

LANDLINE

A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife land management newsletter

Summer/Fall 2006

Long-term plan is just good business

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

With all the activities required to manage Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife lands, including wildlife areas and water access sites across the state, a long-term plan that assures continuity is just good business.

Whether it's weed control, boat launch remodeling, crop farming, fencing, streamside planting, timber thinning, livestock grazing or a myriad of other management activities, we need to be able to work effectively, with a minimum of disruption.

And the recreation that occurs on those lands we manage— fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, boating, swimming, camping, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, rock climbing, and other fun— should continue without conflicts.

That's why last year the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), with input and review from our Lands Management Advisory Council and

Continued on page 9



WDFW access to Silver Lake
Bruce Bolding photo

Water access sites are big and getting better

With fishing, boating and swimming among the top outdoor recreational pursuits in Washington, access to water is important to millions.

Meeting that demand is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), which owns and/or manages more access to the state's lakes, rivers and marine areas than any other single entity.

More than 600 sites across the state provide boat launch or primitive recreational access to waterways.

"Water access is big for us," says WDFW Access Areas Manager Steve Sherlock. "In fact, I learned at a recent conference of the States Organization for Boating Access that Washington is second only to California in number of water access sites."

Most WDFW boat launch sites have minimal facilities – simple ramps, parking areas, and vault toilets. Most were acquired many years ago for fishing access with funds from fishing license sales and federal excise taxes on fishing equipment.

"We are fortunate that former Department of Game and Department of Fisheries managers had the foresight to purchase at least one parcel on many of the state's lakes and rivers," Sherlock said. "Without them, many of these waters would only be available to those fortunate enough to own waterfront property."

Non-fishing use of the access sites has grown tremendously in the past several years. Recreational boaters of all kinds, from canoeists to jet-skiers, use the sites as much if not more than fishers today.

"Maintaining sites under such heavy use, and unfortunately sometimes abuse, is an incredible strain on our budget," Sherlock said. "Our 'Adopt-an-Access' program helps, but we only have groups signed up to help us maintain about four percent of our sites."

Dedicated maintenance funding now also comes from the \$10.95 Vehicle Use Permit that non-fishers are required to purchase and display to park a vehicle at

Continued on page 8

Land Line is produced by the Lands Division and Public Affairs Office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Dr. Jeff Koenings, Ph.D, Director

Mark Quinn, Lands Division Manager

Margaret Ainscough, Public Affairs Director

Madonna Luers, Newsletter Editor
luersmel@dfw.wa.gov





WA Noxious Weed Control Board photo

Weed Control: Yellow Starthistle

(YST), and although to some the yellow blossoms may appear pretty, this plant severely damages the landscape by degrading wildlife habitat and reducing livestock forage.

Having returned recently from a National Guard call-up to the Middle East, I got a chance to see firsthand some of our most problematic weeds in their native habitat. It was a totally different picture there, though. Single plants were sporadically growing across the land. One here and one there was the norm. This is because those plants evolved there, along with other plant and animal species, and found a natural balance between one another on the landscape.

Southeastern Washington's topography lends itself to a massive spread of YST. It can grow on slopes too steep to reach by hand, and it quickly out-competes native vegetation. That means that we can't effectively control it by traditional chemical or mechanical methods.

So about a decade ago the concept of biocontrol was brought to the scene with the introduction of the Yellow Starthistle Bud Weevil (*Bangasternus orientalis*) and Yellow Starthistle Hairy Weevil (*Eustenopus villosus*). Through extensive research and laboratory testing, these insects were found to utilize YST in its native environment as part of their own life cycle, creating that balance I saw in the Middle East. The insects were also found to not affect the already vulnerable native plants here in southeastern Washington.

YST is an annual, meaning it lives just one year, sprouts, grows up, flowers, produces seed for future generations, and then dies.

However, just one plant can produce thousands of seeds that can remain dormant in the soil for years. Multiply that by millions of plants currently out there, consider that there's been some around for many decades, and you can

guess there are literally trillions of seeds lying in the soil, ready to germinate and produce more seeds.

When these particular weevils mate, the female lays her egg inside the YST flower head. The egg hatches and the larva grows, consuming the developing seeds in the flower head. All the while the plant is still growing and the showy yellow flowers are still blossoming. The larva then leaves the flower head, grows into an adult weevil, over-winters in the ground litter, and the following year repeats the life cycle.

Currently we have the weevils working overtime. Slowly but surely they are depleting the YST seed bank in the soil by consuming any seeds produced from plants that sprout. As I travel the countryside I always stop to check YST plants along the way to monitor the weevils' progress. I can say with confidence that 90% or more of the YST seed heads I examine have a weevil larva present and about 90% of the seeds have almost all been consumed.

I predict that in 15 to 20 years we will start to finally see a decline in the number of YST sprouting every year on the hillsides. We know from all predator-prey relationships that the weevils will never totally eliminate YST. So it is unrealistic to expect that at some point we will never see YST again.

Next time you look up on a hillside in southeast Washington and see a blanket of yellow from thousands of YST plants, remember that the weevils are working, slowly finding that natural balance between the two species that will ultimately give native plants a chance to regain their place.

Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) is a Class B designate weed in the state of Washington where a total of almost 134,000 acres of both public and private lands are infested, mostly in the southeast corner but as far north as Stevens County. It is native along the Mediterranean Coast and Eurasia, introduced to the western U.S. coastal seaports through ship ballast water near the turn of the century, spreading through 800 million acres of California to well over one million acres in Idaho by the 1920's. In the Blue Mountains of southeast Washington, it is found mostly on rangelands in deep silt loams on south slopes.

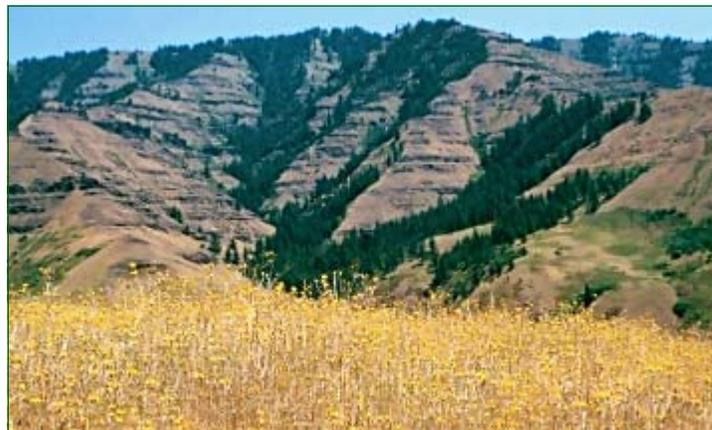
A member of the Compositae family of sunflowers and daisies, it has a yellow thistle-like flower with three-quarter-inch spines in star-like arrangement atop an 18 to 36-inch stem. Cattle feeding on yellow starthistle may be poorly nourished and damaged by the spines. Horses may be poisoned if large quantities are ingested over time.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) controls weeds with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) – a combination of mechanical removal, herbicide application, and "biocontrol" using weed-seed-eating insects.

The following is WDFW wildlife biologist David Woodall's perspective on biocontrol efforts in the Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Complex:

Is all of this biocontrol stuff working?

Here in southeastern Washington in the summertime, take a glance up at the steep hillsides and it looks like we're growing a monoculture of plants from outer space. It's called Yellow Starthistle



Steve Dewey photo

Counties receive tax payments from WDFW

This year WDFW completed annual payments to 30 of Washington's 39 counties totaling \$679,147.87 for Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) on WDFW-owned land, and for local assessments on those lands.

The PILT totaled \$435,255.85 to 14 counties covering 447,139.89 acres of WDFW-owned land. Assessments totaled \$243,892.02 to 28 counties for weed control, fire protection, storm water control, irrigation, and other services provided by lake management districts and conservation districts.

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

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. (PILT is not paid on department buildings, structures, facilities, game farms, fish hatcheries, tidelands, or public fishing areas of less than 100 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.

By state law (Revised Code of Washington 77.12.203), counties electing to collect PILT have their choice of three rates. They may collect an amount equal to that amount paid on similar

parcels of private land held in open space tax classification, or counties may collect the greater of 70 cents per acre or the amount paid in 1984.

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 are not listed or

show no payment, 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.

County	Pilt	Pilt Acres	Assessments	Grand Total
Adams	\$0.00		\$11,943.65	\$11,943.65
Asotin	\$26,009.73	34,292.82	\$0.00	\$26,009.73
Benton	\$0.00		\$2,952.57	\$2,952.57
Chelan	\$18,792.69	26,846.71	\$1,320.00	\$20,112.69
Clallam	\$0.00		\$1,447.64	\$1,447.64
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		\$832.42	\$832.42
Ferry	\$6,781.33	6,866.13	\$705.10	\$7,486.43
Franklin	\$0.00		\$22,082.00	\$22,082.00
Garfield	\$4,839.98	6,914.26	\$553.14	\$5,393.12
Grant	\$37,443.16	39,076.00	\$26,917.17	\$64,360.33
Grays Harbor	\$7,264.14	3,248.00	\$0.00	\$7,264.14
King	\$0.00		\$27,374.97	\$27,374.97
Kitsap	\$0.00		\$1,132.50	\$1,132.50
Kittitas	\$115,909.16	148,762.02	\$5,705.64	\$121,614.80
Klickitat	\$21,416.95	13,106.35	\$753.87	\$22,170.82
Lincoln	\$13,519.35	19,314.66	\$1,871.23	\$15,390.58
Mason	\$0.00		\$435.00	\$435.00
Okanogan	\$77,032.87	62,336.03	\$9,663.68	\$86,696.55
Pacific	\$0.00		\$492.40	\$492.40
Pend Orielle	\$3,308.65	614.00	\$0.00	\$3,308.65
Pierce	\$0.00		\$7,380.83	\$7,380.83
Skagit	\$0.00		\$28,304.29	\$28,304.29
Snohomish	\$0.00		\$12,299.09	\$12,299.09
Spokane	\$0.00		\$947.54	\$947.54
Thurston	\$6,091.79	1,211.13	\$21,161.58	\$27,253.37
Walla walla	\$0.00		\$12.00	\$12.00
Whatcom	\$0.00		\$119.12	\$119.12
Yakima	\$89,290.14	73,757.65	\$47,008.69	\$136,298.83
Totals	\$435,255.85	447,139.89	\$243,892.02	\$679,147.87

Washington's Wildlife Areas: Colockum

All photos by Pete Lopushinsky



Naneum Ridge

Central Washington's Colockum Wildlife Area is one of the largest areas managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Its 91,603 acres lie south of Wenatchee in Kittitas and Chelan counties, bordered by the Columbia River on the east, and ranging from conifer forests and Mission Peak at 6,875 feet down to shrub steppe habitat at 480 feet.

The Colockum currently includes 46,019 acres purchased by WDFW in the 1950's mostly for elk and deer winter range, 34,561 acres of Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land interspersed in the checkerboard pattern of trust lands granted at statehood, and 11,023 acres of U.S. Bureau of Land Management property. The BLM acreage is managed by WDFW through a Memorandum of Understanding.

The DNR acreage has been leased to WDFW in the past, but a land exchange to consolidate ownerships is in the making. In fact, the Colockum may be the best example of the statewide DNR effort that began two years ago to more efficiently and effectively manage timberlands for Washington school coffers.

"Blocking up our land more contiguously could also help us better manage roads and weeds and grazing," said WDFW Colockum manager Pete

Lopushinsky. The project is still in the appraisal stage, he said, with timber cruising still ahead. But it's likely that DNR would end up with more of the forested summer range and WDFW would own and manage more of the winter range and shrub steppe.

The Colockum's shrub steppe habitat is some of the best remaining in the state. Encompassing over half of the area, it's mostly sagebrush and/or bitterbrush mixed with various bunchgrasses on the east side of the wildlife area, in the "dry shadow" of the Cascade Mountains where annual precipitation can be as little as four inches.

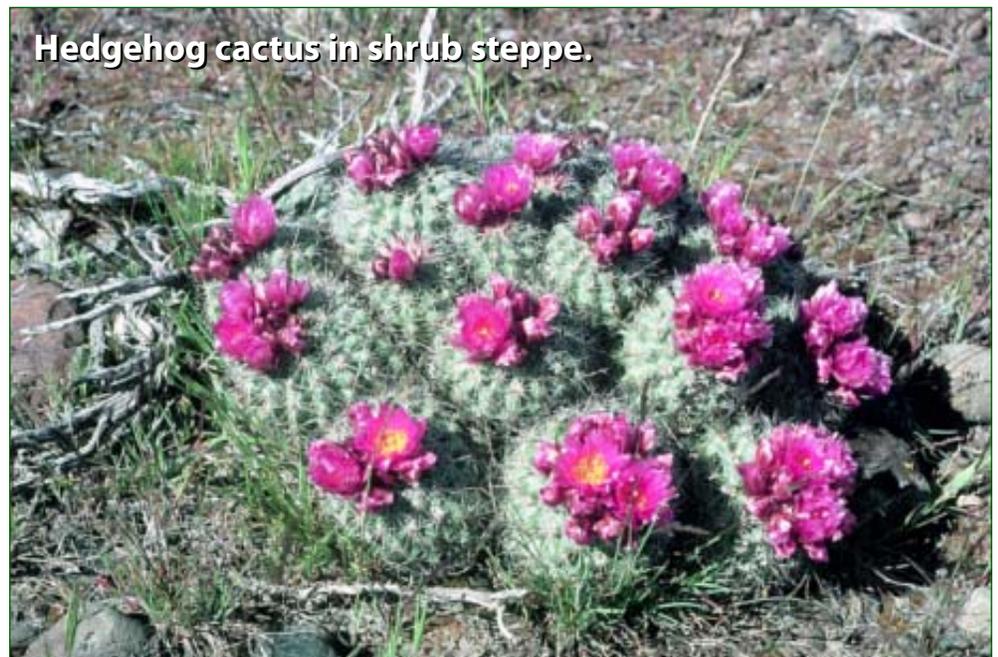
It is especially key for efforts to restore state threatened sage grouse. The last remaining populations of sage grouse are in Douglas County and on the U.S. Army Yakima Training Center in Kittitas and Yakima counties. Sage grouse are currently only occasionally seen on the Colockum. But combined with the shrub steppe habitat on the Whiskey Dick and Quilomene wildlife areas just to the south, the Colockum's shrub steppe is the only contiguous habitat between the two populations and is considered a critical link for the birds to interbreed and maintain genetic diversity.

More than 100 other bird species forage and nest in shrub steppe habitat, including several state candidates for protective listing because of population declines, like the sage thrasher, sage sparrow, burrowing owl, and loggerhead shrike.

Over half of Washington's shrub steppe habitat has been lost to changes in land use over the past century. Historically, nearly all of the Colockum had intensive livestock grazing. Vegetation changes also occurred with fire, roads, and the invasion of exotic plant species.

"We try to better manage all of that now," Lopushinsky said. "Weeds are a big problem that we spend a lot of time and money on, and they're connected to most of the other things, especially degraded rangeland from past grazing

Continued on page 5



Hedgehog cactus in shrub steppe.

Washington's Wildlife Areas: Colockum *cont. from page 4*

practices and off-road vehicle disturbance and road management in general."

The challenge is in the Colockum's size, minimal staff (Lopushinsky has help only from a nine-month worker and summer fence-maintenance crews), and the high level of recreational use of the area.

Thousands of visitors each year enjoy hunting, wildlife viewing, fishing, camping, hiking, horseback-riding, and bicycling on the Colockum. In recent years, there's been a dramatic rise in target shooters and the use of All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, jeeps, and "mudders."

The top uses – hunting and wildlife viewing – are enhanced by road closures or restrictions and habitat improvement work. Some of the other uses are not.

For example, Lopushinsky explained, protecting elk and deer on their winter range is a priority. Snowmobile use has been restricted in that effort for some time. But all motorized vehicle use may have to be restricted because today's ATVs and other machines can go where only snowmobiles once did.

Shed antler hunting has grown in popularity and problems, too. Antler hunters push elk off the public-owned winter range to surrounding private lands where they cause damage. Lopushinsky said some restrictions may be needed with that activity, too.



Spike elk wandering old hunting camp.

"We're always trying to strike a balance with elk on the Colockum," he said. "Hunters want more but our neighbors want less. I think we're actually about where we should be in terms of numbers for our available habitat."

About 4,500 Rocky Mountain elk reside on the Colockum in several sub-herds. They originated from a re-introduction of elk from Yellowstone National Park in 1915, after native elk were extirpated from the area.

A WDFW study completed in 1993 showed elk use the area's various forage and cover types differently throughout the seasons, but their movements and behavior are influenced by land use and human disturbance. WDFW's Draft Colockum Elk Herd Plan (at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/elk/colockum.htm>) includes those factors and others to maintain herd numbers, manage hunting seasons, and address depredation problems on neighboring lands.

Additional work to solve problems created by elk has been underway for the last few years by a Kittitas County group called the "Big Game Management Round Table." The group includes farmers, ranchers, hunters,

concerned citizens, and various government agency staff who have come together to seek solutions to continuing problems of elk damage to private property.

The Colockum is bordered on the north by many private lands. On the south are the Quilomene and Whiskey Dick wildlife areas, which are bordered by more private lands. To the west of the Colockum is part of the Wenatchee National Forest, DNR land, and Western Pacific Timber Company lands.

"We've got encroaching development on a couple of sides of the wildlife area," Lopushinsky said. "When elk are a problem in these fringe areas we use special hunting permits and hot spot hunts to try to head off bigger problems. But some private lands are so appealing to elk, with grain crops or other high quality forage, it's all we can do to find more and better ways to improve our habitat to keep them here."

About 180 acres in the Tarpiscan drainage of the Colockum is currently farmed to do just that. And vegetation fertilization projects are underway in many other areas. Weed control alone can make a big difference, but some of



Tekison Creek

Continued on page 6



Wheatfield provides wildlife forage

those efforts are underfunded for the scope of the problem – cheatgrass alone affects an estimated 20,000 total acres in pockets of low to high density infestations.

As the elk research indicated, land use and human disturbance affect use of available habitat. Livestock grazing has been gradually reduced on the Colockum where it was not compatible with wildlife and habitat. Currently, one grazing lease on the northern edge of the wildlife area continues as part of a long-standing agreement between WDFW, Washington State University, DNR, and a local lessee for livestock, wildlife and forestry research.

A more important grazing issue now is keeping neighboring livestock out of the Colockum. To do so, about 35 miles of boundary stock fence is maintained with summer work crews. The fence also helps restrict motorized vehicle access, which is another whole management problem.

"The Colockum is so vast," Lopushinsky said, "it was like the old wild west out here with people coming and going and no way to stay on top of it. But I think our version of the 'green dot' road system is working, with maybe as much as 90 percent compliance."

Over the past 50-some years of WDFW ownership, many roads on the Colockum have been closed completely and others minimally maintained, partly due to limited funds but also to keep human use compatible with wildlife use of the

area. Since 1990, roads open for motorized travel have been managed under the Green Dot system, posted with green dots to indicate use is allowed (rather than posting or barricading all the closed roads.) With all the checkerboard inholdings throughout the area, however, Lopushinsky said there was legitimate use by some of roads otherwise closed to the general public. And that created a problem.

"A guy would see fresh tracks down a road without a green dot, assume it was legally open, and drive on through," he explained. "So we started posting our red and white 'road closed' signs, too. The combination seems to be working, for the most part."

In compliance with State Forest Practice regulations, a complete Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) has been completed for the forested portions of the Colockum. Further field review, site planning, and road maintenance or abandonment work is scheduled through 2015.

About 30,000 acres of the Colockum are conifer forest, from Ponderosa pine to higher elevation stands of Douglas fir, grand fir, and larch. To provide hiding and thermal cover for elk and deer, few timber harvests have occurred on the WDFW-owned acres. But many WDFW timber stands have become overstocked and vulnerable to wildfire, and preferred forage plants have been reduced by tree competition.

Over the years, several small fires have broken out on the Colockum, both natural and man-caused. In 1970, a lightning-caused fire burned 3,000 acres of timber. In 1981, Fourth-of-July fireworks started a 2,000-acre burn in the West Bar area, and in 2000 the same thing happened on 500 acres. Also in 2000, a target shooter caused a 70-acre fire.

"So far the Colockum has escaped a truly catastrophic wildfire," Lopushinsky said, "but we are certainly at high risk for one."

To address that concern, WDFW last year initiated a timber stand improvement project for 500 acres of timber thinning, slash burning, and

Continued on page 7



West bar beach on Columbia River

Washington's Wildlife Areas: Colockum *cont. from page 6*

reseeding with native grasses, forbs and shrubs. More thinning and prescribed burning is planned to address fuels loading, insect and disease issues, and wildfire danger, as well as habitat improvement. Although DNR is responsible for fire protection within the forested environment on the Colockum, these projects will help reduce the potential damage by fire to wildlife habitat as well as adjacent property.

An emergency fire suppression agreement between WDFW and DNR protects the Colockum's shrub steppe habitat on the east side. Uncontrolled wildfires there could significantly alter the landscape by eradicating sagebrush. Native bunchgrasses are tolerant of low intensity fires, but the invasion of noxious weeds such as cheatgrass have altered the intensity of fires. These weedy species grow in dense stands between bunchgrasses, forbs and shrubs, and fuel intense fires that kill the native plants. Weedy invaders also tend to out compete native plants after a fire and spread readily throughout burned areas.

The management issues are as interconnected as they are diverse, which Lopushinsky says "just comes with the territory" on an area with as much habitat and wildlife diversity as the Colockum.

Besides sage grouse and elk, resident wildlife species include mule deer, bighorn sheep, cougar, black bear, coyote, Peregrine and prairie falcons, all three forest grouse species (spruce, ruffed and blue), Merriam turkey, California quail, chukar partridge, mourning dove, waterfowl, owls, hawks, woodpeckers, and a myriad of other birds, reptiles and small mammals. Also present are state threatened bald eagles and ferruginous hawks, and other state candidates for protective listing including flammulated owl, golden eagle, northern goshawk, pileated woodpecker, Townsend's big-eared bat, Vaux's swift and western bluebird.

As recent as the late 1980's, Pronghorn antelope inhabited the arid region of the Colockum from West Bar to the south. WDFW is currently evaluating the potential to re-introduce this historically native ungulate.



One of Colockum's many elk subherds

The Colockum's extensive riparian habitat along the major tributaries to the Columbia River, including Colockum, Tarpiscan, Tekison, and Brushy creeks, is vital to a variety of wildlife. The talus and cliff habitat is key for bighorn sheep, golden eagles and other raptors, bats, and other species.

Resident and migratory fish species, including Chinook, sockeye and coho salmon, steelhead, bull trout, rainbow trout, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, walleye and white sturgeon inhabit the Columbia River and its tributaries on the Colockum. The two alpine lakes on the wildlife area — Clara and Marion — are stocked with Westslope cutthroat trout.

Upper Columbia Spring Chinook salmon are listed as endangered and Upper Columbia steelhead and bull trout are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Historically, most of the major tributaries to the Columbia on the Colockum supported spawning by these and other anadromous fish, and their mouths were likely important off-channel rearing sites. As part of the recovery effort for these species and the RMAP process, inventories of all the tributaries were just completed and fish passage barrier removal work, like culvert reconstruction, is underway.

Apart from these major streams, year-round surface water is scarce on the Colockum. Intermittent streams, springs

and beaver ponds provide some water for wildlife. Past livestock grazing leases included development of springs to avoid concentrating stock in riparian habitat. Many of those spring-fed stock tanks continue to be maintained for wildlife by volunteers.

"Volunteers are the best thing about this job," said Lopushinsky, who has worked for WDFW for 17 years in land management, the last nine on the Colockum. Living on the wildlife area as the only full-time staffer means being unofficially "on call" 24-7, he acknowledged. But working with volunteers makes it worthwhile.

"I get a lot of help from the Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association," he said. "They really love this place and are always ready and willing to help with whatever's needed, cleaning up everything from hunting camps to river shoreline litter and vandalism."

The Colockum's Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) – a couple dozen individuals representing all kinds of recreationists, neighboring landowners, environmental organizations, and other natural resource management agencies – have also volunteered a lot of time over the last few years to help craft a workable management plan for the area. That draft plan will be available for comment this fall on WDFW's website, and with the CAG's help, reviewed annually.

Mammoth tooth found on Colockum

While inspecting washed-out gullies in the Brushy Creek drainage in the southeast corner of the Colockum Wildlife Area after heavy rains last summer, WDFW natural resource technician Eric Chase found what appeared to be a bone of some kind.

Chase and Colockum manager Pete Lopushinsky contacted officials with Central Washington University (CWU) who had just started a study of mammoth remains found in the Wenas Creek Valley near Selah.

The find was identified as a mammoth molar, one of only a few cases of mammoth remains found in Kittitas County, and the only one known north of the Vantage area within the county.

An initial investigation of the Colockum find location will soon be

conducted by Bax R. Barton, Research Associate in Paleontology with the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington, and Jake Shapley, Resource Management graduate student at Central Washington University, both currently working on the Wenas Creek Mammoth Project (see <http://www.cwu.edu/~masters/mammoth.html>.)

“This investigation should help determine the likelihood of discovering more associated remains and document the location and sedimentary context of the originally discovered mammoth molar,” said Barton. “Preliminary metric



analysis places the tooth in the overlap between Columbian and Imperial mammoths, but to identify the species of the specimen, approximately \$1,300 in funding for radiocarbon age estimation will be necessary.”

Water access sites are big and getting better *cont. from page 1*

WDFW access sites. Fishers and hunters receive permits free when they purchase their licenses.

“We enforce that requirement because it’s only appropriate to share the cost of maintaining the sites with everyone who benefits from them,” Sherlock said.

But an even bigger problem is that many of the water access sites are not designed to handle the volume of public use they are now receiving, notes WDFW Lands Division Manager Mark Quinn.

“Many of our sites are on small pieces of property that originally filled the bill for intermittent use by fishers and others seeking water access with relatively small boats to launch,” Quinn said. “Today we see all kinds of people with all kinds of boats, big and small. Some of the sites, even though they have minimal amenities, have become popular for picnicking and in some cases camping.”

In the last few years, WDFW has aggressively pursued outside funding to make needed renovations and upgrades to handle the surging volume of use. The greatest single source of funds has been Washington’s Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) and their grants under the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA),



WDFW Access Areas Manager Steve Sherlock surveys user at Silver Lake, Spokane County

Washington Wildlife Recreation Program (WWRP), and most importantly, the Boating Facilities Program (BFP).

Dollars in the BFP fund come from a state marine boating fuel tax. WDFW competes for these funds with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Sherlock noted that within the past two years WDFW has received nearly \$1.3 million for three development and two planning grants for access site re-developments through BFP. Those

projects included new boat ramps, launch floats, vault toilets, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible parking and paving at Waitts Lake in Stevens County, Silver Lake in Spokane County, Long Lake in Kitsap County, Pleasant Harbor Marine Area in Kitsap County, and Misery Point Marine Area in Grays Harbor County.

Improvements to some Washington water access sites have come from community or individual donations, too. The latest was the donation by Douglas Knight, owner of Knight Construction in Deer Park and an EZ-Dock distributor, of an \$8,000, 30-foot wide, ADA accessible floating dock at the Loon Lake access in Stevens County.

WDFW is currently requesting nearly \$2 million through the IAC grant funding process in the BFP category for eight projects:

- Silver Lake in Spokane County - Phase two construction of two ADA boat ramps and a boat dock
- Eloika Lake in Spokane County - ADA boat ramp, boat dock, toilet, fencing and parking lot grading
- Jameson Lake in Douglas County -

Continued on page 9

Draft wildlife area plans to be on-line for review soon

Draft management plans for all of WDFW's 27 wildlife area complexes are nearing completion and will be available for review this fall beginning in September on the WDFW website (look under "Lands" at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/habitat.htm>.)

This planning process began in January of 2005 and has included input from the Lands Management Advisory Council and local Citizen Advisory Groups, which were formed for each wildlife area.

"We need management plans in order to inform and be informed about how best to manage our fish and wildlife lands efficiently and properly," said WDFW Lands Division Manager Mark Quinn. "We have stopped and started a variety of wildlife area planning efforts over the years but we have never really had the resources or dedication to complete all of them. Part of the problem has been biting off more than we could chew."

Quinn says the new planning process is based on WDFW's strategic plan and recently completed "Lands 20/20: A Clear Vision for the Future". In addition to important history and introductory

information for each wildlife area, the plans include specific management objectives, strategies, timelines and funding considerations.

"Our goal in the plans was to focus on benefits to fish and wildlife, benefits to the public, and operational excellence," Quinn said. "Our discussions sometimes included conflicting values, either about habitat management for one species versus another, or use of WDFW lands by different user groups. A big topic was how to do a better job of land stewardship with limited funds."

The draft plans will be on the WDFW website through the end of the year for comments and questions. Comments will be incorporated into the plans in early 2007 when the first updates begin. Quinn said to keep plans current they will be updated annually with the help of local citizen advisory groups.

"Our annual updating process will allow ample opportunities for new information to keep the plans and activities current," he said, "and it will be a good opportunity for the public to get involved in the decision making process at the local level."

Long-term plan is just good business

cont. from page 1

others, developed "[Lands 20/20: A Clear Vision for the Future](#)," our land management policy guidance document.

It's also why we are taking that work a step further by exploring the feasibility of developing a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for our land management program.

An HCP is a long-term plan aimed at providing certainty that approved activities meet federal species protection requirements. Over the past decade, HCPs have been developed by a variety of entities, including state agencies, to ensure that various management activities are carried out in compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

An HCP for our lands would provide certainty that activities ranging from weed control to rock climbing comply with federal ESA requirements. It would reduce the need for time-consuming, expensive, piecemeal permitting and minimize spurious third-party lawsuits.

This HCP exploration for our wildlife areas is being funded in part by a \$544,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Complete development of an HCP is expected to take at least three years. We will begin a comprehensive inventory of fish, wildlife and habitats that occur on WDFW-managed lands and start categorizing our lands management and recreational use activities that could potentially have ESA impacts.

If we proceed with full development of an HCP, and if federal funding continues, we will conduct a public participation process and more scientific data collection to improve our land management practices.

As we move through this process, there will be ample opportunity for your input and involvement to ensure that stakeholders' views and priorities are part of the plan. And that, too, is just good business.

Water access sites are big and getting better *cont. from page 8*

Phase one planning and design for re-development

- Sidley Lake in Okanogan County – Phase one planning and acquisition
- North Lake in King County - ADA toilet and paving
- Kalama River Modrow Bridge access in Cowlitz County – Boat ramp and two new toilets
- Point No Point Marine Area in Jefferson County - Phase one planning and permitting for re-development
- Pleasant Harbor Marine Area in Kitsap County - Phase two upland development, floats and sheet piling

WDFW is also currently requesting about \$1.2 million through the IAC State Lands Development category for similar projects, plus viewing platforms and trails, at eight sites: Newman Lake

and Silver Lake in Spokane County, Diamond Lake in Pend Oreille County, Green Lake in Okanogan County, two Yakima River Canyon Road sites in Yakima County, I-82 Ponds #1 and #2 in Yakima County, Skykomish River Lewis Street access in Snohomish County, and Turkey Hole in Cowlitz County. Sherlock notes that since there is only \$1 million in that category account, and DNR is also requesting about \$1 million worth of projects, it's doubtful that all will be funded in this cycle.

"We're working hard to improve our water access sites," Sherlock said. "Since we have so many, we have to prioritize carefully, based on safety issues and highest use. We want to be able to accommodate not only our traditional fishing constituency and license buyers, but also other outdoor recreationists."

UPDATE: Pilot Grazing Program

The pilot grazing program that was initiated by an agreement signed last fall between the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Washington Cattlemen's Association, has completed the first season on one of the four selected sites.

The Pintler Creek unit of WDFW's Asotin Wildlife Area in southeast Washington was the site and manager Bob Dice filed this update:

A total of 255 cattle (125 cow/calf pairs and five bulls) were turned on to the 4,280-acre Pintler Creek pasture on April 15 and remained until May 30. Grazing began in the Ayers Gulch side of the unit with cattle widely dispersed throughout the gulch. Eventually, cattle moved to the Kelly Creek side where they completed their grazing season.

The goal of this permit is to use closely managed livestock grazing to improve forage quality and enhance wildlife habitat conditions, primarily for mule deer. The area has not been grazed for a number of years. It was felt that the level of disturbance from a controlled spring grazing program would stimulate production and improve palatability of native grasses and forbs for wildlife.

Wildlife area staff observed several examples of heavy cattle use of undesirable plants, such as purple mustard. In addition to cheatgrass, weeds like purple mustard are some of the first plants to turn green in the spring and can be attractive to domestic livestock. This gives the native grasses, which tend to grow later in the season, a better chance to become more widely established.



Cows on the Pintler Unit of Asotin Wildlife Area
Bob Dice photo

Operator Tom Hendrickson was on site just about every other day making sure cattle were well distributed and not congregating in riparian areas. Cattle did visit riparian areas for water, but did not spend enough time there to cause any harm. The combination of a lot of green forage and cool temperatures really helped livestock stay well distributed throughout the grazing period.

Staff frequently observed wildlife using the area while cattle were present. Wildlife observed included mule deer, black bear, turkey, chukars, pheasants, nesting golden eagles, and a wide variety of songbirds.

Before the grazing began, staff made many improvements and preparations for the pilot grazing in the Pintler unit, including new water troughs and fencing around a spring in Kelly Creek, construction of two monitoring exclosures, blading and maintenance of trails in Ayers Gulch and Kelly Creek, and maintenance and repair to all boundary fences.

Other WDFW biologists also conducted pre-grazing habitat surveys, including weed mapping, establishment of 16 photo-point monitoring sites,

vegetation surveys, breeding bird surveys, and deer surveys. All data collected will be compared to data collected in 2007 and 2008 to evaluate the effectiveness of controlled grazing.

Plans call for the Spring 2007 grazing in the Pintler Creek pasture to begin in Kelly Creek and conclude in Ayers Gulch (the opposite of this year.) Before the second season begins, staff will again check all perimeter fences on the Pintler unit and make improvements to at least two springs for wildlife/livestock

watering. All trails maintained this year will be checked and bladed as necessary and sprayed for noxious weeds.

Similar strategies will be applied to the Smoothing Iron unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area for scheduled cattle turn-on in Fall 2007. WDFW biologists are beginning to set up vegetation transects on Smoothing Iron this summer. The first round of breeding bird surveys have been completed on Smoothing Iron and will continue each year as long as the pilot program is in place. Wildlife area staff started checking pasture fences this summer and will make repairs or replacements as necessary.

The Washington Cattlemen's Association intends to hold a public meeting in Asotin on September 12 for the purpose of soliciting an operator for the Smoothing Iron unit grazing pilot.

The third pilot grazing site in Asotin County is located on the Chief Joseph Wildlife area in the vicinity of the Shumaker Grade. Grazing on this area is scheduled to begin in Spring 2008. So far, very little survey work has been done in this area.

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