# Tucannon Lakes and Floodplain Reconfiguration

## W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area Floodplain Management Plan

# Fact Sheet

## Why are floodplains important?

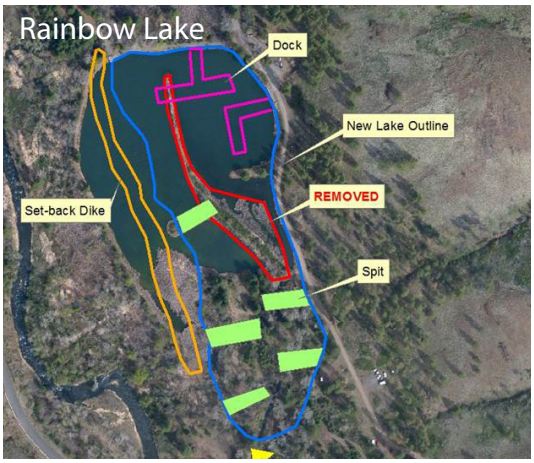
River floodplains are important for a variety of reasons. Floodplains may reduce the severity of floods by allowing floodwaters to spread out and slow down. Floodplains filter nutrients and pollutants from runoff. Properly functioning floodplains affect stream-channel function and fish habitat by improving or maintaining channel meanders. These floodplain functions also help recharge groundwater by encouraging more rainfall and snowmelt to infiltrate the floodplain rather than flow overland and be carried downstream. This can result in more flow and moderated water temperatures during the hot summer months. Riparian areas are generally the highest-value wildlife habitats on the landscape of Southeast Washington.

## What is the Floodplain Management Plan?

The Floodplain Management Plan (FMP) was developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) as an integrated, cross-program effort to improve conditions within the Tucannon floodplain. The goals of the FMP were developed to provide the following benefits: 1) protect and restore ecosystem functions of the Tucannon River, floodplain, and riparian habitats; 2) enhance fishing, hunting, camping, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities; 3) improve of habitat conditions for Endangered Species Act-listed salmonids (as well as other aquatic species); 4) improve wildlife habitats; and 5) protect and enhance critical infrastructure.

## Campground Relocation

Two of the existing campgrounds (Campground 6 and 9) were located adjacent to the river, resulting in soil compaction along the banks, trash in the river, and damaged or removal of riparian vegetation. Campground 6 was relocated across the road from its current location. Campground 9 was split into two smaller campgrounds (Campground 9 and a “new” Campground 10). Campground 10 was renamed Campground 11. These changes occurred in the fall of 2014.




## What are the initiatives of the FMP?

The initiatives define the major areas of work that must be completed to make the FMP successful. Projects will be developed under each Initiative.

1. Outreach – Maintain or build public support for management of the wildlife area
2. Tucannon Lakes – Enhance the Tucannon Lakes to create more fishing opportunities and a more enjoyable experience
3. Habitat Enhancement – Improve habitat conditions for Endangered Species Act-listed salmonids
4. Campgrounds – Relocate two campgrounds outside of the floodplain and allow for the Tucannon River to reconnect with the historic floodplain and reduce human damage to riparian vegetation
5. Roads, Bridges, and Culverts – Look at possibly relocating portions of the road away from the Tucannon River

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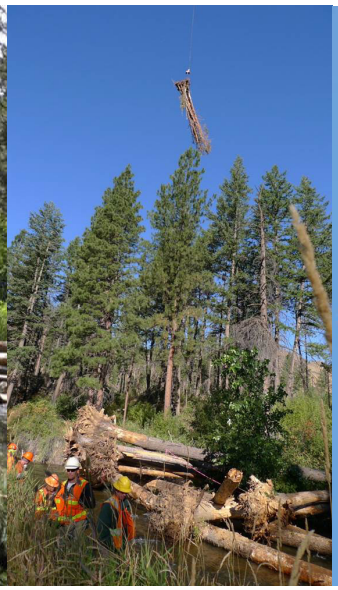

## Tucannon Lakes

The Tucannon Lakes are man-made lakes that were constructed between 1953 and 1955. They are some of the most popular fishing lakes in Southeast Washington.

All but two of the lakes constrict the floodplain of the Tucannon River, causing the river to be channelized and incised. Six of the eight lakes are in violation of the Washington Department of Ecology's dam safety regulations. The lakes retain sediment and are losing carrying capacity for maintaining put-and-take trout fisheries. At least six of the lakes are currently in need of dredging.

Enhancing the Tucannon Lakes can create more fishing opportunities, provide a more enjoyable fishing experience, allow WDFW to comply with state dam safety regulations, address reduced carrying capacity and ongoing maintenance issues, and reduce the adverse impacts of the lakes to the Tucannon River and its floodplain.

## Habitat Enhancement

The following habitat-enhancement projects have been completed that benefit the floodplain and ecosystem:

1. Several campgrounds were moved outside of the floodplain after the 2005 fire, and additional modifications were made in 2014.
2. 1.5 million trees were planted after the 2006 salvage logging.
3. A spring branch on the Russell Unit was improved and reconnected to the Tucannon River.
4. A spring branch on the Hartsock Unit was reconstructed to improve fish access to off-channel habitats.
5. Two buildings on the Hartsock Unit were removed from the floodplain to allow movement of the river.

### How can you stay informed and provide input?

Additional information can be accessed at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/wt_wooten/.
New information will also be posted to this site as it becomes available.

For questions or to provide comments, please contact Kari Dingman, Assistant Wildlife Area Manager, at 509-843-1530 or Kari.dingman@dfw.wa.gov. You can also call the WDFW Spokane Regional office at 509-982-1001.

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