

## WDFW lands are just part of public access effort statewide

By Dr. Jeff Koenings, Ph.D.  
WDFW Director

Outdoor recreation—be it hunting, wildlife viewing or fishing—is an essential part of our state's heritage. Spending a day on the water or in the field is part of what makes Washington a great place to live.

But as development continues to spread across formerly rural areas, finding places to pursue those outdoor sports is increasingly difficult. Hunters, especially, face growing challenges in finding appropriate recreational access.

Although the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has long maintained a network of wildlife areas and water-access sites to provide public fishing and hunting access and to benefit fish and wildlife, these lands can only partially satisfy the recreational access demand.

Meeting recreational access needs now and into the future will require creative solutions, pursued cooperatively by private landowners, recreationists and lawmakers, as well as our agency and other public land managers.

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## Wind turbines will provide funds for wildlife area

This spring the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission authorized Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Director Jeff Koenings to negotiate a commercial lease that will allow the first wind turbines to be built on a WDFW wildlife area.

About 80 acres of WDFW's 17,803-acre Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area in Kittitas County will be leased to Zilkha Renewable Energy for the construction and operation of between nine to 12 wind turbines. The turbines are part of the 158-turbine Wild Horse Wind Farm Project on private and other state land adjacent to the wildlife area. Puget Sound Energy is expected to assume the lease and operate the wind farm once it is up and running.



*Wind turbines and elk mix at another Zilkha project*

The lease will provide between \$60,000 and \$125,000 annually to provide operation and maintenance funding for the Colockum, Wenas, L.T. Murray, Wenas, Oak Creek, Whiskey Dick, Quilomene and other wildlife areas in the southcentral region of the state. Lease terms are still being negotiated.

The Wild Horse Wind Farm Project has been approved by the Washington State Energy and Facilities and Siting Council and at this writing was

awaiting final approval and signature from the Governor's office.

"Since this is a first for us, we went through an extensive decision-making process," said WDFW Lands Division Manager Mark Quinn.

"We first presented the idea to the Commission in November of 2003 when the wind farm project was first proposed to the Energy Council by Zilkha Reweable Energy," Quinn explained. The Commission's authorization then was simply that WDFW property could be considered for potential inclusion in the project.

"Then we took it to our Lands Management Advisory Council and talked about the idea, the pros and cons, at three separate meetings over more than a year," Quinn said. "Some members felt strongly that any commercial use of Department land that doesn't directly benefit fish and wildlife is inconsistent with our mission."

But ultimately, Quinn said, the advisory group voted to support a lease, based on three assumptions:

- 1) The Wild Horse Wind Farm Project would occur on lands immediately adjacent to WDFW lands, along with any impacts to area wildlife, with or without WDFW participation;
- 2) Operations and maintenance revenues are vital to the sustainability of WDFW lands, and the project's location immediately adjacent to the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area is a significant opportunity to generate income;
- 3) The funds generated by the lease would be used to maintain and support WDFW lands.

In addition, Quinn noted, the Wild Horse Wind Farm Project has been reviewed under the State Environmental Policy Act process,

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# New members join Lands Management Advisory Council

Eight volunteers joined WDFW's 18-member Land Management Advisory Council (LMAC) this year to help review the agency's land issues.

LMAC was formed in 2002 to involve citizens as advisors and co-stewards of the state's fish, wildlife, and recreational resources. The group meets quarterly with WDFW Land Division Manager Mark Quinn and other staff.

The first edition of this newsletter introduced the original council members, whose terms expired this summer. Many of those first advisors will continue to serve another term to 2009; those who chose not to extend their volunteer service were replaced by the eight new members.

The LMAC newcomers are:

Paul Ancich of Fircrest is a member of the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Advisory Board where he represents commercial fishing interests, based on his many years as a vessel captain in Puget Sound and Alaskan waters. He is concerned about watershed preservation and habitat enhancement in land management. He currently supervises an RV and boat storage project in Lakewood and is head tennis coach at Lakes High School.

John Blankenship of Olympia is recently retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service where he completed his 34-year, 17-state career as Deputy Director of the Mountain-Prairie Region in Denver. He has worked on all aspects of land management, including acquisition negotiations,

resource assessments, permitting, planning, and on-the-ground implementation.

Burl Booker of Connell is a landowner/farmer in a part of the state that has healthy populations of many different game species and attracts lots of hunters. He has been a longtime access/habitat cooperater in WDFW's Hunter Access Program, and since some of his property is near WDFW lands, he's been involved in land management issues with WDFW for many years.

Mariann Brown of Ferndale served 21 years in the U.S. Forest Service, in three states and four national forests, working on wildlife management. She also has six years experience as a private consulting wildlife biologist in Whatcom County. She believes managing lands for overall ecosystem integrity is one of the most important things we can do for Washington state lands.

John Comes of Bothell is the owner and editor of NorthWestTrout.com which promotes and supports activities of Trout Unlimited, Federation of Fly Fishers and other conservation and education groups. He is an avid fly fisher who frequently uses WDFW lands and access sites and works as an Information Technology (IT) manager for Borden Chemical, a major supplier to the forest products industry.

Phil Mosher of Wenatchee is Assistant Chief of Operations for Chelan County Fire District 1 with 16 years of experience as a firefighter,

including wildfires on public lands. Outdoor recreation is his passion and he is interested in interagency functions, particularly from the fire control perspective.

Robert Stoll of Spokane is a retired civil engineer who hunts and fishes and has spent the last decade investing in ranch and farm properties in eastern Washington and Idaho, working to improve them for both wildlife and livestock. He is especially interested in weed control and management of public land adjacent to private land.

Steve Bondi of Winthrop is the stewardship director for the Methow Conservancy, working with private landowners on conservation easements. He is a wildlife biologist with a graduate degree in environmental science and regional planning from Washington State University who has worked for the U.S. Forest Service and land trusts in various northwest states over the last 10 years. He advocates basing management recommendations on ecological monitoring.

The original LMAC members who continue to serve are Brian Briscoe of Montesano, Brian Davern of Vancouver, Brad Johnson of Marysville, Neil Kayser of Centerville, Dan Kinney of Yakima, Norm McClure of Nespelem, Tom McCoy of Selah, Arvilla Ohlde of Belfair, Tom Rutten of Seattle, and William White of Easton.

## Wind turbines will provide funds for WDFW

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and was developed in consideration of WDFW's new Wind Power Guidelines.

"Our Wind Power Guidelines were developed a couple of years ago to find ways to reconcile support for renewable energy and the growing wind farm industry, and protect wildlife and habitat at the same time," Quinn said. "They include innovative provisions for siting, designing and operating turbines to avoid and minimize impacts to migrating birds

and bats, burrowing mammals, and other wildlife."

Quinn acknowledges concerns that the first wind turbines at Whiskey Dick will lead to more on other wildlife areas around the state.

"We're not seeking out any further arrangements," Quinn said. "Our business is fish and wildlife, not energy production, and most of our wildlife areas are probably not likely candidates anyway.

"But if a similar situation developed, where adjacent lands were being used in that way, and we had an opportunity to generate income to benefit wildlife or in some other way leverage additional resources for wildlife," he said, "we would again carefully weigh the options. We are going to manage our lands aggressively to provide maximum benefits to fish and wildlife. That's the only way we, representing fish and wildlife, can hope to sustain these resources into the future."

# Counties receive tax payments from WDFW

This Spring WDFW completed annual payments to 32 Washington counties totaling \$662,880.69 for Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) on WDFW-owned land, and for local assessments on those lands.

The PILT totaled \$431,357.53 to 14 counties covering 441,059 acres of WDFW-owned land. Assessments totaled \$231,523.16 to 26 counties for weed control, fire protection, storm water control, irrigation, and other services provided by lake management districts and conservation districts.

Each county can either retain game violation fines and forfeitures collected by WDFW within the county, or elect to receive in lieu taxes on WDFW property of at least 100 contiguous acres. Most counties that have significant WDFW acreage choose to receive the in lieu payments. In most cases, the payments are equivalent to or more than counties would receive if the property was privately owned and held in open space classification for agriculture or forestry activities.

The table shown here lists the Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT), based on the number of acres eligible for PILT, and assessment payments that counties received from WDFW this year. Counties with WDFW acreage that show no payments have either not billed the agency for service assessments and/or have chosen to retain game violation fines rather than in lieu taxes. Variations in the taxes per listed acreages may indicate that not all acres are taxed and/or that not all are computed at the same rate. Assessments vary from county to county.

WDFW is the only state agency that currently makes in-lieu tax payments on property it owns and manages.

Beginning in 2007, the Washington Department of Natural Resources will also make Payments In Lieu of Taxes on their Natural Areas and Natural Resource Conservation Areas. That change was among those made this year by the Legislature in SB5396, which addresses the 15-year-old Washington Wildlife Recreation Program.

**2005  
PILT AND ASSESSMENTS**

COUNTY	PILT	PILT ACRES	ASSESSMENTS	GRAND TOTAL
ADAMS	\$0.00		\$11,659.05	\$11,659.05
ASOTIN	\$23,543.08	32,676.76	\$0.00	\$23,543.08
BENTON	\$0.00		\$2,881.18	\$2,881.18
CHELAN	\$18,792.70	26,846.71	\$0.00	\$18,792.70
CLALLAM	\$0.00		\$1,421.97	\$1,421.97
CLARK	\$0.00		\$8,859.70	\$8,859.70
COLUMBIA	\$7,555.91	10,794.13	\$1,616.20	\$9,172.11
COWLITZ	\$0.00		\$733.58	\$733.58
DOUGLAS	*	0.00	\$0.00	0.00
FERRY	\$6,781.33	6,866.13	\$705.10	\$7,486.43
FRANKLIN	\$0.00		\$21,271.33	\$21,271.33
GARFIELD	\$4,839.98	6,914.26	\$553.14	\$5,393.12
GRANT	\$37,443.16	39,076.00	\$26,167.60	\$63,610.76
GRAYS HARBOR	\$7,264.14	3,248.00	\$0.00	\$7,264.14
KING	\$0.00		\$26,927.80	\$26,927.80
KITSAP	\$0.00		\$1,092.50	\$1,092.50
KITTITAS	\$115,909.16	148,762.02	\$5,700.14	\$121,609.30
KLICKITAT	\$21,416.95	13,106.35	\$753.87	\$22,170.82
LINCOLN	\$13,629.25	19,472.26	\$1,885.84	\$15,515.09
MASON	\$0.00		\$450.00	\$450.00
OKANOGAN	\$76,392.62	61,421.29	\$8,736.11	\$85,128.73
PACIFIC	\$0.00		\$1,260.17	\$1,260.17
PEND ORIELLE	\$3,308.65	614.00	\$0.00	\$3,308.65
PIERCE	\$0.00		\$7,916.58	\$7,916.58
SKAGIT	\$0.00		\$26,979.31	\$26,979.31
SNOHOMISH	\$0.00		\$14,968.31	\$14,968.31
SPOKANE	\$0.00		\$955.50	\$955.50
THURSTON	\$5,687.78	1,131.03	\$10,597.29	\$16,285.07
WALLA WALLA	\$0.00		\$12.00	\$12.00
WHATCOM	\$0.00		\$94.95	\$94.95
YAKIMA	\$88,792.82	70,130.17	\$47,323.94	\$136,116.76
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$431,357.53</b>	<b>441,059.11</b>	<b>\$231,523.16</b>	<b>\$662,880.69</b>

\* Douglas County has indicated that it will elect to collect PILT in 2006

# Drought could impact WDFW land management

The governor's declaration in March made it official: for the fourth consecutive year, drought conditions are plaguing Washington, this time due to snowpack in the mountains last winter that was so low, not even abundant rain this spring can make up the difference.

Of course low water is first and foremost a threat to the fish that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages, from downstream migration problems to hatchery rearing concerns. And low water at WDFW boat ramps can make access an issue.

Those and other drought impacts are being assessed and addressed in an update of WDFW's 2001 Drought Contingency Plan, with several "early action projects" already initiated, from preparations for fish salvage and transfer to boat ramp remodeling.

But WDFW land management could be affected by drought, too, in terms of wildfires. Many WDFW lands are under wildfire protection by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), so WDFW land managers take fire prevention cues from those and other interagency fire-fighting professionals.

DNR firefighters respond to about 800 wildfires each year in Washington, most in late summer and early fall. At this writing in early July, at least two major wildfires were already burning in Okanogan County, one on the Colville Indian reservation and the other including part of WDFW's Methow Wildlife Area. Both may have been the result of fireworks, although the Methow fire may have started near the rifle range (high power rifles have been known to spark wildfires.)

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# Washington's Wildlife Areas: Asotin Creek

The Asotin Creek Wildlife Area, 16 miles west of the town of Asotin in southeast Washington's Asotin and Garfield counties, includes about 30,000 acres of Blue Mountains riparian, Ponderosa pine, and grassland habitats that support everything from elk to threatened salmon.

The area is comprised of multiple management units located around the North and South Forks of Asotin Creek, Charley Creek, Lick Creek, and George Creek drainages. It is adjacent to the Umatilla National Forest and other public lands under the Bureau of Land Management and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Asotin Creek is managed with the 13,415-acre Chief Joseph Wildlife Area to the south near the Snake and Grand Ronde rivers.

The Asotin Creek Wildlife Area was created in 1962 with the purchase of 2,468 acres of big game winter range and elk calving grounds by the Game Department predecessor of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), using Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration funds.

By 1989 the acreage grew to 13,290, including the purchase of the 3,000-acre Weatherly unit and 4,438 acres leased from DNR. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Snake River Mitigation purchases in the early 1990's included 4,810 acres on Parson and Pintler creeks. The 1,528-acre Halsey purchase in 2001 includes 493 acres currently managed by WDFW and 1,035 acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through 2007, at which time the acreage will come under WDFW management.

The 8,500-acre Schlee Ranch was acquired in June 2003 with cooperative funding from the Bonneville Power Association (BPA), Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The ranch is divided into two parcels – the Smoothing Iron and George Creek units. In June 2004 WDFW acquired the 1,600-acre Bickford property, located on lower George Creek and adjacent to the George Creek unit of the Schlee acquisition. To date, WDFW owns 24,500 acres and leases nearly

6,000 DNR acres on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.

The recent acquisition focus in this area is driven by its state designation as a critical watershed for salmonids, from bull trout to spring Chinook salmon, and particularly as a refuge for wild steelhead. It is also considered at high risk for habitat degradation due to fragmentation and stream modifications.

WDFW's other mandate, to maximize recreational opportunities,



also drives management of Asotin Creek. Elk, mule and white-tailed deer, black bear, cougar, wild turkey, chukar and Hungarian partridge, quail, blue and ruffed grouse, and a host of songbirds afford a variety of hunting and wildlife viewing experiences.

The Asotin Creek subbasin is recognized as a "usual and accustomed" use area of the Nez Perce Tribe as stated in the treaty of 1855. The subbasin provides opportunities for fishing, hunting and gathering by tribal members, and although much of the land is owned by private or public agencies, the Nez Perce still retain an active interest in the functional resources of the watershed.

A large portion of this wildlife area lies adjacent to private livestock rangeland or agricultural land (mostly winter wheat and spring barley). After spring calving, most cattle graze lower canyon grasslands until they are moved to forest pastures in early summer. Livestock commonly spend fall and winter in the lower elevations of the subbasin, on either grain fields or grassland pastures.

Elevations range from 1,300 feet on Pintler Creek to 4,600 feet on Smoothing Iron Ridge.

The subbasin has 360 miles of perennial and intermittent stream channels.

Historically, Asotin Creek had a more meandering pattern and low

flow stream channels, but now most of the tributaries in the watershed have been straightened, diked, or relocated.

These channel modifications, exacerbated by multiple flood events, reduce instream structure, pools, and streamside woody vegetation and instream debris – all elements that cool the water, increase flows, lower sediment loads, and in general make for good fish habitat.

Three salmonids listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act are found in the waters of the Asotin Creek drainage.

WDFW records and surveys estimate the carrying capacity for the Asotin Creek summer steelhead spawning population at 423 fish, and to date only 206 have been counted.

The estimated carrying capacity for Spring chinook salmon spawning population is 558 fish, with a current average of just 158 fish. Those low numbers could mean the species is functionally extinct in the Asotin Creek sub-basin, but habitat restoration could make it a viable population again.

Bull trout are known to spawn in the upper North Fork, but historic distribution is unknown. Bull trout require colder water temperatures than the other two species, so wherever water temperature is poor for steelhead or chinook, it is also a significant limiting factor for bull trout. WDFW lists the Asotin Creek population as being at "high risk" of extinction.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area manager Bob Dice and assistant manager Shana Kozusko have been working with a Citizen Advisory Group for the past year to draft an overall management plan for the area and its diverse fish and wildlife species.

Dice explains that several wildlife species in Asotin Creek's habitat types have already been identified as the focus for the management planning because their needs define healthy habitat for many species. In the riparian, riverine or wetlands habitat, it's beaver, great blue heron and yellow warbler. In Ponderosa pine habitat, it's elk, flammulated owl and whiteheaded woodpecker. In the grasslands, it's bighorn sheep, sharp-tailed grouse, mule deer and grasshopper sparrow.

Additional wildlife species are also targeted to evaluate habitat acquired

## Washington's Wildlife Areas: Asotin Creek *continued from page 4*



with BPA mitigation funding. This Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) is applied to the Smoothing Iron and George Creek units and includes western meadowlark, black-capped chickadee, and downy and Lewis' woodpeckers.

To stabilize elk populations, which declined throughout the Blues in the late 1980's due to drought-associated low reproduction rates, the wildlife area's Lick Creek game management unit is targeted for transplants and habitat enhancement. Habitat work includes revisions to road densities, forestry practices, grazing, forage plantings, and noxious weed control. It also includes access closures to protect elk from disturbance, when they are most vulnerable and in the poorest condition on winter ranges and calving areas. Changes to long-term fire suppression are also underway to provide better long-term cover and foraging areas for elk.

The same wildfire suppression has allowed many ponderosa pine stands in the area to develop into more shade tolerant fir species, which are less suitable for the flammulated owl, a state candidate for threatened species listing. These small, insectivorous owls prefer cavities in large ponderosa pine snags for nesting and roosting. Other past practices, such as the felling of snags or diseased trees for firewood, also remove many cavities suitable for nesting.

Bighorn sheep, extirpated in Washington in 1917, were reintroduced to the Asotin Creek drainage between 1991 and 1998, and by 2003 the count was up to 45 sheep. The biggest threat to wild sheep is probably diseases, like pasteurilla or scabies, introduced by domestic sheep and goats, which are kept in small herds along the local river bottoms. A major bighorn die-off in 1995-96 was believed to come from a feral goat contacting bighorns in the Tenmile

Creek drainage south of Asotin.

Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, a state threatened species, historically occupied the grasslands and shrub-steppe habitats of the wildlife area. But there have been no confirmed sightings of the species for decades, due to alteration of native habitat by agricultural conversion, overgrazing and invasion of noxious weeds. The Smoothing Iron parcel of the wildlife area includes potentially high-quality grouse habitat and WDFW is assessing what other habitat enhancements may be necessary to restore a viable population of these native grouse.

These and the other focal species' habitat needs are being addressed in several ways, Dice says, and many are inter-related.

"Fire management and weed control are good examples," he said. "The native bunchgrasses are tolerant of naturally-occurring, low intensity wildfires, but the invasion of weeds like yellow star thistle and cheatgrass have changed that. They grow in dense stands, filling spaces between bunchgrasses and fueling intense fires that kill native forbs and grasses. Then weeds tend to out-compete native bunchgrasses after a fire, and spread, ultimately converting native vegetation to entire stands of exotics that are less palatable to wildlife."

Dice said neighboring U.S. Forest Service prescribed burns planned for this year may include some of the wildlife area to address the issue. He's also treating weed outbreaks on a minimum of 500 acres per year, prioritizing by weeds of greatest concern.

Other key practices are livestock grazing, road management, and agricultural crop production.

When conducted carefully, at the right time and place, some grazing can actually help improve elk winter forage. But maintaining fences on wildlife area boundaries to private and USFS grazing lands is necessary. Fencing waterways and ponds to protect riparian vegetation from livestock trampling is another strategy, not only for protecting terrestrial wildlife habitat, but fish habitat, too.

Plans call for excluding livestock, controlling weeds, and restoring vegetation along Rockpile Creek,

George Creek, and South Fork Asotin Creek specifically to help salmonids. The South Fork Asotin Creek trail is also planned for closure to unauthorized vehicles to reduce sediment run-off and other detrimental effects to fish.

Gates on some of the area's roads are closed from December to April to provide refuge areas for wildlife and reduce winter disturbance. Development of forage plots on the area's existing agricultural fields is improving nutrition for wintering elk and also keeping the animals off private lands where they cause damage.

Dice plans to continually assess the condition of the area's vegetation communities and monitor restoration success with mapping, HEP surveys and permanent photopoint measurements. Since the rare plant Spalding's Silene was found in the Lick Creek area, plans also call for surveys of rare plants.

This year marked the start of an effort to re-establish a viable population of native mountain quail in the north fork of Asotin Creek. Seventy-three quail captured in Oregon were released in March and are being tracked with radiotelemetry by University of Idaho researchers to monitor their success. More are planned for release next year.

Possible future reintroductions include sharp-tailed grouse in a cooperative project with USFS, and Pacific lamprey in cooperation with Nez Perce Tribe Fisheries.

"There's so much we can do for fish and wildlife and people who enjoy them on this great piece of property," said Dice. "And with an active advisory group, I think we're doing things in a way that works with our neighbors."



*Forage plots are planted for elk.*

## Adopt an Access Site

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages about 625 water and land access sites across the state with only about ten employees.

These sites are used by thousands of fishers, boaters, hunters, wildlife watchers, and others every year. Most comply with the requirement at many of these sites for a Vehicle Use Permit, which comes with fishing and hunting licenses or can be purchased separately to help cover maintenance costs. Most respect these public lands and follow the rules to help keep them clean, safe and useable.

But unfortunately some of these relatively remote sites become targets for illegal dumping, vandalism and other problems, and WDFW staff struggle to stay on top of maintenance needs.

That's where the Adopt an Access program comes in, says WDFW Access Coordinator Steve Sherlock. Patterned after the well-known Adopt A Highway program, it uses volunteers to help maintain local access sites.

"It isn't just a one-day litter pick-up project," Sherlock explained. "It's a partnership with a group of people interested in helping maintain a site long-term, with a commitment to keeping the site open and useable into the future."

WDFW provides a brief orientation, a supply of litter bags and gloves, and an Adopt an Access program sign with the name of the organization, for posting at the site. WDFW access managers make arrangements to pick up and dispose of bags of litter collected by the volunteers

at least once a month. The volunteers also often become watchdogs of their site and alert managers to problems.

Adopt an Access groups are asked to make a one-year commitment that can be renewed annually. All volunteers are covered by liability insurance under the state Labor and Industries rules. There are no expectations that volunteers pick up dumped refrigerators or deer carcasses, and hazardous materials are referred to local law enforcement.

"The volunteer groups who have been involved in Adopt an Access



for more than a year seem to really take pride and ownership in the area," Sherlock said, "and that's exactly what we need."

WDFW has the following 11 Adopt an Access agreements currently underway across Washington:

- Eastern Washington: Pend Oreille County's Davis Lake, Gene Fitzpatrick and fellow lakeside homeowners; Spokane County's Silver Lake, ECO Foundation; Stevens County's

Waits Lake, Just International.

- North central Washington: Okanogan County's Aeneas and Ell lakes, Okanogan Fly Fishing Club.
- South central Washington: Snively access to Yakima River, Richland Rod and Gun Club; Hyde access to Yakima River, Tapteal Green-way Association.
- North Puget Sound: Pierce County's American Lake, Bills Boathouse, Tillicum Neighborhood Association and Baptist Church, Lakewood Parks and Recreation, and the American Lake Home Owners Association; Snohomish County's Stillquamish River Lime Quarry access, Evergreen Fly Fishing Club.
- Southwest Washington: Cowlitz County's Kress Lake, Cowlitz County Anglers; launch development and litter cleanup project sponsored by the Woodland Lions Club and the Port of Woodland.
- Coastal Washington: Thurston County's Black River School Land Road access, Gate Community Club; Black River Little Rock access, Chehalis River Council; Mason County's Lake Nahwatzel, Coastal Bass Masters.

Anyone interested in creating an Adopt an Access agreement with WDFW should contact Sherlock at 360-902-2375 or [sherlises@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:sherlises@dfw.wa.gov).

## WDFW lands are just part of public access effort statewide

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In one such innovative approach, our Department has proposed providing assistance to landowners who grant hunter access, through funds generated by a \$5 hunting-license surcharge. Although the measure did not reach adoption during the 2005 legislative session, we will continue to seek legislative approval next year.

In addition, the Department is also pursuing Washington Wildlife Recreation Program (WWRP) monies for stewardship of its lands, for traffic control, weed management and other functions that are vital to maintaining public accessibility.

On another front, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission later this

year will consider adoption of a new Landowner Access Permit Program, which would allow landowners to issue permits for special hunts to reduce wildlife damage.

The proposed new permit program would broaden an effort under way this year in the Hanford area of Benton and Yakima counties to reduce elk damage through special landowner-issued hunting permits, combined with general hunting seasons and traditional permit hunts. The Hanford area program is a significant milestone in our work with landowners to find local solutions to the elk damage issue. If the landowner access permits program is adopted, it could not only alleviate wildlife damage problems,

but could offer additional access opportunities for many more hunters.

The Landowner Access Permit Program was developed with input from stakeholders, including the Hunter Access Task Group representing timber, agricultural and other landowners, sports groups, and conservation organizations. The task group has been meeting for more than a year to advise the Department on access issues.

Joint efforts with broad citizen involvement such as this offer us the best hope for increasing recreational access for our citizens and meeting other land-management challenges before us.

## Sharp-tailed grouse released on wildlife

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists relocated 60 sharp-tailed grouse from Idaho and British Columbia to eastern Washington this spring in an effort to boost populations of the state threatened species.

Forty of the birds were trapped in British Columbia and 20 in Idaho. A total of 20 each were released on WDFW's Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in Lincoln County, WDFW's Wells Wildlife Area in Okanogan County, and the Colville Reservation near Nespelem in Okanogan County.

"Once the grouse started cooperating with our traps, the operation went smoothly," reported WDFW Threatened and Endangered Species biologist Dave Hays of Olympia. "We had a lot of help from our colleagues with Idaho Fish and Game, British Columbia, Colville Confederated Tribes, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management."

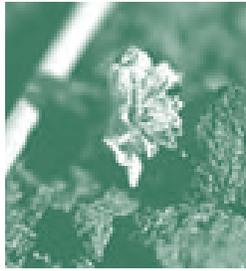
WDFW Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Manager Juli Anderson, who helped trap, transport and release some of the birds, was happy to report that the newcomers immediately joined existing birds on one of their "leks" or spring dancing or mating ritual grounds.

"We hope this helps restore this native species to these 20,000 acres of shrub-steppe at Swanson Lakes that we acquired and manage primarily for them," Anderson said. "Combined with the adjacent and nearby 30,000 acres that BLM manages, this is one of the largest pieces of intact shrub-steppe habitat left in the state."

Sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) were historically found throughout most of the sagebrush, deciduous shrub, and grass habitats of eastern Washington. Large-scale removal of native vegetation for agriculture and reductions in habitat quality from intensive livestock grazing took their toll on all prairie grouse, including state threatened sage grouse. Both species are also considered federal Species of Concern.

Recent surveys have indicated that a total of about 300 sharp-tailed grouse are left in small and isolated populations on remnant patches of habitat in Okanogan, Douglas, and Lincoln counties.

## Threatened Plant Surveys on Quincy Wildlife Area Show High Rate of Bloom



Recent surveying of a small threatened plant on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Quincy Wildlife Area in Grant County revealed that despite drought conditions, a record high number may have bloomed this spring.

WDFW range specialist Edd Bracken surveys the area for white eatonella (*Eatonella nivea*) every year and this time recorded more than 3,000 blooming.

White eatonella is an aster family member that is listed

by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Natural Heritage Program as threatened because populations are only known in Kittitas and Grant counties.

The species is the only one of the *Eatonella* genus in North America. It occurs in shrub-steppe vegetation on poorly developed soils in dry, sandy or volcanic areas.

White eatonella is a small (1-1/2-inch tall), easily-overlooked annual with a white, woolly flower that blooms between May and July, presumably in response to warming temperatures and spring moisture.

The number that flower from year to year fluctuates widely, probably in response to weather. It probably doesn't even appear in some years. Its apparent restriction to small, sparsely vegetated sites suggests it's a poor competitor with other vegetation, although it's found near shrubs like sagebrush and bitterbrush.

Bracken mapped 20 patches of the plant in the Frenchman Coulee part of the wildlife area. The patches range in size from 25 to 50 square meters in size, most near recreational use portions of the wildlife area.

"So far the nearby recreational activity doesn't appear to be disturbing the plant," said Greg Fitzgerald, who manages all of the Columbia Basin wildlife areas, including Quincy. He noted that the plant was discovered on the wildlife area many years ago and that portion of the property was designated a natural area.

On the Frenchman Coulee site, eatonella grows in fine, deep red, pea-size gravel derived from basalt. Its apparent association with volcanic areas perhaps makes it a natural for the Quincy Wildlife Area, the geology of which is a product of the erosion of lava flows by glacial flood waters. Quincy's many layers of basalt are exposed in towering 800-foot cliffs, isolated mesas, stair-stepped benches, box canyons, and potholes.

## Landowners, groups honored for help

Earlier this year during an annual recognition awards ceremony in Olympia, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) honored several landowners and groups for their assistance with wildlife habitat and land management efforts.

Dan Sangster, Jay Holzmilller and Ron Scheibe, three property owners from Asotin County, shared honors for Landowner of the Year for their work in negotiating a pilot program to reduce agricultural impacts from a growing elk herd using special hunting permits.

Three men from the Hanford area also received recognition from WDFW for their work in elk management. Rich Nall, John Robert and Bud Hamilton helped coordinate with area landowners and WDFW in developing 2005 elk-hunting seasons in the Hanford area.

Two citizens groups, the Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association and the Snow Creek-Salmon Creek Technical Advisory Group, shared Organization of the Year honors.

Founded in 1928, the Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association donates thousands of hours every year on fish and wildlife habitat projects, including habitat restoration projects, clean-up efforts and wildlife-feeding tasks.

The Snow Creek and Salmon Creek Technical Advisory Group was honored this year for its work in developing a fish and wildlife management plan to provide guidance in the restoration and stewardship of property acquired in that watershed. This diverse group includes representatives from WDFW and other state and county agencies, tribal organizations and many other entities.

*This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is the policy of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to adhere to the following: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please contact the WDFW ADA Coordinator at 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 or write to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of External Programs, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 130, Arlington, VA 22203.*

## **Drought could impact WDFW land management** *continued from page 3*

Most wildfires are man-caused, with lightning strikes only accounting for 13 percent of the total. The most common cause is debris burning, from timber slash piles to backyard burn barrels.

WDFW land management practices like timber thinning and prescribed burns must be even more carefully planned or even put on hold in drought conditions.

And just as private timberlands often do, WDFW lands might make early and extended closures and restrictions to public access to reduce wildfire risks.

The consecutive years of drought in Washington also compound the problem for some wildlife itself.

For example, while mild winter conditions ease the stress to and mortalities of deer and elk over the winter months, continued drought can lead to additional stress and mortalities during the summer and fall when they should be fattening up on lush forage that is dependent on normal water levels. If animals enter the winter in poor condition because of a lack of good forage, over-winter mortality rates can rise, even under normal winter conditions.

Fires on Washington Department of Natural Resources Protection by Cause

