-come first-served, several will be enrolled in the Register to Hunt and Hunt by Reservation access systems. Private Lands personnel have worked with landowners to implement food plots at some sites to provide additional forage for ducks. For those lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, this can generate some excellent hunting.



More information about individual sites, including maps and access rules, as well as the program in general, may be found at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/. Waterfowl hunt units on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every unit will be available on opening day.

In addition, WDFW’s Private Lands staff has developed and enhanced hunting opportunities on WDFW lands. This includes five sites on the Bay View and Edison parcels managed by Skagit Wildlife Area.

PUBLIC LANDS

For big game, hunter access to Washington Department of Natural Resource lands decreased slightly in Whatcom County. Access to the Van Zandt dike has been restricted by the DNR to manage vehicle access during times of active logging. At the time that this report was prepared, DNR officials indicated that this will be the case for at least a portion of time this winter.

US Forest Service lands offer some vehicular access throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties. Many road systems have been closed due to flood related damage, and some roads are subject to seasonal road closures. The Forest Service is currently in a planning process to decommission or

abandon a significant portion of its managed road network on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Ultimately, this will further restrict vehicular access to upper elevation habitats for big game and forest grouse hunting.

Among the WDFW owned and managed lands in District 14, waterfowl hunters should look to the Skagit Headquarters Unit, Samish Unit (also known as the Welts property), Debay Reserve, Tennant Lake, and Lake Terrell Wildlife Areas. All of these sites are managed for waterfowl and provide walk-in and/or boat access. Some blinds are also available.

2015

BRYAN MURPHIE, Wildlife Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 15 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Mason, Kitsap, and East Jefferson Counties

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DISTRICT 15 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 15 is located in Region 6 and consists of all or portions of six game management units (GMUs): 621 (Olympic), 624 (Coyle), 627 (Kitsap), 633 (Mason), 636 (Skokomish), and 651 (Satsop). A portion of GMUs 621 and 624 fall within District 16. Administratively, District 15 includes Mason, Kitsap, and East Jefferson counties, and is one of four districts (11, 15, 16, and 17) that collectively comprise the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) Region 6.

The landscape in District 15 is dominated by industrial forest land and the most common habitat is characterized by multi-aged forests consisting primarily of Douglas fir and red alder. However, other habitats do occur, ranging from alpine in areas adjacent to Olympic National Park to marine in areas within the Salish Sea.

A range of hunting opportunities are available in District 15, including elk, deer, bear, cougar, mountain goat, waterfowl, including sea ducks, and grouse. Also, a variety of small game species like rabbit, quail, coyote, and bobcat are present. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest for most game species in District 15 during the 2014 hunting season, and how those estimates compare to the 2013 season and the five-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

Species	Harvest		
	5-yr avg.	2013	2014
Elk	30	28	34
Deer	1,653	1,530	1,660
Bear	91	70	61
Cougar	8	14	10
Ducks	6,858	6,898	5,164
Canada Goose	361	510	466
Snipe	18	0	24
Grouse	2,902	1,893	2,257
Mourning Dove	207	574	0
Quail	32	37	12
Snowshoe Hare	4	11	0
Cottontail Rabbit	112	120	54

TABLE 1. ESTIMATES OF THE 2013, 2014, AND 5-YR AVERAGE ANNUAL HARVEST FOR MOST GAME SPECIES HUNTED IN DISTRICT 15 ARE SHOWN. WATERFOWL AND SMALL GAME HARVEST TOTALS WERE TABULATED FROM ALL OF MASON, KITSAP AND JEFFERSON COUNTIES.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

All elk that occur in District 15 are Roosevelt elk. District 15 contains those portions of the Olympic elk herd occurring in GMUs 621, 624, 633, 636 and 651. GMU 627 is not included in any elk herd plan and no known elk herds currently occur in this unit. The quality of elk hunting in District 15 can generally be described as fair. GMU 651 provides the only general season elk hunting opportunity in the district, while elk hunting in GMUs 621 and 636 are by permit only. Elk in GMU 624 primarily reside near the town of Sequim in District 16. GMU 651 is managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing elk numbers while also minimizing negative elk-human interactions, including elk depredation to agricultural crops. GMUs 621 and 636 are managed with the primary goal of increasing elk numbers while also minimizing negative elk-human interactions, including elk depredation to agricultural crops. Management of the Sequim herd in GMUs 621 and 624 is primarily based on minimizing negative elk-human interactions, including elk depredation to agricultural crops.



Elk in the District 15 portion of GMU 621 can primarily be found along the main river valleys, including the Dosewallips, Duckabush, Hamma Hamma, Lilliwaup, and North Fork Skokomish rivers. Elk in the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers either remain in the lower river valleys and on adjacent valley ridges year round or migrate to their summer range in the Olympic National Park. The Hamma Hamma and Lilliwaup herds are generally non-migratory. The North Fork Skokomish herd is primarily resident to the upper North Fork Skokomish River valley in the Olympic National Park above Lake Cushman, often wintering near the northern end of Lake Cushman before migrating to summer range in the Mount Skokomish Wilderness. GMU 621 was closed to all elk hunting in the mid-1990s for conservation reasons and is now open to hunting by permit only. There is not a good estimate of abundance in GMU 621. However, based on herd counts and the increase in elk damage/conflict reports, we are probably at or near our management objective for this unit.

Elk in GMU 636 can primarily be found in the upper Wynoochee River valley, the Skokomish River valley and near the town of Matlock. Although some herds remain non-migratory, migratory movement has been documented from the upper Wynoochee to the Olympic National Park and the North Fork Skokomish River at Lake Cushman, as well as movement up the South Fork Skokomish river valley into the Olympic National Park. GMU 636 was closed to all elk hunting in the mid-1990s for conservation reasons and later opened on a limited basis to hunting by permit only. Although there is not a current estimate, anecdotal data suggests the elk population in GMU 636 is likely below management objectives overall, but in some cases individual herds that primarily occupy private agricultural lands are likely at or above thresholds for elk damage/conflict.

Elk in GMU 651 are distributed across the GMU among roughly 13 non-migratory sub-herds. However, herd size/number remains dynamic. Although we do not have a current estimate, anecdotal data suggests the elk population in GMU 651 is likely below management objectives overall, but in some cases individual herds that primarily occupy private agricultural lands are likely at or above thresholds for elk damage/conflict.

Additionally, the WDFW management goal is to maintain 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows in the pre-season or 12 to 20 bulls per 100 cows in the post-season (WDFW 2015). Ideally, bull ratios would be collected when all age-classes of bulls are freely intermixed with cows, providing the least biased estimate of bull to cow ratios. However, the ability to sight bulls can be influenced by bull behavior. During pre- and post-rut periods, mature bulls are often segregated from cow/calf groups, reducing the likelihood of their detection during aerial surveys. Conversely, during the rut mature bulls may exclude other bulls from cow/calf groups due to social intolerance of rutting bulls toward each other. Thus bull to cow ratios collected during pre- and post-season surveys are likely minimum estimates. Bull to cow ratios in District 15 were at or below management objectives in recent years, averaging 38:100 cows in the fall and 29:100 cows in the spring for GMU 621, including the Sequim herd, 20: and 18:100 cows in the fall and spring, respectively in GMU 636, and 15: and 14:100 cows in the fall and spring, respectively in GMU 651.

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](#).

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?



Photo Courtesy of A. Lund, a successful GMU 636 elk hunter.

Hunting is influenced by multiple factors, including elk abundance, weather, land access, hunting pressure, and hunting season regulations. Most elk hunting in District 15 is by permit designed to minimize hunting pressure or for safety reasons. In 2015, permits are available for all three weapon types to hunt in GMUs 621 (29 bull permits) and 636 (11 bull permits). Most elk hunting in GMU 624 is accomplished through the Master Hunter program targeting the Sequim herd. General season hunting during the archery and modern firearm seasons is allowed in GMU 651,

including a 3-point minimum or antlerless season in Elk Area 6061 for archery hunters. In 2015, a general late-season muzzleloader elk hunt was added to GMU 651. Although both GMUs 627 and 633 are open for general season elk hunting, hunters should avoid these GMUs as no recent observations of elk have been reported for these units.

Hunting pressure is lowest in GMU 636 and highest in GMU 651. Many of the elk herds spend a considerable amount of time on small private land parcels often associated with pastures, so access to hunt may be limited in some areas. Further, local timber companies are starting to require an access permit to hunt their timber lands. For hunters looking for areas with the least amount of pressure and little to no private land access issues, we recommend applying for an elk permit in GMU 636 and hunting the upper Wynoochee valley area or in GMU 621 and hunting mostly DNR land near the Lilliwaup Swamp. Both of these areas will require some effort to hunt, as motorized access is often limited, but because of this the hunting pressure can be lighter.

Tribal hunting occurs in all three GMUs and often accounts for 50% or more of the total elk harvest in District 15 (see Figure 2), so the actual hunting pressure in these units is greater than WDFW hunting season statistics and permit levels might suggest.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Elk and hunter numbers are not likely to fluctuate dramatically between years and the 2015 hunting season regulations and permit levels have not changed much. There are 29 permits available for GMU 621 hunters (eight archery, four muzzleloader, and 17 modern firearm). Average hunter success in this unit can be a little misleading because of the small permit levels, but five-year averages by weapon type are 22% success for archery, 27% for muzzleloaders, and 37% for modern firearm hunters. Actual success has been reported as low as 0% in some years.

There are 11 permits available for GMU 636 elk hunters (five archery, three muzzleloader, and three modern firearm). Average hunter success in this unit can be a little misleading because of the small permit levels, but five-year averages by weapon type are 17% for archery, 0% for muzzleloaders, and 30% for rifle hunters. Actual success is often 0% in some years. General season hunting during the archery and modern firearm seasons is allowed in GMU 651, including a 3-point minimum or antlerless season in Elk Area 6061 for archery hunters. New in 2015, a late-muzzleloader season was added to GMU 651 and the one quality bull permit available to rifle hunters in GMU 651 was dropped.

The number of elk harvested in GMUs 621, 624, 636, and 651 is shown in Figure 2, while general season trend data for hunter numbers and success in GMU 651 is presented in Figures 3 and 4.

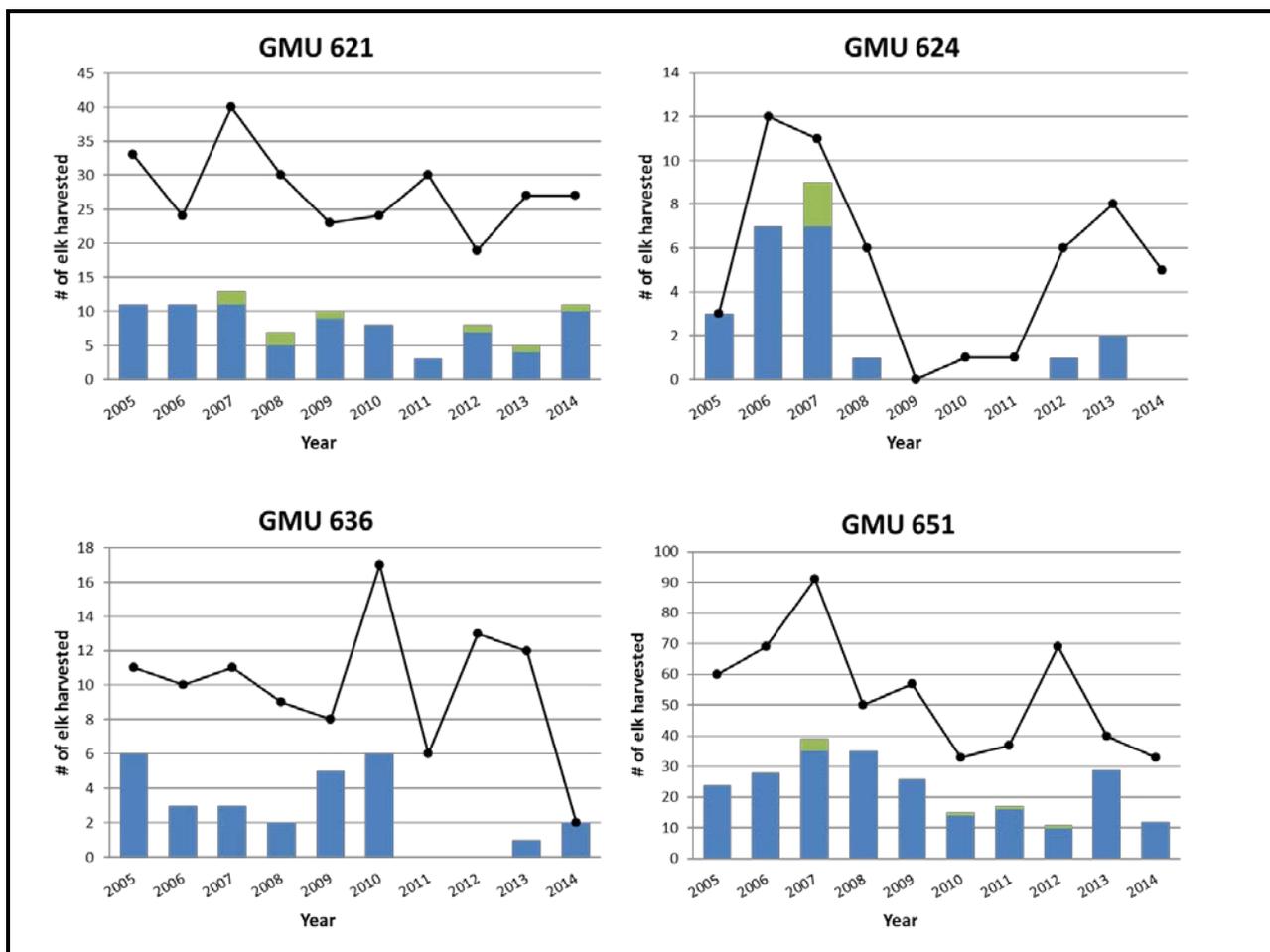


FIGURE 2. THE NUMBER OF BULL (BLUE) AND COW (GREEN) ELK HARVESTED DURING STATE PERMIT SEASONS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF ELK HARVESTED FROM ALL SOURCES (BLACK LINE) IN GMUS 621, 624, 636, AND 651 DURING 2005–2014. TRIBAL HARVEST WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2014.

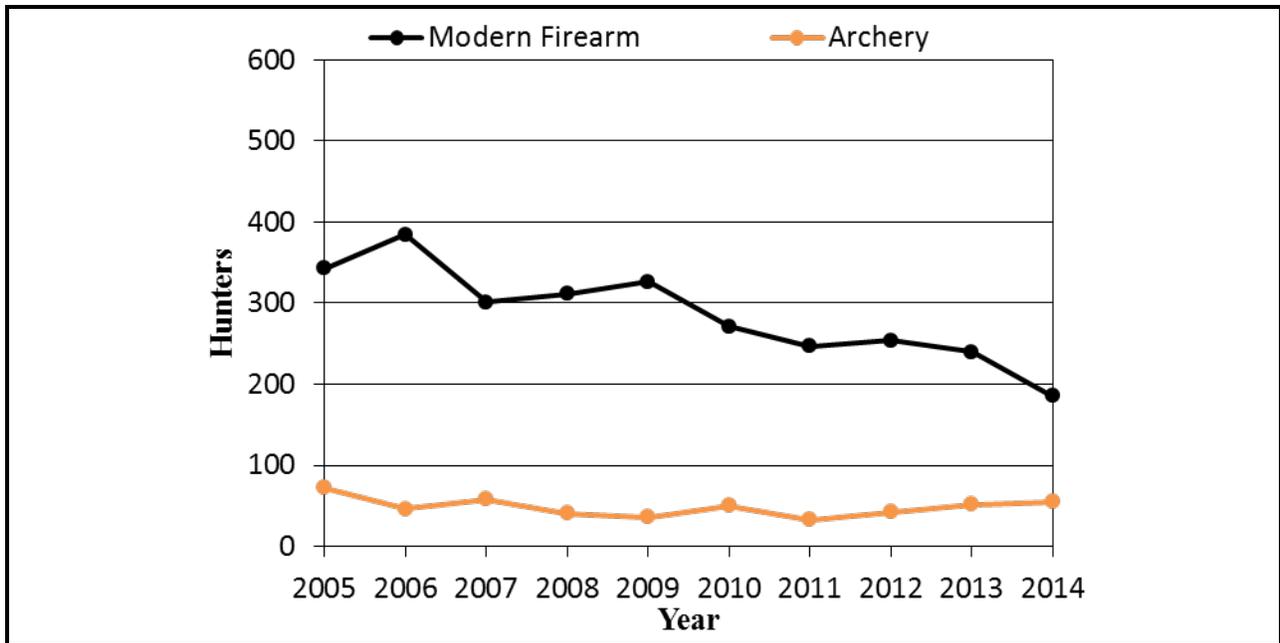


FIGURE 3. TRENDS IN ELK HUNTER NUMBERS DURING THE GENERAL MODERN FIREARM AND ARCHERY SEASONS IN GMU 651, 2005–2014.

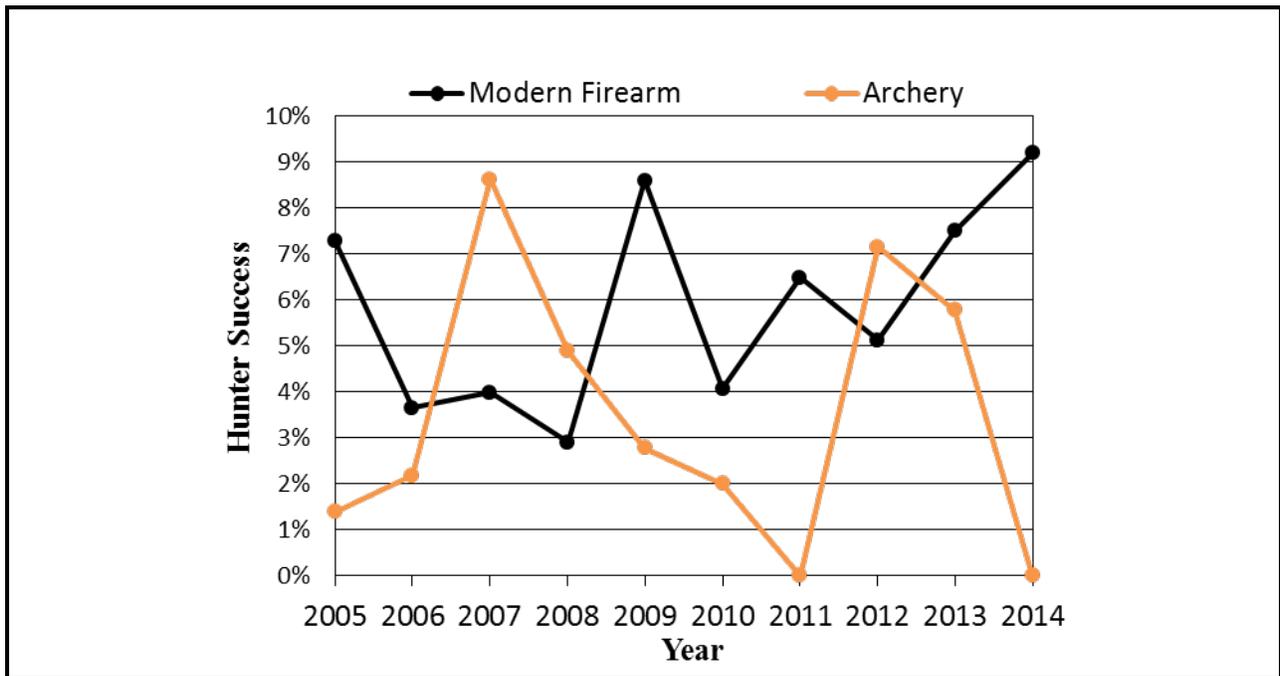


FIGURE 4. TRENDS IN HUNTER SUCCESS RATES DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM AND ARCHERY ELK SEASONS IN GMU 651, 2005–2014.

ELK AREAS

There are two Elk Areas that occur in District 15: Elk Area 6061 (Twin Satsop) and Elk Area 6071 (Dungeness). Elk Area 6061 was established primarily to aid in addressing chronic elk damage issues, while Elk Area 6071 was established to limit elk hunting for safety reasons.

Current hunting regulations allow the harvest of 3-point minimum bull or antlerless elk during the general early archery season in Elk Area 6061, while elk hunting in EA 6071 is usually conducted through the Master Hunter program on a limited basis.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Notable hunting changes for the 2015 season include:

1. The number of archery permits in GMU 621 was decreased to eight permits
2. The number of modern firearm permits in GMU 621 was increased to 17 permits
3. The number of muzzleloader permits in GMU 636 was increased to three permits
4. The number of archery permits in GMU 636 was increased to five permits
5. A late-season muzzleloader hunt was added to GMU 651.
6. The one Quality Bull permit in GMU 651 was dropped.
7. Private timber companies in District 15 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.

BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

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. Elk afflicted with hoof disease commonly show severely overgrown and deformed hooves, as well as 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. Although most reports have come from areas south of District 15, reports of limping elk have been recorded in District 15 and WDFW has confirmed the presence of hoof disease in one elk from GMU 651.

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/) or by [clicking here](#).

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



Black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) are the only species of deer that occur in District 15. They are managed to maintain productive populations, while providing for multiple uses, including recreational, educational, and aesthetic (WDFW Game Management Plan 2008). District 15 includes all or portions of GMUs 621, 624, 627, 633, 636, and 651. Buck harvest is generally any antlered buck, although the Skokomish (636)

GMU has been managed as a 2-point or better unit. Beginning in 2015, the 2-point minimum restriction will be lifted from GMU 636. Antlerless harvest is limited to certain weapon types and/or by permit.

Overlapping with the early archery season, the Olympic Wilderness areas in District 15 are also open to modern firearm and muzzleloader hunters during the High Buck hunt. We don't have good data to estimate either participation or success during this hunt, but assume both are quite low in comparison to general season hunting. Harvest is restricted to 3-point minimum bucks.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 15. 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.

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?

In 2015, there are ample general season deer hunting opportunities for archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm hunters in District 15 (Table 2). Field observations and recent harvest trends suggest good deer hunting potential exists in GMUs 621, 627, and 633. GMU 651 remains a popular hunting unit.

Good deer hunting can be found in lower elevation habitats in GMU 636, but deer density in this unit appears to decline at higher elevations; we suspect this is largely related to habitat quality and available forage.

2015 General Deer Seasons						
GMU	Modern Firearm		Archery		Muzzleloader	
	Early	Late	Early	Late	Early	Late
621	Oct. 17-31, Any buck	Nov. 19-22, Any Buck	Sep. 1-30, Any Deer	Closed	Closed	Nov 25-Dec 15, Any Buck
624	Oct. 17-31, Any buck	Nov. 19-22, Any Buck	Sep. 1-30, Any Deer	Nov. 25-Dec 31, Any Deer	Oct 3-11, Any Buck	Closed
627	Oct. 17-31, Any buck	Nov. 19-22, Any Buck	Sep. 1-30, Any Deer	Nov. 25-Dec 31, Any Deer	Oct 3-11, Any Deer	Closed
633	Oct. 17-31, Any buck	Nov. 19-22, Any Buck	Sep. 1-30, Any Deer	Closed	Closed	Nov. 25-Dec. 15, Any Deer
636	Oct. 17-31, Any buck	Nov. 19-22, Any buck	Sep. 1-30, Any Deer	Nov. 25-Dec 31-31, Any Deer	Oct 3-11, Any Buck	Closed
651	Oct. 17-31, Any buck	Nov. 19-22, Any Buck	Sep. 1-30, Any Deer	Closed	Closed	Nov. 25-Dec. 15, Any Buck

TABLE 2. 2015 GENERAL HUNTING SEASONS AND LEGAL DEER DESCRIPTIONS FOR GMUS 621, 624, 627, 633, 636, AND 651.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

It is typically uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 15 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 to the 2014 season.

Hunter numbers also typically do not change dramatically from one year to the next, unless there is a dramatic shift in hunting regulations or access. 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 15 and what they can expect to encounter with regard to hunter success and hunter numbers.

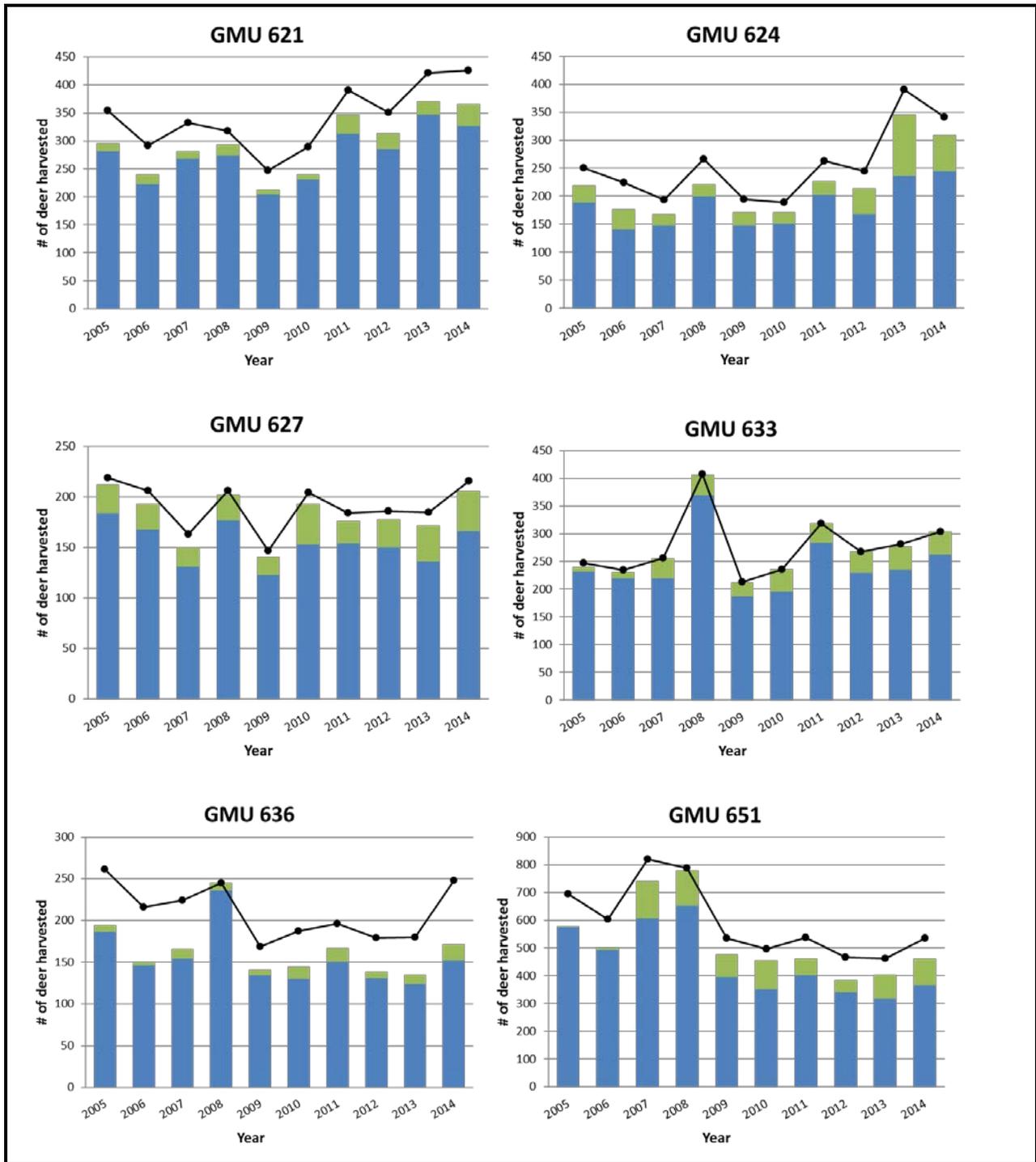


FIGURE 5. TRENDS IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BUCK (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS (GREEN) DEER HARVESTED DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER DEER

SEASONS COMBINED, 2005–2014. TOTAL DEER HARVEST (BLACK LINE) INCLUDES HARVEST FROM ALL SOURCES. 2014 DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY TRIBAL HARVEST.



FIGURE 6. TRENDS IN HUNTER NUMBERS DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), AND MUZZLELOADER (RED) DEER SEASONS IN DISTRICT 15, 2005–2014.

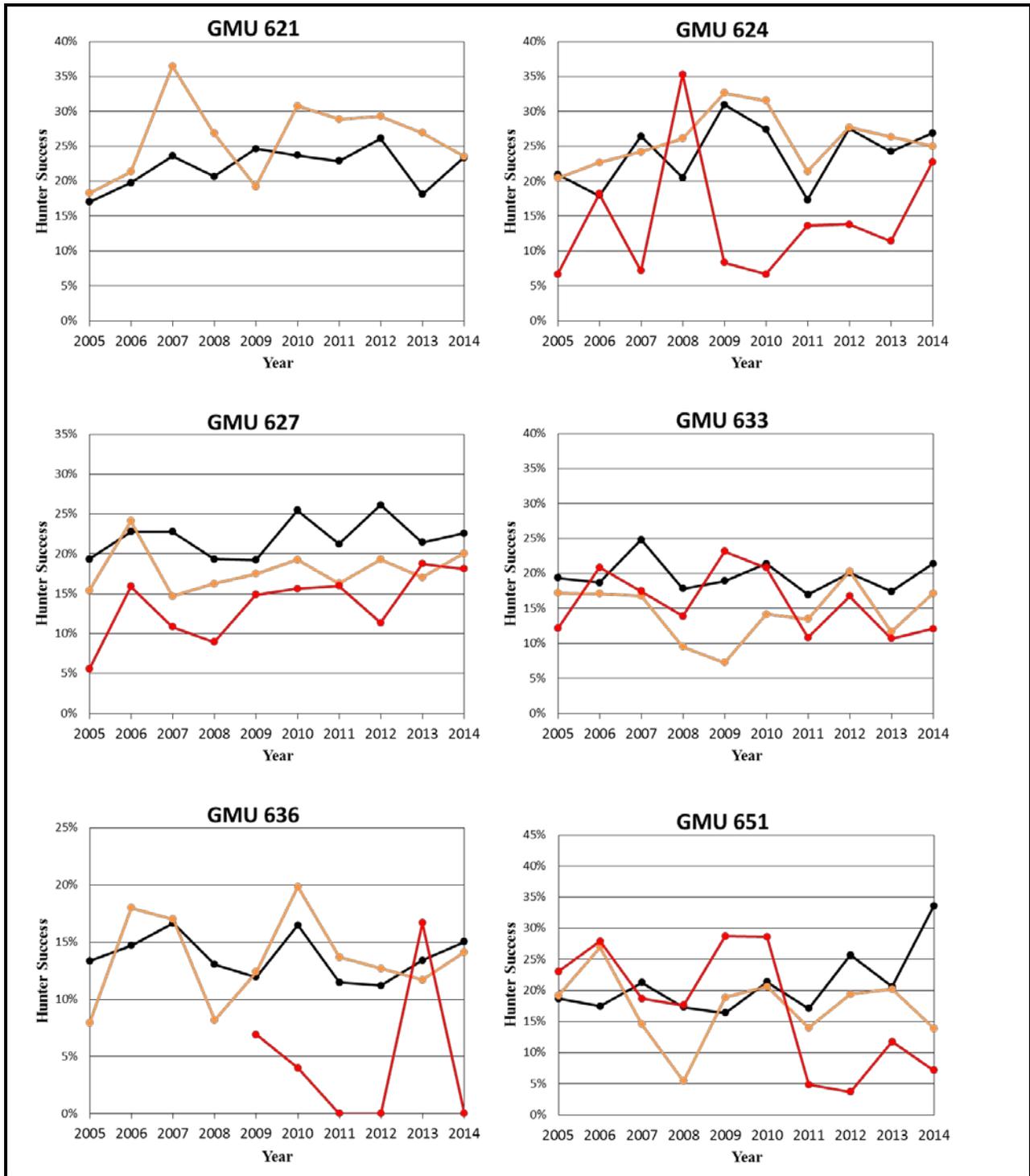


FIGURE 7. TRENDS IN HUNTER SUCCESS RATES DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), AND MUZZLELOADER (RED) DEER SEASONS IN DISTRICT 15, 2005–2014.



DEER AREAS

Deer Area 6020 is located in GMU 624 and was established primarily to aid in addressing chronic damage issues and is open to general season any deer harvest for all three weapon-type user groups. Additionally, 40 second deer permits are available for archery hunters in this area.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. The two-point minimum restriction was lifted from GMU 636.
2. To avoid an overlap in weapon types during the late season, the late muzzleloader hunt was dropped from GMU 627 and the late archery season was dropped from GMU 633.
3. The early archery season was extended to the end of September,
4. The early muzzleloader season shifts to October 3-11.
5. Private timber companies in District 15 are going to fee access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Hunters are advised to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the company’s current policy.
6. A number of changes were made to special deer permits for the 2015 Hunting Season (Table 3):

GMU	Antlerless Modern	Antlerless Muzzle	Youth Modern	65+ Muzzle	Disabled Modern	Disabled Muzzle	2014 #
621	35	40	20	20	10	15	60
624 ¹			10				0
627			10				20
633	15	20	10	10	5	5	0
636	10	10	5	5			25
651	30	30	15	15	10	10	110

TABLE 3. SPECIAL PERMITS AVAILABLE FOR GMUS 621, 624, 627, 633, 636, AND 651 IN 2015.

¹Excludes Deer Area 6020 2nd Deer Permits

MOUNTAIN GOAT

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



Mountain goats were introduced into the Olympic National Park (ONP) from Alaska in the 1920s. During the 1980s, the Olympic National Park relocated 407 goats to other ranges outside the Olympics, and from 1983 until 1997, 119 goats were taken outside the ONP during legal hunting seasons (Jenkins et al). WDFW closed the Olympic goat hunt in 1997. The most recent estimate of goat abundance for the ONP indicates the population has rebounded since the relocation efforts and was estimated to be 344 ± 72 in 2011 and increasing (Jenkins

et al). WDFW and USFS conducted goat surveys on the eastern front of the Olympic range in areas primarily outside the ONP, and returned a sightability corrected estimate of 66 (90% CI: 51-81) total goats in 2012 and 94 (90% CI: 82-112) total goats in 2014.

A permit hunt was established in 2014 with two designated hunt areas in the eastern Olympics, the Brothers and Mount Washington hunt units. A total of six permits were distributed between the two hunt units and two adult nannies were reported taken during these permit hunts in 2014. Tribal hunting pressure remains relatively low.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

All of the Olympic goat permits were transferred to a new Conflict Reduction Mountain Goat Special Permit category. Olympic Goat hunt units, Mount Washington and the Brothers, were combined into one large unit called the East Olympic Mountains A and B. Six goat permits will be offered during the 2015 hunting season divided between two goat seasons: early, Sept. 15-25, and late, Sept. 26 – Oct. 5. These permit hunts should be viewed as management hunts, with the principal management objective to reduce goat numbers in areas where conflicts are occurring and in areas adjacent to the ONP. As with any mountain goat hunt, hunters can expect rugged, strenuous hunting conditions as they pursue goats in the designated Olympic goat hunt unit. Although we have little current information on goat distribution and movement, based on our most recent surveys we suggest hunters focus efforts near Mount Ellinor, Mount Washington, Mount Pershing, or the Brothers.

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears occur throughout District 15, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a black bear likely occur in GMUs 621, 627, and 636.

District 15 consists of GMUs that are part of the Coastal Black Bear Management Unit (BBMU) (GMUs 621, 636, and 651) and GMUs that are part of the Puget Sound BBMU (GMUs 624, 627, and 633). The current black bear hunting season guidelines for these BBMUs are designed to maintain black bear populations at their current level. 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. The black bear hunting season for all District 15 units is August 1 to November 15, 2015. There are no spring bear hunts in this district. Hunters can purchase up to two bear tags during each license year.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

The majority of bear harvest in District 15 comes from hunters killing a bear opportunistically while hunting other species like deer and elk, although some hunters do specifically hunt bears. Hunter success in District 15 has averaged 6% in the Coastal BBMU and 7% in the Puget Sound BBMU over the last five years. 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 15 has declined during the last two hunting seasons in both the Coastal and Puget Sound BBMUs (Figure 8). At the GMU level, most bears will be harvested in GMUs 621 and 627 (Figure 9). Overall, we expect similar harvest and success rates during the 2015 season.

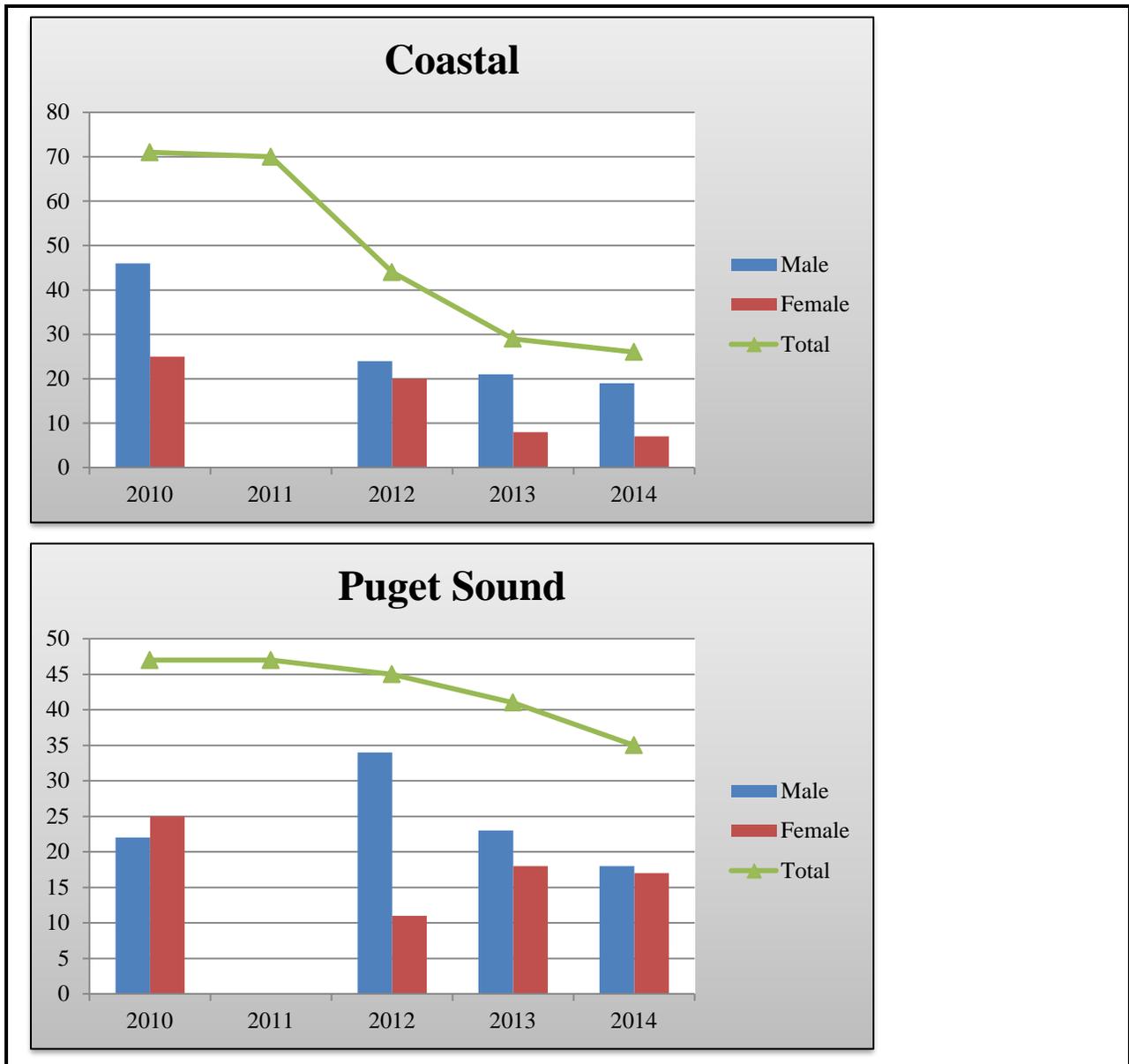


FIGURE 8. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 15, 2009–2014. BEARS REMOVED FOR SAFETY REASONS ARE NOT INCLUDED. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

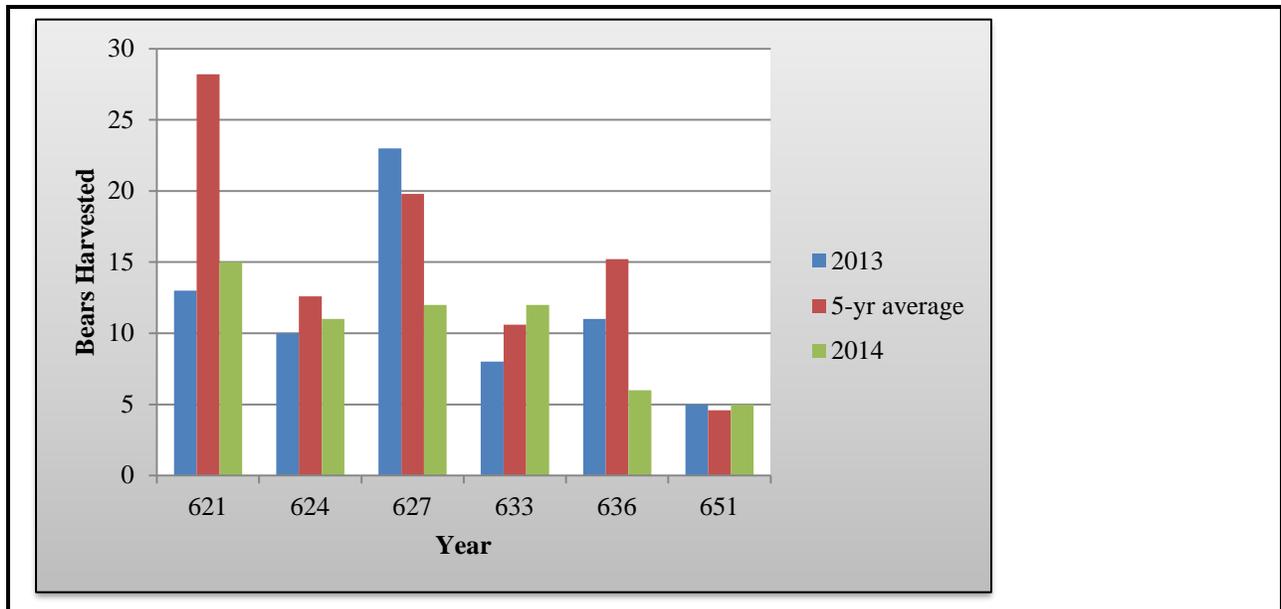


FIGURE 9. THE NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU DURING THE 2013 AND 2014 SEASONS IN DISTRICT 15. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE FOR TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED IN EACH GMU.

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are no notable changes for the 2015 season.



COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars occur throughout District 15 and hunting seasons are established with the primary objective of maintaining a stable cougar population. Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed to a standardized approach for establishing harvest guidelines based on habitat availability and a standard general season. 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.

WDFW established a series of hunt areas with standard early season dates of September 1

through December 31 and late season dates from January 1 to April 30 or when the harvest guideline is reached, whichever comes first. 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 guidelines for each Hunt Area located in District 15 are provided in Table 4.

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

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline 2015	Harvest Guideline 2014	2014-2015 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	4-5	1
642, 648, 651	6-8	6-8	6
621, 624, 627, 633	None	None	5

TABLE 4. HARVEST GUIDELINES AND THE REPORTED 2014-15 HARVEST FOR THE 3 COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 15.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Most cougar harvest comes from opportunistic encounters while hunters are pursuing deer, elk, or other activities, meaning total cougar harvest in District 15 can vary from year to year (Figure 11). Since 2005, the number of cougars harvested annually in District 15 has averaged seven.

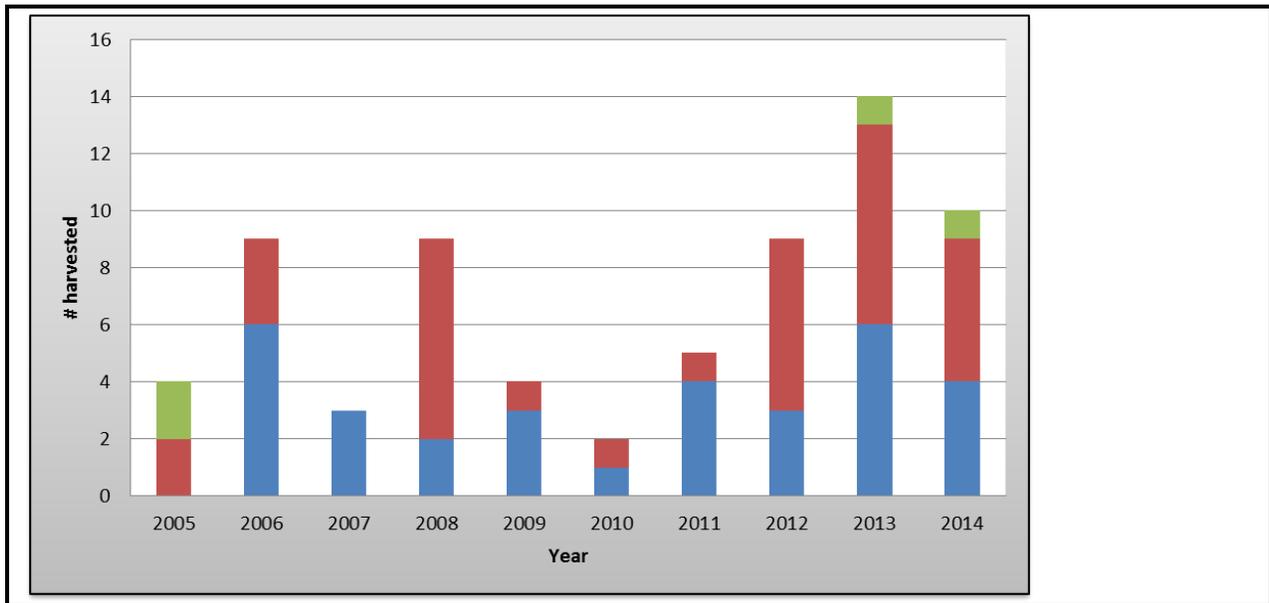


FIGURE 11. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MALE (BLUE), FEMALE (RED), AND COUGARS OF UNDETERMINED SEX (GREEN) HARVESTED IN DISTRICT 15, 2005–2014.

NOTABLE CHANGES

The late season dates were extended by one month to include April 2016; however, a 2016 cougar license will be required to hunt cougars in April.

DUCKS

COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 15. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, and common goldeneye are also present on fresh and salt water. Nesting wood ducks can be located throughout the district early in the season and can provide a unique hunting opportunity. Sea ducks including scoters, Barrow’s goldeneye, long-tailed ducks (formerly oldsquaws), canvasbacks, and harlequin ducks occur in Hood Canal, as well as other saltwater areas.

Mallards are the most abundant species of duck in Washington and constitute the vast majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically $\geq 50\%$). However, the most abundant species of duck in District 15 is American wigeon.

POPULATION STATUS

Although some mallards and wood ducks nest in the district, the number of ducks that occur in District 15 during the hunting seasons is most strongly related to the status of breeding duck populations in Alaska. The 2015 breeding population survey estimated the breeding population for mallards in Alaska and Canada was similar to last year but above the long term average. The numbers of breeding birds in Washington was up 9% over last year and 11% over the long term average.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

With an increase in the breeding population in Alaska, hunters should expect great hunting opportunities in District 15 during the 2014 season. As in recent years, hunter success will be largely driven by rainfall and storm events during the waterfowl season. A lack of flooded farm fields can sharply reduce hunting opportunity in District 15.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Public hunting access exists at the mouths of the Duckabush, Quilcene and Union rivers. Many of the undeveloped lakes and marshes on the Tahuya Peninsula's DNR land offer an untapped and remote walk-in hunting opportunity for mallards, ringnecks, and scaup. Check the WDFW website for locations and restrictions as the season nears.

Due to extensive residential development on the shorelines, saltwater hunting opportunities are limited, especially in Kitsap County. Always check with the Sheriff's Department for county shooting closures before hunting.

Also, be sure to check the 2015 Migratory Waterfowl Regulation Pamphlet for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin and goldeneye) in Western Washington [by clicking here](#).

GEESE

COMMON SPECIES

The sub-species of Canada geese that are most likely to be found in District 15 include western, lesser, Taverner's, and cackler. White-fronted and occasionally snow geese can also be encountered. The goose most likely to be harvested is the larger western, which breeds in the district and can be found year around.

POPULATION STATUS

Like ducks, goose numbers in the district are largely driven by weather. The more severe the weather, the more likely we are to see the northern subspecies in our area. The local westerns are stable or slightly increasing.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

Goose hunting opportunities in District 15 are expected to be similar to trends observed during the last few seasons. Most geese are taken on private farm fields and securing permission is essential. When funding exists, WDFW biologists attempt to lease fields that regularly attract waterfowl.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Same as that listed under ducks.

FOREST GROUSE

SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Although grouse occur throughout the district, Mason County offers the most opportunity for the hunter. The Olympic National Forest and Skokomish valley are two of the more popular grouse hunting areas. Blue (sooty) grouse tend to occur in the coniferous forests at higher elevations while ruffed grouse can occur throughout the district in coniferous as well as mixed forests. In the fall, either species can be found in clearcuts feeding on berries from salal, Oregon grape, and huckleberry.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not conduct any standardized or formal surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 15. 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 so CPUE is the best indicator of population trend. Unfortunately, Jefferson County is split with another district, so getting actual harvest data and hunter numbers from the hunter reports is impossible. However, field observations by district biologists suggest that populations will be similar to last year.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

The total number of grouse harvested in District 15 has gradually been declining since 2005 (Figure 12).



However, hunter numbers have declined as well, especially over the past few years. There can be several reasons for this, but the high cost of gasoline and reduced access to private timberlands has certainly affected hunter participation. Still, hunters should be able to find some excellent grouse hunting in District 15, particularly as the mild spring weather this year should be favorable to grouse chick survival.

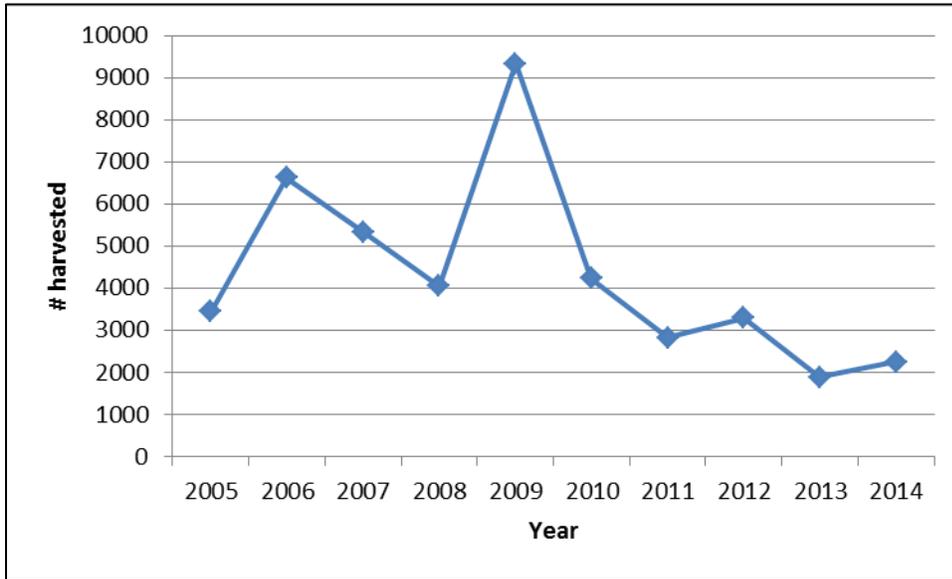


FIGURE 12. THE REPORTED NUMBER OF GROUSE HARVESTED IN JEFFERSON, KITSAP AND MASON COUNTIES DURING 2005 – 2014.

PHEASANTS

There are no viable populations of wild pheasants in District 15. All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 15 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 three of those sites (Hunter Farms, Belfair, and the Sgt. Mak site) occur in District 15.

Release site locations can be found at GoHunt on the WDFW website or at the Peninsula Birdhunters Association website at <http://birdhunters.homestead.com/>. The new Sgt. Mak release site near Mason Lake replaced the Grapeview site in 2014. Maps and information will be available later this summer at the above websites.

QUAIL

District 15 contains the largest population of mountain quail in the state. Although frustratingly unpredictable, they are most likely to be found in two- to six-year-old clearcuts, under power

lines, and in tall stands of scotch broom throughout Mason and Kitsap counties. Their tendency to run rather than fly or hold for a pointing dog makes them an especially challenging upland game bird. Locations to try include the DNR parcels on the Tahuya Peninsula northwest of Belfair and the industrial timberlands between Shelton, Matlock, and McCleary. Walk-in opportunities are also numerous on timber company clearcuts around Mason Lake. The time to scout is in the spring and early summer when the males are quite vocal.

TURKEYS

The turkeys that can be found in District 15 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 15. Occasionally single birds are spotted but this district cannot be recommended as a place to bag a turkey.

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. July counts in 2015 showed a slight increase over last year.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

Band-tailed pigeon harvest in District 15, 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 15 occurs mostly in Mason County, which averages 48 birds taken per year.

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 five to ten 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.

Totals from two surveys at mineral spring sites along Hood Canal this July were similar to past years at one site and higher at the other.

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 2015 as well. Hunters will have a nine-day season from September 15 through 23.

Hunters should review the 2015 Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet to confirm season dates, harvest reporting, and any other regulation changes.

OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES



Other small game species and furbearers that occur in District 15, but were not covered in detail include eastern cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hares, coyotes, beaver, bobcat, raccoons, river otter, marten, mink, muskrat, and weasels. Additional migratory birds include snipe and coot. Crows are also abundant in District 15.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Unfortunately, District 15 is not well known for its large amount of public land opportunities. However, public land opportunities do exist on lands administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

New in 2014 was 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>.

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

GENERAL INFORMATION

The vast majority of hunting opportunities, especially for big-game and upland birds, occur on private industrial forestlands. 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. There has been an increasing trend among timber companies to restrict public access or require an access permit to hunt or recreate on their lands. Access may also be restricted due the risk of fire danger. This predominately affects early season archery and muzzleloader hunters. All hunters are encouraged to check ahead of time to determine if any landowner restrictions apply to the area they plan to hunt.

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. 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.

Failure to obey landowner rules can result in prosecution for trespass and/or other restrictions from the landowner.

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 15 GMUs. However, type of access varies between motorized and non-motorized access.

The following rating system was developed for District 15 GMUs to give hunters a general idea of what type of access is available in the GMU they are thinking of hunting. 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 GMUs 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. Private timberlands may require an access permit.

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 Montasano (360-249-4628) if they have questions related to hunter access that have not been answered.

GMU 621 – Olympic Access rating = Good

Access in GMU 621 is good for deer hunters and challenging for elk hunters, as most elk are found on lower elevation private lands along the major river valleys. This GMU is a mixture of private timberlands, private lands, DNR, and USFS. Access to USFS land is generally allowed year-round. DNR land is accessible to motorized vehicles or walk-in only in most areas. Green Diamond Resources generally opens some of their gates to motorized access from September to the end of December. However, exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings. For areas behind closed gates on Green Diamond Resources land, access is

by non-motorized means throughout the year. All private agricultural lands require owner permission to hunt.

GMU 624 – Coyle Access rating = Poor

Other than the resident elk herd in the Sequim area, the Coyle Unit is usually considered a deer area. Although there are scattered timberlands that are publicly owned by DNR, most forest lands are privately owned. The largest property manager is Olympic Resource Management which is a division of Pope Resources Company. Maps of their properties can be found at www.orminc.com. Although some DNR and private mainlines may be open to motor vehicles, most hunting access is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicle.

GMU 627 – Kitsap Access rating = Poor

The Kitsap Unit is a highly human developed deer area, with private property throughout. However there is still ample hunting opportunity on forest lands. DNR owns a considerable amount of land in the western part of the unit. Olympic Resource Management (Pope) and Green Diamond Resource Company also have major holdings here. Whether state or private, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles except that DNR allows ATV use on designated trails on some of their land in this unit.

GMU 633 – Mason Access rating = Poor

The Mason Unit is best known as an area for deer. DNR has forestland throughout with extensive holdings on the Tahuya Peninsula. But in the Mason Unit, most of the deer hunting occurs on private property controlled by the Green Diamond Resource Company and the Manke Lumber Company. Whether state or private, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles except that DNR allows ATV use on designated trails on some of their land in this unit.

GMU 636 – Skokomish Access rating = Good

This GMU is a mixture of private timberlands, private lands, and USFS. Elk in this unit are generally found on the lower elevation private agricultural or timberlands. Green Diamond Resources Company is the largest private timberland owner in this unit and they generally open most areas to motorized access from September to the end of December. However exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings. For areas behind closed gates, access is by non-motorized means throughout the year.

Upper elevations and those portions of this GMU in the upper Wynoochee River and Skokomish River Valleys are primarily USFS with most areas open year-round for vehicle access. Some USFS land is gated and closed to motorized access to minimize disturbance to elk.

GMU 651 – Satsop Access Rating = Good trending to Poor

The primary area accessed by hunters is owned by Green Diamond Resources. They generally open some gates to motorized access from September to the end of December. However, exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings. Beginning in

2013, a large portion of their property in this GMU will be open only to those purchasing a recreation access permit. For more information, Green Diamond Resources can be reached at www.greendiamond.com/recreation/ or (360) 427-4737. For other areas behind closed gates, access is by non-motorized means throughout the year.

PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

There are several private landowners in District 15 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 2015 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 on WDFW's Hunter Access website located at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access.

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 15 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.

Parcel ownership can be accessed in all three counties in District 15 by going to their county assessor's webpage and viewing the parcel maps.

WDFW's Go Hunt Tool

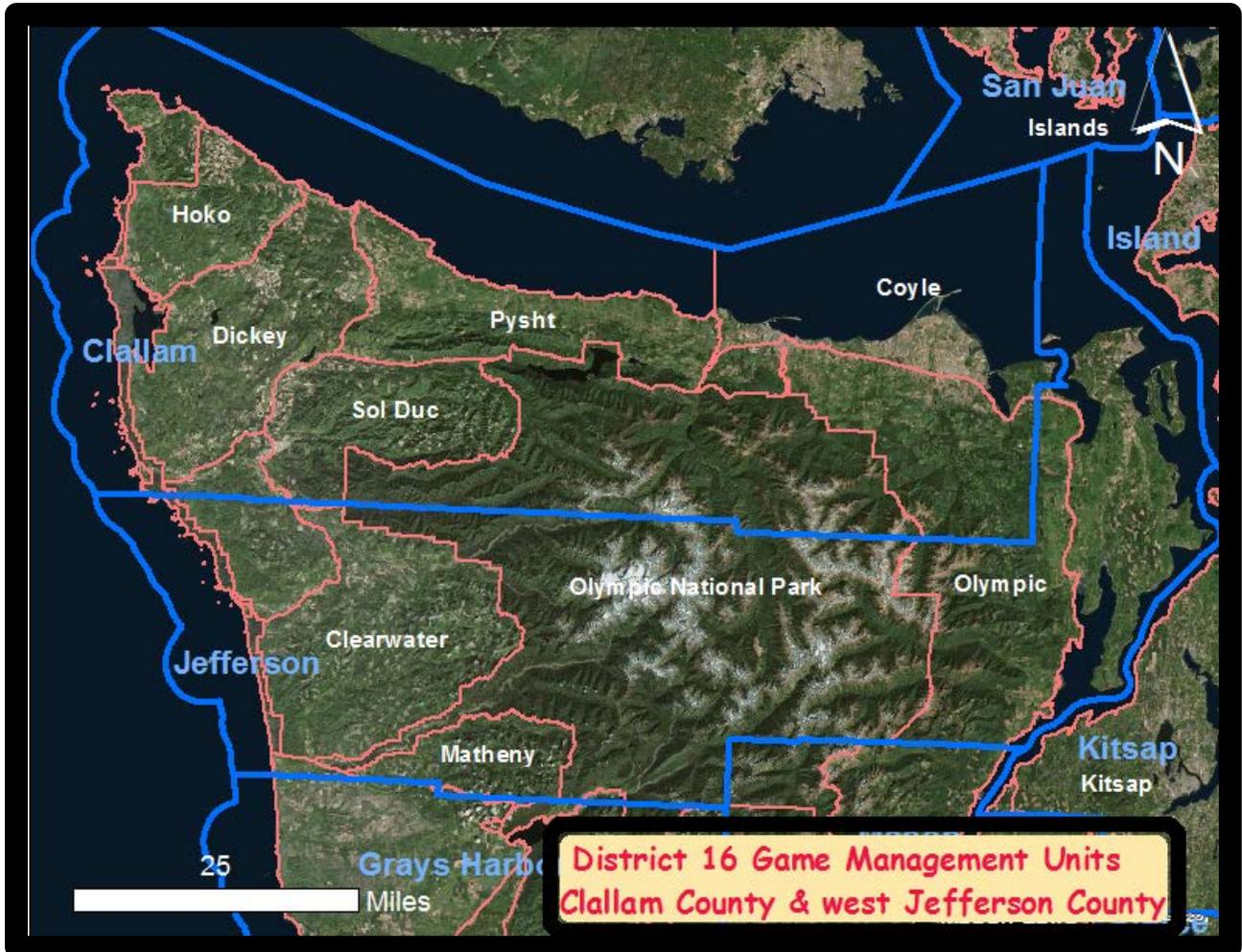
WDFW's GoHunt Tool has been revamped and provides hunters with a great interactive tool for locating tracts of public land within each GMU. The GoHunt Tool can be accessed on WDFW's Hunting website or by [clicking here](#).

2015

ANITA McMILLAN, District Wildlife Biologist
SHELLY AMENT, Assistant District Wildlife
Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 16 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Clallam and West Jefferson Counties

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DISTRICT 16 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 16 includes Clallam County and the western portion of Jefferson County on the Olympic Peninsula. There are eight game management units (GMUs) in District 16, all bordering Olympic National Park and/or a Tribal Reservation, except for GMU 624-Coyle (see maps below). Coyle GMU 624 and Olympic GMU 621 extend into District 15 (Mason, Kitsap, & East Jefferson County). Matheny GMU 618 is not included in District 16, although some maps may indicate otherwise. You can contact the District 17 Wildlife Biologist for information on Matheny GMU 618.

Each GMU in District 16 has its own unique mix of land ownerships: private residential, private agricultural, private forest industrial, state and federal forest, and park lands. Most higher-elevation forest lands are in public ownership (U.S. Forest Service and Olympic National Park (ONP)). Lower elevation foothills are generally private industrial forest lands and lands managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR).



The eastern quarter of the district is in the Dungeness Basin (western Coyle and northern Olympic GMUs). The Dungeness Basin offers a rich diversity of habitats, from high elevation, rain-shadow mountains to lower watershed with plentiful wetland habitats dispersed amidst a mix of riparian and bygone prairie/oak forest. The prairie is now a rural mix of small and large farms with scattered developments. In the lower basin there are some choice private duck hunting club ownerships and a few well enjoyed public waterfowl hunting areas. Waterfowl hunting opportunities have been expanded in the eastern portion of the district in recent years. The Dungeness Basin and the smaller watersheds east of the Elwha are areas where deer are in such high numbers there are frequent complaints by the rural and urban residents. The high visibility of deer in the Coyle and Olympic GMUs extends into the forestlands where there is an ideal ratio of forest openings. The availability of deer for harvest is enhanced within Deer Area 6020 where harvest of “any deer” during regular seasons is allowed. The main challenge with hunting in eastern District 16 is the high amount of private ownership, so time needs to be invested into arranging for hunting access on the target private lands.

The “West End” (Hoko, Dickey, Sol Duc, Goodman, and Clearwater) has the bulk of the elk in the district, while the deer are sparse in these same GMUs. Various sub-herds of elk are located within District 16. Many elk herds are year-round residents that remain in lower elevation habitats. There are some herds that make regular migrations into the higher elevations, most always being on Olympic National Park (ONP) habitat. There are opportunities to harvest elk as

they migrate out of ONP high country and follow river drainages to low elevations during the hunting season. The eastern portion of the Clearwater (GMU 615) is in DNR ownership and contains higher-elevation areas bordering ONP.

Varied hunting opportunities exist within District 16, from waterfowl hunting on designated shoreline and wetland areas along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to forest grouse, deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on private commercial and public forest land. Both state (DNR) and federal (U.S. Forest Service) lands provide hunting opportunities for a variety of species within the district.

With the mixed ownership come the complexities of access rules by various governmental and private entities. Make sure you have acquired the necessary permits to drive on public and private land in the area you have decided to explore.



Discover Pass: For State Parks, DNR, and WDFW lands



US Forest Service-Interagency Access Pass: For US Forest Service Lands

Keep in mind that many public lands on the Olympic Peninsula are not open to hunting, including Olympic National Park, most all Washington State Parks, and Clallam County Parks.

Private timberlands have various access and road closure procedures, so it is prudent to determine current ownership for a target location and the requirements to obtain permission to hunt. One company that has retained a consistent access program over the years is Merrill & Ring Pysht Tree Farm in the Pysht (GMU 603). Their permits provide access during most (but not all) hunting seasons. Several other forest industry ownerships have other access systems in place. See more in the [Private Industrial Forestland](#) section. Hunters are encouraged to scout the areas they are considering hunting and pay close attention to the signs on all roads. Signs are often the landowner's primary method of informing the public on which areas are open to hunting.

These diverse mixtures of ownerships and jurisdictions also present different combinations of firearm restriction regulations and ordinances. The three main firearm restriction regulations that are most relevant to hunters are the following:

- WDFW: The portion of the Coyle (GMU 624) in Clallam County (description can be found on page 90 of [Washington's 2015 Big Game Hunting Seasons & Regulations](#) pamphlet).
- Clallam County Code: [Clallam County Firearms Discharge Restrictions](#)
- Jefferson County Code: [Jefferson County NO SHOOTING AREAS](#)

ELK

The elk within District 16 are Roosevelt elk. For ongoing monitoring and population trend studies there are many elk throughout the district with radio collars, ear tags, and transmitters. Some are VHF collars while others are GPS collars. It is very likely that you will observe one of the elk that have been captured to put some radio gear on. If you observe a collared elk in an unusual location, or possibly even find a collar, you are encouraged to share that information with the district biologist.

District 16 contains various sub-herds of the Olympic elk herd, one of 10 herds identified in the state. The elk are important resources that provide significant recreational, aesthetic, cultural, and economic benefits to the people of the state. Based on historical harvest information, elk numbers peaked in the late 1970s with a conservative estimate of about 12,000 elk outside of Olympic National Park. Current population estimates are based on a combination of harvest data, telemetry studies, and mark-resight surveys. These techniques yielded a fall population estimate of approximately 8,600 in the game management units (GMUs) surrounding Olympic National Park in the year 2000. The current estimated population of the Olympic elk herd is likely lower.

Much of the elk hunting for GMUs located within the district is restricted to a limited-entry 3-point minimum bull-only harvest. These successfully managed hunts have been producing quality bulls and high hunter success rates for some permit hunts. Some elk herds migrate down from high alpine meadows in Olympic National Park (ONP) to lowland winter range. Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Hunters are encouraged to scout for elk that may leave ONP and travel along major river drainages. Law Enforcement Officers convey that they are getting reports that elk groups in the Pysht (GMU 603) have increased slightly in the past few years.

Hunting seasons have been established to allow recreational use and serve as a tool for managing elk populations within the district. The eastern district rarely has a report of elk harvest from the general season in GMU 624. Harvest within Elk Area 6071 is limited to damage control, occasionally involving master hunters from the Region 6 permit list. Check the [WA Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#) or the WDFW website for more information. The eastern district elk harvest in Olympic GMU 621 is limited to permit and tribal harvest.

The Clearwater (GMU 615), Dickey (GMU 602), and Sol Duc (GMU 607) have the highest elk harvest in District 16. These units contain the largest portion of public land without restricted access.

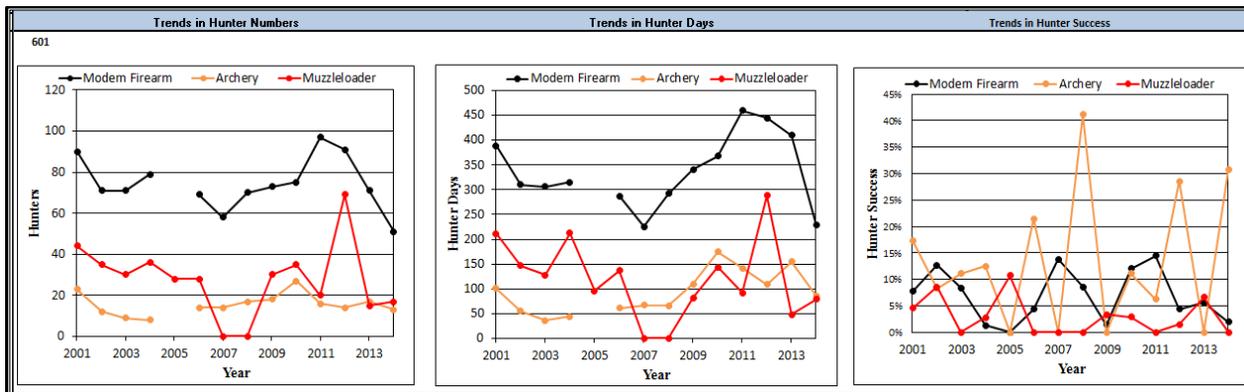
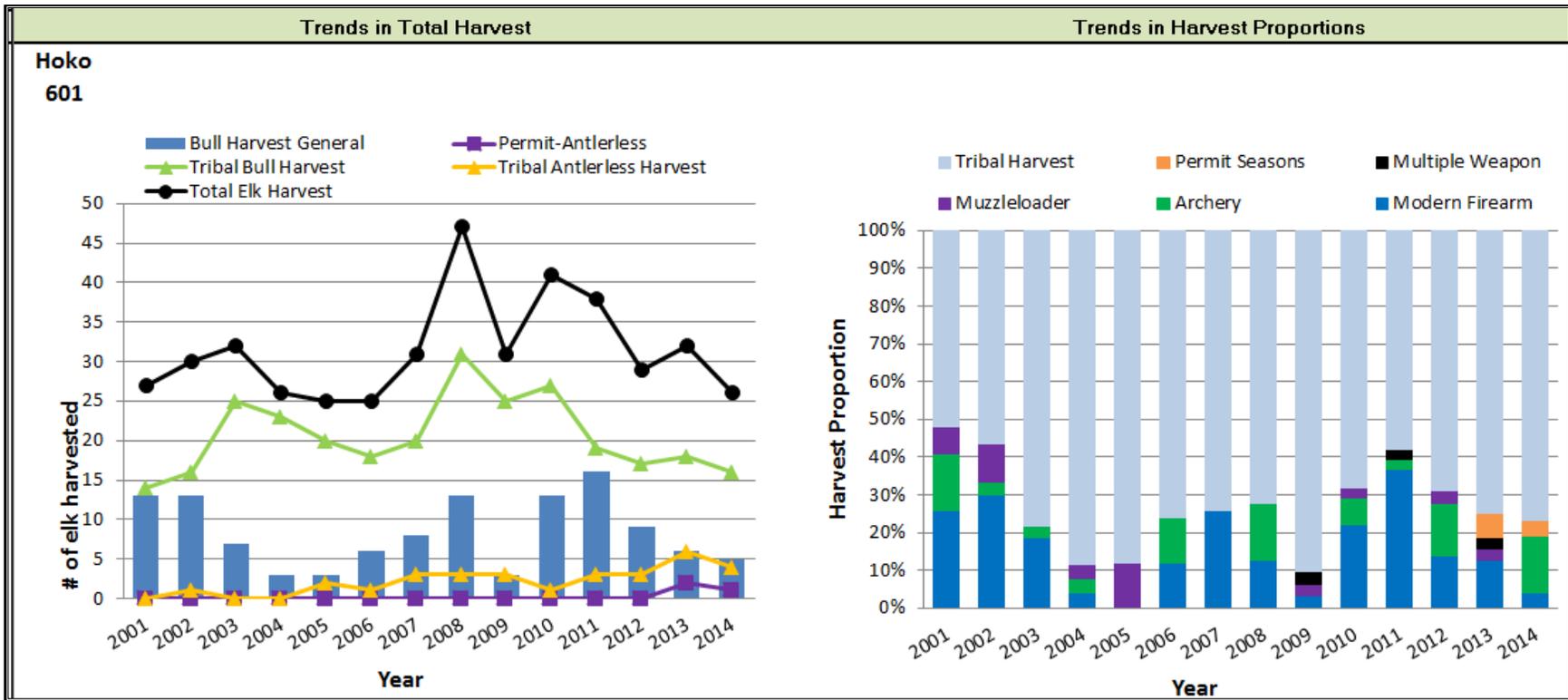
The Hoko (GMU 601), Pysht (GMU 603), and Coyle (GMU 624) have very limited opportunities for general season hunters. Most of these units contain private land and many of the roads on timber lands are gated. Hunting on DNR lands, U.S. Forest Service lands, and private timber lands in other GMUs within the district can yield good results. However, it is important to note that there are several areas where vehicular access is limited. Hunters would

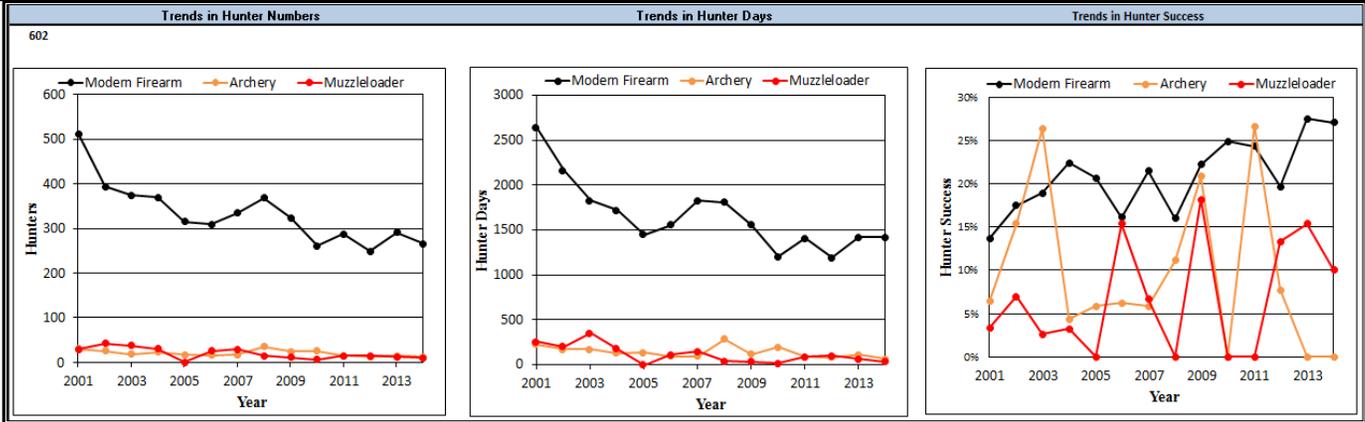
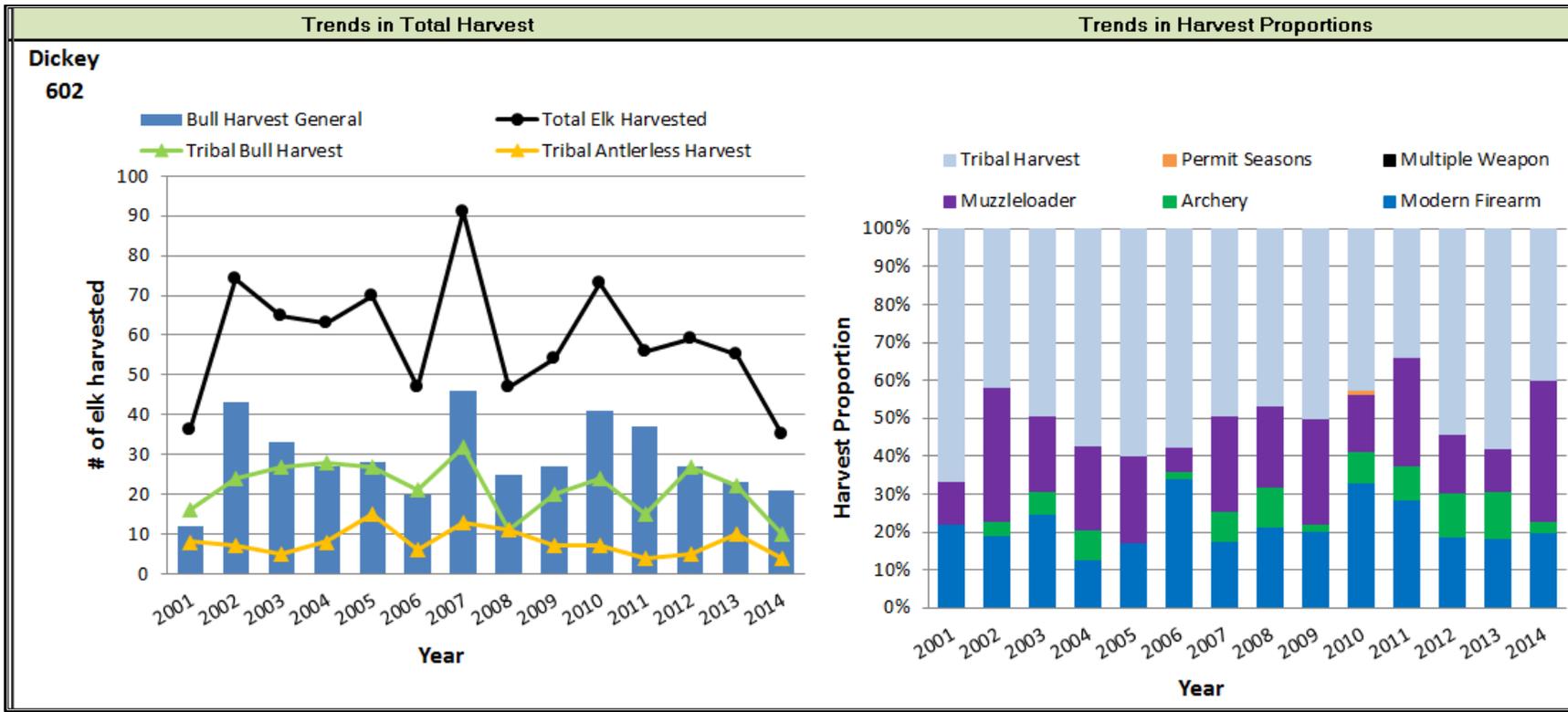
need to obtain permission to hunt on private lands and must obey all posted signs and regulations.

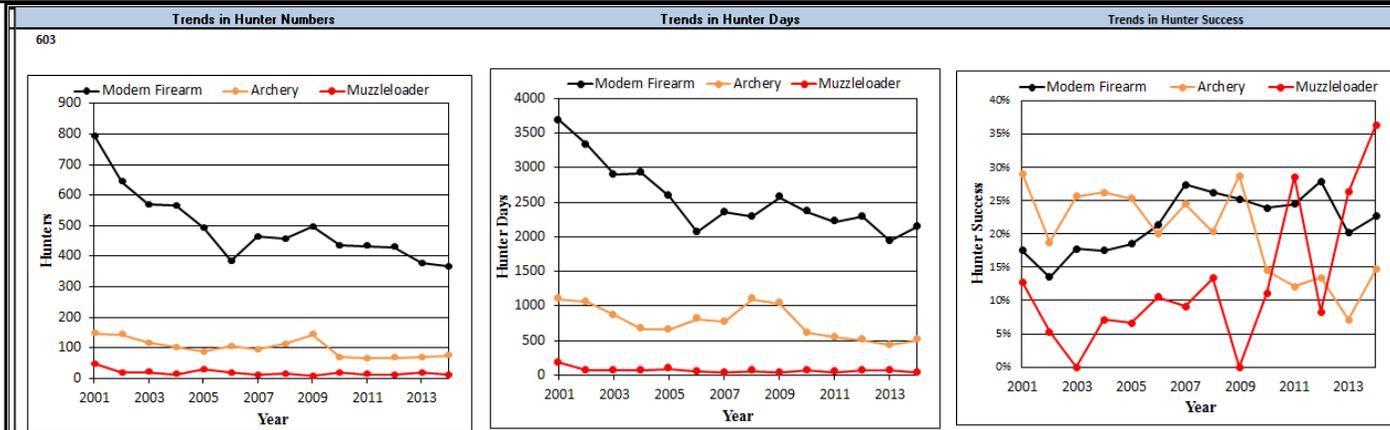
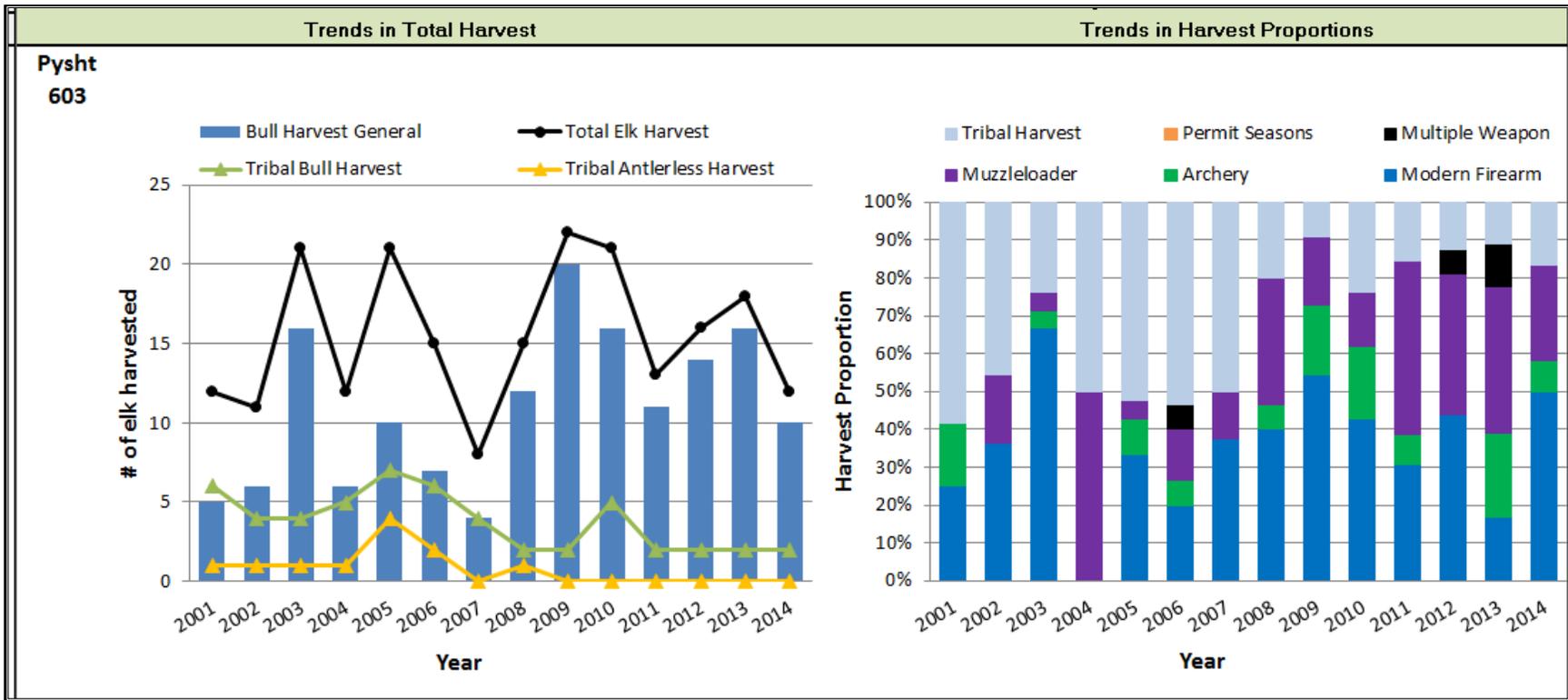
A thesis on elk with research conducted in the Hoko (GMU 601) and Dickey (GMU 602) is available here: [Movements and Habitat Use of Female Roosevelt Elk in Relation to Human Disturbance on the Hoko and Dickey Game Management Units, Washington](#) [Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for elk based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.

See District 15 Hunting Prospects- Elk to get information on GMU 621 (Olympic) and GMU 624 (Coyle).

The following are Harvest Records for GMUs in District 16:

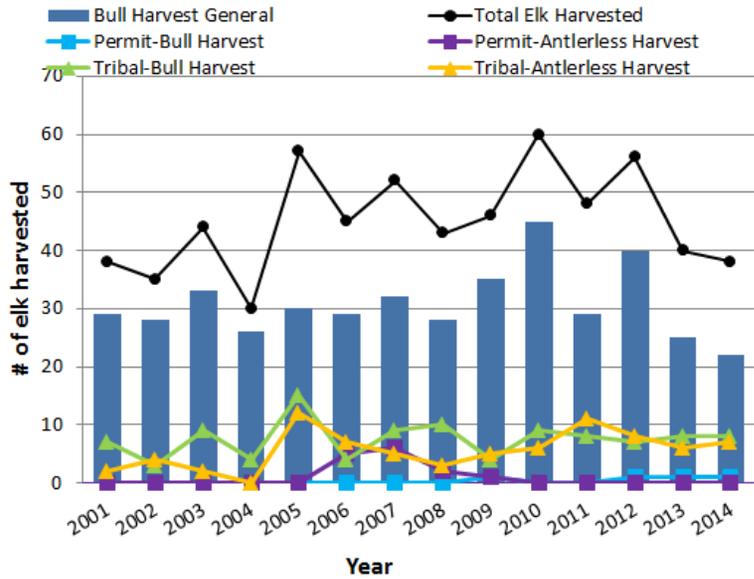




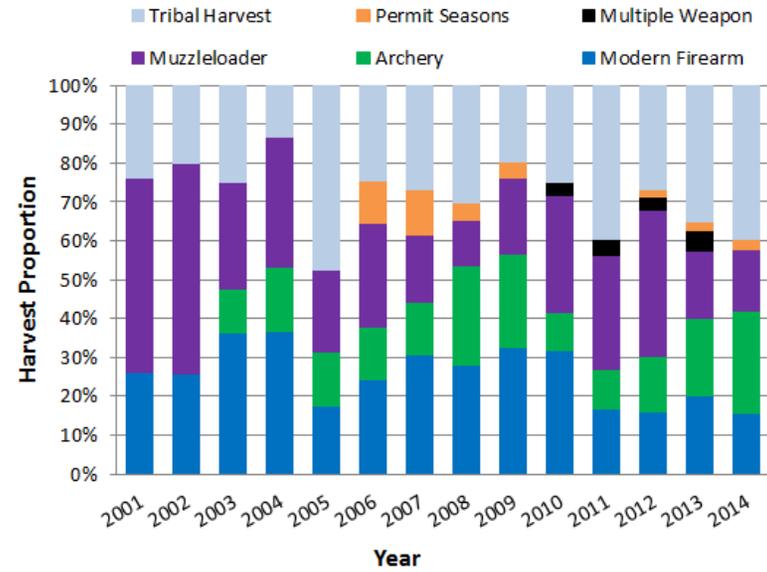


Trends in Total Harvest

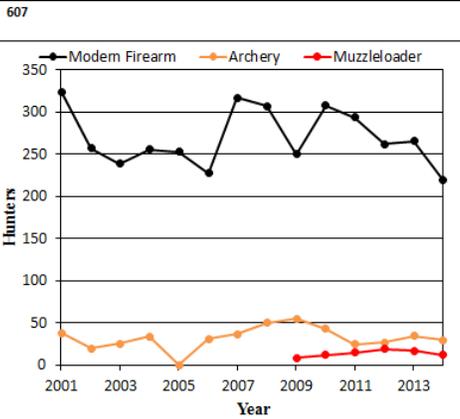
Sol Duc
607



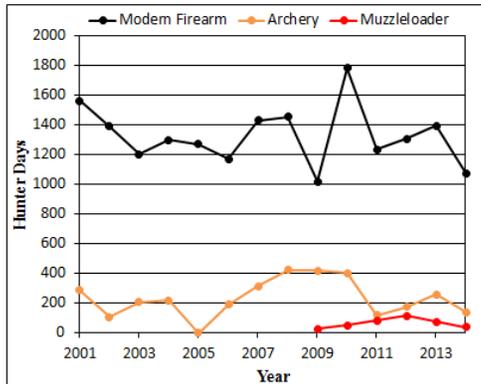
Trends in Harvest Proportions



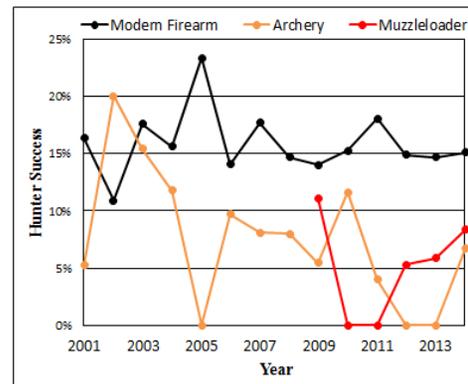
Trends in Hunter Numbers



Trends in Hunter Days



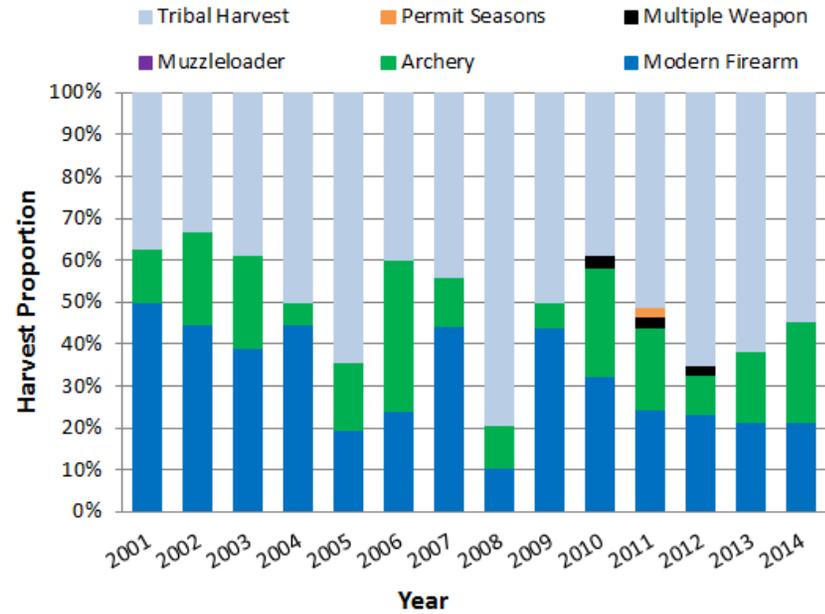
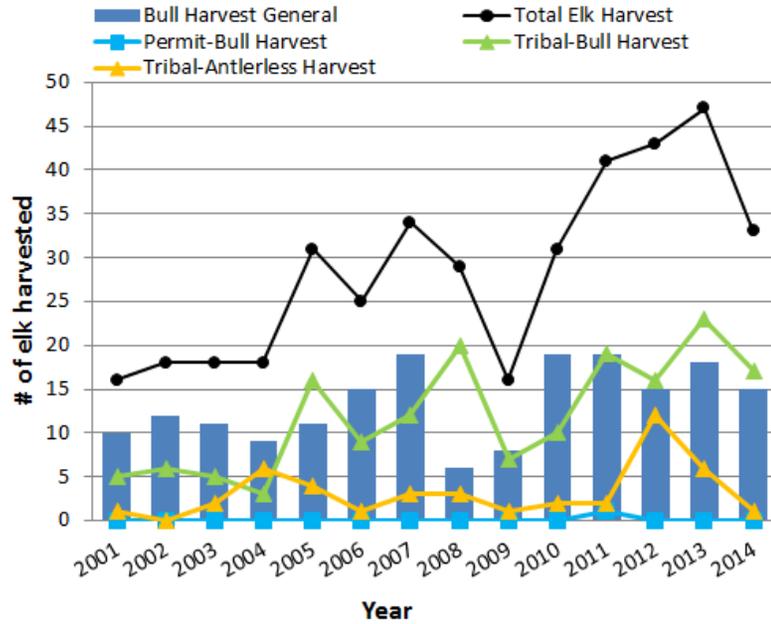
Trends in Hunter Success



Trends in Total Harvest

Trends in Harvest Proportions

Goodman
612

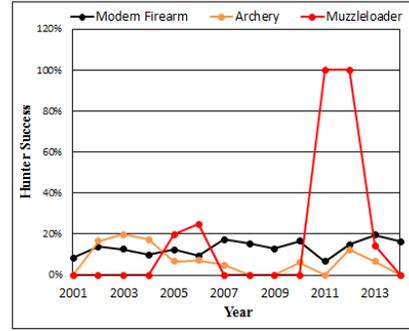
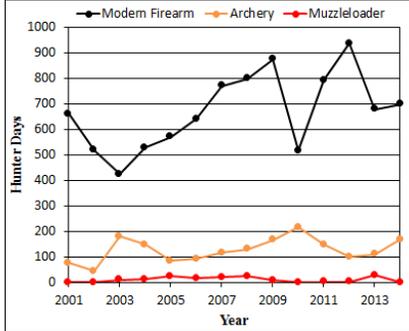
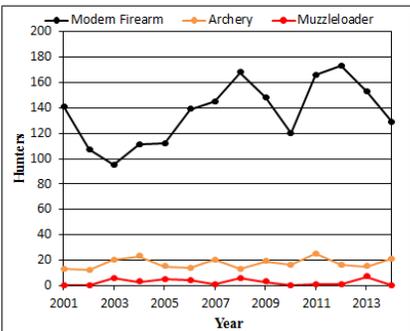


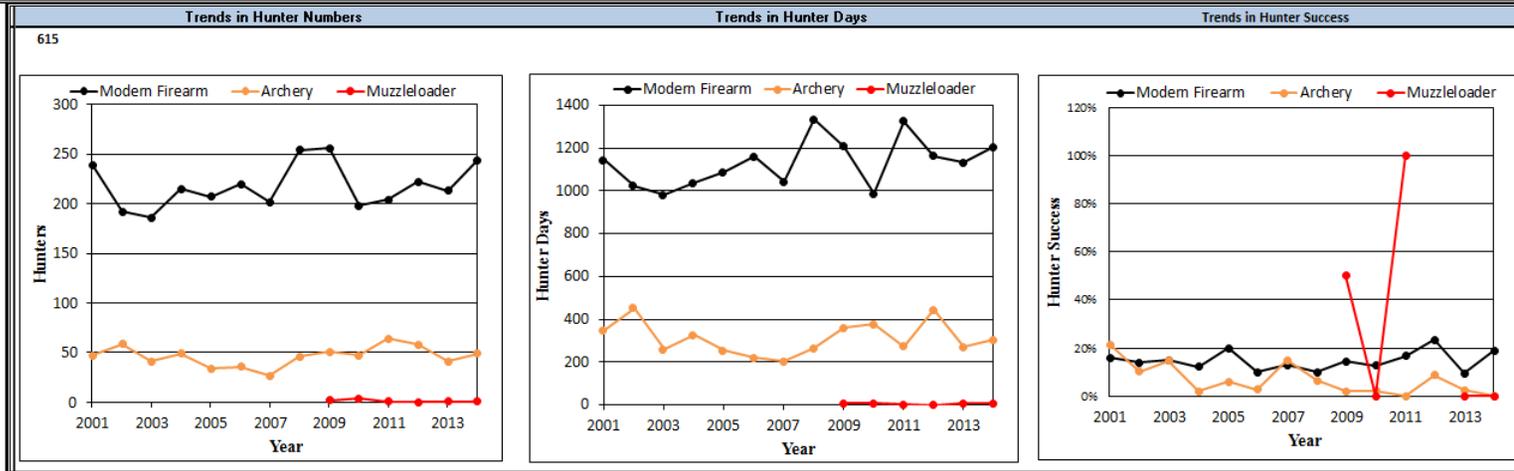
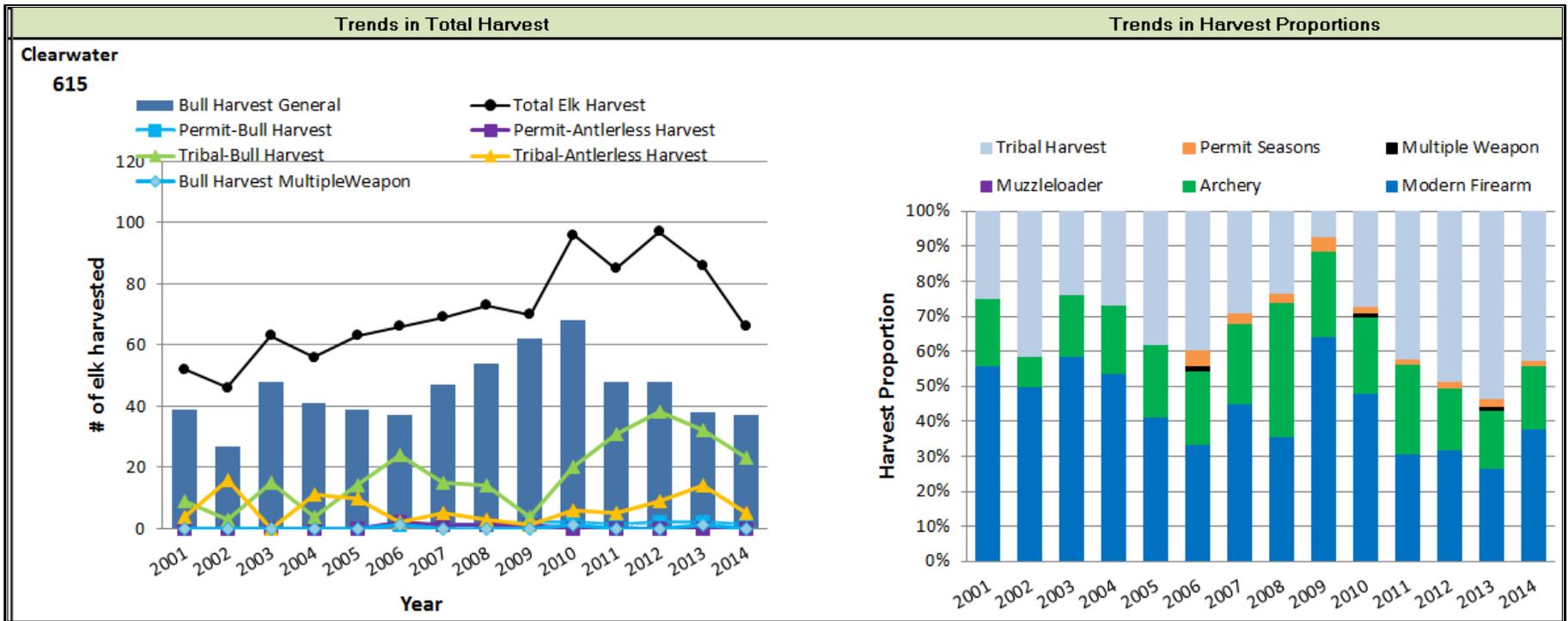
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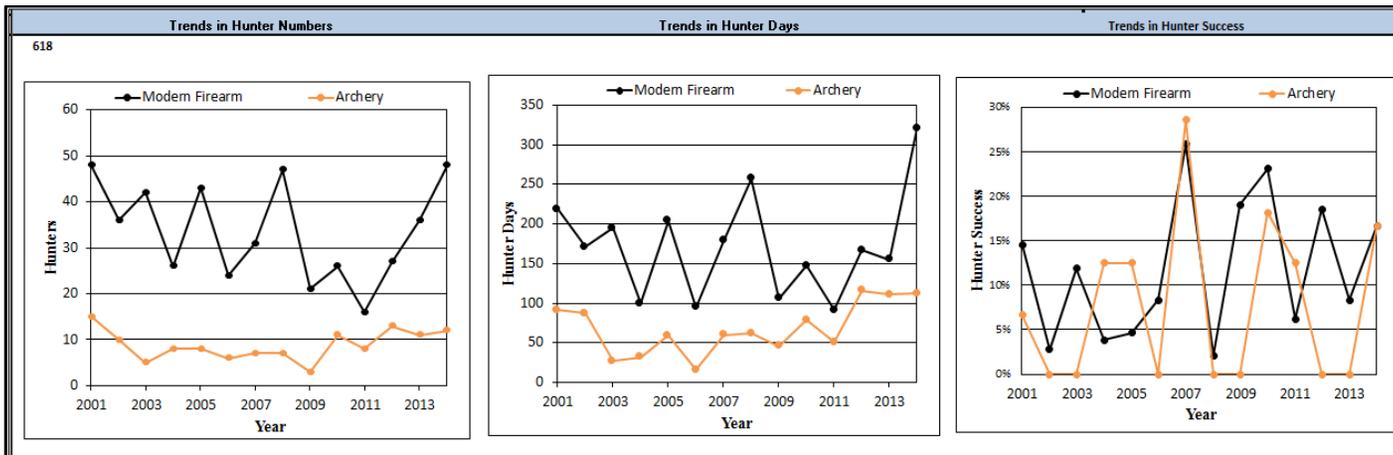
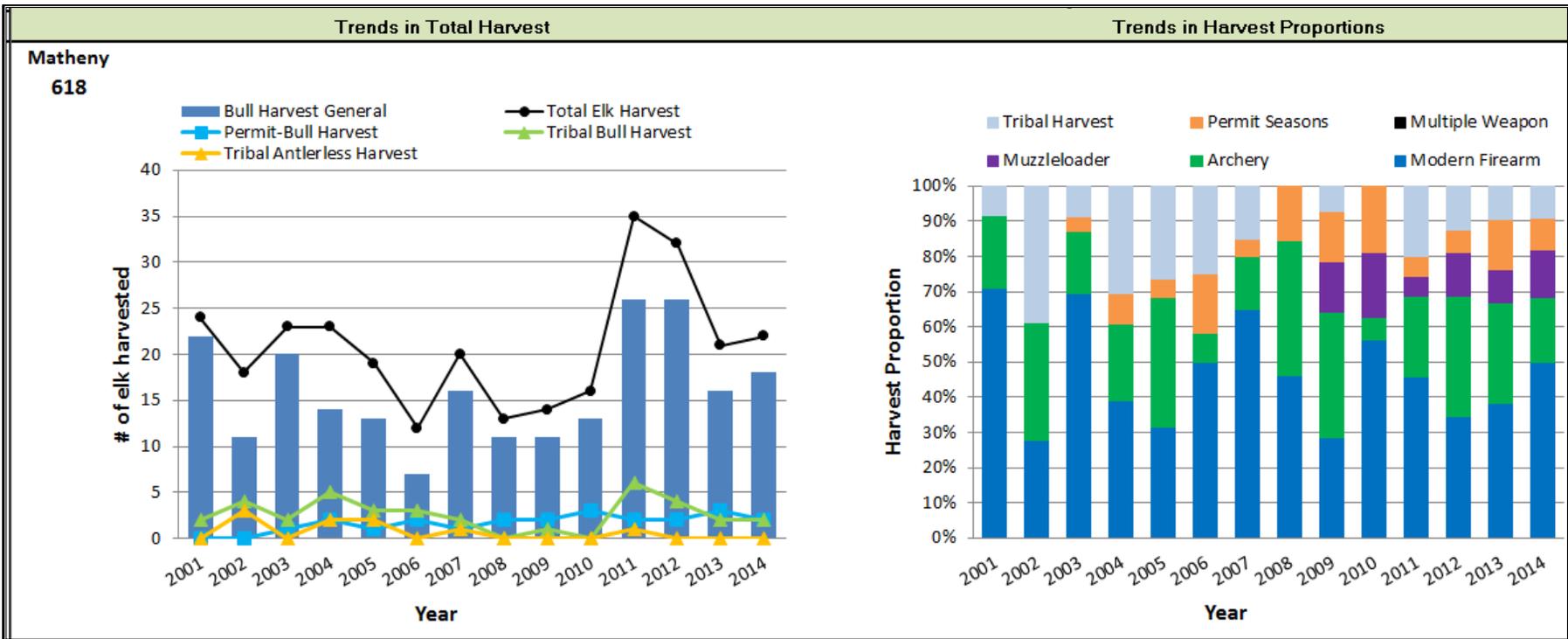
Trends in Hunter Numbers

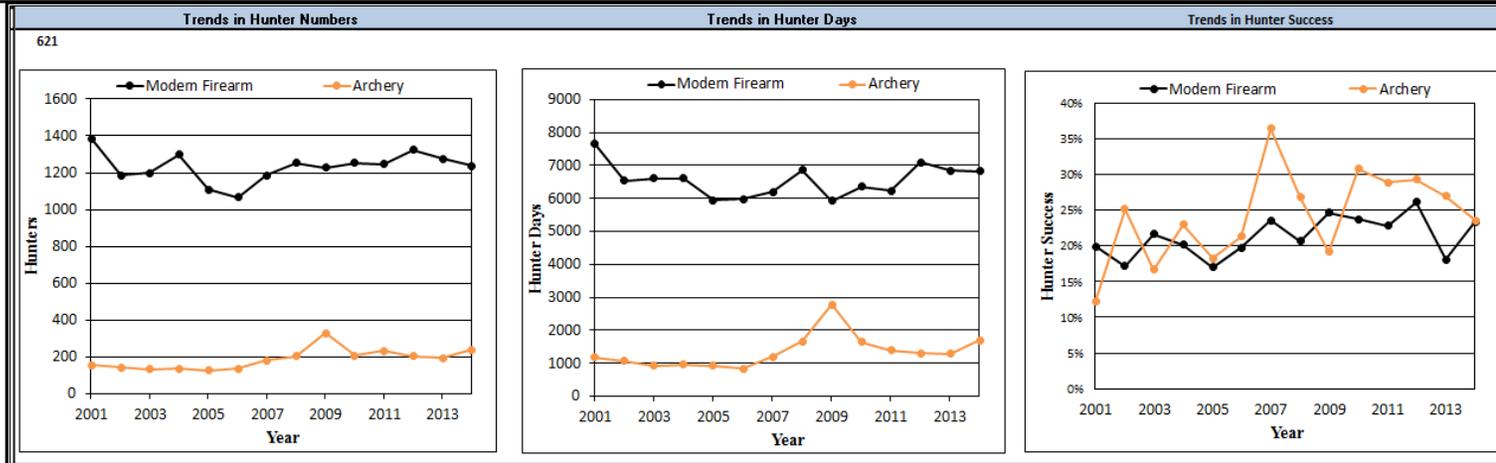
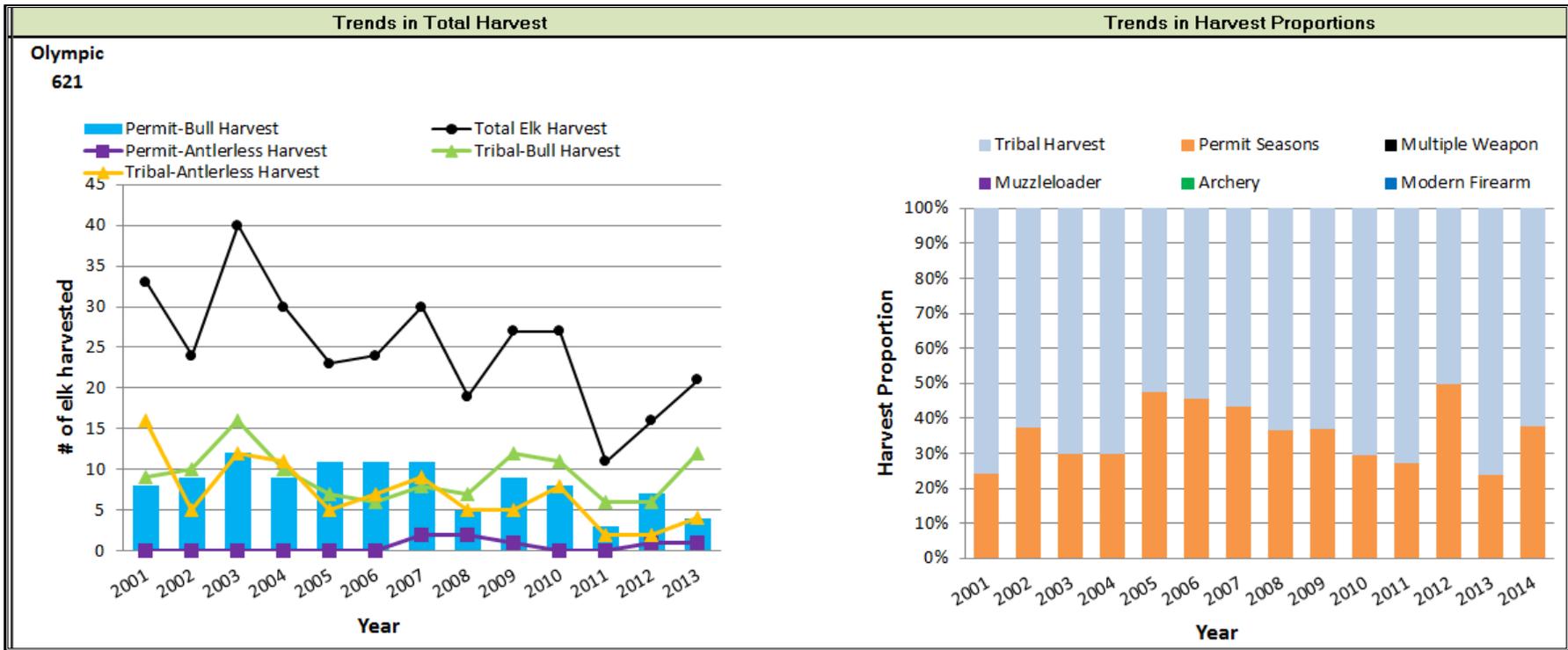
Trends in Hunter Days

Trends in Hunter Success









DEER

District 16 wildlife biologists are actively involved in black-tailed deer research. Assignments conducted by district staff for this research include collaring and tracking of the deer and locating collared deer mortalities to identify mortality causes. These links represent some of the collaring in Clallam County:

[Researcher Cliff Rice releasing collared doe](#)

[Black-tailed Deer - Western Washington Study using GPS collars](#)

During the capture portion of the study, the detectability of deer was noticeably much higher east of the Elwha. According to Dr. Cliff Rice, the lead researcher, some of the largest does captured in western Washington were captured west of the Dungeness on the lower foothills in a mix of DNR and private land. Black-tailed deer monitoring is continuing to be accomplished by tracking the harvest and hunting effort and gathering data on survivability, recruitment, and mortality rates using collared deer studies and aerial census methods.

Western District 16 is generally sparse of deer. This area includes GMUs 601 (Hoko), 602 (Dickey), 603 (Pysht), 607 (Sol Duc), 612 (Goodman), and 615 (Clearwater). Often, GMU 618 (Matheny) is associated with District 16. Biologist, Enforcement Officer observations, and published reports indicate that deer population numbers and density are generally down throughout the district west of the Elwha. The following link outlines the current black-tailed deer research in the Hoko GMU:

[Black-tailed Deer Research in Hoko GMU](#)

The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission reported that “The Makah and Quileute tribes agreed to curtail harvest of antlerless deer in the wake of a study that led biologists to believe that the Olympic Peninsula's black-tailed deer population is declining.”

Eastern District 16 includes the northwestern portion of GMU 621 (Olympic) and the northern portion of GMU 624 (Coyle), which extend east and south into District 15 (eastern Jefferson County). Because the data on harvest is recorded by GMU, the harvest figures presented here include all of GMU 621 and 624, extending into District 15. The portion of District 16 east of the Elwha River has black-tailed deer populations that are readily observed (presumably due to higher densities) and in many areas can be observed in groups, especially at low to mid-elevations. In these areas, the deer are often perceived to be a nuisance by some property owners and agricultural operations, especially in GMU 624 (Coyle). Deer Area 6020 was established years ago to allow the harvest of does to help curb the trend of too many deer encompassing the area north of Highway 101 between Port Angeles and eastern Miller Peninsula. Doe harvest is allowed within Deer Area 6020 during the general seasons. This area is primarily private land, but it is worth inquiring with landowners about hunting access. Note that much of the state land on Miller Peninsula, within this Deer Area 6020, is State Park land where hunting is not allowed. The key to a successful harvest is securing the appropriate permission to hunt on private land and scouting the area prior to the hunting season. Hunters who intend to target deer in developed

areas would be well advised to check with local jurisdictions regarding firearm restrictions.

The mid and lower elevations of GMU 621 (Olympic) have high densities of deer as well, with some scattered blocks of DNR ownership that offer hunting on public land. Private industrial timber lands and property managed by DNR are largely gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism, and other problems. However, many of these roads can be accessed on foot or with mountain bikes, giving those willing to do the work access to deer that don't get as much hunting pressure. Be sure to check with the appropriate land owner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

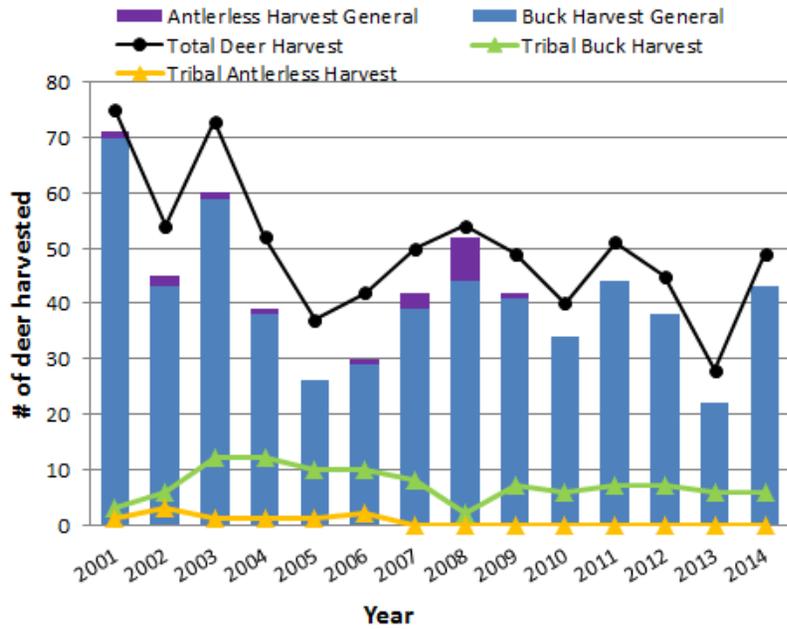
[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.

See District 15 Hunting Prospects for more information on GMU 621 (Olympic) and GMU 624 (Coyle).

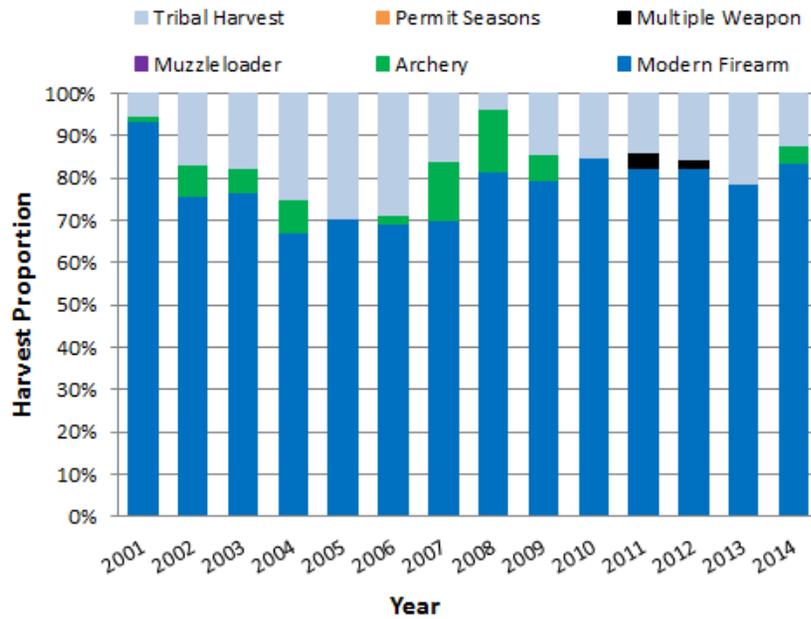
The following are Harvest Records for GMUs in District 16 (some GMUs cross boundaries into District 15 and District 17):

Trends in Total Harvest

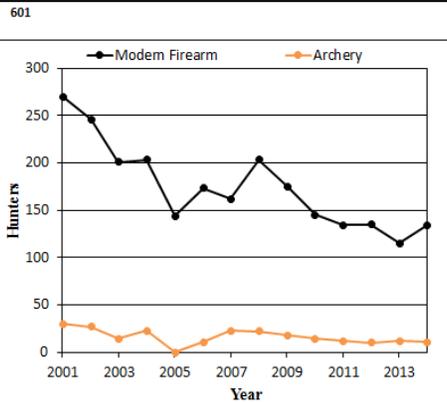
Hoko
601



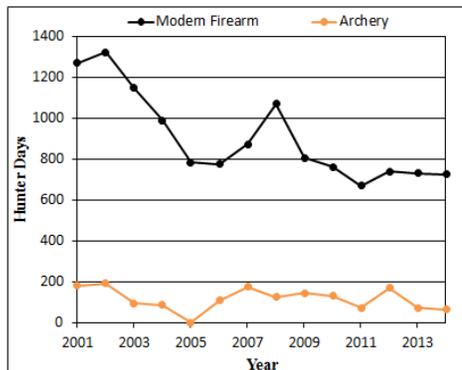
Trends in Harvest Proportions



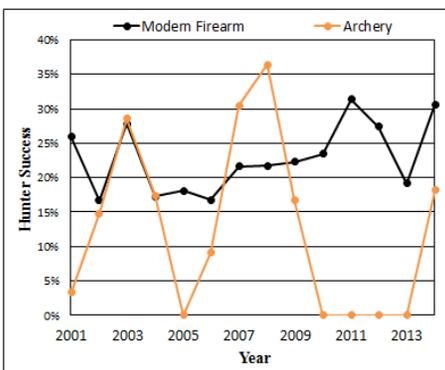
Trends in Hunter Numbers

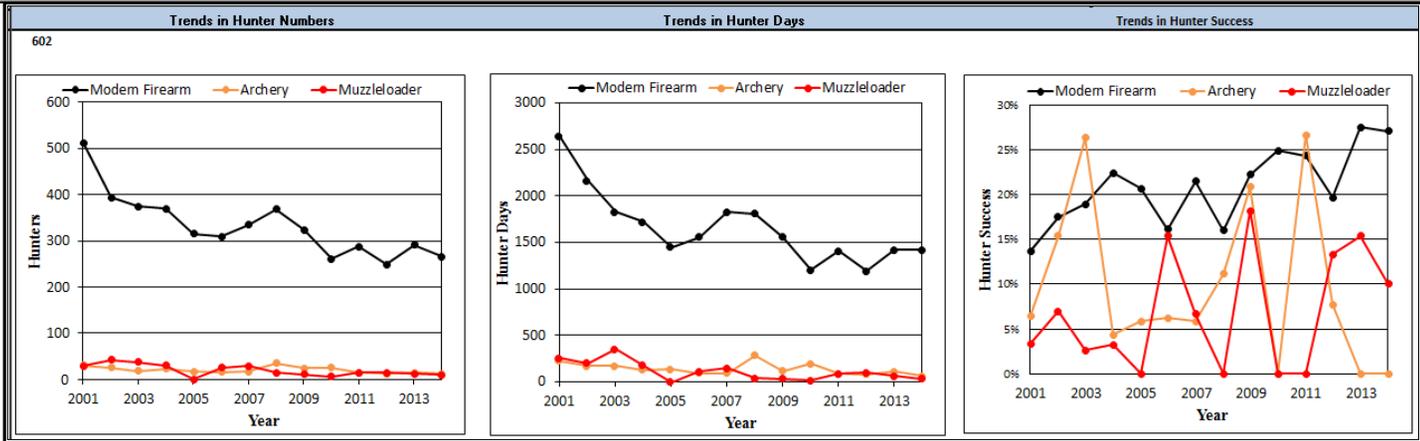
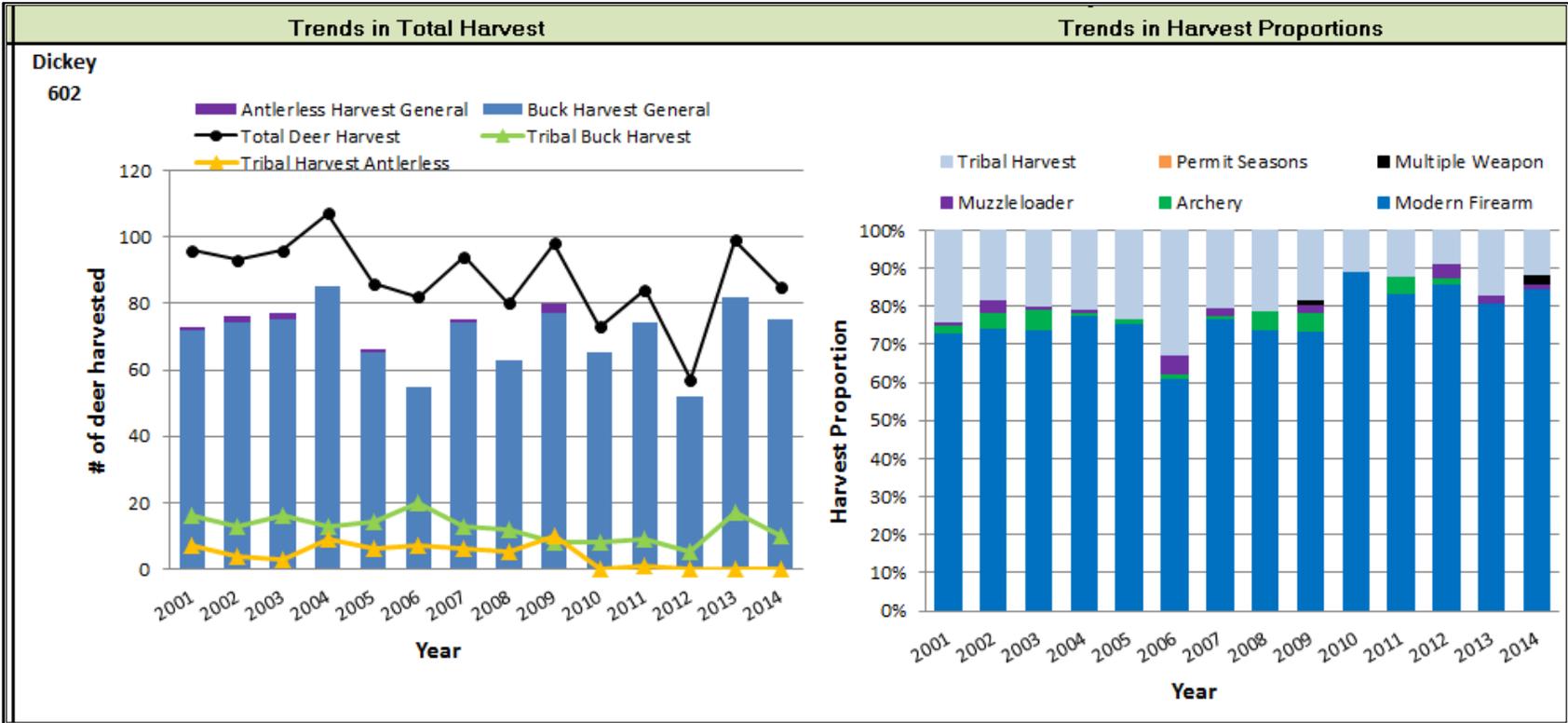


Trends in Hunter Days



Trends in Hunter Success

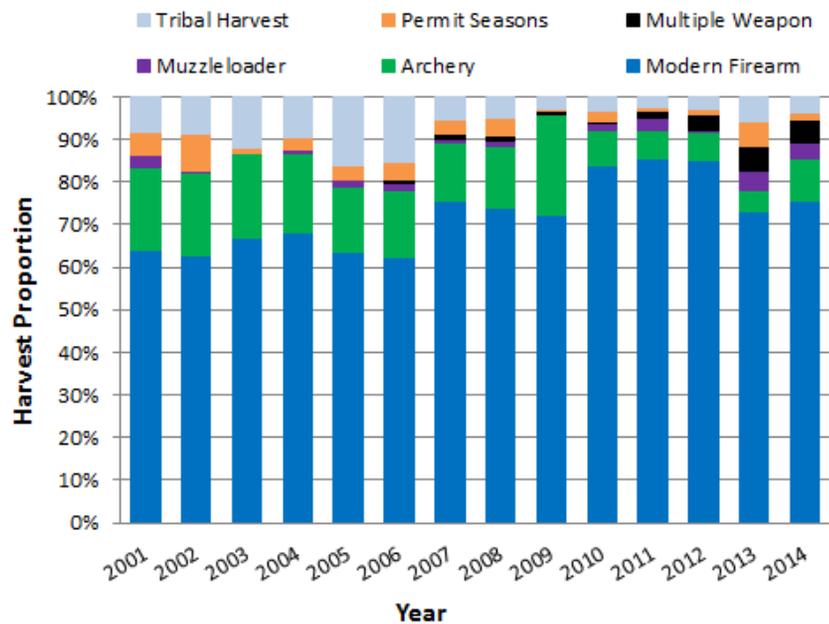
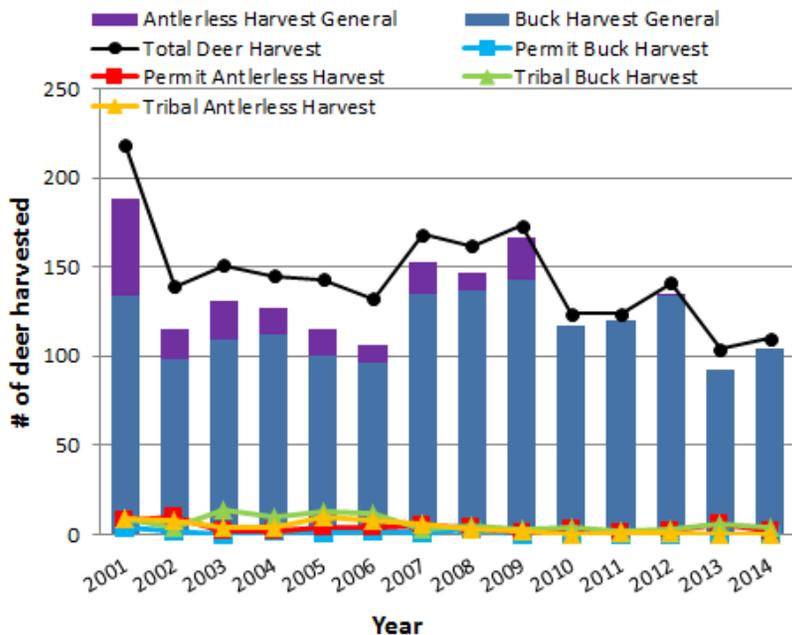




Trends in Total Harvest

Trends in Harvest Proportions

Pysht
603

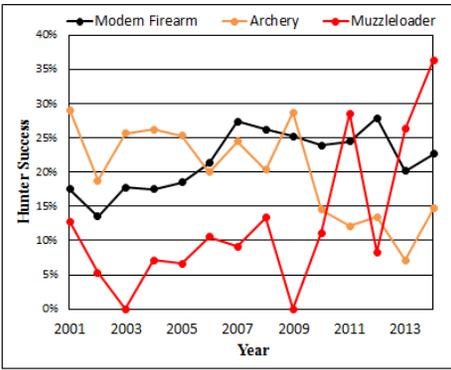
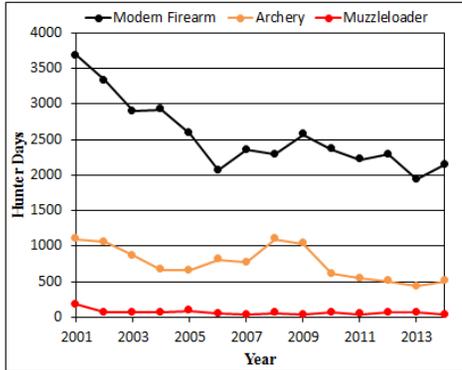
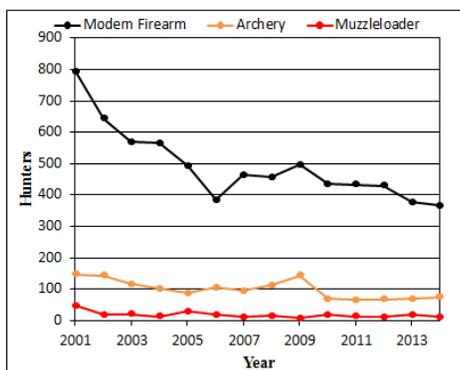


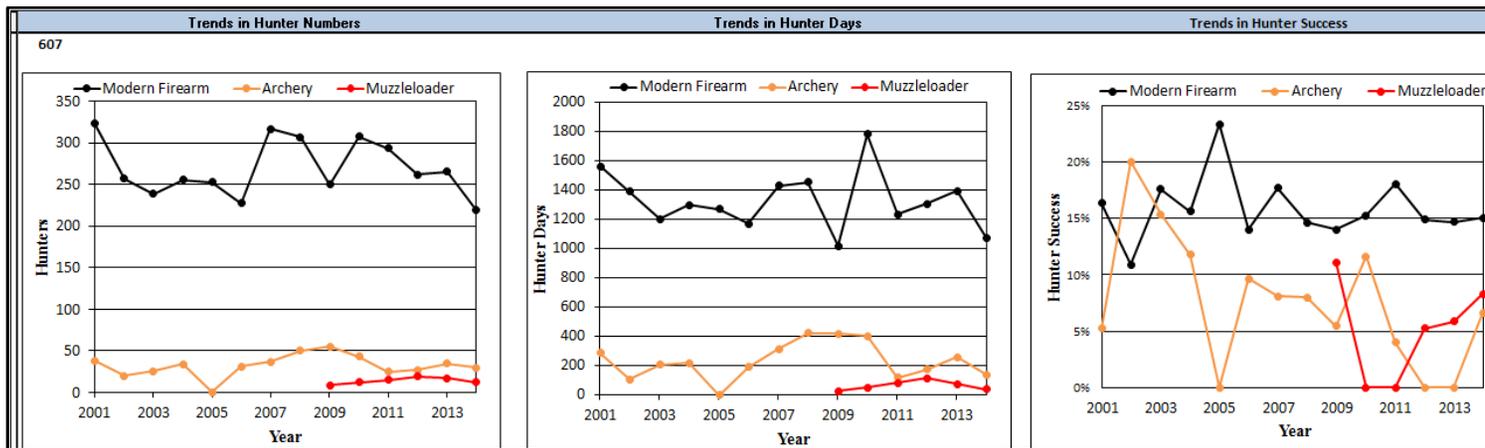
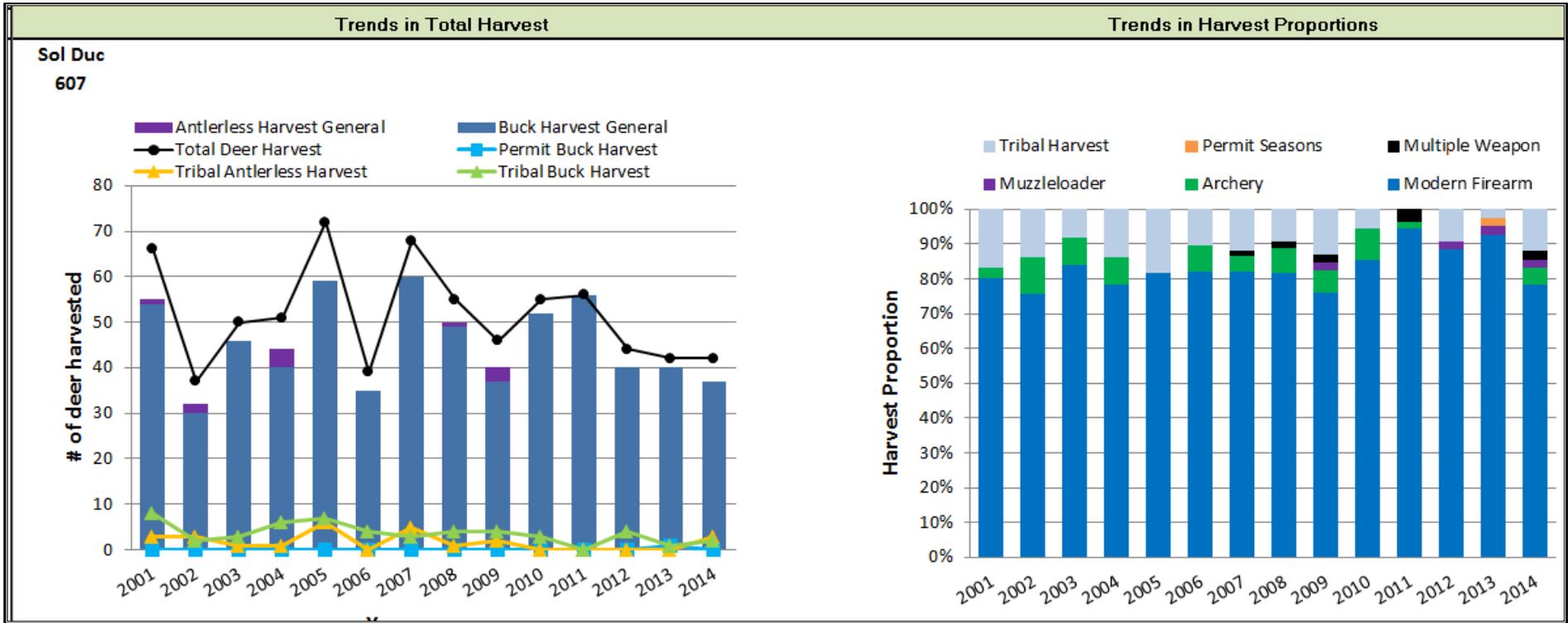
Trends in Hunter Numbers

Trends in Hunter Days

Trends in Hunter Success

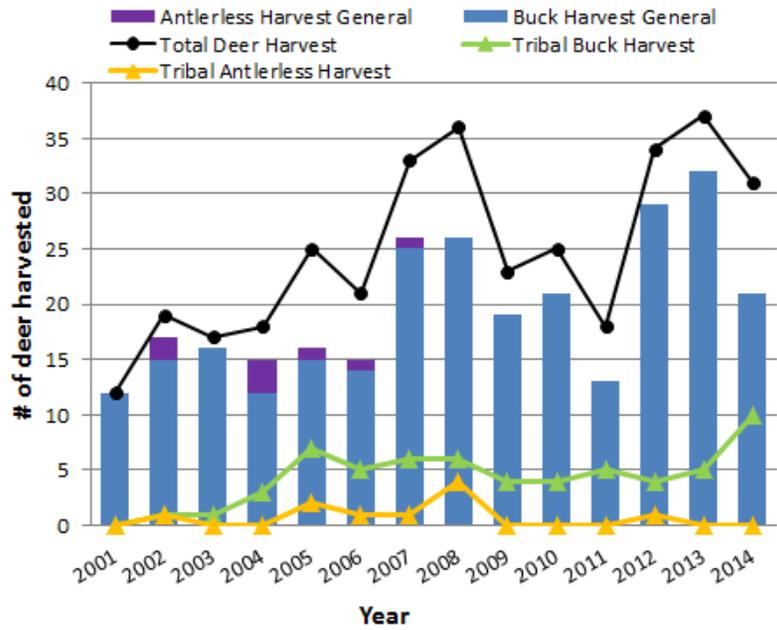
603



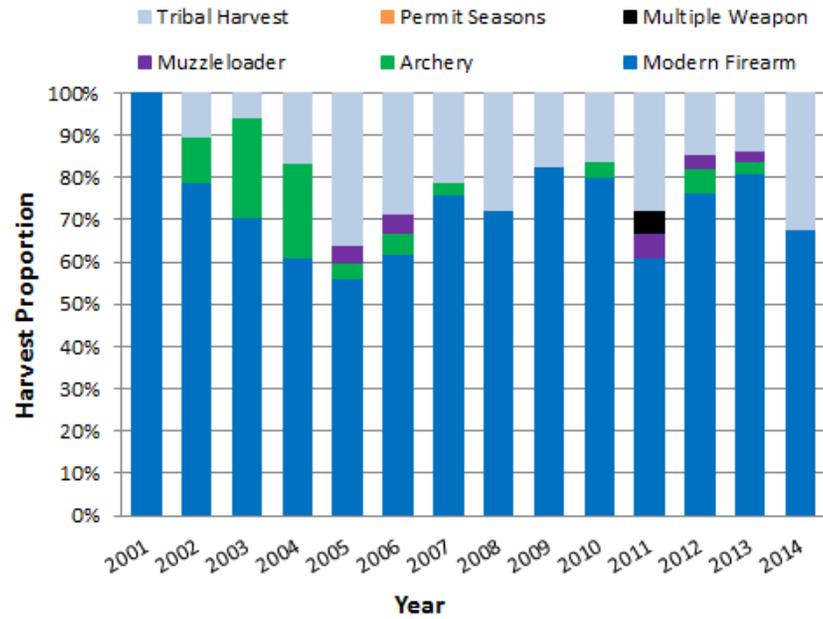


Trends in Total Harvest

Goodman
612

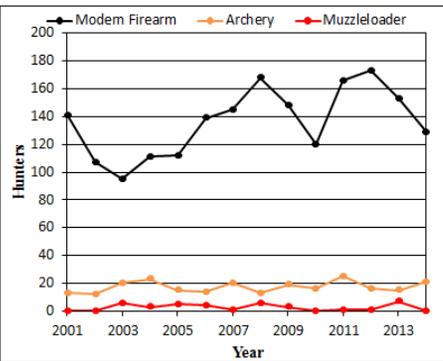


Trends in Harvest Proportions

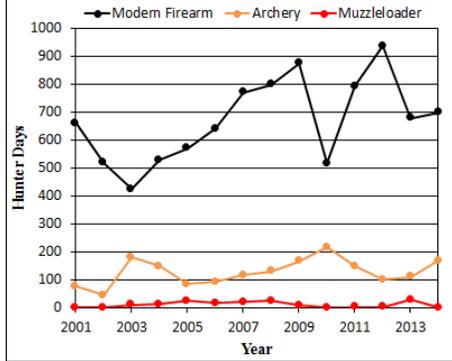


Trends in Hunter Numbers

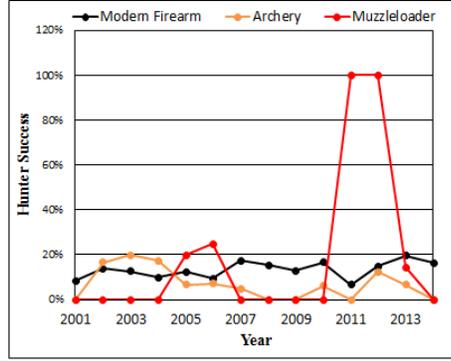
612

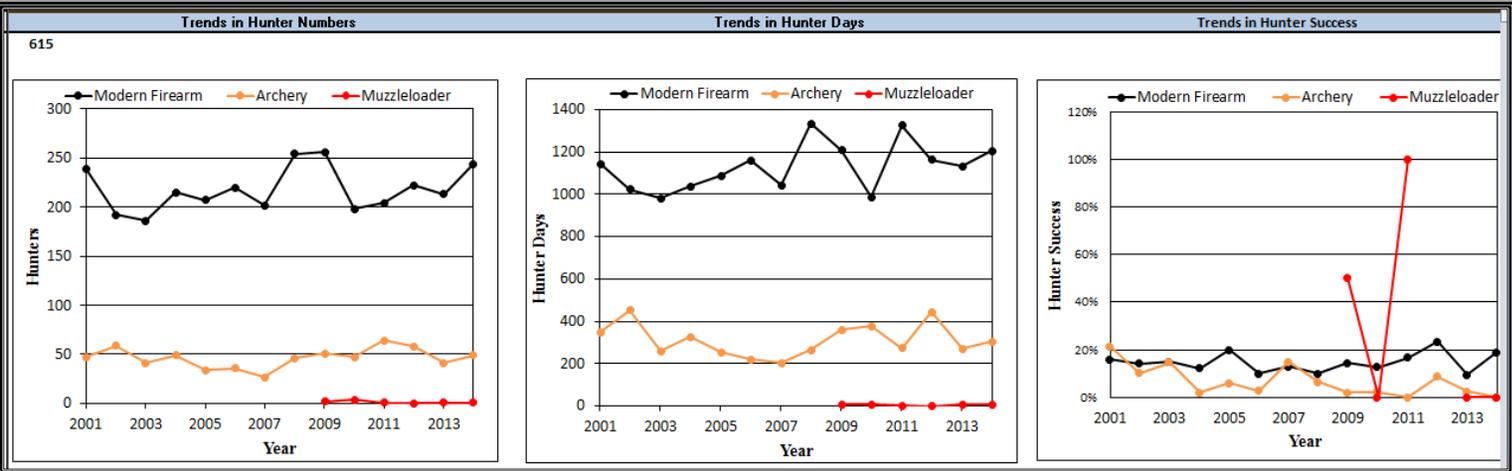
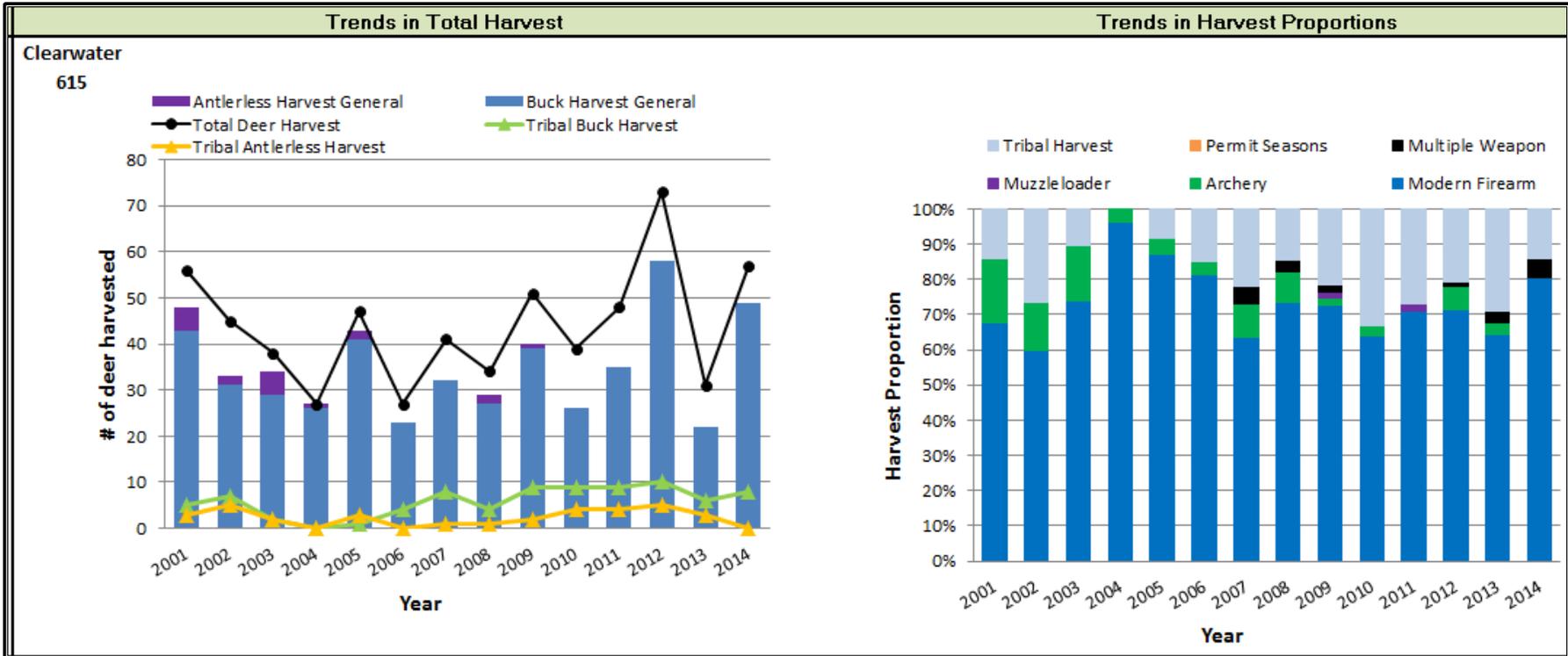


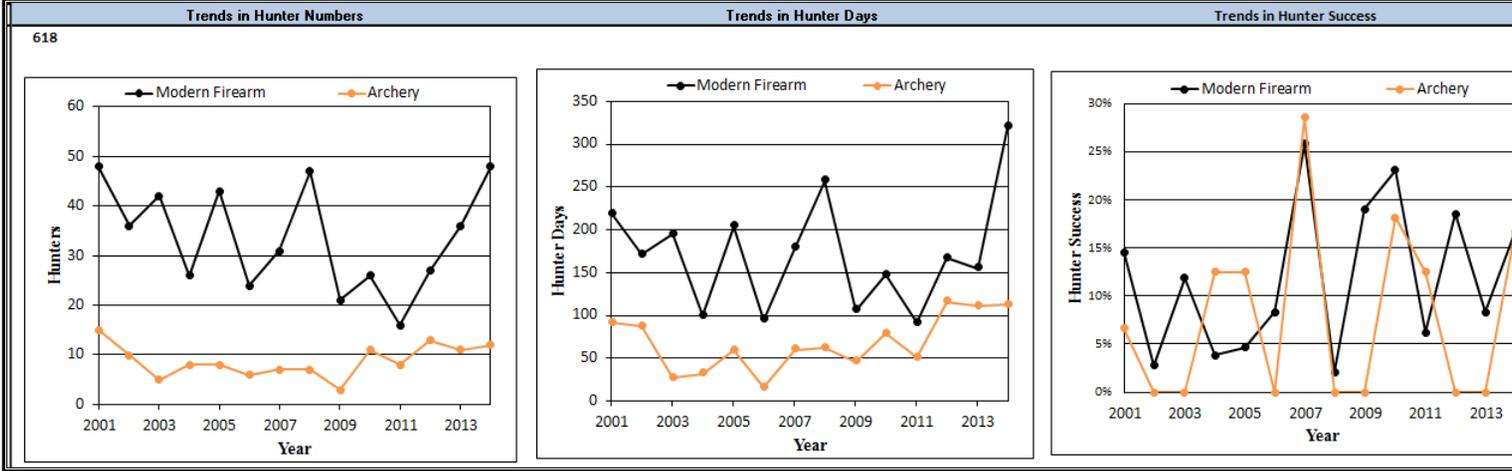
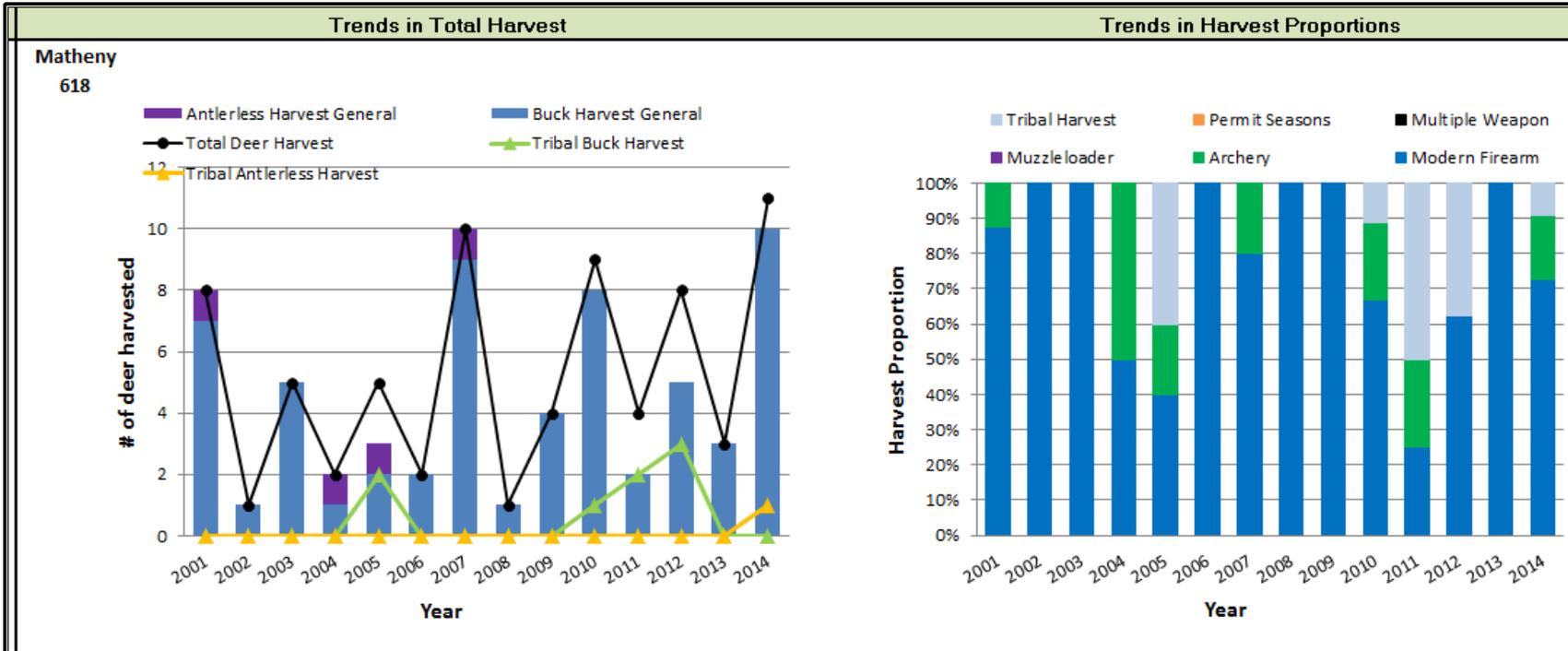
Trends in Hunter Days

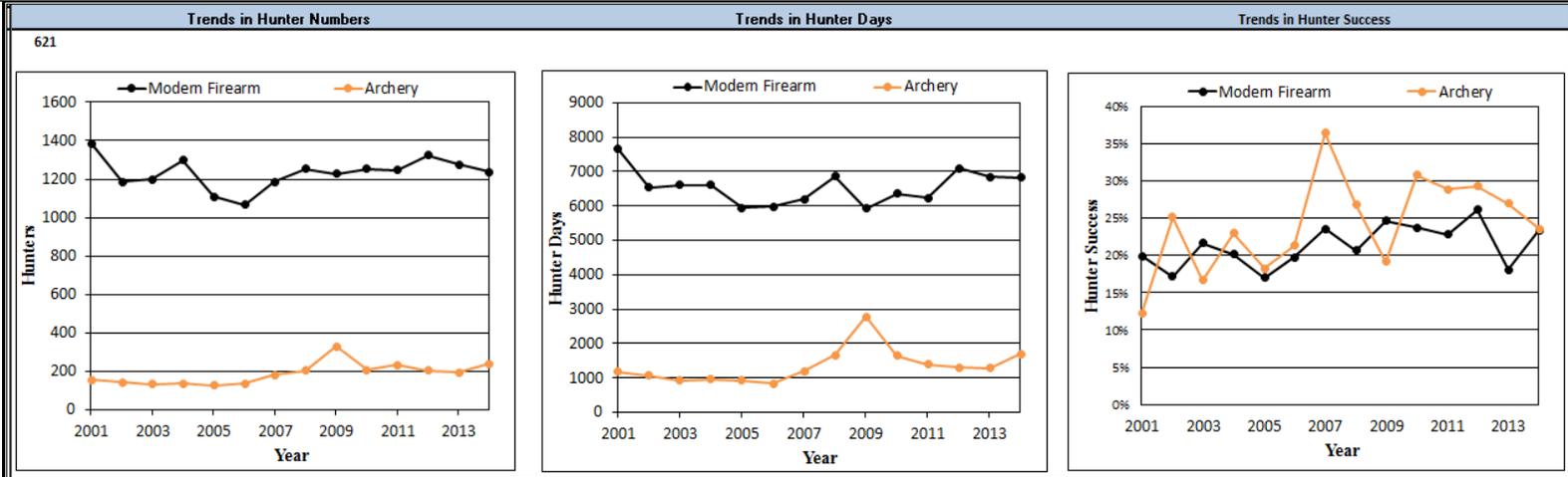
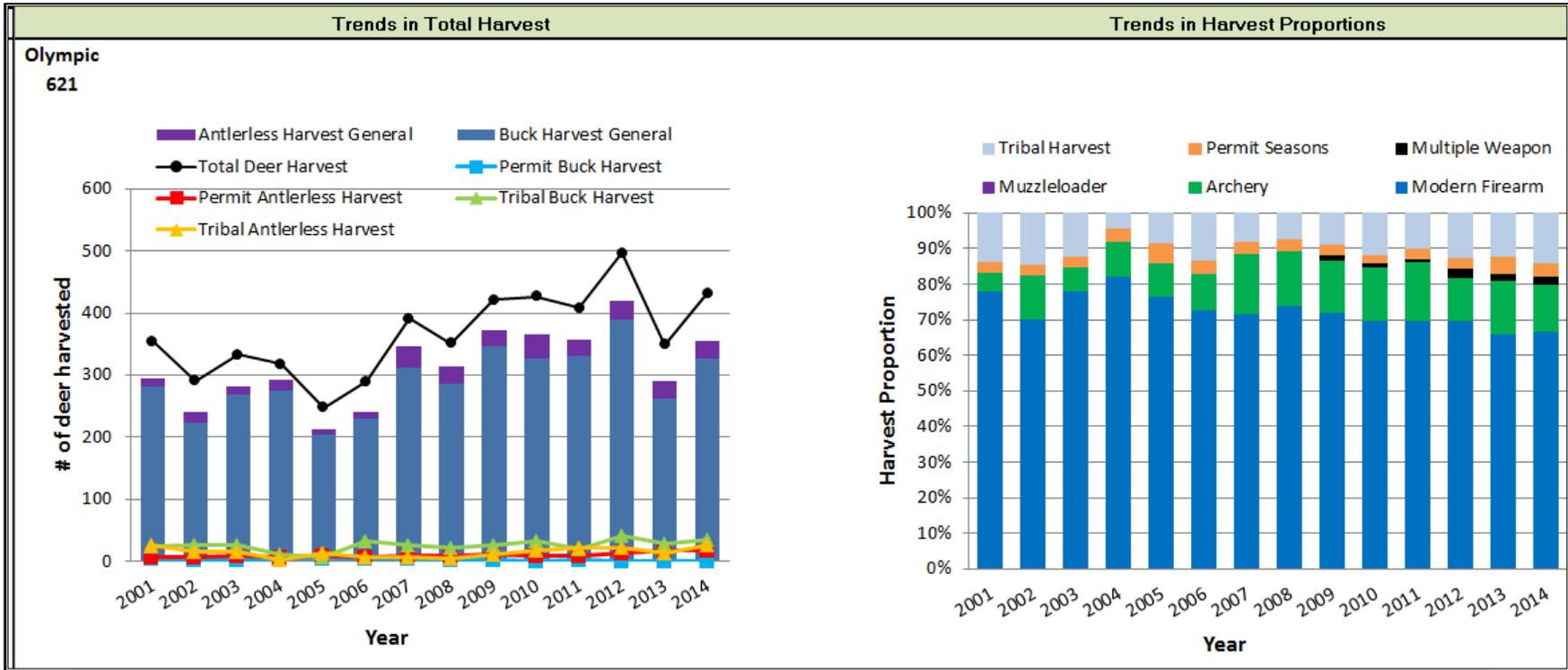


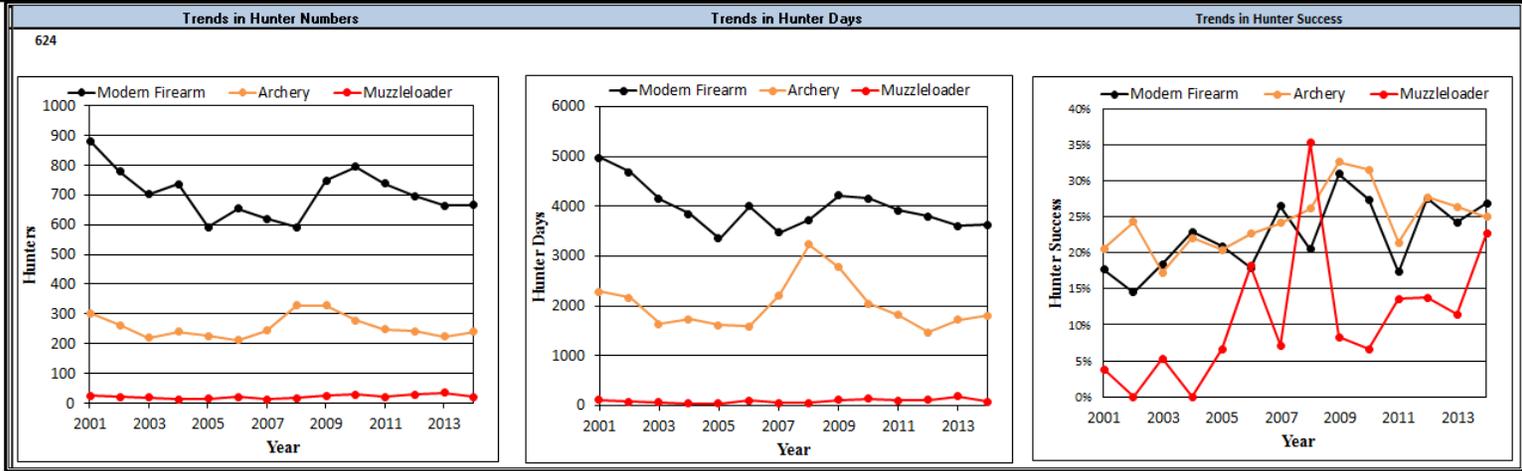
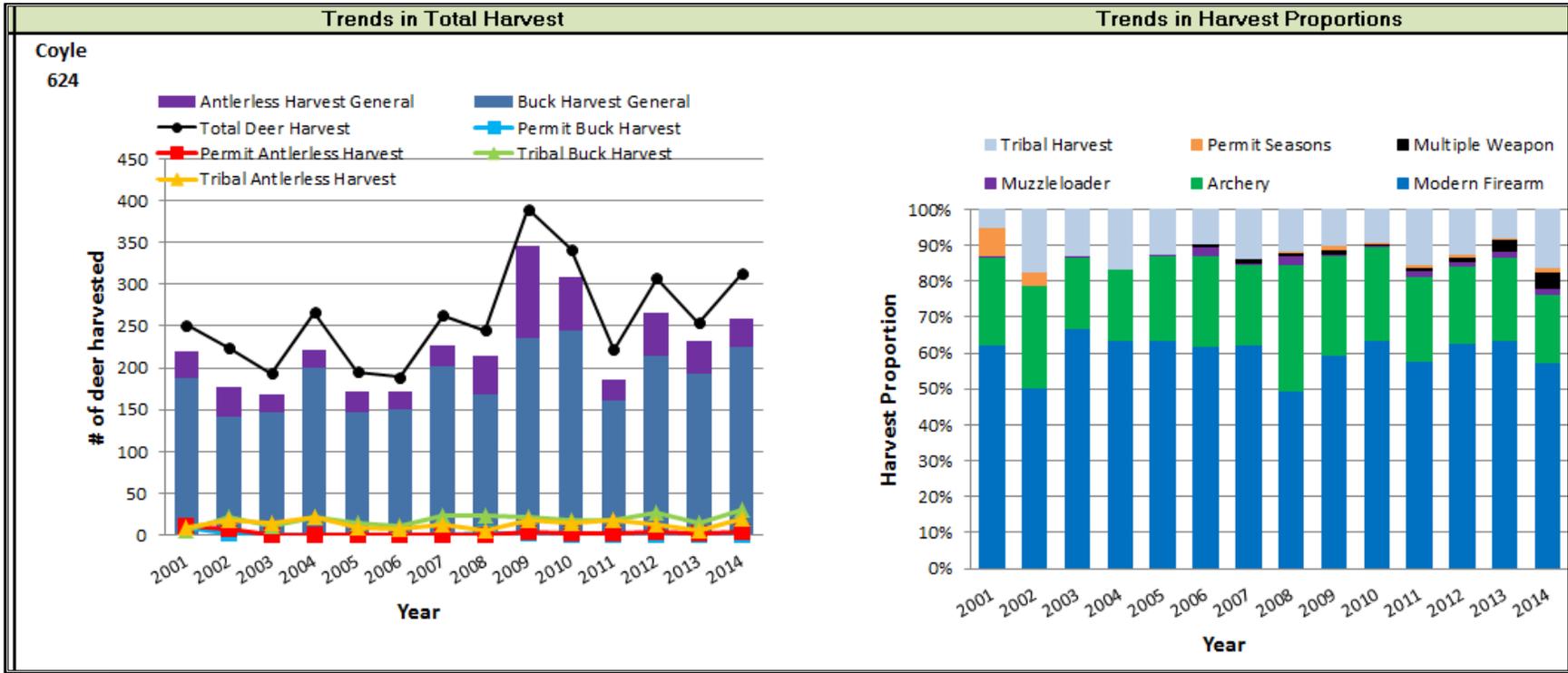
Trends in Hunter Success











BEAR

District 16 is located nearly entirely within the designated Coastal Black Bear Management Unit. There is, however, a small portion of the Coyle (GMU 624) that is within the Puget Sound Black Bear Management Unit. This area is mostly private land with firearm restrictions. There is no spring bear permit hunt season within the district. The fall black bear hunting is allowed in all GMUs within the district. The prospects for harvesting a black bear in District 16 remain good to excellent. The Forest Service has a website with Forest Health maps that identify areas where bear damage has been detected from aerial surveys.

[Aerial Forest Health Detection Maps](#): A check of these maps may provide a person with ideas on where to scout for bear.

State DNR and federal (U.S. Forest Service) lands continue to provide the best availability for bear hunting within the district. Hunters are encouraged to scout sign (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Similar to deer, access behind gated roads is largely available to those willing to walk or mountain bike, and there are ample numbers of clear cuts/younger age class regeneration units that will attract bears. At higher elevations, those willing to hike in-pack out can pursue bears in classic environments where spot-and-stalk opportunities await. The use of hounds and/or bait to hunt black bear is prohibited statewide.

COUGAR

In 2012 WDFW implemented a change in the cougar hunting season design, choosing a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. Cougar seasons will run from September 1 to December 31 for any weapon. After January 1, if the harvest guidelines have been exceeded, the season may close. Hunters should check to see if the season is still open after January 1. Check on Cougar Hunt Area Closures 1-866-364-4868 or go online at wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar. See the [WA Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#) or the WDFW website for more information regarding cougar hunting in specific GMUs within the district. Cougars are widespread in the forest lands of District 16. Areas supporting high numbers of deer and elk provide great opportunity for hunting cougar. Many of the cougars sealed in 2014 were from hunters who simply encountered the cougars while actually out deer hunting. Law Enforcement Officers in the district have reported low cougar hunting pressure in most GMUs in previous years.

PHEASANT

District 16 does not have viable populations of wild pheasant and there are no longer any pheasant release sites in the district. Due to changes in management direction from Clallam County Parks & Recreation, hunting pheasants at the Dungeness Recreation Area ended with the 2012 season. WDFW continues to seek a suitable release site within District 15 or 16. Please contact [District 15 & 16 Biologists](#) if you have any suggestions. For information on current

pheasant release sites check this link to the [Western Washington Pheasant Release Program | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

QUAIL

There is a fair abundance of California (Valley) quail in the eastern portion of District 16. They are quite common in the Dungeness Valley, but hunting opportunities can be challenging due to predominately private ownership. Quail, like the deer, thrive in the Dungeness habitats that include a mix of open grass, shrublands, and forest. Some quail hunting opportunities can be found on public lands located in the lower foothills in clearcuts or any early successional habitats. Reported harvest of quail is increasing in District 16, as the 2014 estimated harvest was 500 quail by 37 Clallam County hunters and 24 Jefferson County hunters.

FOREST GROUSE

Hunting within any of the forest lands throughout District 16 should offer good opportunities for harvesting grouse. Prime forest grouse hunting may be found on DNR and U.S. Forest Service lands within the district. The harvest of grouse in Clallam County rivals all other counties within Region 6. Participation in grouse hunting in District 16 had declined since 2009, when Clallam County harvest peaked at 6,350 by 1202 hunters and Jefferson County had 3,839 grouse by 1502 hunters. Annual harvest totals for Clallam County are climbing back to those 2009 levels, with 2014 harvest being 4605 grouse by 1107 hunters. Jefferson County harvest continues to drop, with 751 harvested by 458 hunters in 2014. Success is low for both Clallam and Jefferson counties with harvest per day between 0.11 and 0.15.

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 16. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet within timber stands with huckleberry, grouse whortleberry, and other forage plants. Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Here is a WDFW publication on sooty grouse: [Regional Phenotypic Variation in the Sooty Grouse](#)

TURKEY

District 16 is not managed for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare to non-existent here. Some turkeys were transplanted in the Dungeness drainage 30 – 40 years ago, but there is no harvestable population present. WDFW receives occasional reports of individuals or small groups of turkeys within the Pysht (GMU 603). They are likely domestic turkeys that escaped from a farm that raised turkeys in the Joyce area. There are basically no prospects for hunting wild turkeys in the district.

DOVE

District 16 has not been a major dove hunting area, although eastern Clallam County has a lot of dove. In the last few years, participation has increased, with a report of 16 hunters harvesting 176 dove in 2013. The reported harvest for 2014 dropped to 11 dove harvested by 11 hunters in Clallam County. No participation in Jefferson County was reported in 2014.

The Dove Status Report can be found here: [2015 USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status](#)

The following is a link to a banding study WDFW is participating in: [Mourning Dove Banding Study](#)

BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Band-tailed pigeons were abundant in District 16 in years past. Local hunters reported seeing “clouds of them” in drainages, such as McDonald Creek, on the east side of the district back in the 1950s.

Band-tailed pigeons are most prevalent in the district along marine estuaries, shorelines, and open forest roads where they are foraging on berries. Hunters are encouraged to search for areas with elderberry and cascara shrubs present. Band-tailed pigeons often congregate around food sources.

The reported harvest of band-tails in this district is relatively low, but the resource is available throughout the district in good numbers. WDFW Enforcement Officers remind hunters that they must have all required hunting licenses, along with the special migratory bird authorization with a band-tailed pigeon harvest card. It is mandatory to report all harvest to improve management of the species. You can find out more about the population monitoring and harvests at [2015 USFWS Band-tailed Pigeon Population Status](#)

WATERFOWL

The majority of the waterfowl hunting opportunity in District 16 is east of Port Angeles, centered in the Lower Dungeness Basin. The basin has a high density of wintering waterfowl and holds 7% of the Western Washington Breeding Waterfowl population. District biologists have focused on documenting areas with high waterfowl concentrations in Clallam County during the last several years, mapping high use areas during breeding and wintering periods. The Dungeness Basin has proven to be an area of consistently high waterfowl concentrations, even amidst the scattered developments.

Concentrations of waterfowl in freshwater habitats diminish drastically west of the Elwha and Lyre Rivers.

Midwinter waterfowl survey counts in District 16 showed an increase from 11,611 in 2013 to 18,379 in 2014, representing 2% of all waterfowl counted in the state. Midwinter populations include resident and migratory populations. The following link and map show the flyways:

[Four Flyways April 2012 Updated Map](#) :



FOUR NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATORY BIRD FLYWAYS

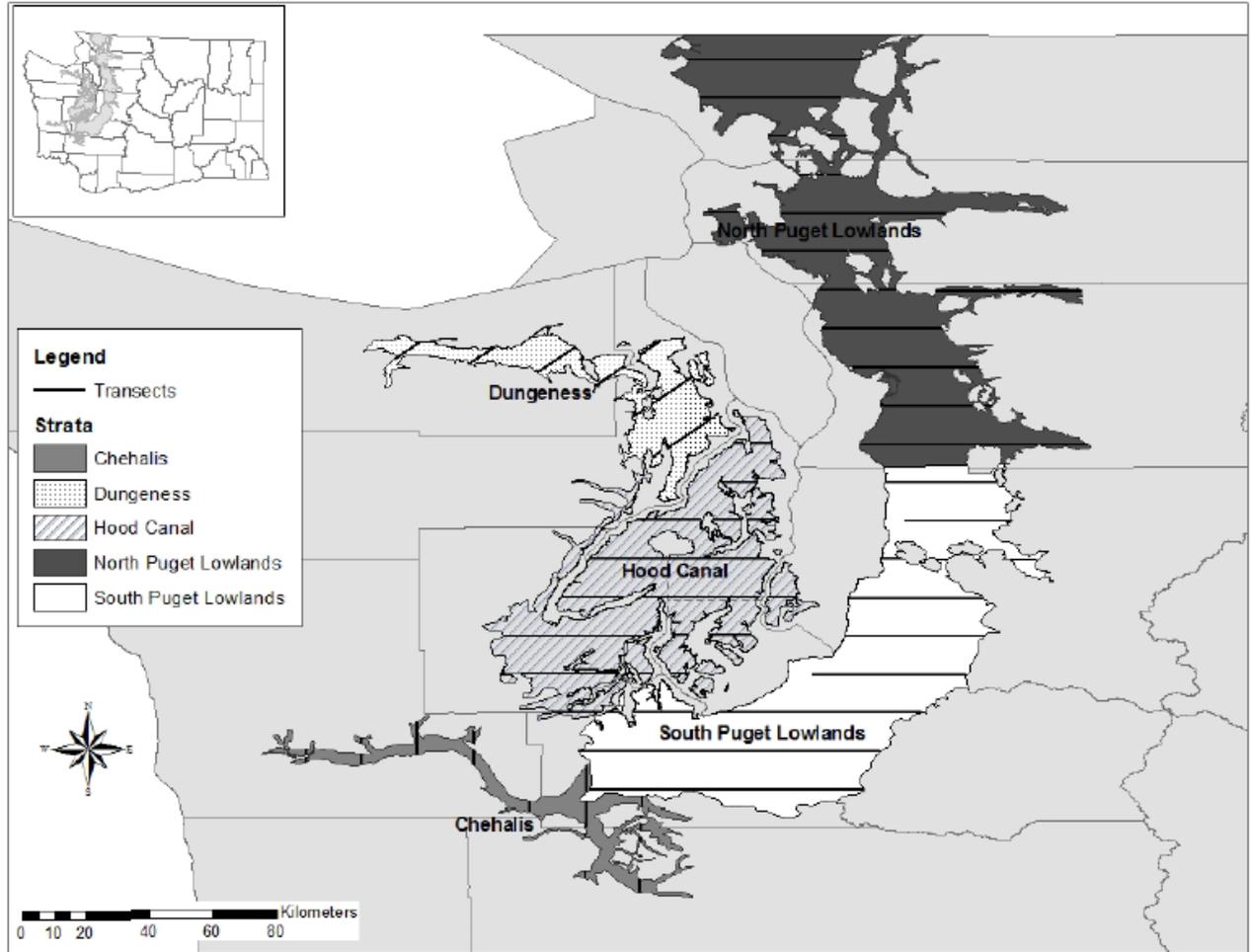
The local Olympic Mountain snowpack was extremely low during winter of 2014-2015, adding to ongoing drought conditions. Water levels this fall may be the lowest ever in many wetlands used for wintering habitat. The greatest factor influencing brood production in the district continues to be loss of habitat to development at water bodies and human presence. Waterfowl numbers are expected to remain moderate in District 16. Unfortunately, there is limited access to where you can hunt waterfowl in the district. Some locals in the western portion of the district conduct some “jump shooting” in pools and side channels of the “West End” rivers, along with other small ponds and flooded gravel pit areas. In 2014, there were 5,401 ducks harvested by 393 hunters in Clallam County and 1,852 ducks harvested by 159 hunters.

Breeding population trends in Dungeness show a continual increase in recent years. In 2011, new methods were adopted for Western Washington Breeding waterfowl surveys, shifting from ground counts to conducting aerial surveys. The Dungeness counts show an increasing total for surveys from 2010 (Total Ducks = 3974) until 2014, where the total amount of ducks equaled

7,518. Washington Breeding Waterfowl population estimates for 2014 are found in the [2014 Game Status and Trend Report](#) , page 235-252, with these figures demonstrating the transects and data results:

Waterfowl Status and Trend Report 2014• Wilson

Figure 3. Western Washington aerial breeding waterfowl survey transects flown in 2014.



Waterfowl Status and Trend Report 2014• Wilson

Table 5. Summary of western Washington breeding waterfowl population survey, 2010-2014.

Region	Year	Species																		TOTAL DUCKS	American Coot	Canada Goose	
		Mallard	Gadwall	American Wigeon	Green-winged Teal	Cinnamon Teal	Blue-winged Teal	Unclassified Teal	Northern Shoveler	Northern Pintail	Redhead	Canvasback	Scaup	Ring-necked Duck	Goldeneye	Bufflehead	Ruddy Duck	Common Merganser	Hooded Merganser				Wood Duck
Chehalis Valley	2010	1,670	0	835	0	0	0	1,035	67	0	0	0	200	0	67	0	0	0	0	0	3,875	0	3708
	±SE	511	0	777	0	0	0	776	62	0	0	0	99	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	1,217	0	3166
	2011	1,569	58	291	1,104	0	232	494	58	0	0	0	58	1,511	0	349	0	349	0	58	6,131	0	174
	±SE	705	59	294	372	0	231	318	59	0	0	0	59	1,040	0	170	0	346	0	45	1,455	0	148
	2012	2,156	485	1,967	2,263	0	0	0	701	216	0	0	54	1,455	0	701	0	162	0	189	10,347	0	458
	±SE	1,349	470	729	1,954	0	0	0	515	209	0	0	52	1,349	0	379	0	162	0	148	2,952	0	261
2013	1,652	103	0	1,678	52	155	52	155	0	0	0	0	52	0	361	0	0	0	310	4,569	129	929	
±SE	675	70	0	1,304	54	112	42	149	0	0	0	0	50	0	257	0	0	0	92	1,509	146	736	
2014	2,091	52	1,575	310	0	0	0	568	0	0	0	207	129	0	258	0	258	0	103	5,550	0	826	
±SE	473	50	1,400	182	0	0	0	476	0	0	0	234	98	0	125	0	89	0	65	1,593	0	382	
Hood Canal	2010	2,296	0	574	0	0	0	287	0	0	0	0	0	0	430	0	0	0	96	3,683	0	813	
	±SE	179	0	349	0	0	0	190	0	0	0	0	0	0	250	0	0	0	58	505	0	369	
	2011	2,779	0	0	0	0	0	192	0	0	0	0	511	0	447	0	0	0	128	4,057	0	511	
	±SE	629	0	0	0	0	0	114	0	0	0	0	189	0	171	0	0	0	127	700	0	287	
	2012	2,619	0	607	192	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	831	0	256	0	0	256	415	5,175	0	735
	±SE	694	0	564	176	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	477	0	119	0	0	112	142	1,051	0	280	
2013	2,080	63	0	63	0	0	126	0	0	0	0	0	63	0	851	0	126	126	126	3,624	0	851	
±SE	494	58	0	59	0	0	129	0	0	0	0	59	0	435	0	116	116	67	701	0	152		
2014	3,466	0	0	0	0	0	0	63	0	0	0	0	32	63	189	0	0	378	189	4,380	0	1008	
±SE	1,022	0	0	0	0	0	0	64	0	0	0	0	30	58	120	0	0	153	127	1,052	0	423	
Dungeness	2010	2,649	0	0	0	0	0	294	1,030	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,974	0	37	
	±SE	378	0	0	0	0	0	169	502	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	650	0	24	
	2011	1,661	181	60	1,963	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	453	0	453	0	60	0	4,832	30	272	
	±SE	527	185	62	1,859	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	318	0	426	0	65	0	2,014	31	192	
	2012	2,053	755	0	1,027	0	0	0	60	0	0	0	272	0	302	0	0	0	0	30	4,499	0	423
	±SE	885	737	0	840	0	0	0	65	0	0	0	252	0	99	0	0	0	0	33	1,452	0	300
2013	2,971	119	238	1,218	59	0	0	743	0	0	0	505	386	0	713	0	0	0	59	7,011	0	861	
±SE	1,241	121	162	843	64	0	0	759	0	0	0	471	205	0	292	0	0	0	57	1,796	0	893	
2014	3,162	716	0	1,581	0	0	0	0	60	0	0	0	627	0	1,074	0	0	239	60	7,518	149	1581	
±SE	908	611	0	1,541	0	0	0	0	61	0	0	0	381	0	527	0	0	230	64	2,014	110	1128	
South Puget Lowlands	2010	8,691	0	325	0	0	0	372	186	0	0	0	232	511	0	2,974	0	186	0	186	13,664	46	1859
	±SE	1,549	0	215	0	0	0	175	148	0	0	0	163	282	0	424	0	131	0	121	1,678	40	390
	2011	8,926	509	2,067	1,438	60	120	779	3,175	0	0	0	0	1,048	0	1,917	0	0	120	659	20,818	150	1647
	±SE	1,307	538	1,635	596	55	76	629	3,193	0	0	0	0	380	0	554	0	0	78	466	4,037	91	397
	2012	15,127	60	449	300	0	0	0	899	60	0	0	120	3,295	0	2,426	0	60	30	539	23,364	30	3684
	±SE	3,569	61	283	218	0	0	0	589	61	0	0	125	1,153	0	585	0	56	28	221	3,868	28	1163
2013	10,274	734	499	2,495	0	0	59	2,789	0	0	0	0	2,407	59	2,671	0	59	176	822	23,043	29	2436	
±SE	1,520	777	528	1,365	0	0	62	1,977	0	0	0	0	1,098	54	624	0	62	93	288	3,265	27	880	
2014	7,359	0	493	0	0	0	92	954	0	0	0	0	431	0	985	0	185	62	1,293	11,854	31	3664	
±SE	932	0	392	0	0	0	95	600	0	0	0	0	227	0	417	0	109	61	182	1,291	28	878	

Figure 6. Western Washington duck breeding population survey results by species, 2010-14.

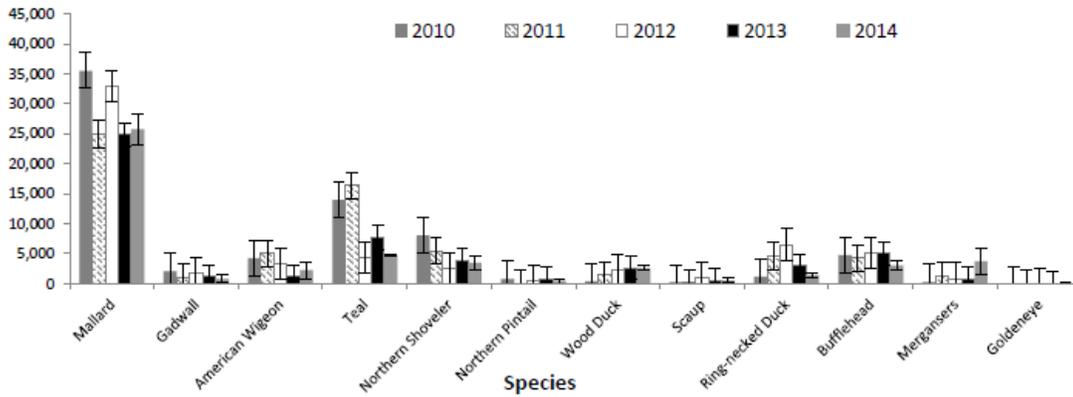
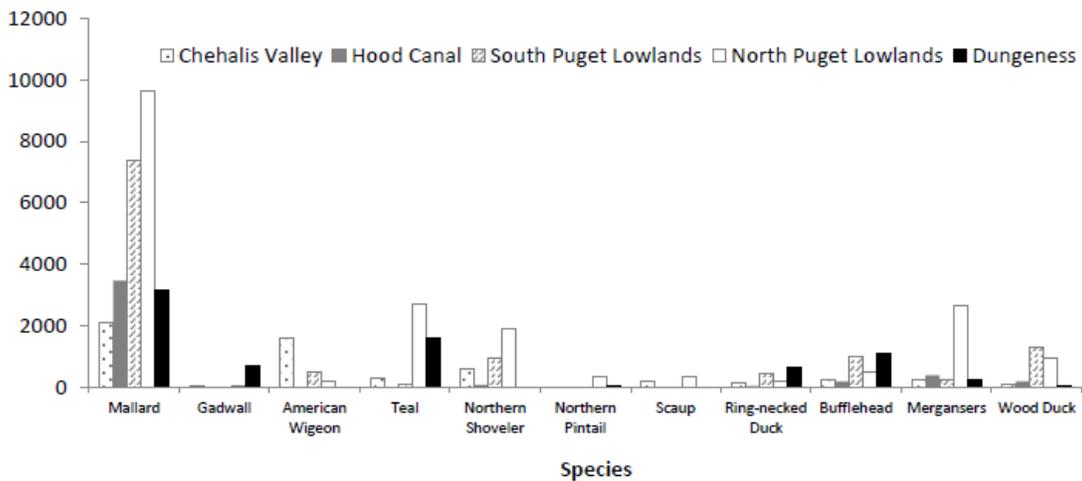


Figure 7. W. Washington duck breeding population survey results by species and strata, 2014.



Most all freshwater waterfowl hunting areas in the Dungeness Basin are on private lands. Public land hunting opportunities include the newly established Lower Dungeness Unit at the mouth of the Dungeness River. Some hunters find hunting opportunities in the near-shore areas of bays and along the shoreline of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, both on foot and by boat.

Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies and along the saltwater shorelines in the district. Hunters are urged to obey all hunting regulations at sites near residential areas to avoid potential future closures. Be sure to check [the 2015 Migratory Waterfowl Regulation Pamphlet](#) for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin, and goldeneye) in western Washington. The local seaduck populations have been studied for many years and the Sea Duck Management Strategies publication has been made available here: [Washington Sea Duck Management Strategies](#).

more information on waterfowl populations can be found at the following links:

[Trends in Duck Breeding Populations 1955-2015](#)

[USFWS Waterfowl Population Status 2015](#)

The North Olympic Wildlife Area includes The Lower Dungeness Unit. This unit contains multiple disjunct parcels located about five miles north of Sequim within GMU 624 (Coyle). Seventy-five acres of this unit can be hunted north of East Anderson Road and west of the Dungeness River. Public access at this location is supported by a small parking area, information kiosk containing site rules, and a restroom. There are freshwater ponds located in the main field below the parking area. However, the main hunting area for this unit is located on the tidelands of Dungeness Bay, adjacent to the river's mouth. A variety of dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and geese have been documented at the unit.

Hunters are required to "walk-in" to the main hunting area. Rivers End Road is a privately owned road and cannot be used to access the tidelands. It is approximately one half mile to reach the main hunting areas on this unit. Hunting is permitted only on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays throughout the regular waterfowl season. A 15 shotgun shell restriction is in affect for this unit. Designated blind locations for first-come, first-served use will be established for this season. Detailed information will be posted on the kiosk and on the Lower Dungeness Unit webpage at: [North Olympic - Lower Dungeness Unit](#). The hunting area along the tidelands is privately owned and is managed by WDFW through a temporary land use agreement. Misuse of this area may result in the loss of future public access.



Here is another useful link for the WDFW Waterfowl Hunting Area Report:
[Western Washington - Region 6 Waterfowl Hunting Areas](#)

The Lower Dungeness Unit can be found on page 12-13, but note the Safety Zone specified on map above, which is possibly not displayed on the website version.

The Dungeness Recreation Area County Park no longer allows hunting.

The 2015 Waterfowl Status Report from USFWS has some interesting reading that might come in useful to better understand the waterfowl resources throughout North America: [USFWS Waterfowl Population Status 2015](#)

Trumpeter swan numbers have increased in the Dungeness valley in the past five years, and they have been documented near the river mouth. All waterfowl hunters are encouraged to know all identification features for trumpeter swans and snow geese. It is illegal to shoot trumpeter swans.

Typical participation of hunting Canada geese occurred during 2014, with 95 hunters in Clallam County harvesting 232 Canada geese and 99 hunters in Jefferson County harvesting 59 Canada geese. The population of Canada geese on the east side of the district has been increasing in

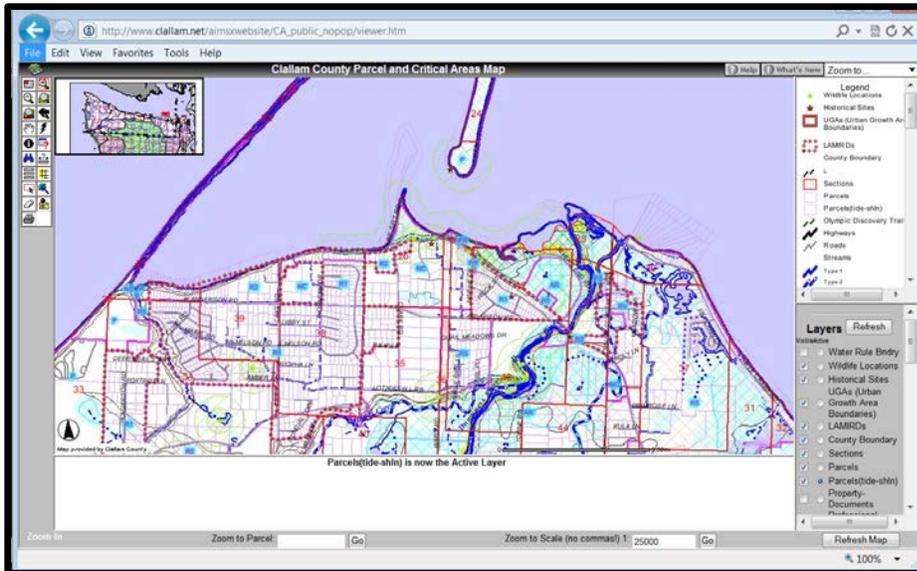
recent years. Most of the hunt opportunities are on private agricultural lands in GMU 624 that contain barley. No “pass shooting” is possible. Local hunters were quite successful in previous seasons using a decoy spread and blinds. Permission to hunt on private lands will need to be obtained and all firearm regulations must be followed. Many agricultural fields have residential properties in the vicinity, so hunters must be aware of all safety concerns.

Public saltwater hunting opportunities are more numerous than freshwater options in District 16, albeit more difficult in many ways. The regulations and landownerships, including tideland ownerships, make it necessary for hunters to have their plans well thought out. Another complication includes the US Fish & Wildlife Service Dungeness Wildlife Refuge. Hunting is not allowed on the refuge and some of the refuge boundaries are difficult to determine in the field.

When hunting from a boat, make sure you do not have your anchor down on private tidelands without permission. You must not go onto private land to retrieve any waterfowl you shoot without prior permission. So if a hunter on a boat shot a duck and it landed on private land or where they weren't able to retrieve it (because of where and how they were hunting or if they were without a suitable method of retrieval), the hunter would have violated the wastage law. The Local Enforcement Sargent emphasizes that boat hunting is generally not feasible because of these complications and Enforcement staff will be enforcing these laws.

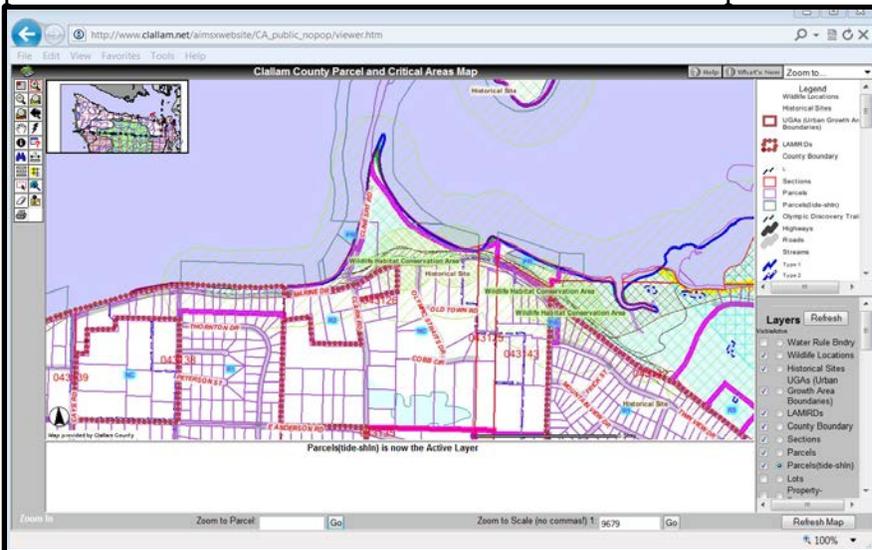
There are some private landowners that allow limited hunting access along the saltwater shoreline. Typically local signage refers to a phone number or contact information, and in some cases the signage spells out the conditions of access. Because these vary from year to year the hunter must make a tour of the area and find out the current arrangements. Tideland ownership (state or private) can be found on the DNR maps referred to later in this prospect report. Assessors maps can be retrieved on the internet using these websites for Clallam County tideland ownership. Jefferson County does not display tideland parcel ownership. Hunters will want to make sure they will have the ability to retrieve ducks, keeping in mind the ownerships where they set up and have permission to have their hunt and the adjacent ownership where they don't.

CLALLAM COUNTY: <http://www.clallam.net/maps/>
http://www.clallam.net/aimsxwebsite/CA_public_nopop/viewer.htm



Make sure you have the Parcels (tide-shln) layer checked and the Active circle dotted. You will want the scale set at 1:25,000 or less.

Use the icons on the top left to zoom in and choose the lightning bolt icon, then select tideland parcels and click on them. The information on ownership should come up.



With these records, along with the DNR maps referenced at the end of these prospects (example below, where state tidelands are highlighted), you could make sure you were aware of the land ownership whether on the shoreline or in a boat over tidelands.



Jefferson County has a version of this as well, found at <http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/idms/mapserver.shtml>. The maps show ownership of parcels, with the exception of tideland ownership. Again, you could use the DNR maps reference (shown above) to identify state tidelands.

SNOWSHOE HARE AND COTTONTAIL RABBIT

Snowshoe Hare & Cottontail Rabbit: Most all of the rabbits encountered on the Olympic Peninsula will be snowshoe hare (see range maps below). Snowshoe hare are readily observed along forested roads in the western half of District 16, and will be found throughout the district, usually along forested edges. Annual district harvest is erratic, ranging from zero (~450 hunt days, 2011 report) to over 300 (~800-1200 hunt days, 2005 & 2008 report). The opportunity is always there, with a harvest per unit effort expected to range between 0.25-0.70/day. More information on the snowshoe hare can be found at these websites:

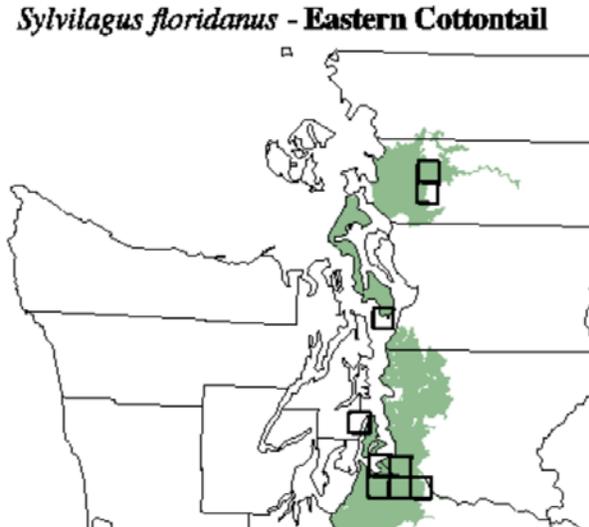
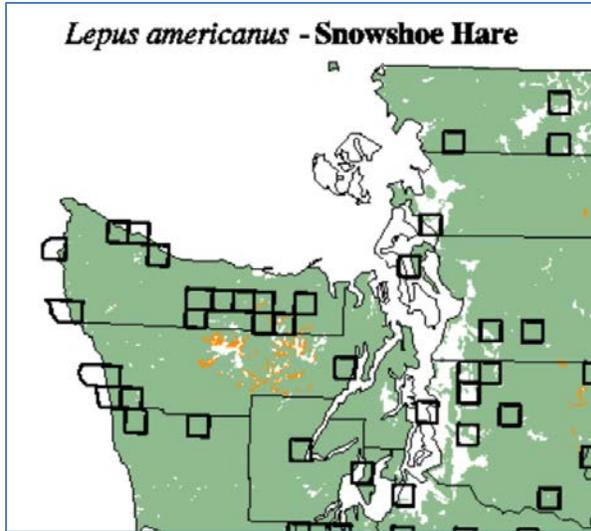
[Snowshoe Hare - Canadian Wildlife Federation](#)

http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_snowshoe_hare.html

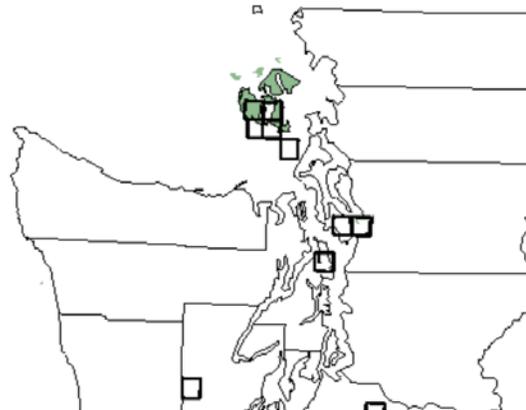
http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_eastern_cottontail.html

http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_european_rabbit.html

http://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_nuttalls_cottontail.html



Oryctolagus cuniculus - European Rabbit



Legend

- Habitats in core zones
- Habitats in peripheral zones
- Township/Range with a record

TRIBAL HUNTING

Tribal Hunting: District 16 is within the ceded area of numerous treaty tribes on the Olympic Peninsula. WDFW and tribes are co-managers for wildlife populations. Tribal hunting often occurs concurrent with WDFW hunting seasons. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal enforcement personnel are responsible for ensuring that tribal hunting regulations, which may differ from state regulations, are followed. You can find more information about tribal hunting on the WDFW website at:

wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/tribal.

[Tribal big game harvest reports are available at Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Big Game Harvest Reports.](#)

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FOREST LANDS

Some Private Forest Industry Links

Rayonier Inc

<http://www.rayonier.com/>

IFP Office (360) 452-1351

Forks Office (360) 374-6565

Port Angeles (360) 457-2329

Western Washington Rayonier map:

Information on Access Permits:

<http://property.rayonierhunting.com/Permits/PermitsHome.aspx>

<http://property.rayonierhunting.com/AvailableAreas/FindProperties.aspx>

Previous season - 2014 online documents:

http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_General%20Access_Map.pdf

Pysht GMU 603 – Rayonier ownership Deep

Creek: http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_DeepCreek_Map.pdf

Dickey GMU 602 – Rayonier ownership Dickey

http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_DickeyPermitArea_Map.pdf

Clearwater GMU 615 – Rayonier ownership Kalaloch

Ridge: http://property.rayonierhunting.com/CreateDocument/PermitMapImages/2014_KalalochRidge_Map.pdf

Green Crow

<http://www.greencrow.com/contact-us/locations/>

Port Angeles (360) 452-3325

Merrill & Ring

<http://www.merrillring.com/contacts/>

Port Angeles (360) 452-2367

Email: contact@merrillring.com

Cascade Timberlands

<http://www.cascadetimberlands.com/>

OTHER MAJOR LANDOWNERS

Other Landowner Links

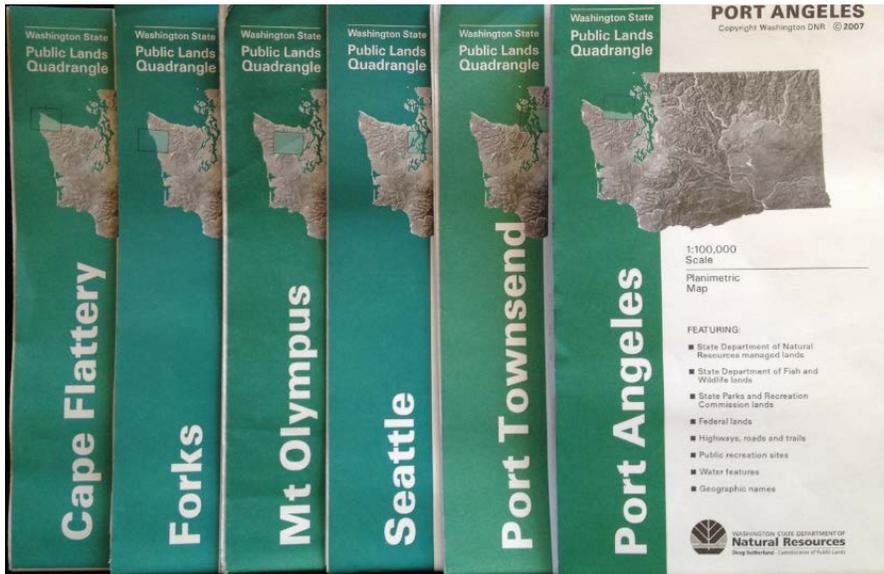
Hoh River Trust

<http://hohrivertrust.publishpath.com//Websites/hohrivertrust/Images/webmap.jpg>

ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Because the land ownership can be very confusing, District Biologist McMillan recommends a set of these DNR maps, which you can order online at:

[Buy Maps, Aerial Photos, or Survey Data | WA - DNR](#)



Often these DNR maps are available to buy at Swains & Browns in Port Angeles or at Thriftway in Forks.

These DNR maps have the best combination of land ownership and current roads. But keep in mind there have been several DNR & Private Forestland ownership exchanges in recent years that won't show up on these maps.

DNR's website has current DNR ownership displayed at this link: [DNR Ownership](#) . Other maps that can be helpful for select areas include:

Forest Service Quadrangle Maps can be obtained free online at http://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/rastergateway/states-regions/states_zoom.php?stateID=wa Forest Service also sells Forest District Maps that are very useful, as are the Custom Correct Maps shown on the same page. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/olympic/maps-pubs/?cid=stelprdb5195398>

The map for the east end of WDFW District 16 is the Hood Canal Ranger District/North End map.

The maps for the west end of WDFW District 16 are Pacific Ranger District/North End & South End maps.

2015

ANTHONY NOVACK, District Wildlife Biologist
SCOTT HARRIS, Private Lands Biologist



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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DISTRICT 17 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 17 is located in southwest Washington and consists of 12 game management units (GMUs): 618 (Matheny) 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 all of 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 portion 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 characterized by second and third growth forests. These lands are primarily dedicated to producing conifers such as Douglas fir, western hemlock, and occasionally cedar. A small number of stands focus production on red alder. Other kinds of habitats occur in the district and range from sub-alpine habitat in areas adjacent to Olympic National Park to coastal wetlands along the outer coast.



District 17 is best known for elk hunting opportunities in the Willapa Hills and waterfowl hunting opportunities around Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and in the Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys. High quality hunting opportunities exist for other game species, including Columbian black-tailed deer, black bears, and forest grouse. **Table 1** shows the estimated harvest for most game species in District 17 during the 2013 and 2014 seasons. Those numbers are compared to the five-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

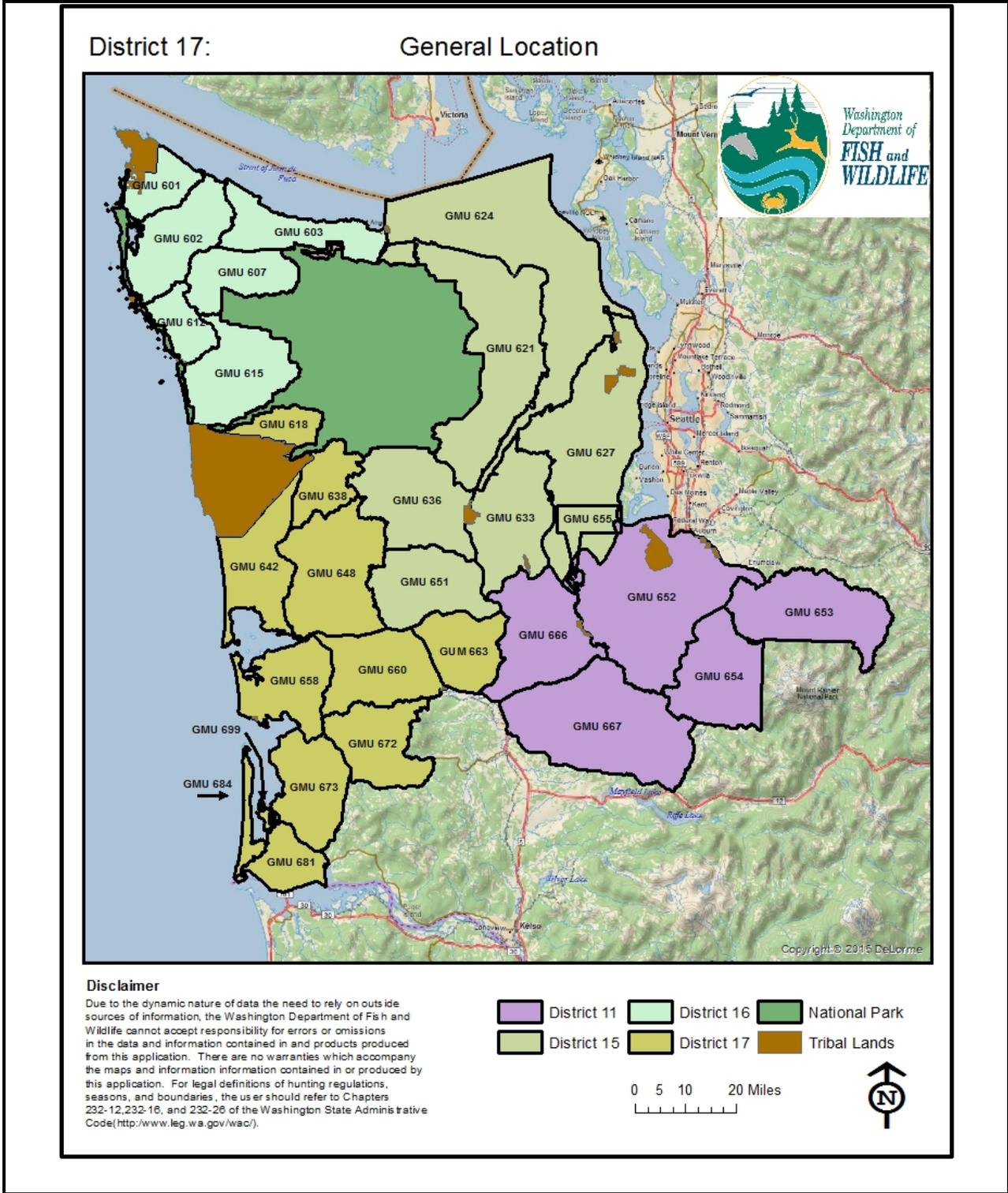


FIGURE 1. MAP DEPICTING THE GENERAL LOCATION OF DISTRICT 17 AND ALL OF WDFW ADMINISTRATIVE REGION 6.

Species	Harvest		
	5-yr avg.	2013	2014
Elk	644	628	652
Deer	1,553	1,492	1,602
Bear	102	97	63
Cougar	7	10	3
Ducks	23,130	25,426	24,012
Geese (late season)	2,446	2,030	2,612
Geese (early season)	336	371	489
Forest Grouse	6,102	3,050	4,206
Mourning Dove	77	252	16
Quail	82	0	0
Band-tailed pigeons	(pre 2013)148	No data	No data
Rabbits	143	77	108

TABLE 1. AVERAGE HARVEST FOR SELECTED GAME SPECIES DURING PREVIOUS 5 YEARS, AND YEARLY ESTIMATES FOR THE 2013 AND 2014 HUNTING SEASONS IN DISTRICT 17.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The subspecies of elk in District 17 are Roosevelt elk. Unlike other areas in western Washington, Rocky Mountain elk were never introduced into the area and Roosevelt-Rocky Mountain elk hybrids do not occur. The state of Washington contains 10 distinct elk herds and a portion of two elk herds occurs in District 17:

- Olympic elk herd (GMUs 618, 638, 642, and 648)
- Willapa Hills elk herd (GMUs 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, and 699).

The quality of elk hunting in District 17 varies from marginal to excellent depending on the GMU. The greatest harvest opportunities occur in GMUs associated with the Willapa Hills elk herd area, specifically GMUs 658, 672, 673, and 681.

In Washington, elk are managed at the herd level, while harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. In general, each herd consists of several GMUs that collectively define the range of a population that minimizes interchange with adjacent elk populations.

Overall, District 17 is managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing elk herds. Portions of the district (such as GMU 684) must balance overall herd objectives with the equally important mission of minimizing conflicts with people. Elk can cause severe impacts to crops such as hay or cranberries. Overall management objectives include maintaining herds to contain 15 bulls: 100 cows in the pre-hunting 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. Trends in harvest, hunter success, and CPUE are used as surrogates to formal indices or estimates. WDFW recognizes limitations to using harvest data to monitor trends in population size. The agency developed a monitoring strategy for the Willapa Hills to:

- Determine elk population trends
- Quantify cow to calf ratios
- Quantify bull to cow ratios

Elk surveys conducted in District 17 during Mar/Apr of 2015 produced the following data:

Year	GMU	Sampling Units		Yrl	Sub	Mat	Unk	Total	bull:cow:calf	
		Surveyed	Cow							Calf
2015	658	7	345	125	72	9	1	15	567	24:100:36
	660	1	33	16	6	0	0	0	55	18:100:48
	672	5	208	57	29	6	0	36	336	17:100:27
	673	2	321	95	46	1	0	9	472	15:100:30
	Total	15 units	907	293	153	16	1	60	1,430	19:100:32

WDFW observed 1,430 elk during the 2015 survey. Bull to cow ratios averaged 19 bulls per 100 cows. This 19:100 statistic is well above the 12 bulls per 100 cow minimum that WDFW uses to benchmark breeding success. Calf to cow ratios measured 32 calves per 100 cows. The calf ratio indicates good elk production. Mature bulls, carrying antlers with five points or more, were scarce. Only one mature bull was seen during the entire survey. Hunters with a primary goal of finding a trophy bull are directed to look outside the Willapa Hills area and into the neighboring Olympic or St. Helens elk herds.

Future surveys will be conducted once per year, sampling different segments of the Willapa Hills elk herd.

All harvest data indicates that elk populations are stable in District 17. 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](#).

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question we get from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” The answer depends on individual preferences, such as what weapon is going to be used and what type of hunting experience the hunter is looking for. For example, GMU 699 is a small unit closed to muzzleloader hunters. Also, archery hunters are not allowed to harvest antlerless elk in every GMU.

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 either the Quinault Ridge (GMU 638), Matheny (GMU 618), or adjacent Clearwater (GMU 615) GMUs. All three 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 readily exist in any GMU that is open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 17. Those 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. Note, many industrial timber companies have begun limiting access or charging a fee to access their land. This change has effectively, and sometime dramatically, reduced the density of hunters on those lands.

The information in **Tables 2, 3 & 4** 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 five-year averages for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of elk harvested and hunters per square mile.

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 in a five year period from 2009-2013 during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 681 and 673 was 36 and 116 elk, respectively. That total harvest may seem to indicate much higher density of elk in GMU 673

compared to GMU 681. However, by redefining that number as elk harvested/mi², we come up with an estimate of 0.436 harvested/mi² in GMU 673 and 0.330 harvested/mi² in GMU 681. Expressed as harvested/mi², 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/mi² (bulls and cows), hunters/mi², and hunter success rates for the 2009-2013 season. 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.

Archers should consider that antlerless elk seasons are not uniform across all GMUs. Antlerless elk may be harvested during the general season in six GMUs, and three GMUs are open during early and late archery seasons. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs. Muzzleloader seasons are not uniform either. Some muzzleloader seasons are open during the early muzzleloader season while others are only available during the late muzzleloader season. Hunters should keep these differences in mind when interpreting the information provided in Tables 2 through 4.

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

TABLE 2. COMPARISON OF MODERN FIREARM GENERAL ELK SEASON: TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES USING RANK SUM ANALYSIS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE (2009-2013).

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

TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF MUZZLELOADER GENERAL ELK SEASON: TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES USING RANK SUM ANALYSIS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE (2009-2013).

*GMU 684 IS IN **BOLD** AND OPEN DURING BOTH EARLY AND LATE SEASON FOR ANY ELK*

** NOTE – MUZZLELOADER SEASONS WERE NEWLY OPENED FOR THE 2014 SEASONS IN UNITS 648, 673, 681.*

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

TABLE 4. COMPARISON OF ARCHERY GENERAL ELK SEASON: TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES USING RANK SUM ANALYSIS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE (2009-2013). *GMU 684 IS IN **BOLD** AND OPEN DURING BOTH EARLY AND LATE ARCHERY* * NOTE – GMUS WITH 3-PT. MINIMUM OR ANTLERLESS HARVEST RESTRICTIONS. ...

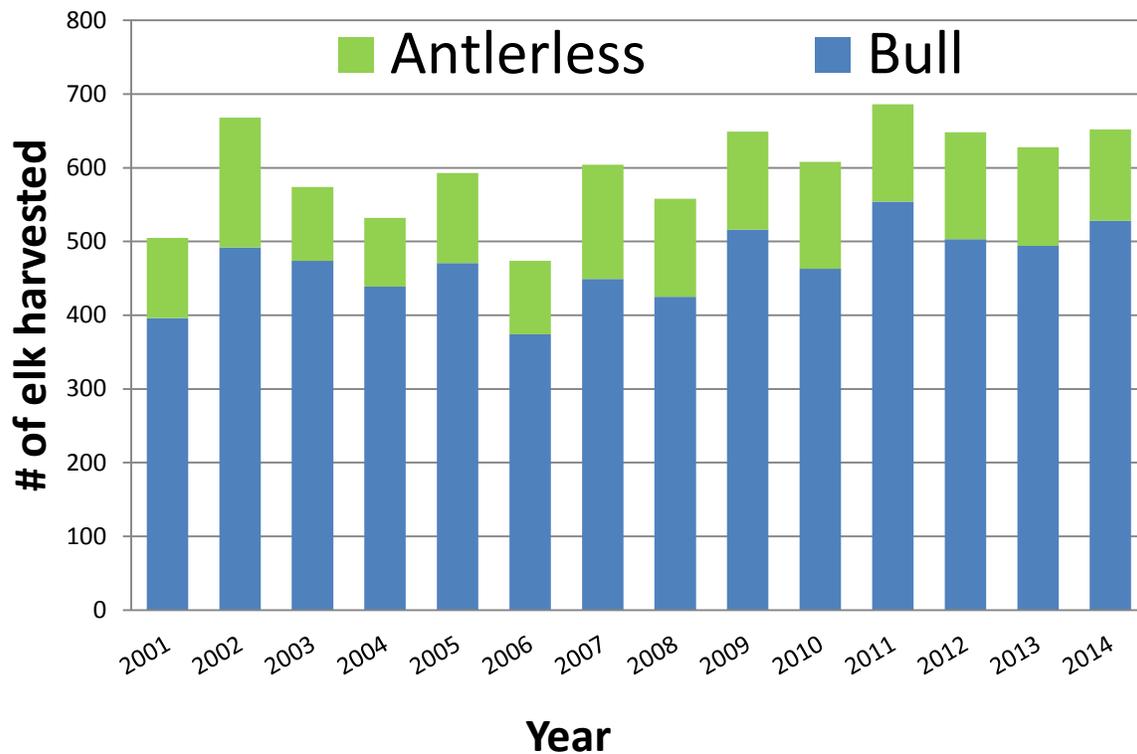
WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Elk populations do not vary much from year to year, especially in District 17, which lacks the severe winter weather conditions that might result in a winter die-off. Consequently, the number of elk available for harvest is expected to be similar in size compared to the 2014 season. Hunter numbers do not typically change much from one year to the next, but recent actions by private timber companies to charge for access have reduced hunter numbers in those areas affected.

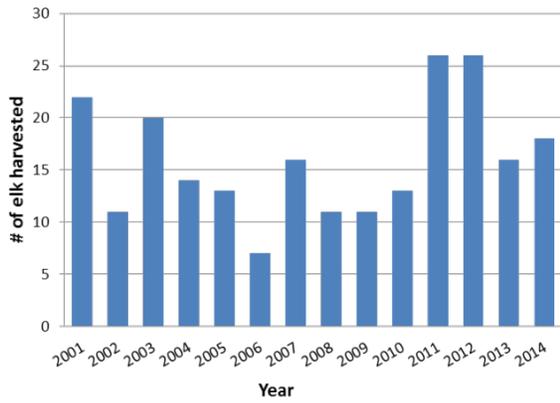
Weather can be dramatically different from year to year, and has the potential to influence harvest rates. As an example, 2012 was a hot and dry summer by western Washington standards, which produced extreme fire danger warnings and caused many timber companies to close their lands to public access during the latter part of the general early archery season and the entire early muzzleloader season. At the time of this report, the summer of 2015 has seen extreme drought conditions throughout the district and hunters may need to consider alternatives to their typical hunts. Since we are not able to predict long-term weather events, the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent trends in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success.

Figure #2, provides historic harvest data for the district and each individual GMU. Figure #3 and # 4 show district level information on hunter participation and success rates. These figures are intended to provide hunters with information to make an informed decision on where to hunt.

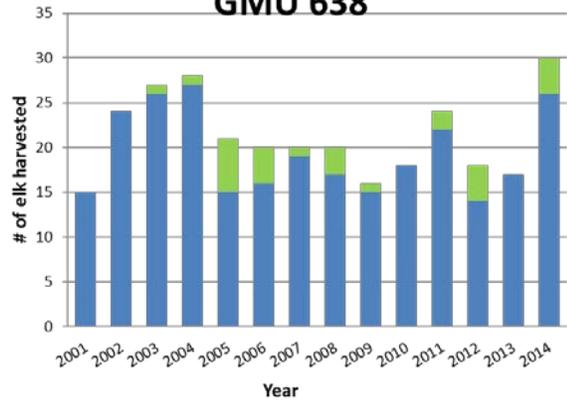
District 17



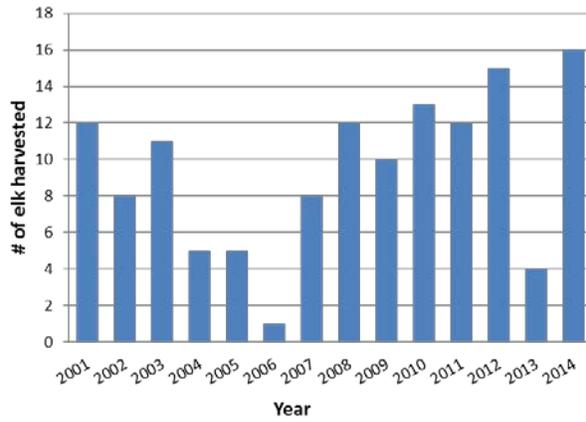
GMU 618



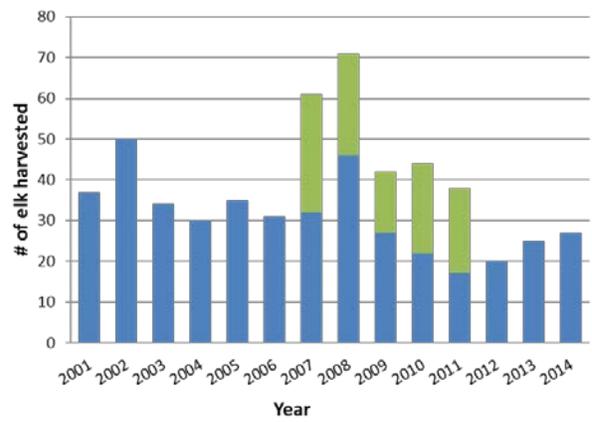
GMU 638



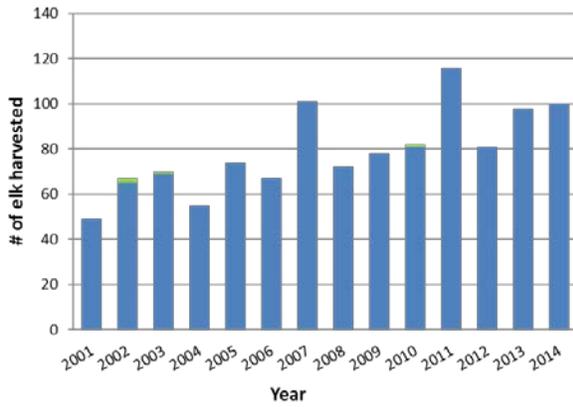
GMU 642



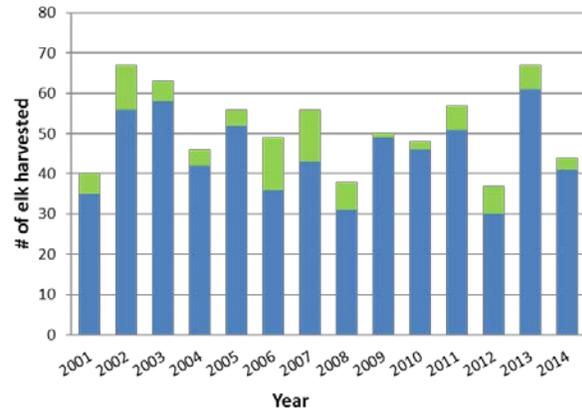
GMU 648



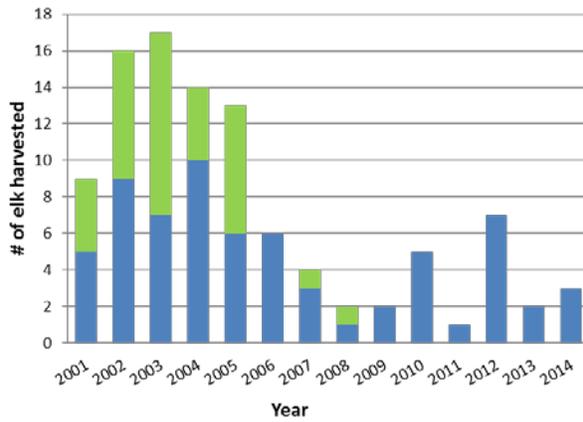
GMU 658



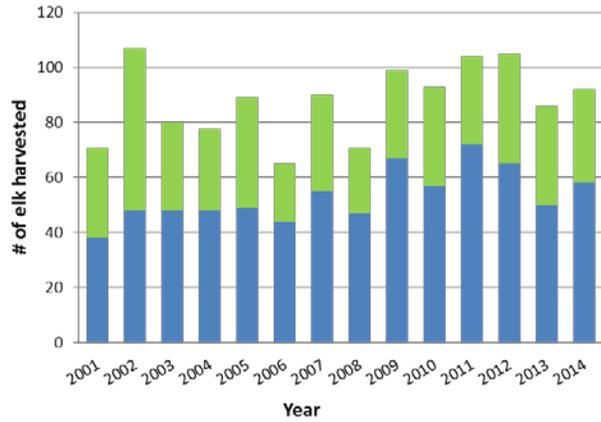
GMU 660



GMU 663



GMU 672



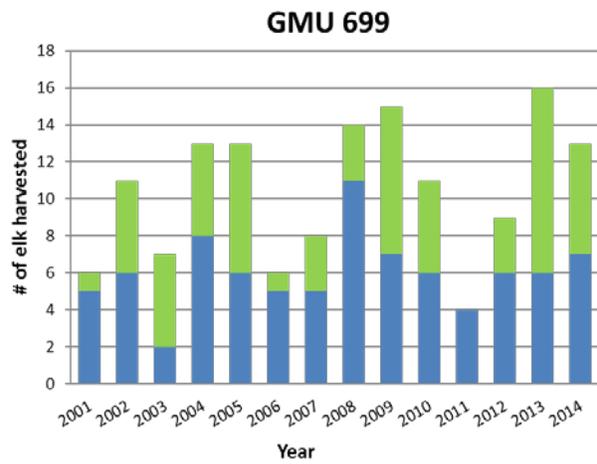
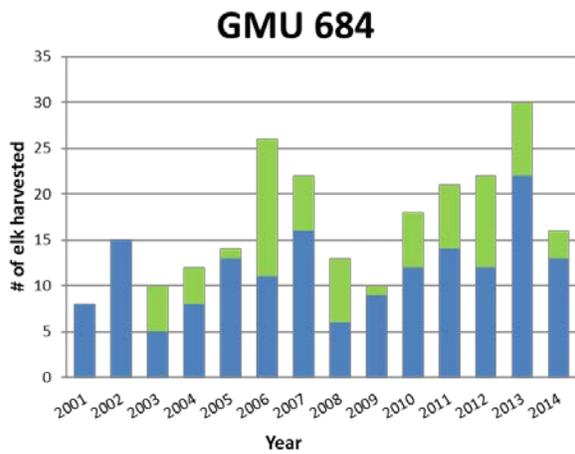
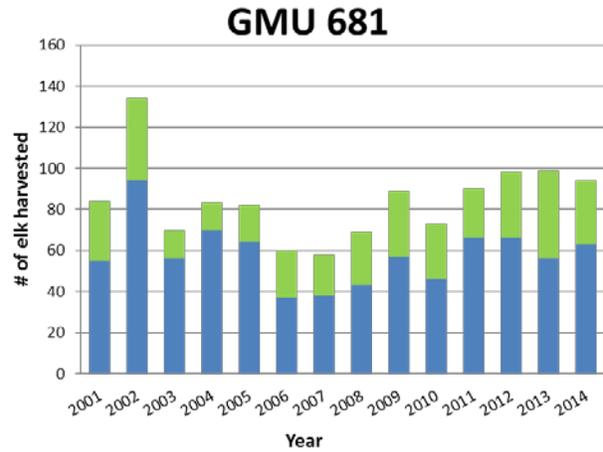
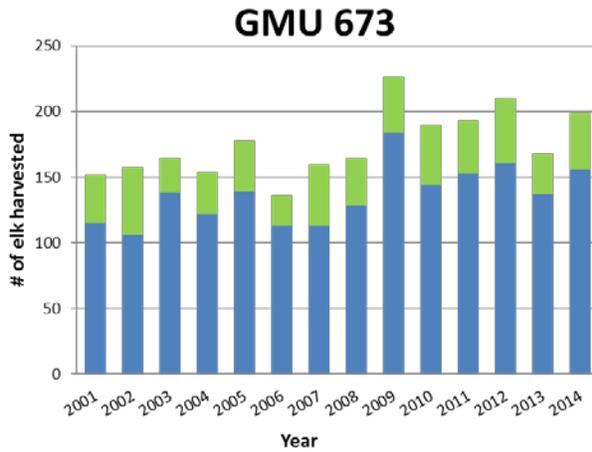


FIGURE 2. TOTAL BULL (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS (GREEN) ELK HARVESTED DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASONS COMBINED, 2001–2014. DISTRICT TOTAL WITH BREAKDOWN BY INDIVIDUAL GMU. HARVEST TOTALS DO NOT INCLUDE EITHER TRIBAL HARVEST OR ELK SPECIAL PERMIT HARVEST.

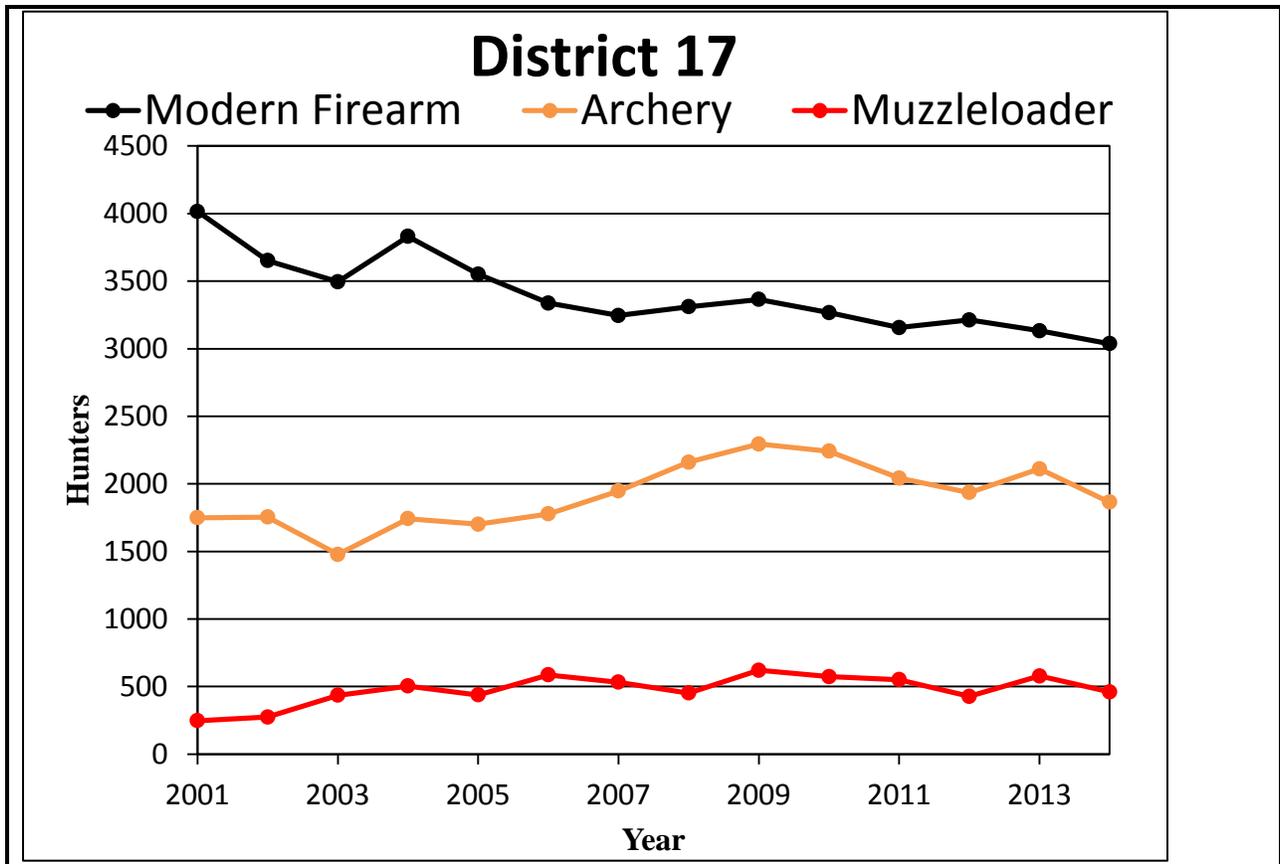


FIGURE 3. TOTAL ELK HUNTER PARTICIPATION DURING GENERAL SEASONS FROM 2001-2014 BY WEAPON TYPE: MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), MUZZLELOADER (RED)

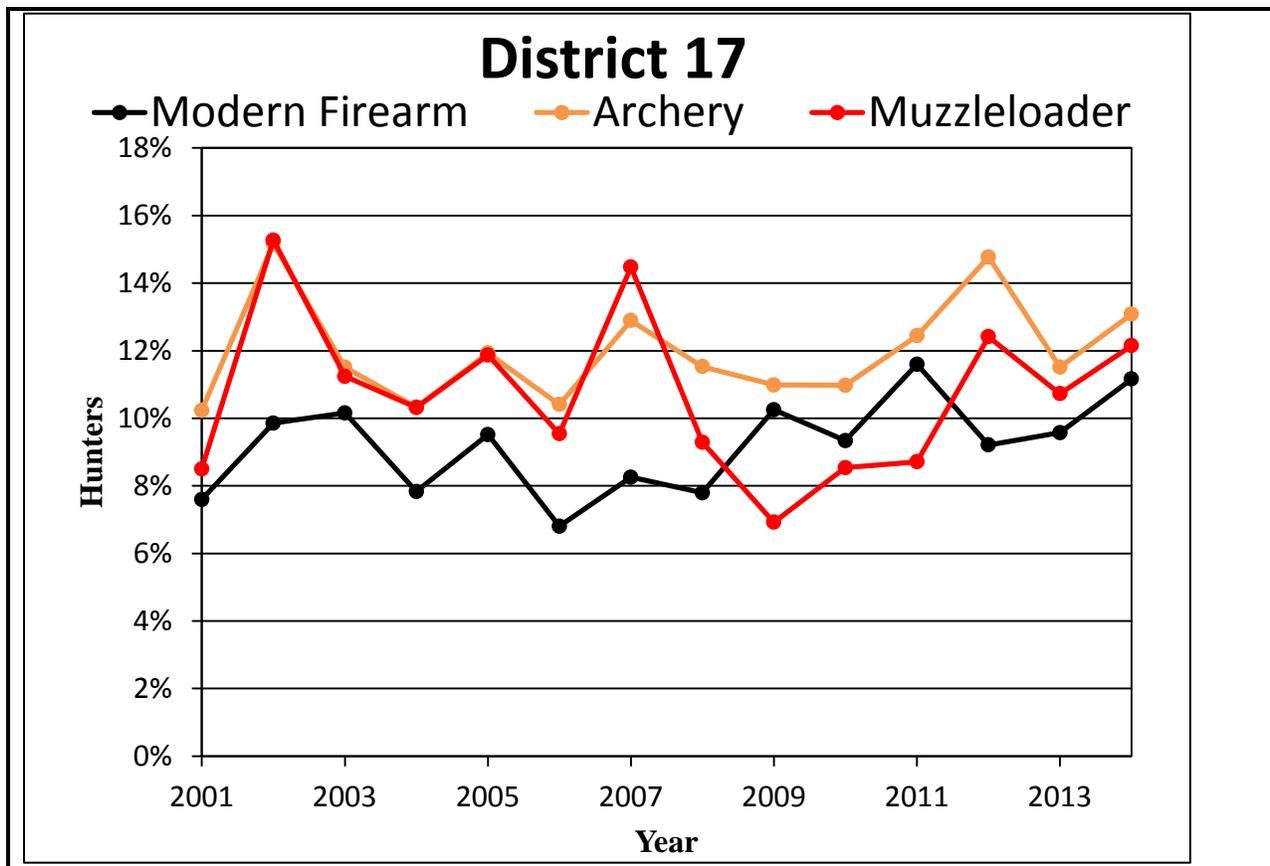


FIGURE 4. ELK HUNTER SUCCESS RATES DURING GENERAL SEASONS FROM 2001-2014 BY WEAPON TYPE: MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), MUZZLELOADER (RED)

HOW TO FIND ELK

Like most places, when hunting elk in District 17, hunters need to do homework and spend time scouting before the season opens. Predicting where elk are located is especially difficult after hunting pressure increases. The majority of hunters spend their time focused on clearcuts. Elk often forage in clearcuts and are highly visible when they do. Those highly visible elk often attract other hunters. Consequently, clearcuts can get crowded in a hurry.

Many elk (especially bulls) do not frequently visit clearcuts during daylight hours. Instead, they spend most of their day in closed canopy forests, swamps, or regeneration stands (aka “reprod”).



Some generalities can be made about the landscape that will increase the odds of locating elk. When going to a new area, hunters will do best to cover as much ground as possible. Note areas where you see sign along roads and landings. Landings are often ungraveled, making it easy to see fresh tracks. Scouting will reveal what areas hold elk and where to focus their more intensive efforts.

After identifying areas with abundant elk sign, hunters should focus on stands that provide cover and are adjacent to clearcuts. During early seasons, when it is warm, these cover areas often include swamps, creek bottoms, river bottoms, or any place near water. Once the season progresses and temperatures cool, elk are less attracted to water and locating them becomes more difficult. Hunting pressure also can force elk to use areas that provide thicker cover or are more inaccessible to hunters because of topography.

Later in the season, consult a topographic map and find “benches” located in steep terrain with thick cover. Elk often use these benches to bed down during the day. Finally, don’t let a locked gate (provided that non-motorized access is allowed) keep you from going into an area to search for elk. Frequently, these areas hold elk that have not received much hunting pressure, making them less skittish and easier to hunt. A popular approach to hunting behind gates is to use mountain bikes with trailers. Biking on timber company lands is facilitated by high densities of well-maintained gravel roads.

ELK AREAS

There are two Elk Areas in District 17: Elk Area 6010 (Mallis or Raymond) and Elk Area 6064 (Quinault Valley). Nearly all permit opportunities in District 17 are antlerless elk hunts and are associated with these Elk Areas. Elk Areas 6010 was established in a location with chronic elk damage problems and its primary purpose is to provide antlerless harvest opportunities that help control the growth rate of herds in localized agricultural areas.

Elk Area 6064 was established to resolve problems that landowners had with elk hunters. Special restrictions apply in each Elk Area. In Elk Area 6064, only Master Hunters are allowed to hunt elk during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons.

The purpose of Elk Area 6010 is to alleviate elk damage on private agricultural lands. Elk Area 6010 does contain tracts of public or private timber company lands where elk are not problematic. Hunters that draw a permit in either Elk Area are encouraged to call the Private Lands Biologist (Scott Harris) in the Region 6 Office (360-249-4628 ext.234). Mr. Harris may be able to put you in contact with a landowner currently having problems with elk.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. Muzzel loader elk general season opportunities in GMUs 648, 673 and 681.
2. Antlerless elk permits for GMU 684
3. Youth antlerless elk special permits for units 648, 658, 673, and 6010
4. Several private timber companies in District 17 charge a fee to access areas previously open to the public. Hunters should contact landowners in areas they intend to hunt and determine the company's current policy. See private lands access section below for more information.

BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE

The reports of elk with hoof deformities in southwest Washington increased sharply in 2008. Elk afflicted with severe hoof disease commonly show severely deformed or overgrown hooves and marked emaciation. The cause of this condition is considered an infectious treponeme bacterium. The same bacteria are linked to digital dermatitis in domestic sheep and cattle. Most reports of elk hoof disease have been concentrated in GMUs located within WDFW administrative Region 5.

Recent observations of hoof disease have included GMUs in the northern portion of the Willapa Hills elk herd area (e.g. GMUs 648, 660, 672, and 673). In response to the expansion of elk hoof disease, WDFW is 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 directed to report their observations to 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/) 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 range from marginal to very good. The best opportunities to harvest a black-tail in District 17 occur in GMUs 663, 648, 672, and 660.

In Washington, black-tail harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. All areas of District 17 are managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing deer populations while minimizing conflicts with people. Management objectives include maintaining deer populations that have a minimum of 15 bucks per 100 does in the post hunting season population.

WDFW does not attempt to survey deer populations to estimate their total numbers in District 17. Trends in harvest, hunter success, and CPUE are used as surrogates to a formal estimate of

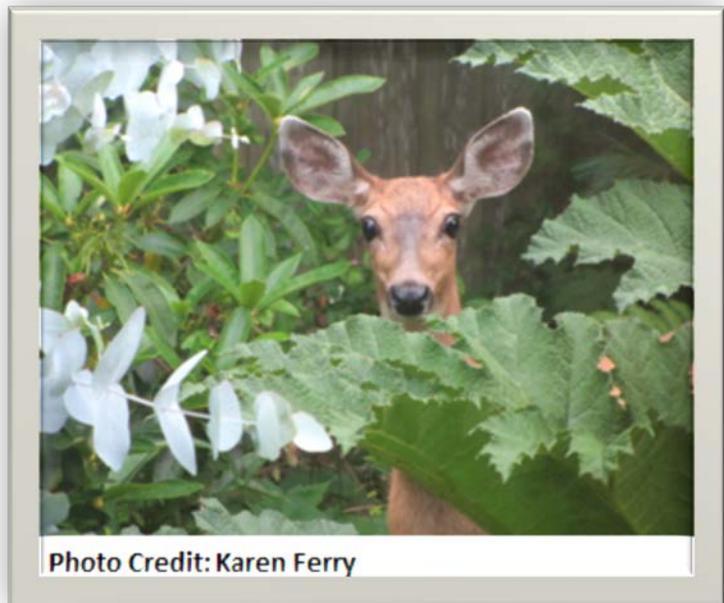
population size. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size. We are currently evaluating new approaches to monitor black-tailed deer populations.

Finding an effective way to monitor black-tail deer populations has been an ongoing management challenge. Black-tailed deer are secretive and use densely vegetated habitats. Their ability to remain unseen substantially lowers their probability of detection through aerial surveys. Aerial surveys have been attempted, but very few deer were seen during those surveys. The small number of deer observed results in an insufficient sample size to monitor population trends or demographics (e.g. buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios).

Overall deer harvest increased in 2014. Harvest data indicates deer populations appear to be stable in most areas of District 17. For more detailed information on the status of black-tailed deer in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report. This report is available for download on the Department's website or by [clicking here](#).

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

“What GMU should I hunt?” is one of our most frequent questions. Answering that question is not always easy. The best answer depends on what weapon is going to be used and what type of hunting experience the hunter is seeking. Some hunters are looking for the best chance to harvest a large, mature buck, while others just want to harvest any legal deer, or simply be in an area with few hunters.



The ideal GMU for most hunters would have:

- High numbers of deer
- Low numbers of hunters
- High hunter success rates.

Unfortunately, the perfect scenario does not exist in any GMU that is freely open to the public during any season within District 17. GMUs with the highest deer numbers tend to have the highest hunter numbers as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them to avoid a GMU with many deer. Others prefer to hunt areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if they can avoid other hunters.

Information in Tables 5 through 7 assesses GMUs by harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for 2009-2013 for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers are summarized by the number of deer harvested and hunters per square mile. A comparison of total harvest or hunter numbers is not always preferred because GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of deer harvested over the 2009-2013 seasons during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 663 and 648 was 245 and 266 deer, respectively. Total harvest suggests that deer densities are quite similar between the two GMUs. However, when harvest is expressed as deer harvested/mi², the estimate is 1.167 in GMU 663 and 0.617 in GMU 648. These numbers indicate that deer densities are probably higher in GMU 663 than GMU 648.

Each GMU (excluding 618) was ranked from 1 to 11 for deer harvested/mi², hunters/mi², and hunter success rates. 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 direct since bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs. Differences that should be considered are:

1. GMU 681 had a 2-pt. minimum harvest restriction during all general seasons (2009-2013).
2. GMU 673 had a bag limit of any buck during the general archery season, while all other GMUs (except 681) had a bag limit of Any Deer.



MODERN FIREARM										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	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 5. COMPARISON OF MODERN FIREARM GENERAL DEER SEASON: TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES USING RANK SUM ANALYSIS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE (2009-2013)

MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	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 6. COMPARISON OF MUZZLELOADER GENERAL DEER SEASON: TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES USING RANK SUM ANALYSIS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE (2009-2013).

ARCHERY										
GMU	Size (mi ²)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi ²	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi ²	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

TABLE 7. COMPARISON OF ARCHERY GENERAL DEER SEASON: TOTAL HARVEST, HUNTER NUMBERS, AND HUNTER SUCCESS RATES USING RANK SUM ANALYSIS. DATA PRESENTED ARE BASED ON A FIVE-YEAR RUNNING AVERAGE (2009-2013)

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Deer populations do not change dramatically between typical years. Winter weather conditions rarely cause winter die-offs within District 17. Consequently, the total deer numbers available for harvest are expected to be similar to the 2014 season.

Hunter numbers also do not change dramatically between typical years unless hunting regulations are significantly modified or access is closed. The best predictor of expected general season harvest is recent trends in

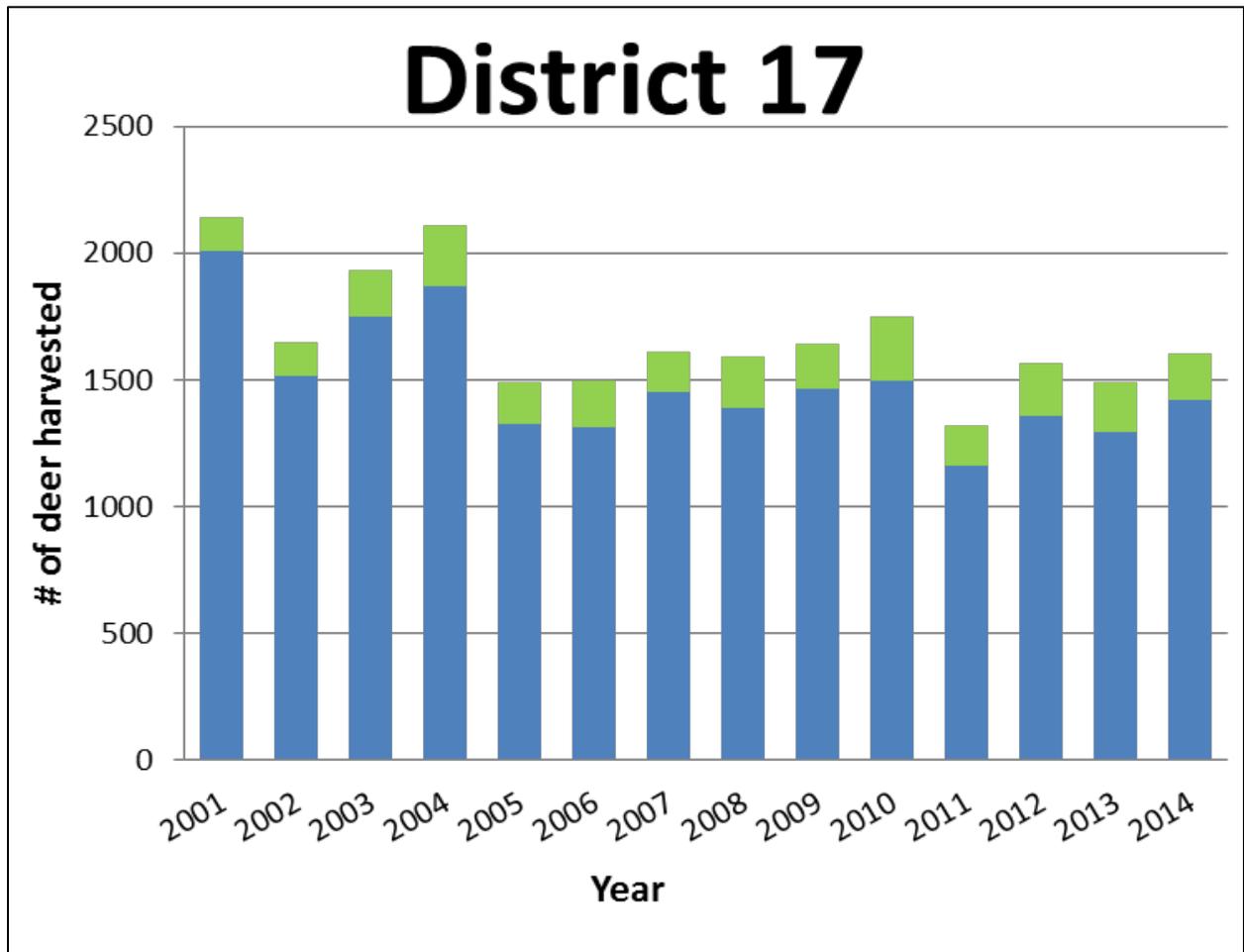
1. Harvest,
2. Hunter numbers, and
3. Hunter success.

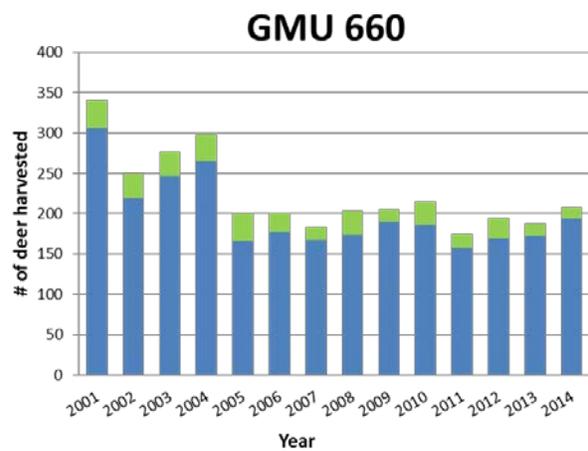
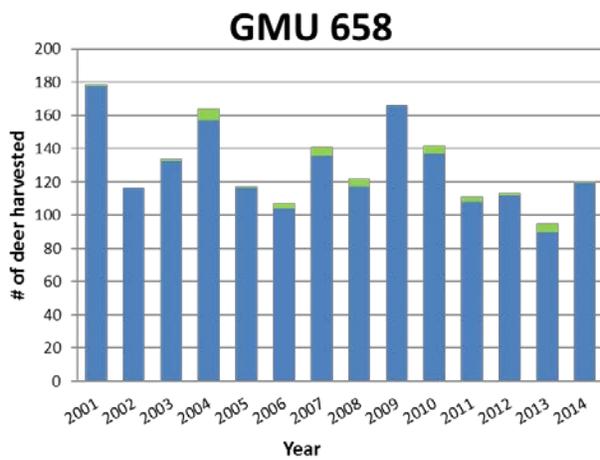
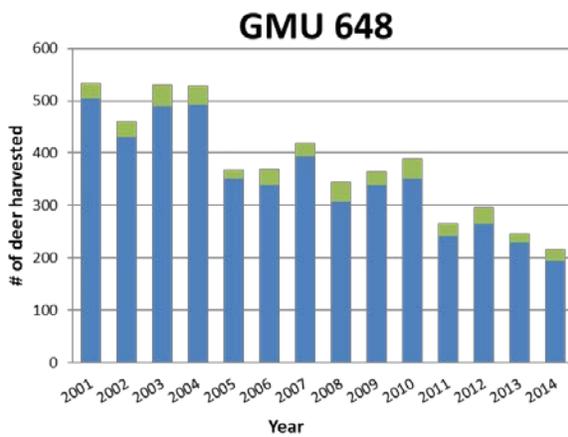
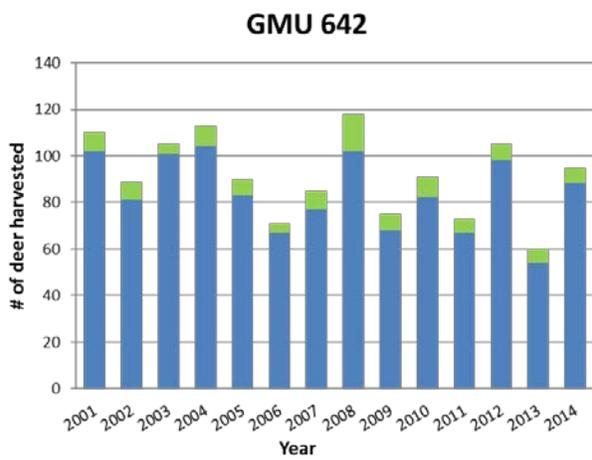
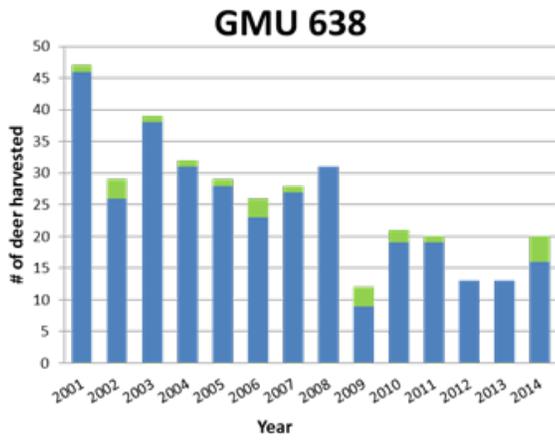
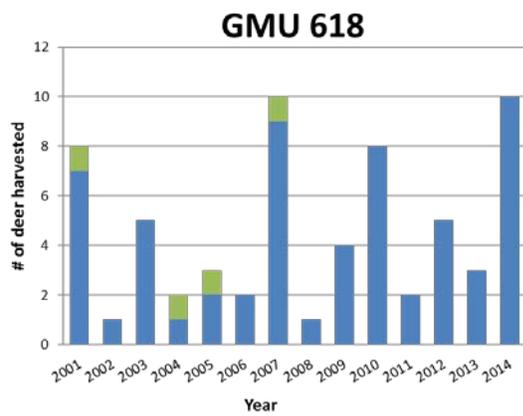
Figures 5 through 7 provide trend data for each of these statistics by GMU. The intent is to allow informed decisions on where to hunt in District 17.

HOW TO FIND AND HUNT BLACK-TAILS

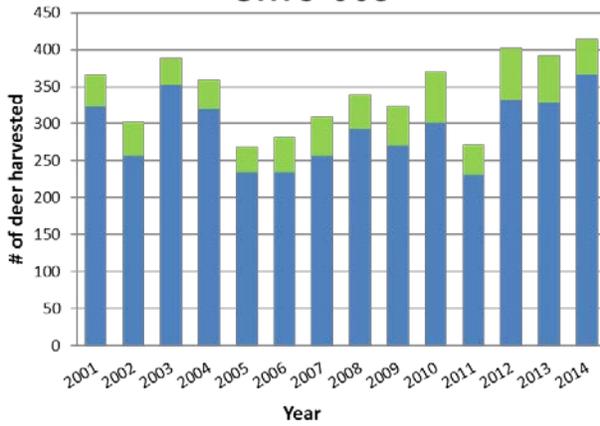
The key to harvesting a black-tail in District 17 is scouting. Black-tails occur throughout the district and in nearly every habitat type that is present. Deer numbers differ among habitat types and the highest deer densities are associated with five to seven-year old clearcuts. These young tree stands provide large amounts of both cover and food.

Many hunters will focus efforts in new clearcuts. Deer in clearcuts are much more visible than most other habitats. However, deer know they are exposed and typically use the clearcuts at night, early dawn, and dusk. Hunters should also explore areas adjacent to these openings. Those areas with cover are more likely to contain deer for the majority of the day.

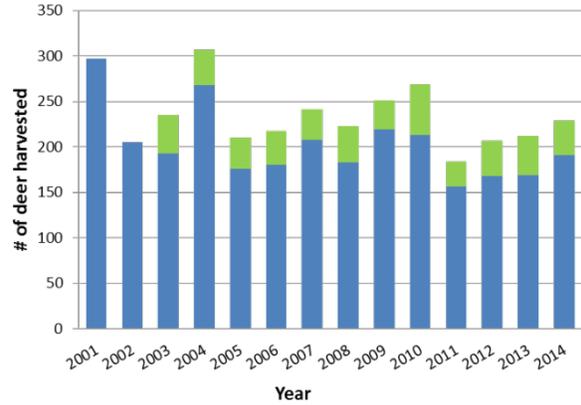




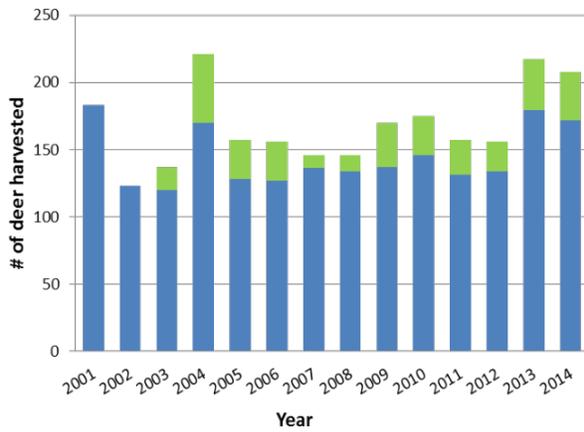
GMU 663



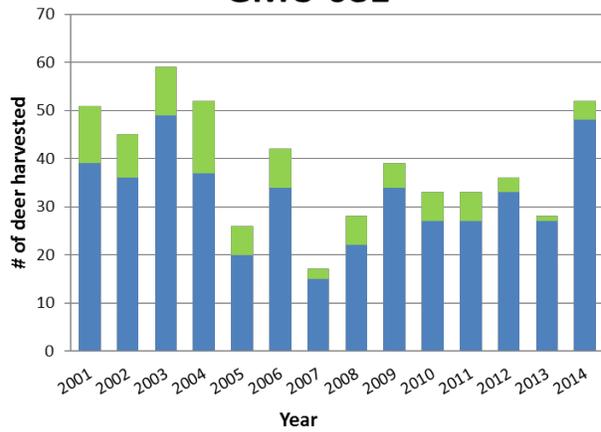
GMU 672



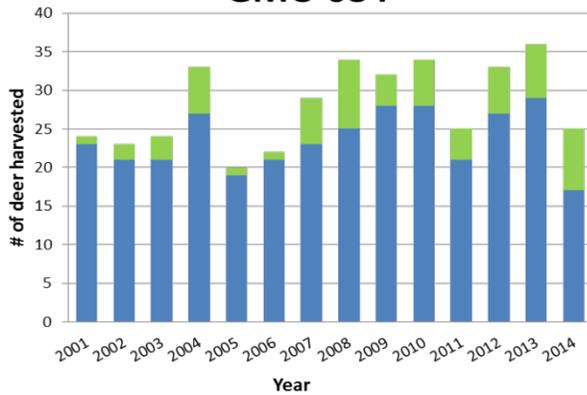
GMU 673



GMU 681



GMU 684



GMU 699

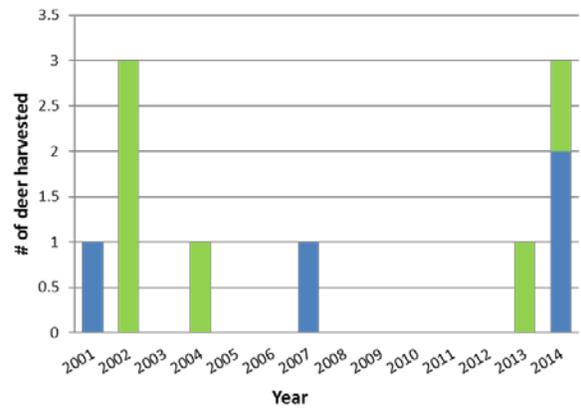


FIGURE 5. TOTAL BUCK (BLUE) AND ANTLERLESS (GREEN) DEER HARVESTED DURING GENERAL MODERN FIREARM, ARCHERY, AND MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASONS COMBINED, 2001–2014. DISTRICT TOTAL WITH BREAKDOWN BY INDIVIDUAL GMU. HARVEST TOTALS DO NOT INCLUDE TRIBAL HARVEST NOR DEER SPECIAL PERMIT HARVEST.

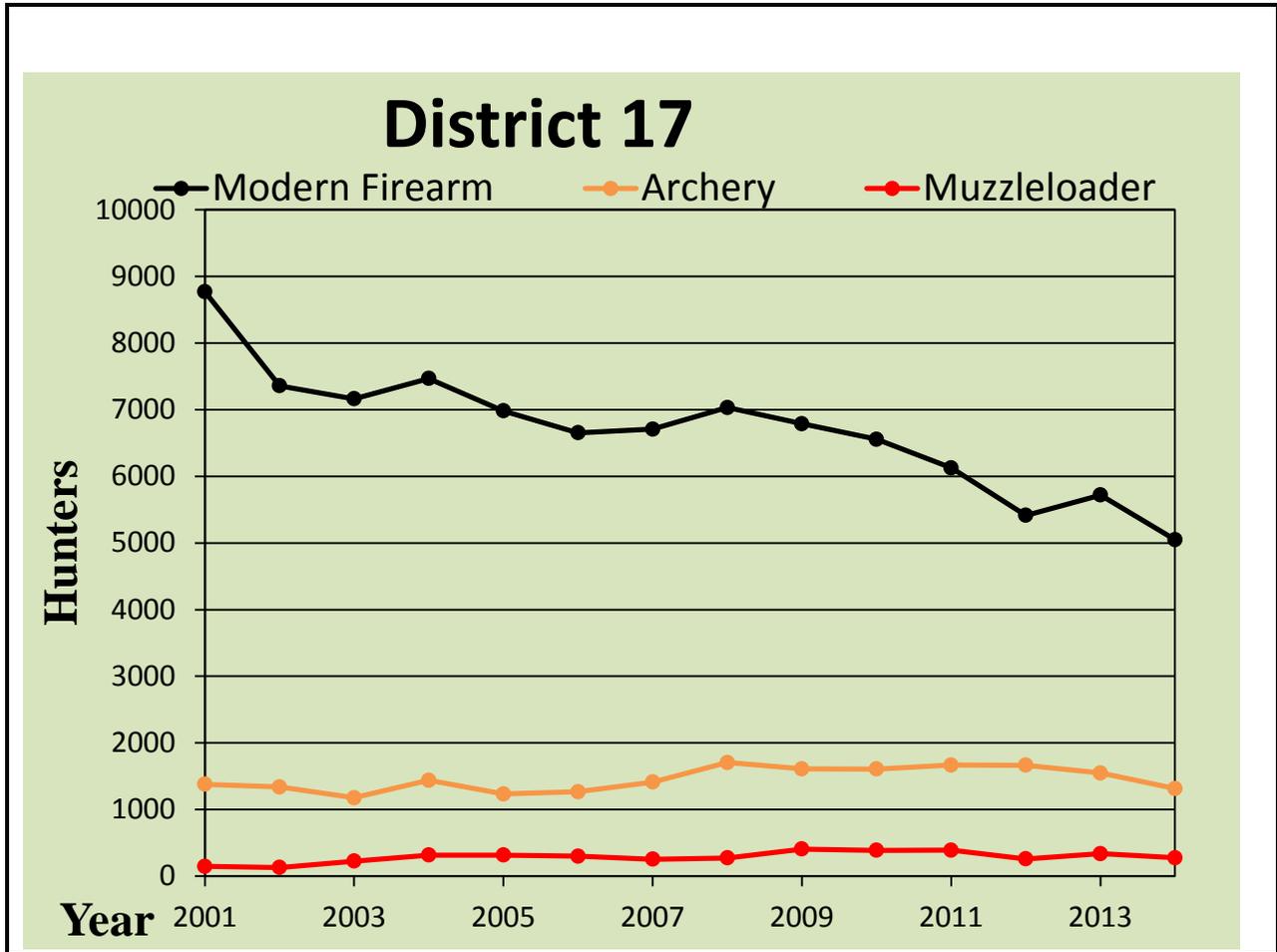


FIGURE 6. TOTAL DEER HUNTER PARTICIPATION DURING GENERAL SEASONS FROM 2001-2014 BY WEAPON TYPE: MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), MUZZLELOADER (RED)

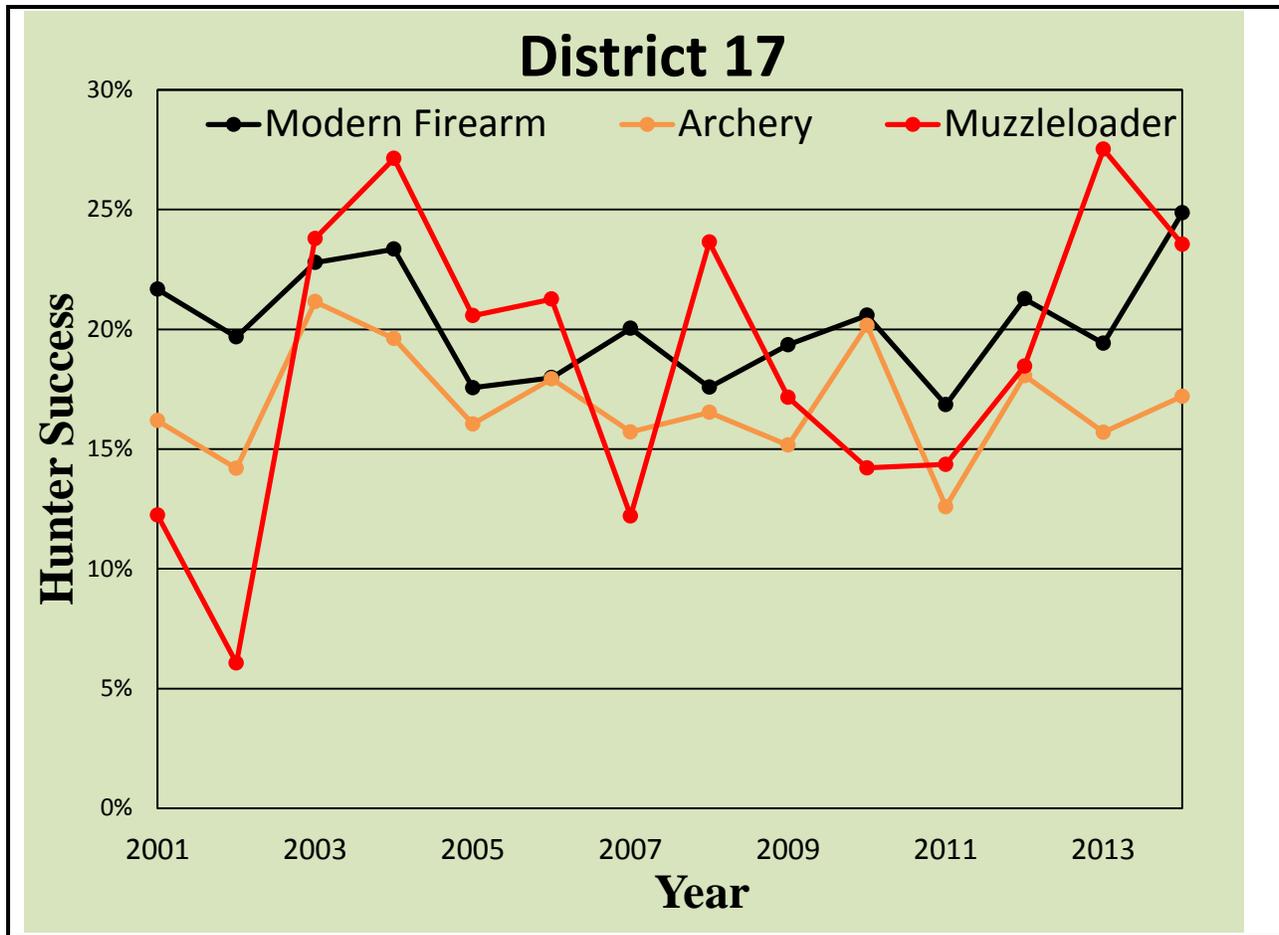


FIGURE 7. DEER HUNTER SUCCESS RATES DURING GENERAL SEASONS FROM 2001-2014 BY WEAPON TYPE: MODERN FIREARM (BLACK), ARCHERY (ORANGE), MUZZLELOADER (RED)

Large amounts of deer sign in an area indicate deer are in close vicinity. Over the past several years, deer in Capitol Forest (GMU 663) were fitted with GPS collars as part of a larger study throughout western Washington conducted by WDFW. The goal of this study is to better understand the effects timber management practices have on deer survival and productivity. These GPS collars automatically upload the deer’s location via satellite several times a day. The data gives biologists a detailed look at black-tailed deer movements and habitat use.

None of the deer monitored in our study used an area larger than 0.38 mi² (243 acres). The average home range size was just 0.14 mi² (86 acres). Some deer used an area no bigger than 45 acres in size during an entire year! Thus, if a hunter sees sign in an area, but no deer, they just 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. Less well-known or utilized is rattling and grunting to simulate two bucks that fighting over a “hot” doe. The rattling 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 yields plenty of evidence to illustrate the effectiveness of this technique when conditions are right.

DEER AREAS

No Deer Areas are contained in District 17.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

1. Remove 2pt antler restriction in GMU 681 for all seasons
2. Many expanded special permit opportunities for both buck and antlerless deer
3. Archery
 - a. Extend GMU 648 late archery season to December 31st
 - b. GMU 673 early archery changed to any deer
 - c. GMU 638, 642, 681, 699 archery seasons changed to any buck
4. Muzzleloader
 - a. GMU 684 open to any deer
 - b. GMU 673 changed to any buck, season dates extend to Nov 25th – Dec 15th
5. 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

SUMMARY

Four percent of bear hunters had success last year. Since 2001, hunter success was between 4-8%.

Recent Trends: Declining Harvest

GMUs with Highest Harvest: 658, 681

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears occur throughout District 17. Bear numbers vary among GMUs. The best places to harvest a bear probably occur in GMUs 658 and 681. Six other GMUs worth mentioning are 618, 660, 663, 673, 684, and 699. Unit 648 had a dramatic decline in harvest during 2014 relative to the five-year average.



Management Goals: Bear seasons are primarily designed to maintain stable black bear populations. Spring seasons are directed to areas where black bears cause measurable damage to young commercial timber stands or other sites of human-bear conflict. The existing bear populations are not expected have much impact to big game herds. Three statistics used to assess black bear harvest are.

- Proportion of females harvested
- Median age of harvested females,
- Median age of harvested males.

Surveys: WDFW does not conduct surveys of bears to estimate their numbers. The agency uses 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 2015 SEASON

Most bears are probably harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Overall, hunter success is low, but annual harvest can vary widely from year to year. Four percent of bear hunters in District 17 were successful in 2014. Since 2001, hunter success for this district has averaged 6% to 8%. Hunter success is likely higher for those that specifically hunt bears compared to hunters that take bear incidentally during deer or elk season.

Annual bear harvest in District 17 increased from 2002 to 2008. Harvest declined sharply during the 2009 season, then rebounded in 2010. Bear harvest remained stable until last year, when there was a sharp decline (Figure 8).

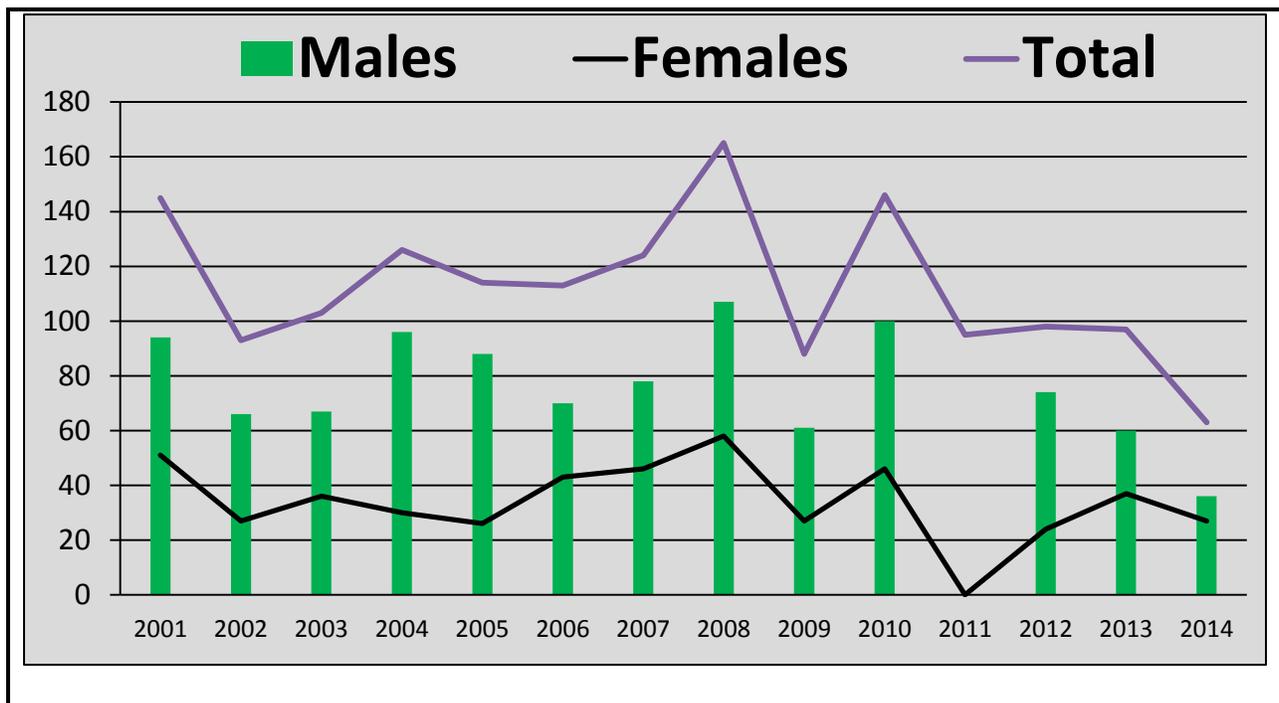


FIGURE 8. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE BLACK BEARS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED DURING THE GENERAL BEAR SEASON IN DISTRICT 17, 2001–2014. HARVEST ESTIMATES EXCLUDE BEARS HARVESTED DURING SPRING PERMIT SEASONS IN GMU 642. DOES NOT INCLUDE BEARS REMOVED BECAUSE OF CONFLICT WITH PEOPLE. THE SEX OF HARVESTED BEARS WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR 2011.

Most bears were harvested in GMUs 658, and 681 (Figure 9). Analyzing the number of bears harvested per square mile indicates a greater bear density in GMUs 699 followed by 684 and 681. Bear harvest in 2014 was markedly better than the five-year average in GMUs 618, 681, and 699. Bear harvest in 2014 declined notably in GMUs 642, 648, 660, 663, and 672 compared to the five-year average (Figures 9 and 10).

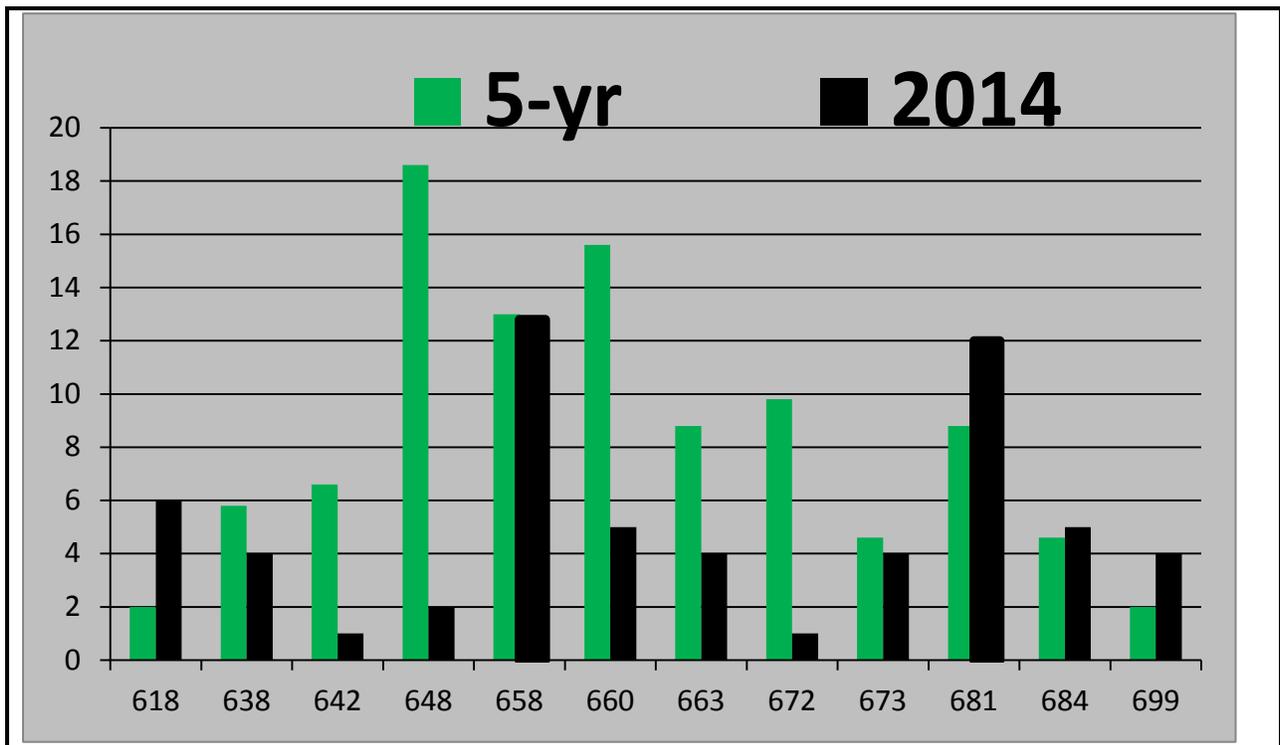


FIGURE 9. NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED BY GMU DURING THE 2014 SEASON IN DISTRICT 17 COMPARED TO THE FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE.

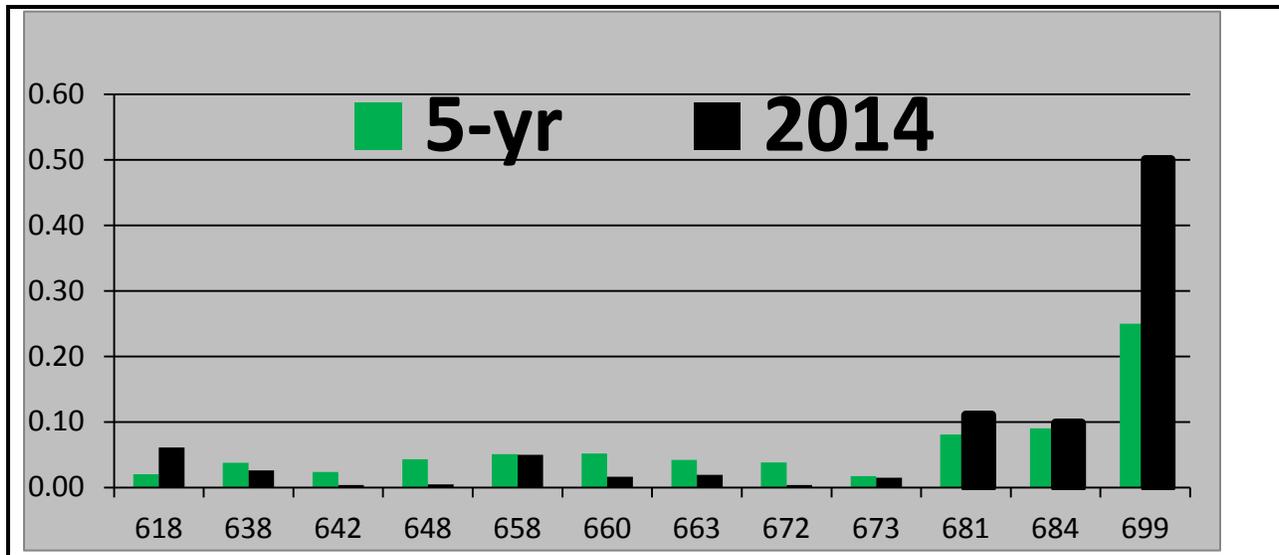


FIGURE 10. THE NUMBER OF BEARS HARVESTED PER SQUARE MILE BY GMU DURING THE 2014 SEASON IN DISTRICT 17 COMPARED TO FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE HARVEST.

HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR

Black bears are common and occur at high densities in some locales. However, bears in District 17 are seen infrequently because of thick vegetation that dominates the landscape. Consequently, scouting is extremely important when hunting for black bears.

Black bears occupy a variety of habitat types, so it can be difficult to narrow down where to find them. Because bears have an incredible sense of smell, hunters should focus on open terrain (e.g. clearcuts). When out in the open, a bear can be seen from a distance without alerting it. In dense cover, a bear is likely to smell a hunter before being seen and move to avoid an encounter.

Bears are often located in clearcuts containing a large amount of berry-producing shrubs. Examples include:

- Elderberries
- Salmon berries
- Huckleberries
- Black berries
- Salal berries.

During the fall, hunters should seek clearcuts with these types of shrubs and search for bear sign. Fresh sign indicates that a bear is visiting that stand. Hunters who are patient and watch these areas for extended periods of time can increase their chance to harvest a bear.

NOTABLE CHANGES

Spring Bear special permit seasons were added to GMU 681 and 684 for the 2015 season.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars occur throughout District 17, but densities vary among GMUs. Cougar populations in District 17 are managed primarily to maintain a stable cougar population. Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed the system for managing cougar harvest in Washington. WDFW shifted away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougars harvested, and implemented a standard season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intended goal was to allow a longer season without weapon restrictions. Cougar seasons would close for a specific area once 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 April 30. Harvest numbers are examined starting January 1. Any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline may be closed. If you plan to hunt cougar after January 1, take a moment to confirm that the cougar season is still 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 WDFW's website or [click here](#).



Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	2013-2014 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	0
642, 648, 651	6-8	2
658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, 699	9-12	1

TABLE 8. HARVEST GUIDELINES AND 2014 HARVEST LEVELS COUGAR HUNT AREAS LOCATED IN DISTRICT 17.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2015 SEASON

Cougar harvest in District 17 is highly variable (Figure 11). The variability may be due to the prohibition on hound hunting and trapping. Most cougars are taken opportunistically by deer and elk hunters. Since 2001, the average number of cougars harvested in District 17 was six animals. Young males are overrepresented in the harvest. Most cougar harvest in District 17 has occurred in GMU 648. Since 2001, cougar harvest in GMU 648 (Wynoochee) has typically accounted for over half of the harvest in District 17.

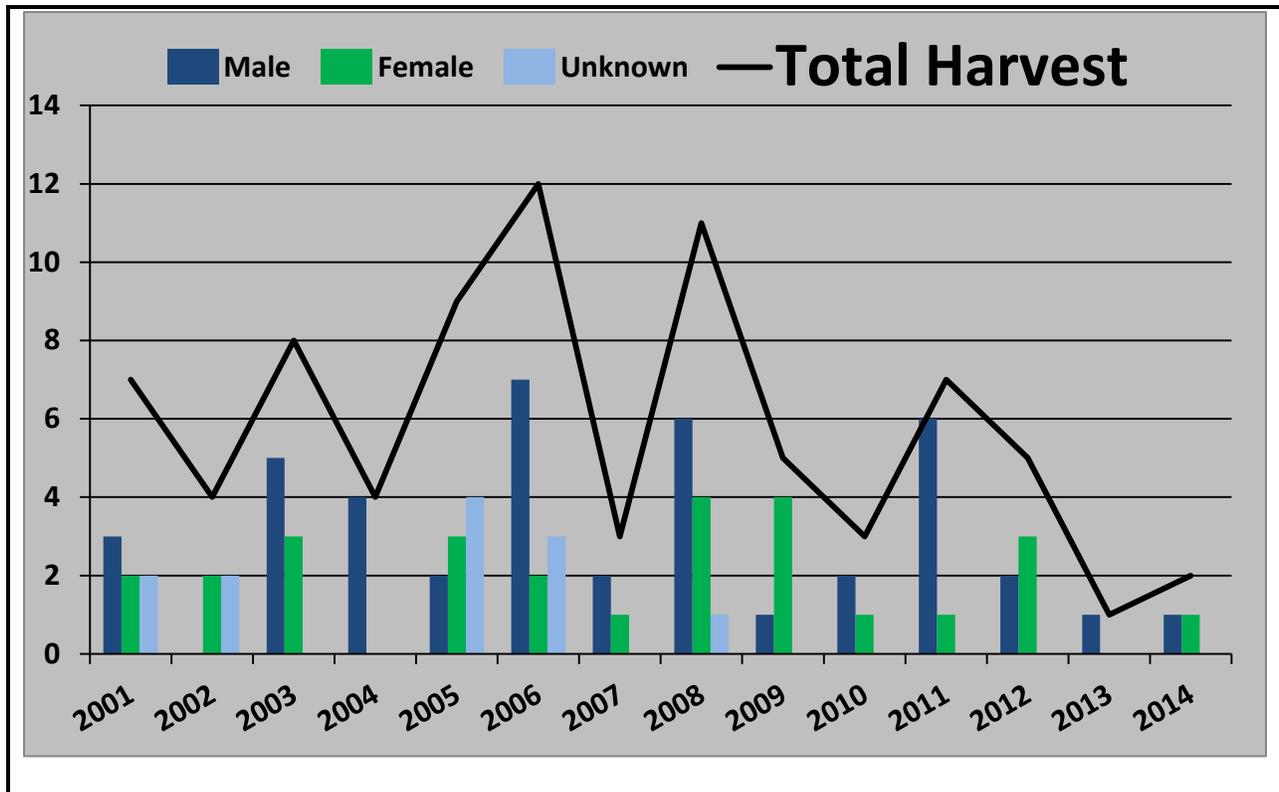


FIGURE 11. ESTIMATED COUGAR HARVEST IN DISTRICT 17, 2001–2014.

NOTABLE CHANGES

One month was added to the late cougar season. The season ends April 30, unless closed early. Remember, a new tag and license is required after March 31.

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 provide a unique hunting opportunity. Sea ducks, including scoters and long-tailed ducks, are seen occasionally in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor.

Mallards are the most abundant species of duck in Washington. Consequently, mallards constitute the majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically $\geq 50\%$). In contrast, American wigeon are the most abundant species of duck in District 17. . During recent aerial survey flights of Willapa Bay, American wigeon typically comprise 50%–60% of the ducks observed. Hunters should expect to primarily harvest American wigeon, northern pintail, and mallard. Green-winged teal are abundant early in the season, but decrease in numbers as the season progresses.



MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY

Very few ducks are found during late-spring and early summer. Beginning in mid to late September, birds will migrate south from Alaska. Duck numbers will continue to increase until peaking in late October and early November. The migrating ducks are believed to concentrate in District 17 as resting areas. They do not appear to remain in the district for long periods of time. Consequently, the number of ducks located inside District 17 likely varies on a daily basis. Total duck numbers decline precipitously once the flow of migrants from Alaska has stopped. By Christmas, duck numbers are typically 5% of what they were at the end of October (see Figures 12 and 13). Unlike eastern Washington, major weather events do not alter migration chronology in coastal Washington. Regardless of weather events, duck numbers decline at about the same point in time each year.

CONCENTRATION AREAS

In general, waterfowl concentrations occur in Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and the Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys. Where concentrations occur, they are dependent on many factors (e.g. hunting pressure, weather, food, etc.) and can change daily.

Aerial composition flights were conducted monthly in Willapa Bay during the 2014 (see Figure #12) season. Waterfowl concentrations shift around the bay between each flight. Hunters should scout a few days before hunting to locate where concentrations of ducks are currently found.

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 2015, the breeding population in the Chehalis River Valley was estimated at 5,093 ducks. The 2015 estimate represents a 7% decline from the 5,550 estimated in 2014, but is still 11% greater than the 4,569 ducks two years earlier, in 2013..

The number of ducks that occur in District 17 during established hunting seasons is strongly related to the status of breeding duck populations in Alaska. The 2015 breeding population survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 3.5 million ducks, a 6% increase from the 2013 estimate of 3.3 million and 5% below the long-term average of 3.7 million.

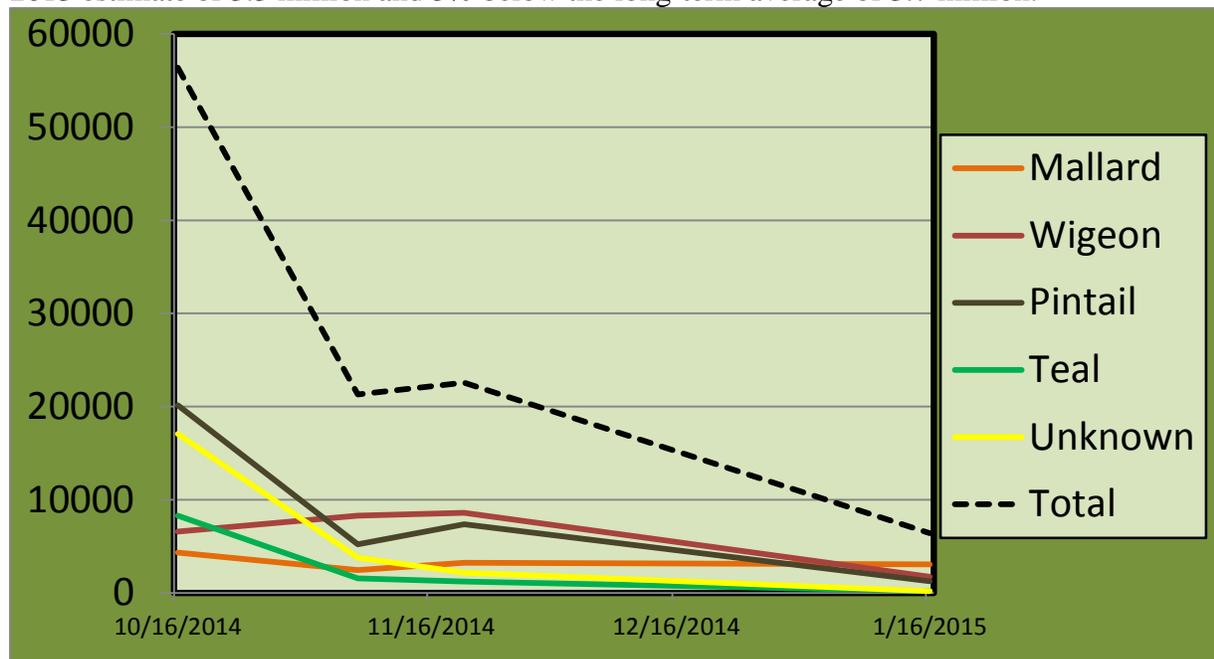
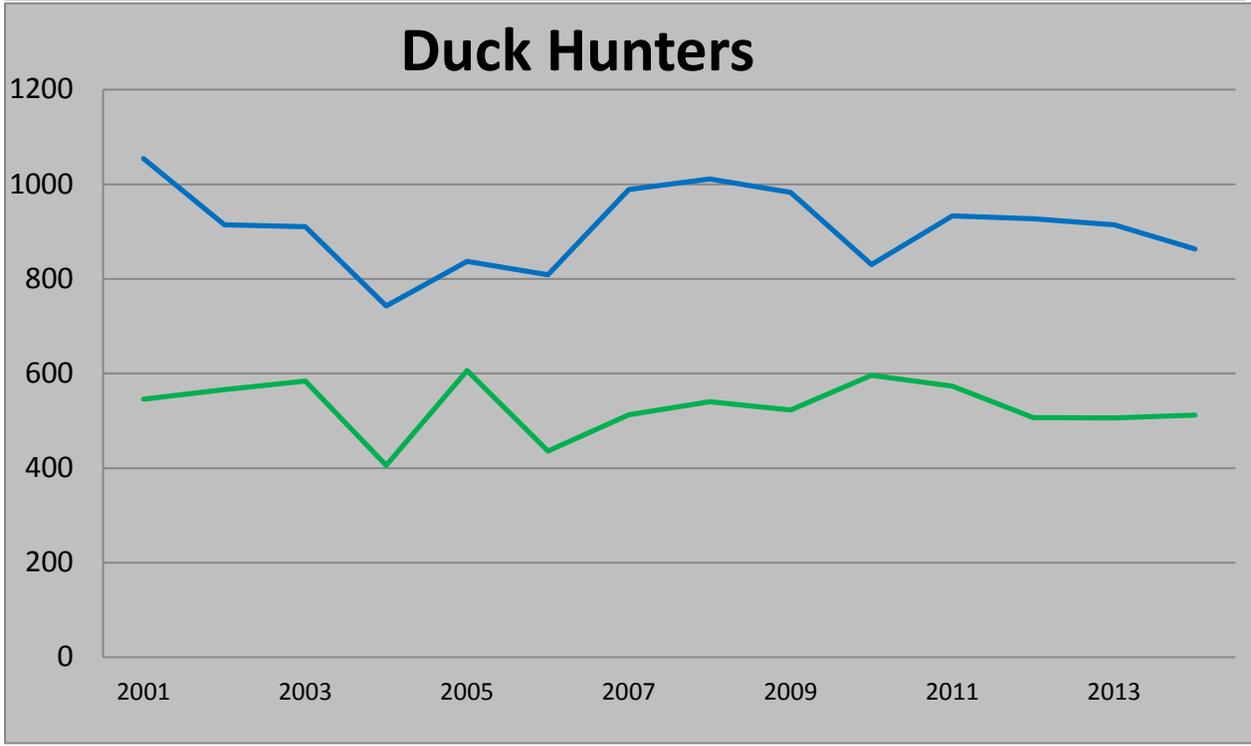
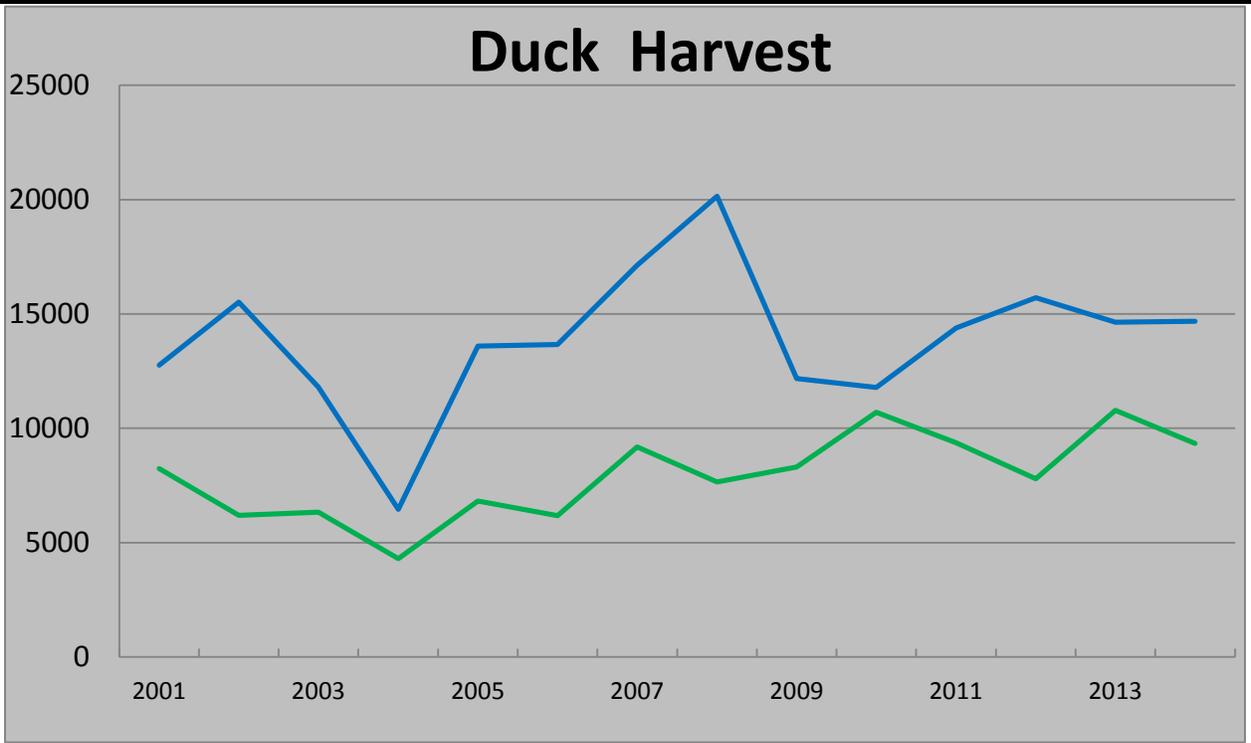


FIGURE 12. TOTAL DUCKS OBSERVED DURING FOUR AERIAL SURVEY FLIGHTS IN WILLAPA BAY FROM OCTOBER 2014 TO JANUARY 2015.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

Breeding duck numbers in Alaska are the biggest factor affecting duck hunters. Duck numbers further north appear comparable to last year. We should still expect great hunting opportunities in District 17 during the 2015 season. Hunter numbers have remained stable. Both the total number of ducks harvested and the number of ducks harvested per hunter day have been increasing since 2009 (Figure 13). Hunters may expect greater duck harvest in Grays Harbor County. Pacific County has both fewer hunters and fewer ducks, but the number of ducks harvested per day is equivalent.

Note – Severe drought conditions are occurring in 2015, which could carry into the fall/winter. A continuing drought could dramatically change the migration patterns of ducks during the waterfowl season, especially inland.



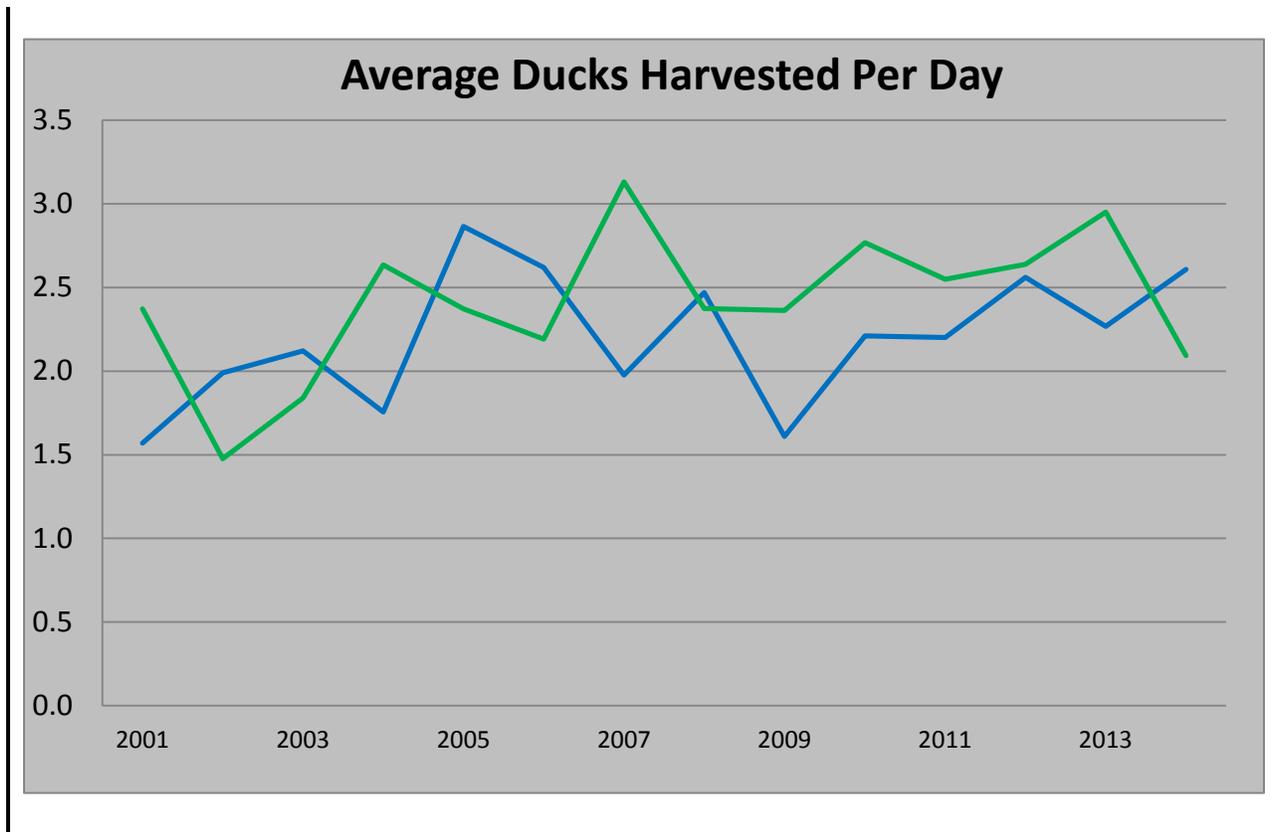


FIGURE 13. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF DUCK HUNTERS, TOTAL DUCKS HARVESTED, AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF DUCKS HARVESTED PER DAY IN GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY (BLUE), PACIFIC COUNTY (GREEN), 2001–2014

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Duck hunting techniques should vary depending on where you choose to hunt. Traditional setups work best when hunting inland waters around ponds and rivers, or feeding areas. Birds are most active in early morning and late afternoon, as they move between resting sites and feeding areas.

The tides influence hunting the coastline of Willapa Bay or Grays Harbor. Regardless of the time of day, ducks along the coastline tend to move very little at either low or high tide. Hunters can expect very little movement during tidal extremes. However, bird activity and opportunities increase when the tide is going out or coming in. A perfectly timed tide can provide success to coastline hunters at p.m., unlike traditional waterfowl hunting that is typically limited to early morning and late afternoon. See [“Let’s Go Waterfowling.”](#)

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 the WDFW waterfowl hunting page ([click here](#)) for more detailed information. The website includes waterfowl 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 found in District 17 include western, dusky, lesser, taverner, Aleutian, Vancouver, and cackler. Large numbers of black brant can be found in Willapa Bay beginning

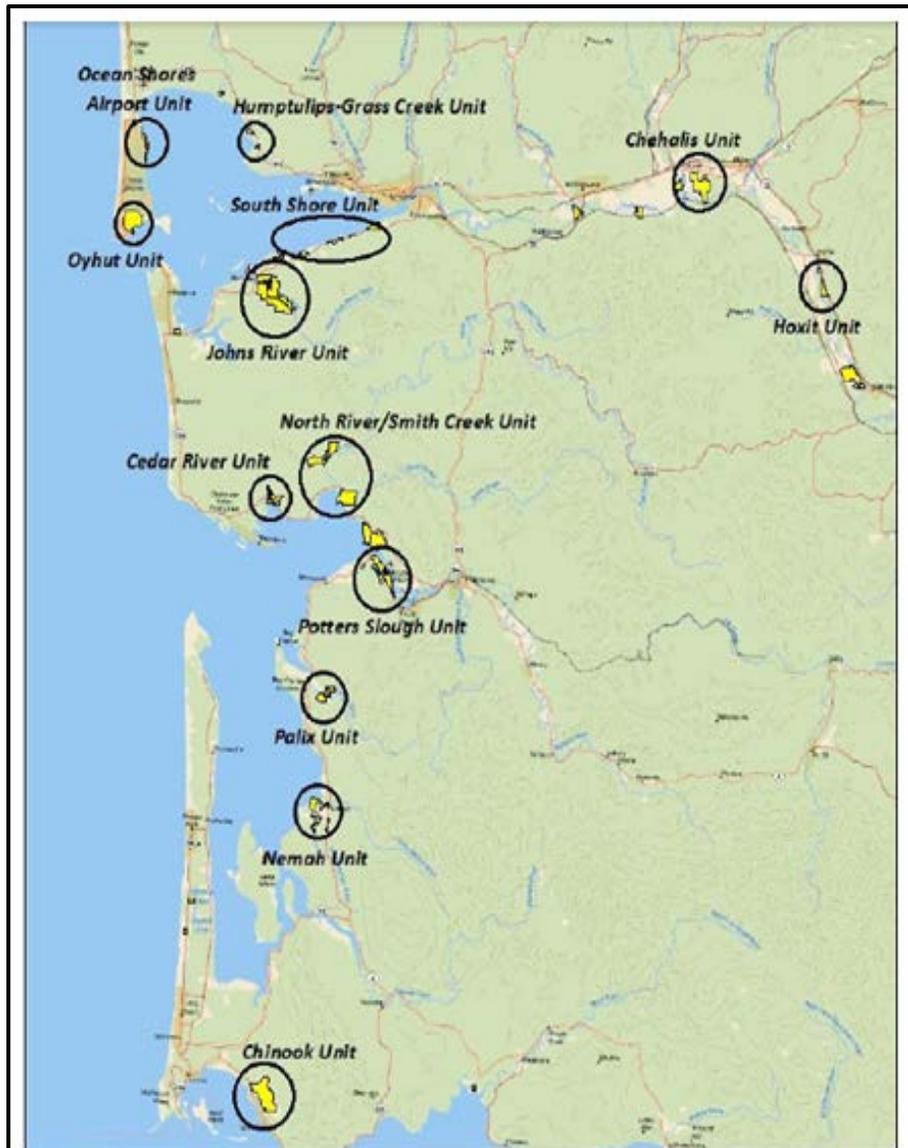


Figure 16. Map depicting the location of WDFW wildlife areas that offer waterfowl hunting opportunities in District 17.

in late January and early February.

MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

The timing of migration for geese in District 17 is nearly identical to that described for ducks. Few geese reside locally in the district. Starting in September, waves of migrant geese begin showing up from Alaska. One distinct difference between ducks and geese is that goose numbers do not decline in late November as sharply as duck numbers. Many geese choose to over-winter in the agricultural areas of District 17 where they find food. Brant are mostly found in Willapa Bay starting in the latter half of December or early January.

Geese concentrate in agricultural lands around the Willapa and Chehalis River Valleys. Some properties routinely have geese on them. Generally, the specific fields where geese congregate change on a weekly basis. The Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys are not expansive, so relocating geese is not difficult.



Local resident dark goose captured and fitted with a satellite transmitter on Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

POPULATION STATUS

Very few geese breed in District 17. Consequently, WDFW does not survey for breeding geese within the district. Long term goose nest surveys have occurred elsewhere in Washington.

Portions of the lower Columbia River have small, but relatively stable breeding populations.

Wintering populations of geese are hard to survey effectively because geese forage widely in agricultural areas, making them difficult to locate. The number of geese observed in Washington during the midwinter-waterfowl surveys has been relatively stable since the early 2000s.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

Goose harvest was stable or somewhat better in 2014 compared to 2013. Given the current trends in goose populations further north, the goose hunting opportunities in District 17 are expected to remain consistent. Pacific populations of large geese appear to be greater than last year. Cackling geese have also seen a modest increase from 2014. Most goose harvest should occur in Grays Harbor County during the regular season (Figures 17 and 18). Hunters can expect to harvest an average of one goose per day. Hunter numbers during both the regular

season and early season have been relatively stable during recent years (Figures 17 and 18). Goose hunter numbers in Grays Harbor County could drop during the 2015 season as a consequence of incorporating the county into Goose Management Area 2B.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Goose hunting is almost standardized. Goose hunters find agricultural areas where geese feed and set up well before daylight in portions of the field where geese concentrate. In District 17, feeding geese tend to congregate in pastures containing cattle operations. Most goose hunting opportunities occur on private property. You must obtain permission before hunting private lands.

SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Both Pacific and Grays Harbor counties are contained within Goose Management Area (GMA) 2B. Special regulations apply in GMA 2B to prevent harvest of dusky Canada geese. These special regulations include:

1. Hunters must possess a valid migratory bird hunting authorization for Goose Management Area 2B to hunt geese, except during the September goose season
2. February and March seasons are open only on private lands.
3. Hours are 30 minutes after the start of official waterfowl hunting hours to 30 minutes before the end of official waterfowl hunting hours.
4. The season is closed for dusky Canada geese. If a hunter takes a dusky Canada goose, the authorization will be invalidated and the hunter will not be able to hunt geese in Goose Management Areas 2A & 2B for the rest of the season or the Special Late Goose Season.

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

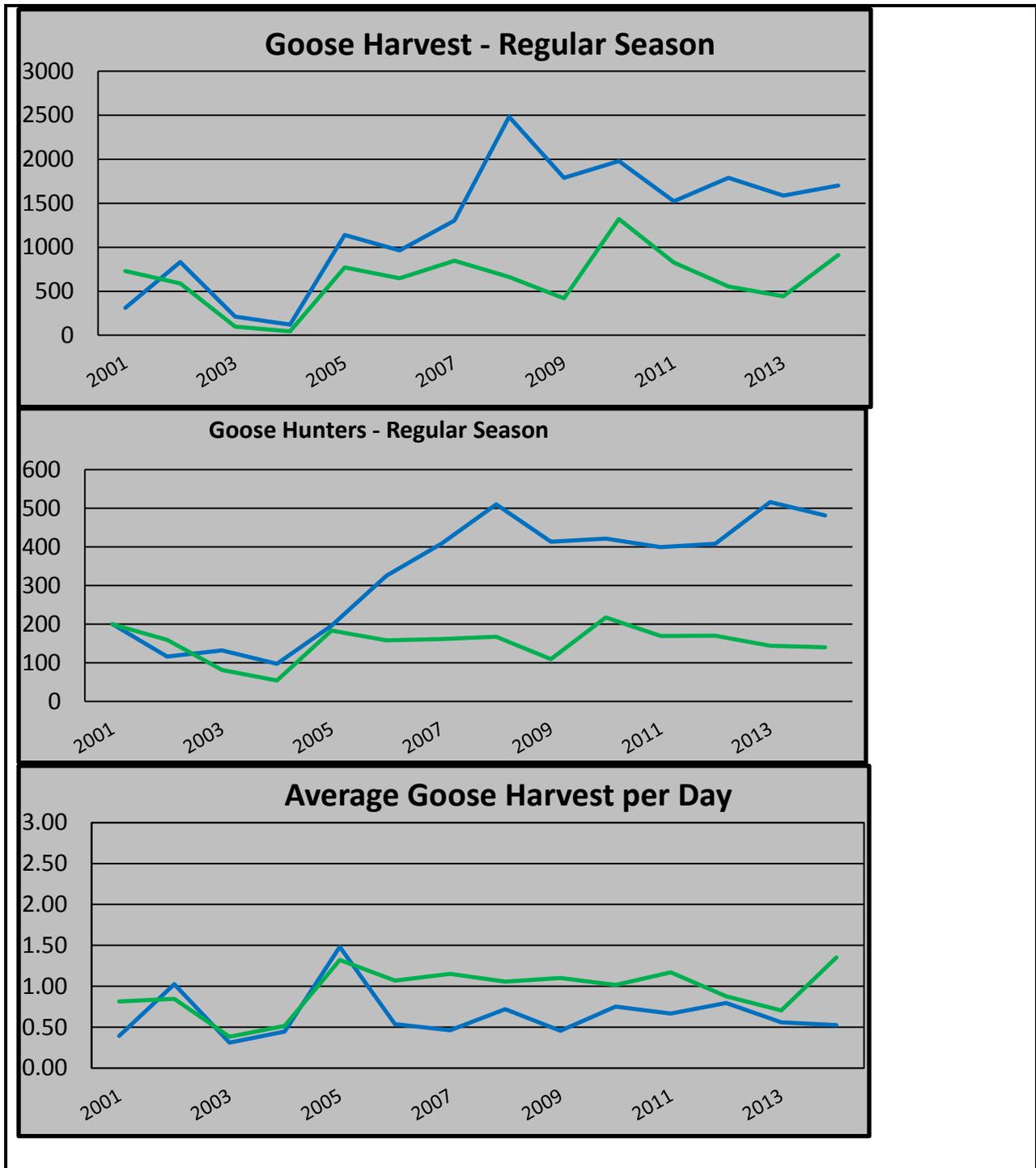


FIGURE 17. TOTAL GOOSE HARVEST, GOOSE HUNTER NUMBERS, AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF GEESSE HARVESTED PER DAY DURING REGULAR GOOSE SEASONS IN GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY (BLUE), PACIFIC COUNTY (GREEN) FROM 2001–2014.

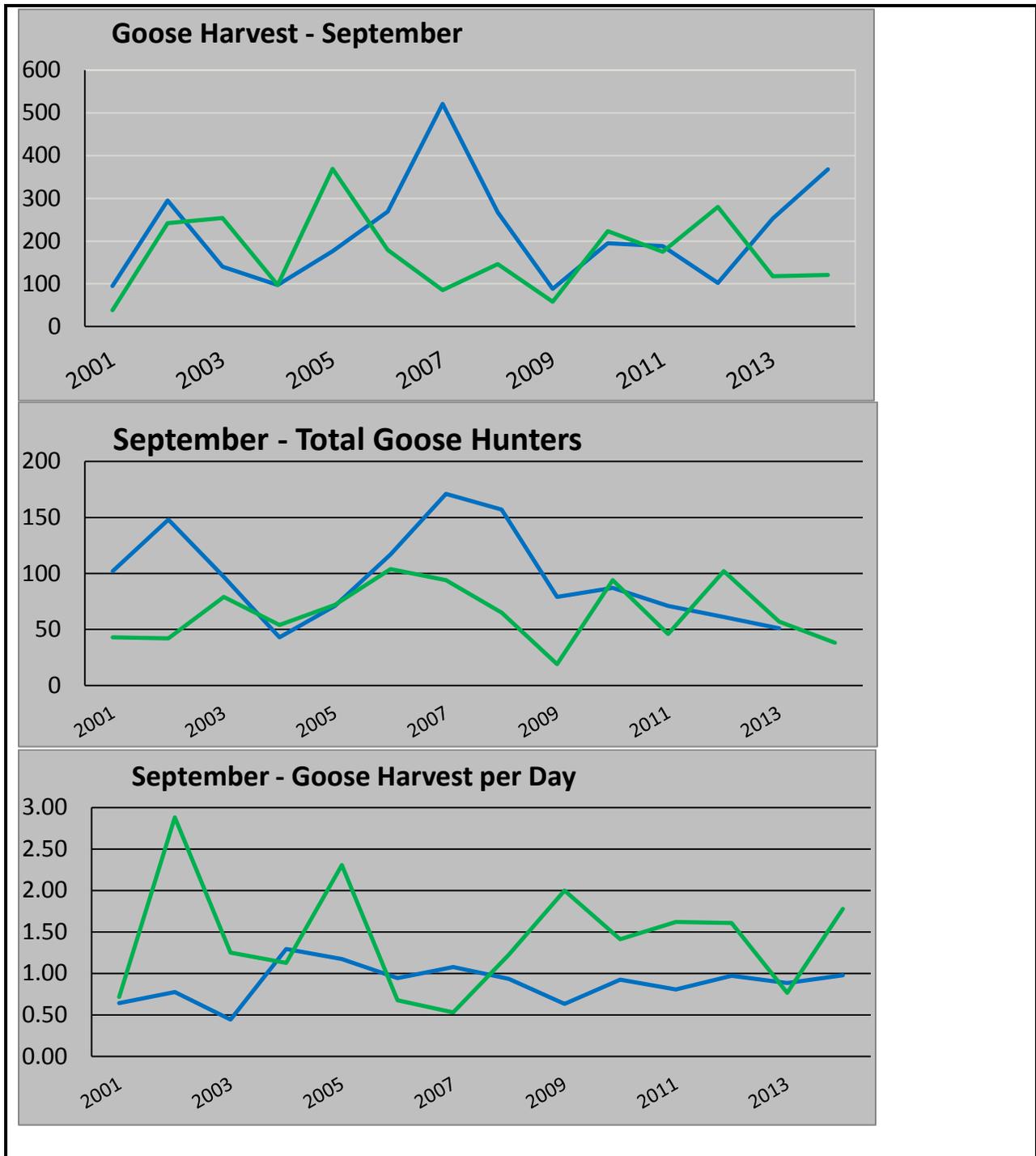


FIGURE 18. TOTAL GOOSE HARVEST, GOOSE HUNTER NUMBERS, AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF GEESE HARVESTED PER DAY DURING EARLY GOOSE SEASONS IN GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY (BLUE), PACIFIC COUNTY (GREEN) FROM 2001–2014.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Many wildlife areas in District 17 provide a chance to hunt geese. Look at Figure 16 and the Public Land Opportunities in the Duck Section for more details. Additionally, some landowners have enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program. Those lands provide additional hunting opportunities for the public. See the Private Lands Access Program section for more details.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

- Grays Harbor County now included in Goose Management Area 2B.
- The season is closed to taking dusky Canada geese.

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 trends. 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).

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 PROSPECTS

The total number of grouse harvested in District 17 has gradually been declining since 2001 (Figure 19). Grays Harbor County saw a small increase in grouse harvest during 2014. Last year, about half the number of hunters reported hunting grouse compared to five years earlier. Most grouse are taken from Grays Harbor County. Hunters average one grouse per three to five days of effort.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

A generally effective way to hunt grouse is by walking roads and shooting birds as they flush, or after they roost in a nearby tree. Grouse occur in higher densities along roads with little traffic. Consequently, hunters should target roads behind locked gates or decommissioned roads. To learn more about hunting grouse, please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage or [click here](#).

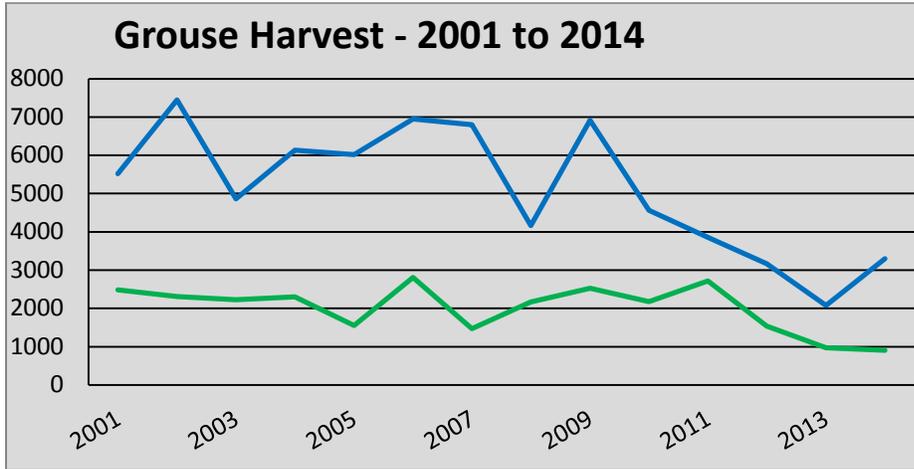


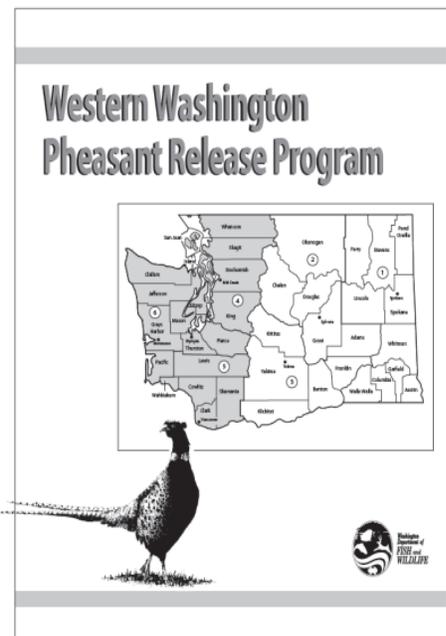
FIGURE 19 – GROUSE HARVEST WITHIN DISTRICT 17 FROM 2001-2014

PHEASANTS

All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 17 are provided by the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program. District 17 does not have self-sustaining populations of pheasant. The primary intent of the release 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. 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. To locate maps for the Chehalis River and Chinook Release Sites and learn more about the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, [click here](#).

Hunters should be aware that special regulations apply on western Washington pheasant release sites. Notably:

- Hunters must purchase a western Washington pheasant license



- Non-toxic shot is required
- Hunting hours are between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm.

QUAIL

Mountain quail rarely occur in District 17. This district does not contain any sizable population. Mountain quail sightings are rare. The few sightings that occur are usually located in five to 10 year old clear cuts with abundant shrub cover and pine saplings. Some sightings occur in brushy cover located adjacent to agricultural land. Since 2001, annual harvest and hunter numbers have averaged just 89 birds and 25 hunters.

TURKEYS

There are no sizable turkey populations in District 17. Only two turkeys were reported harvested in District 17 from GMU 672. The only area known to hold any 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 who no longer wanted to take care of them.

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.

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 15-16 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.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2015 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 (see Figure 20) has typically 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.

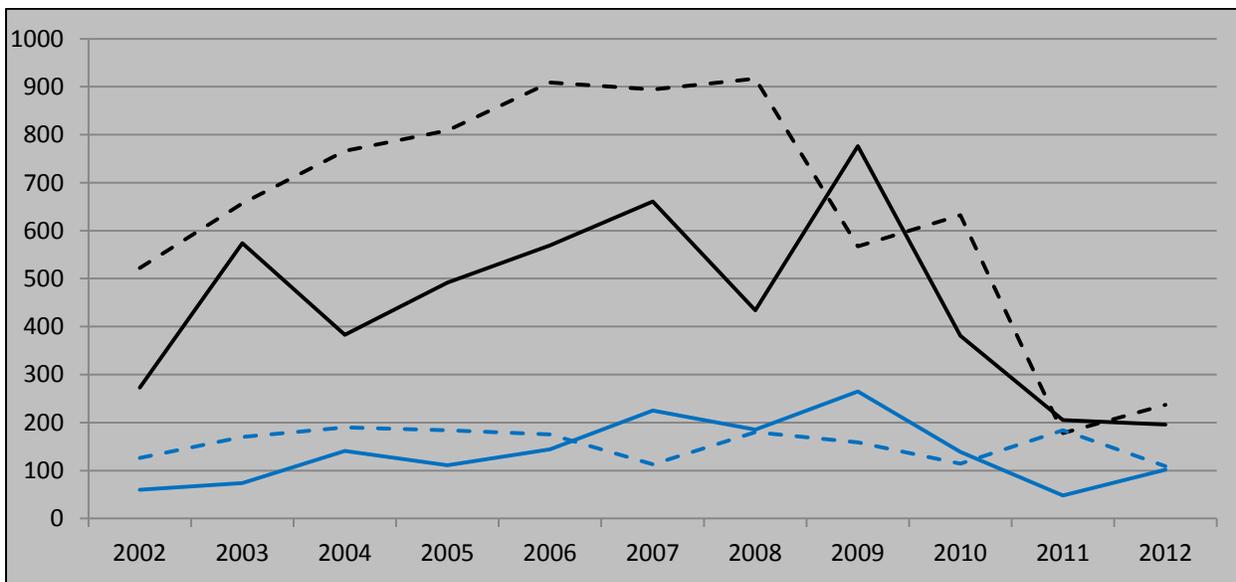


FIGURE 20. BAND-TAILED PIGEON HARVEST TRENDS IN DISTRICT 17 (SOLID BLUE) AND STATEWIDE (SOLID BLACK) SINCE 2002. ALSO INCLUDED IS THE NUMBER OF HUNTERS (DASHED BLACK) AND THE MEAN NUMBER OF BAND-TAILED PIGEONS OBSERVED AT EACH OF THE MINERAL SITES VISITED DURING STANDARDIZED SURVEYS (DASHED BLUE), 2002–2012. NEITHER SURVEY DATA NOR HARVEST DATA WERE AVAILABLE FOR 2014.

WHERE AND HOW TO HUNT BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Band-tailed pigeons frequently congregate in areas with red elderberry and cascara. These small trees are most abundant in five to ten year old clearcuts where hunting can be exceptionally good. The key to harvesting band-tails is scouting. Which clearcuts will be used by band-tails is hard to predict. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites. Upon finding a good site, sit patiently and wait for pass shooting opportunities to occur.

Band-tails often congregate at seeps and mineral sites. They show strong site fidelity to these locations and often return to the same seeps year after year. WDFW conducts annual surveys at such mineral sites to assess changes to the band-tailed population. These mineral sites are not abundant and are hard to find. If a hunter is lucky enough to locate a mineral site where band-tails congregate, they will likely be successful during the season.

SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Since band-tail seasons were re-opened in 2002, hunters are required to purchase a migratory bird authorization. Harvest must be submitted using harvest cards submitted to WDFW after the season has closed. These regulations will apply in 2015 as well. At the time of this writing, 2014 harvest and survey data was not available. Hunters should review the 2015 Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet once it becomes available to confirm season dates and any other regulation changes.

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 618, 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/ 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.

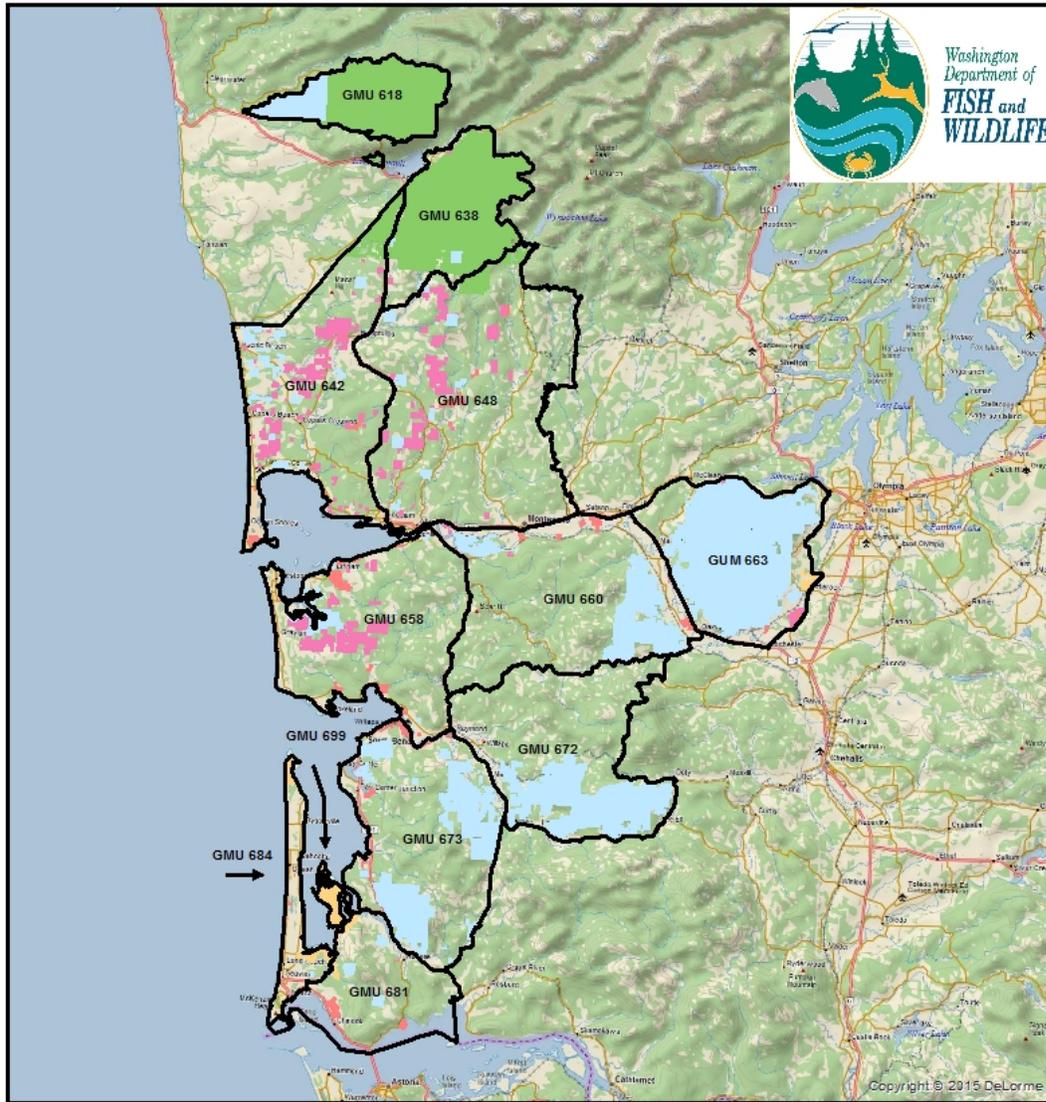
WDFW recognizes that some of the best hunting opportunities occur on private industrial forestlands and works cooperatively with private timber companies to maintain reasonable public access during established hunting seasons. Private industrial forestlands have always been open for public access, but 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 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**

District 17: Major Public Lands



Disclaimer

Due to the dynamic nature of data 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 232-26 of the Washington State Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

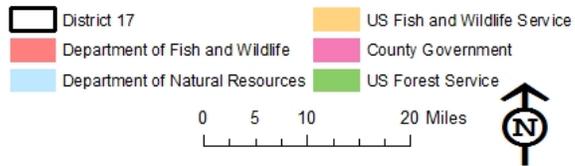


FIGURE 21: LOCATION OF PUBLIC LANDS OPEN TO PUBLIC ACCESS WITHIN EACH GMU OF DISTRICT 17

IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR THE 2015 SEASON

There are a variety of fee access programs that are in place 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. These fees will also apply to all other outdoor recreational activities including hiking, camping, mountain biking, fishing, etc. 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.

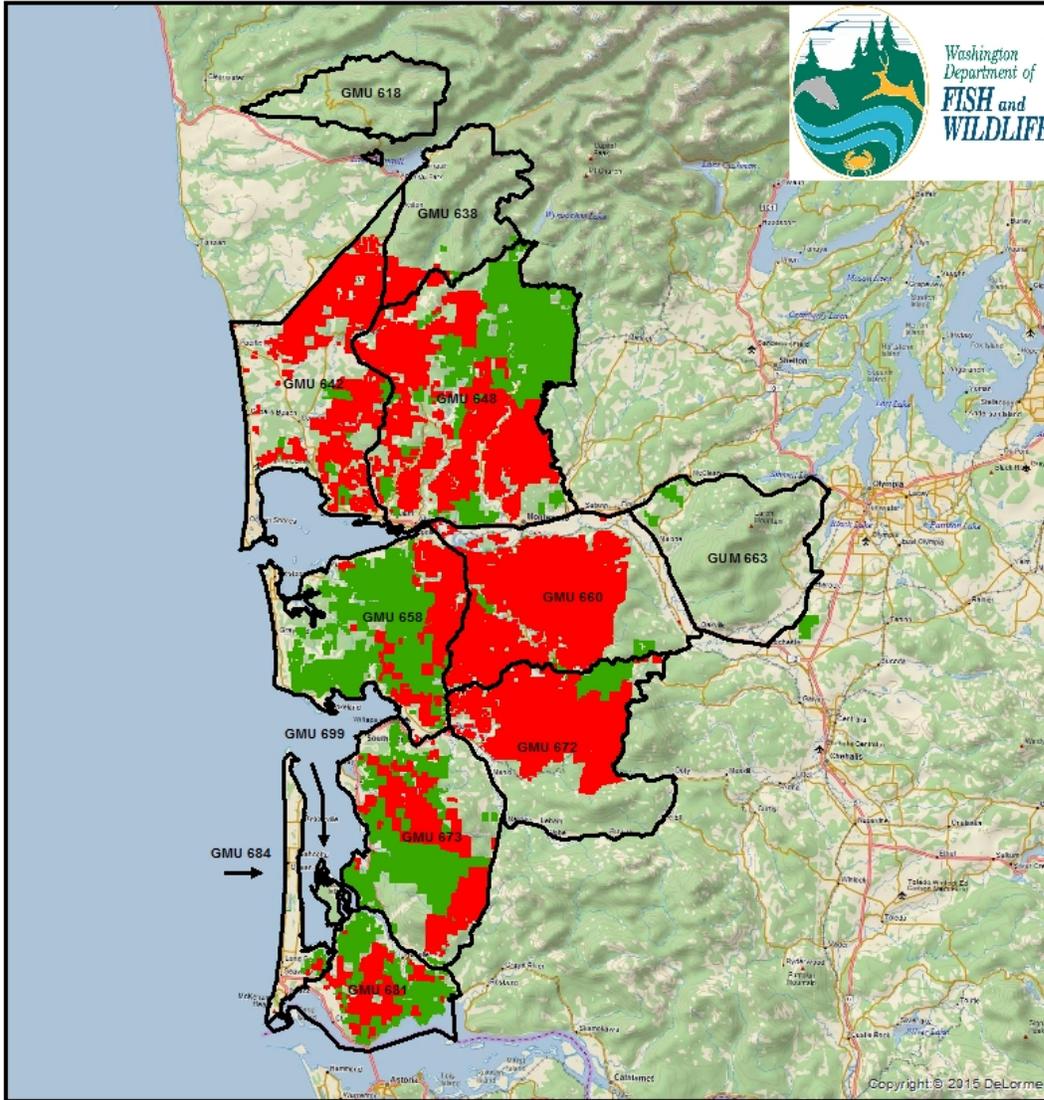
Leases: Designated tracts of land are leased to an individual, or groups of individuals, and only the lessee and their families are allowed to access that particular track of land. The cost of a lease can be several thousand dollars.

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 22 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 August 4. 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.

District 17:

Private Forest Lands Access



Disclaimer

Due to the dynamic nature of data 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 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 232-26 of the Washington State Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

-  District 17
-  Private Forest Lands - Fee Access
-  Private Forest Lands - Free Access

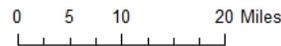


FIGURE 22. MAP OF PRIVATE TIMBER COMPANY OWNERSHIP IN DISTRICT 17. DARK GREEN = FREE ACCESS. RED = PERMIT AND FEE REQUIRED. MAP REPRESENTS DATA AVAILABLE ON AUGUST 4, 2015 AND MAY CHANGE AT ANY TIME.

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.

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 GMUs 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. District 17 GMUs with Green Diamond ownership are 642, 648, 658, and 660.

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. District 17 GMUs with timberlands managed by Campbell Global are 648, 658, 672, 673, and 681.

Weyerhaeuser: Weyerhaeuser currently has three levels of access in District 17: general access permit areas, enhanced permit areas, and lease 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 GMUs with Weyerhaeuser ownership are 648, 658, 660, and 672.

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.

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	https://hancockrecreationnw.com/
Rayonier	All	1-360-533-7000	http://www.rayonierhunting.com/
Green Diamond	All	1-360-426-3381	http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/
Weyerhaeuser	All	1-800-636-6531	http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/

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 GMUs 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 618 (Matheney) Access rating = Excellent

Unit 618 is dominated by federal lands included in the Olympic National Forest. The minority of land not managed by the US Forest service is under state management via the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

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 onto farms in the Chehalis Valley, 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, Weyerhaeuser, 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). Nature Conservancy lands are open to hunting. Weyerhaeuser has recreational lease and permit access areas in this GMU.

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 beforehand. Special regulations apply for hunting on the refuge ([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 2015 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/ 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 GoHunt Tool

WDFW's GoHunt Tool has been revamped and provides hunters with a great interactive tool for locating tracts of public land within each GMU. The GoHunt Tool can be accessed on WDFW's Hunting website or by [clicking here](#).