



BLUE MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE AREA COMPLEX 2009 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex including the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area, Asotin Creek Wildlife Area, Grouse Flats Wildlife Area, and WT Wooten Wildlife Area. Total size of the complex as of this writing is 63,585 acres located in Asotin, Garfield, and Columbia Counties (web link: http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/). This plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Mission of “*Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife*” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions.

Plans are updated annually as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update also includes 2007, 2008 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2009.

UPDATES/CHANGES

Kari Dingman was hired in February 2008 as the Assistant Wildlife Area Manager and is stationed at the WT Wooten Wildlife Area.

Mick Scott has retired from his position of Natural Resource Technician 2 at the WT Wooten Wildlife Area. Technician Dave Meisner will cover the vacant position until a permanent replacement can be found.

Inside

Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
New Issues	2
Major Stewardship Accomplishments	4
Status Report of 2007/08 Performance Measures	5
New Strategies	9
2009 Performance Measures	11
Citizens Advisory Group Input	13
BPA	16
Top Ten List (Appendix A)	19

In February 2008, a recently hired technician sustained serious head injuries from a fall off a rock bluff in Pintler Creek. The employee had been working on installation of an electric fence when he slipped and fell. Though his recovery was long, it is a miracle he survived the fall. This incident generated much internal discussion of employee safety and training needs. All wildlife area employees now carry cell phones and portable radio equipment while working in the field.

In July 2007, the Rockpile Creek Fire burned the George Creek unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Approximately 6,000 acres of WDFW land in Rockpile Creek, George Creek, and Stringtown Gulch burned. Several miles of boundary stock fence were also burned. In the fall of 2008, a private contractor began reconstruction of burned Rockpile area boundary fences. The fence was completed in spring 2009.

Halsey Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Fields: WDFW assumed full property ownership and control on Oct. 1, 2008 of the one thousand acre CRP field. This past fall WDFW made several pen-raised pheasant releases for hunting opportunities on the site and are looking into Pheasants Forever grant opportunities to establish multiple shrub-plots for upland bird cover. The CRP contract for this field has been extended for three additional years. C & L Farms has been assigned the contract under a sharecrop basis.

Cottonwood Fire: In the summer of 2007, USFS staff accidentally started a fire in the Cottonwood Gulch area of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. The fire burned approximately 2,500 acres of WDFW land and a couple of miles of boundary stock fence. USFS repaired the burned fences in the fall of 2008.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) Grant: WDFW received grant monies to create forage plots for big game on Cook Ridge. Approximately 20 acres on Cook Ridge was cultivated and planted to clover/forage turnip mix called "hunters dream" in fall 2008. Other sites including Grouse Flats are scheduled for application of granular fertilizer in 2009.

Watson Lake Road Relocation: Through the Road Map Abandonment Plan (RMAP) project, a portion of the road from Deer Lake to Watson Lake is going to be moved away from the Tucannon River and along the base of the hill. The purpose of the project is to move the road away from the river to reduce the amount of sediments deposited into the river. The project is supposed to be completed by fall of 2009.

NEW ISSUES

Elk Fence Reconstruction: WDFW contracted with DNR to bring inmate crews in to reconstruct the remaining 8 miles of the elk fence burned in the 2005 School Fire. Crews began work July 1, 2008 and completed 7 miles of the fence by the end of September 2008. The crew returned in April 2009 and completed the fence in June, 2009. WDFW needs to research ways to provide a fire barrier along the elk fence to reduce the chances of it burning again. There are four alternatives for reducing fire risk: 1.) use controlled burning along the new fence line; 2.) use herbicides to control vegetation, 3.) mechanically chop down excess vegetation; and/or 4.) use domestic livestock to graze the fence line.

Smoothing Iron: Sharecropper Randy Schlee notified WDFW he was no longer interested in raising wheat on Smoothing Iron Ridge due to escalating input costs and difficult access for large equipment. Because of cost and logistics, we received little interest from other nearby farmers in taking on farming 600 acres of dryland agriculture

fields. WDFW initiated a restoration project by restoring 475 acres back to native bunchgrasses, and 125 acres to be retained for annual food plots for wildlife. Fifty acres were fertilized and seeded to winter wheat in fall 2008. The remaining acreages were seeded in spring 2009 to forage turnips and spring canola. Twenty-five acres are being summer fallowed for a fall 2009 seeding to awnless club wheat.

Spalding's catchfly: Discovery of a federally listed plant species, *Silene spaldingii*, on Smoothing Iron ridge. WDFW Contracted with Botanist Karen Gray to conduct a comprehensive survey to determine location and extent of the plant and are consulting with BPA and USFWS. WSU graduate students have been documenting *Silene* populations in Warner Gulch and have identified nearly 6,000 plants.

East End Elk Fence: WDFW has proposed extending the east end of the elk fence approximately one mile down the ridgeline. Under direction of WDFW's Engineering Division, the project recently went through a competitive bidding process and access agreements from neighboring landowners were collected. The Koch family declined to sign a fencing agreement for this project, which required the fence to be constructed along property lines instead of following the old stock fence along the ridgeline. Construction began in spring 2009 and is nearly complete.

Campbell Field RCO Project: In 2008, WDFW began restoration of approximately 250 acres of old agricultural fields in the Lick Creek Area. The fields existing cover was dominated by smooth brome. The project began with a heavy application of Round-up herbicide and tillage began in August. Plowing soil, which hadn't been worked for nearly 20 years, in August, was extremely difficult and hard on WDFW equipment. We started with a D4 cat and 5-bottom plow. After nearly destroying the 5-bottom plow, we switched to a tougher 6-bottom model and after a month of hard work, completed plowing. The field was then repeatedly disked and cultivated to produce a smooth seedbed. Seeding was completed in November using a beeline drill. Follow-up work will include controlling weeds and eventually seeding forbs into the established grass.

Pilot Grazing: WSU Researchers joined the project and are conducting research to determine the long-term effects of moderate livestock grazing on the landscape. Pintler Grazing unit (GU): WDFW Staff fabricated and established 7 additional water troughs, laid over 20,000 feet of black poly water line, installed 4 miles of temporary electric fence along Pintler Creek. Smoothing Iron GU: WDFW Staff fabricated and established 2 water troughs, laid 9000 feet black poly water line, installed 3.5 miles of temporary electric fence along the south fork of Asotin Creek, and completed setup and plumbing for a 10,000 gallon water storage tank. Shumaker GU: WSU Researchers felt these pastures were not feasible for the time being and this piece of the Pilot Grazing Project was put on hold.

Tucannon Lakes: The 8 lakes on the WT Wooten WLA are in need of serious repair. The dams have needed repair for a number of years, but no funding has been provided to complete the work. The lakes need to be considered individually and prioritized whether to close them, fix them, or rehabilitate them. Spring Lake and Rainbow Lake, in

particular, are becoming very shallow and temperatures are increasing. Both need to be dredged to continue to provide enjoyable fisheries for the public. Big 4 Lake is in danger of being washed out by high flows from the Tucannon River. The importance of Big 4 Lake needs to be considered and whether it should be repaired or no longer kept as a lake. Staff from the Yakima screen shop recently cleared vegetation with the exception of large trees from Watson Lake. The dam is visibly leaking from at least eight different locations along the toe of the dam.

Tucannon Power Line: WDFW's Habitat Program is looking into burying the Columbia Rural Electric Association's (REA) powerline that runs through the WT Wooten Wildlife Area to reduce the chances of another wildfire on the Wildlife Area. In addition, if the power line remains above ground, the power company is obligated to maintain 40 foot wide right-of-way cleared vegetation within Tucannon River riparian area.

Sensitive Period Closures: Due to winter weather conditions stressing wildlife, sensitive period closures should be made permanent from year to year. One location that would benefit from a winter area closure is Cummings Creek, which has been closed periodically during the winter months. Closing the area to all human access will decrease the extra stress put on the wildlife during that critical time period. Other areas on the Wildlife Area should be looked at periodically to create closures during sensitive time periods as necessary.

Land Acquisition: Any future land acquisitions to the wildlife area complex should be examined carefully before making any commitments. The acquisitions proximity to other WDFW lands and a source of funding for operation and maintenance should be considered. If proximity and operations and maintenance dollars are secured, two high priority ownerships for acquisition are: 1. Charley Creek drainage and 2. Green Gulch, on the Chief Joseph WLA.

Riparian Enhancement and Protection: Riparian areas are where the majority of fish and wildlife species are found on the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex. Protection of riparian areas is a priority while enhancement of those areas is a task that can always be expanded upon. WLA staff will seek funding for riparian enhancement projects. Projects would include tree and shrub plantings, in-stream habitat improvement projects, and placement of large woody debris.

MAJOR STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Food Plots: The food plots on Abel's Ridge were replanted in fall of 2008 to produce wildlife forage and habitat in 2009. The plots will be monitored and replanted as necessary to keep a forage source available for the wildlife.

Rockpile Tree Planting: WLA Staff planted 100 fruit trees, including apricot, pear, apple, and cherry to replace fruit trees that were lost due to the Rockpile Fire at old homestead sites located along George Creek. These fruit trees were popular with birds, deer, and bear. Next year we plan to add plum trees. The previously planted willow and

aspen whips experienced high mortality due to drought and the Rockpile Fire. These were replaced this spring with a few hundred drought tolerant native shrubs to include rose, golden current, Syringa, serviceberry, and black hawthorn.

Boss Tank/Water Guzzler Installation: WLA Staff and RMEF Volunteers installed a 2000 gallon Boss water collection system for wildlife. Performed groundwork, soil excavation and leveling, install apron, tank, and 12 feet high protective fence around the perimeter of the apron.

Information Kiosk: RMEF Volunteers constructed and installed an informational kiosk at the Smoothing Iron parking area.

Land Acquisition: The Russell acquisition was made to the WT Wooten Wildlife Area in June adding 186 acres. The acquisition includes about a mile of Tucannon River riparian habitat.

Mediterranean Sage Control: Follow-up visits were made on three occasions this year to the Mediterranean Sage site. The first two visits utilized herbicide to eradicate newly sprouted rosettes, while the third visit utilized Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Volunteers and the Asotin County Noxious Weed Board using shovels to mechanically remove existing rosettes. Prior to this control effort, individual plants numbered in the thousands. Through management efforts that number is just below a hundred.

Cook Ridge Forage Plot: Utilized RMEF grant funds to purchase seed to plant a 30-acre big game forage plot.

Agriculture Leases: WDFW staff wrote and re-wrote agriculture leases for Sharecroppers Dean Reeves and C&L Farms. C&L Farms is now the operator on the 1,000-acre Halsey CRP field located above Pintler Creek.

Weed Control: Utilized RMEF grant funds to purchase aerial spray service for 225 acres of yellow starthistle on the Joseph Creek WLA. WDFW Staff applied herbicide to approximately 1,024 acres of land on the Wildlife Area complex.

STATUS REPORT OF 2007/2008 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2007/08 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measures	Progress/2009 Related Activities/Comments
Assess and maintain 33 miles of boundary stock fence including 5 miles of woven hog wire fence on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area designed to exclude domestic sheep annually	Completed for 2007/2008	Ongoing for 2009

Irrigate food plots and shrubs at Chief Joseph and Wooten Wildlife Areas at least twice annually	Completed for 2007/2008	Ongoing for 2009
Assess and maintain 21 miles of elk fence on Asotin Creek and Wooten Wildlife Areas twice annually or as conditions require.	Completed for standing fence 2008/2009	Ongoing for 2009
Initiate and setup at least one new grazing agreement on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.	No new grazing agreements have been implemented. Two pilot grazing permits are still active	Pursue for 2009 but implementation is not likely.
Conduct at least two grazing evaluations annually on grazing agreements. Submit completed forms to Olympia. Attempt to assess range condition every two weeks during grazing season of use.	Completed. Pilot grazing sites are under close monitoring by WSU	Continue for 2009
Maintain and monitor seven agricultural leases on Asotin creek Wildlife Area annually.	Completed	Ongoing for 2009. One under negotiation
Initiate at least 1 habitat enhancement project annually with RMEF, Blue Mountains Elk Initiative, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), etc	Completed. Received funding from RMEF for food plot and fertilization work.	Pursue additional funding for 2009
Control noxious weeds along Tucannon River and in 10 campgrounds using RMEF funds.	Completed	Ongoing for 2009
Plant and maintain at least two annual food plots on Chief Joseph Wildlife Area annually.	Completed. The main crop planted was spring wheat	Ongoing for 2009
Establish and maintain four big-game food plots on Asotin Creek and Wooten Wildlife Areas (15 acres minimum each). Plant/replant/maintain one	Completed. Ables Ridge and Cook Ridge cultivated and re-seeded in 2008	Ongoing for 2009

out of four of the food plots annually.		
Participate in at least two cooperative weed control project with local weed boards, Wallowa resources, TNC, etc.	Completed for the time period	Ongoing for 2009
Continue to support and assist with mountain quail reintroduction project on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.	Completed	On hold for 2009
Pursue research into life requisites and ecological limiting factors for sharp-tailed grouse on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.	Not completed	Will look into this in 2009 in wake of large scale native grass seeding which took place in 2008.
Complete endangered plant surveys on BPA funded portions on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Survey other non-BPA funded lands as funding opportunities allow.	One new survey for Spalding's catchfly was completed at Warner Gulch with a large population found and documented	Pursue additional surveys in 2009 as funding allows.
Maintain 8 "plant and take" lakes stocked with rainbow trout, steelhead, and Chinook salmon on the Wooten Wildlife Area.	Completed	Continue for 2009
Maintain dike on Spring Lake. Repair damage caused by vegetation and leaking dike to meet Department of Ecology codes and standards on Wooten Wildlife Area.	Completed as far as WLA staff were capable. There is much more work that could be done	Seek funding in 2009
Evaluate existing guzzlers and either repair or discard as necessary. Five evaluations annually.	Completed	Completed
Evaluate old agricultural fields for restoration into native grass habitat. Evaluate two fields per year on the Blue Mountain Wildlife Areas.	Completed 250 acres at Campbell Fields converted	Maintain and monitor Campbell Field Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) project
Establish and monitor	Not Completed	Seek training and funding to

amphibian populations in at least 10 permanent ponds throughout the four wildlife areas on an annual basis.		carry out this task.
Continue to monitor four breeding bird point-count plots established in 2004 on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Begin establishment of bird survey transects to inventory avian species on the four wildlife areas.	Not Completed	Need to train WLA personnel for this task.
Continue to limit trail access to non-motorized vehicles only on the four wildlife areas except for green gulch on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area which is open Oct. 1 – Nov. 30.	Completed	Continue for 2009
Continue to implement and monitor big-game winter range closure gates on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.	Completed	Continue for 2009
Maintain mineral enhancement sites for big game on the four wildlife areas. Asotin Creek – 9, Wooten – 4, Chief Joseph – 4, Grouse Flats – 1	Completed	Continue for 2009
Maintain agricultural lease on Grouse Flats Wildlife Area to retain high quality forage on 100-acre agricultural field for elk retention.	Completed	Re-negotiate for 2009
Evaluate wildlife area campgrounds and consider establishment of designated campsites with fire rings as funding allows.	Completed at Wooten	Still need to look at sites on Chief Joseph WLA
Continue to monitor and maintain established campgrounds on the four wildlife areas.	Completed	Continue for 2009
Monitor and utilize where possible, water rights on the	No meters installed	Working with Asotin Conservation District to

four wildlife areas. Install flow meters on irrigation pumps to accurately monitor water usage. Document usage.		install flow meters on WLA pumps at Chief Joseph WLA in 2009.
Install 1 informational Kiosk displaying Wildlife Area maps, noxious weed information and plant and animal species of concern on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area. Maintain Kiosks installed on the Wooten and Asotin Creek Wildlife Areas.	New Kiosk installed at upper Schlee by RMEF volunteers	Completed
Finish Wooten campground improvement project by fall 2007.	Completed	Make adjustments and refinements in 2009.
Implement hazard tree removal contract	Completed	Completed Spring of 2008
Survey and fence contested boundary between state land and Russell property as time and funding allow.	Completed. Fencing work done by WLA staff.	WDFW acquiring this land in 2009.
Seek funding and support to bury Columbia REA power line between Tucannon Hatchery and Camp Wooten State Park.	Not completed	Seek funding in 2009
Maintain and improve three seeps on Ables Ridge.	One seep completed	WLA staff installed a new trough at Able's summer 2008.
Revisit 33 post-fire monitoring photo points in May.	Completed	Ongoing for 2009

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agencies strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species presence, and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed or new issues or changes on the wildlife area. New strategies may also be in response to adaptive management as staff evaluate the impacts of past management activities.

Agency Objective: Protect, Restore and Enhance Fish and Wildlife Populations and their Habitats

Objective: Improve or Maintain Big Game Populations

1. Continue implementation of pilot grazing program on Smoothing Iron Ridge and Pintler Creek. Complete infrastructure improvements.
2. Maintain Smoothing Iron native grass seeding and annual food plots.

Objective: Protect, Enhance and Restore Function and Structure of Native Habitats

1. Seek funding for projects designed to enhance riparian areas for fish and wildlife species.
2. Seek funding to bury the overhead powerline from Tucannon Hatchery to Camp Wooten.

Objective: Enhance and Protect Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive Species

1. Continue inventory of Spalding's catchfly and other sensitive plants on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area and protect habitat from threats such as invasive non-native plants.
2. Determine ecological status of habitat for the re-introduction of sharp-tailed grouse, and continue managing habitat towards the future reintroduction of Columbian sharp-tailed grouse.

Agency Objective: Minimize adverse interactions between humans and wildlife

Objective: Provide Refuge Areas for Wildlife and Reduce Winter Disturbance

1. Make Cummings Creek winter range closure a permanent occurrence for each winter. Look into similar closures for other WLA lands.
2. Work with the recreational groups and the backcountry horsemen to minimize disturbance to elk calving areas in Asotin Creek by large groups (>4) of riders.
3. Work towards minimizing disturbance to elk by shed antler hunters during the Feb 1 – April 5 time period on winter range.

Objective: Implement Strategies to Reduce Elk Damage on Private Lands

1. Determine a low cost method for reducing accumulated vegetation and debris from building up against the new elk fence on the Wooten WLA to

reduce the risk of damage from range fires, without adversely affecting big game winter range on a large scale (Goat Mtn, Tualum, Able's Ridge, and Tam Tam Ridge).

2. Work towards completion of the east end extension project on Tam Tam Ridge.

Agency Objective: Provide sound operational management of WDFW lands, facilities and access sites.

Objective: Perform required maintenance on Tucannon Dams and Lakes

1. Seek funding to maintain the dam structures on 8 Tucannon Lakes. Also seek funding to perform maintenance on the lakes such as dredging and maintenance to the inlet and outlet structures.

2009 Performance Measures

- Assess and maintain 33 miles of boundary stock fence including 5 miles of woven hog wire fence on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area designed to exclude domestic sheep annually.
- Irrigate food plots and shrubs at Chief Joseph and Wooten Wildlife Areas at least twice annually.
- Assess and maintain 21 miles of elk fence on Asotin Creek and Wooten Wildlife Areas twice annually or as conditions require.
- Look into methods of controlling vegetation against newly constructed elk fence
- Conduct at least two grazing evaluations annually on grazing agreements. Submit completed forms to Olympia. Attempt to assess range condition every two weeks during grazing season of use.
- Maintain and monitor four agricultural leases on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area annually.
- Initiate at least 1 habitat enhancement project annually with RMEF, Blue Mountains Elk Initiative, TNC, etc
- Control noxious weeds along Tucannon River and in 10 campgrounds using RMEF funds.
- Plant and maintain at least two annual food plots on Chief Joseph Wildlife Area annually.
- Establish and maintain four big-game food plots on Asotin Creek and Wooten Wildlife Areas (15 acres minimum each). Plant/replant/maintain one out of four of the food plots annually.
- Treat weed outbreaks on a minimum of 500 acres annually on the four wildlife areas.

- Participate in at least two cooperative weed control project with local weed boards, Wallowa resources, TNC, etc.
- Continue to support and assist with mountain quail reintroduction project on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Pursue a habitat availability and condition analysis for sharp-tailed grouse on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Complete endangered plant surveys on BPA funded portions on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Survey other non-BPA funded lands as funding opportunities allow.
- Maintain 8 “plant and take” lakes stocked with rainbow trout, steelhead, and Chinook salmon on the Wooten Wildlife Area.
- Evaluate existing guzzlers and either repair or discard as necessary. Five evaluations annually.
- Evaluate old agricultural fields for restoration into native grass habitat. Evaluate two fields per year on the Blue Mountain Wildlife Areas.
- Establish and monitor amphibian populations in at least 10 permanent ponds throughout the four wildlife areas on an annual basis.
- Continue to monitor four breeding bird point-count plots established in 2004 on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Begin establishment of bird survey transects to inventory avian species on the four wildlife areas.
- Continue to limit trail access to non-motorized vehicles only on the four wildlife areas except for green gulch on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area which is open Oct. 1 – Nov. 30.
- Continue to implement and monitor big-game winter range closure gates on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Maintain mineral enhancement sites for big game on the four wildlife areas. Asotin Creek – 9, Wooten – 4, Chief Joseph – 4, Grouse Flats – 1
- Maintain agricultural lease on Grouse Flats Wildlife Area to retain high quality forage on 100-acre agricultural field for elk retention.
- Evaluate wildlife area campgrounds and consider establishment of designated campsites with fire rings as funding allows.
- Continue to monitor and maintain established campgrounds on the four wildlife areas.
- Monitor and utilize where possible, water rights on the four wildlife areas. Install flow meters on irrigation pumps to accurately monitor water usage. Document usage.
- Install 1 informational Kiosk displaying wildlife area maps, noxious weed information and plant and animal species of concern on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area. Maintain Kiosks installed on the Wooten and Asotin Creek Wildlife Areas.
- Seek funding for maintenance of Tucannon Dams and Lakes
- Maintain native grass planting on Campbell Field and Smoothing Iron Ridge.

- Plant forb seed mix in native grass seedings at Campbell Field and Smoothing Iron Ridge.
- Continue planting annual food plots on Smoothing Iron Ridge
- Seek funding and support to bury Columbia REA power line between Tucannon Hatchery and Camp Wooten State Park.
- Revisit 33 post-fire monitoring photo points in May.
- Identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area complex. Address at least on barriers annually.
- Tear down two abandoned residences on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area, work with Engineering.
- Continue inventory and monitoring of Spaulding's catchfly on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Seek funding for riparian area enhancement projects

Citizens Advisory Group Input

Wooten CAG

A CAG meeting was held on February 4, 2009. Approximately 10 people participated and the following issues were discussed.

Issue: Is it true that a private contractor had put in a bid to rebuild the elk fence using metal posts? Was that bid lower? Why didn't the state use that contractor?

Response: We are not aware of a private contractor putting in a bid to rebuild the fence with metal posts. WDFW Engineering and Wildlife Program favored using wood construction over metal due to ease in making future repairs and modifications. WDFW was mandated not to use a contractor to build the remaining nine miles of fence. The agency had to use another state agency as the contractor.

Issue: WDFW really needs to get professionally made signs for the Cummings Creek closure if they expect the public to obey them.

Response: Yes, and we are looking into this.

Issue: Who decides what the priorities are on the Wooten WLA?

Response: The priorities are developed from input from the CAG, District Team, and other governmental constituents.

Issue: Regarding the sensitive area closures, the CAG is against any further drainage closures in the Tucannon.

Response: The WDFW and the USFS are reviewing further closures.

Issue: What is the status of burying the powerline from the hatchery to Camp Wooten?

Response: WDFW is still seeking a funding source for this project.

Issue: Why are river otters being allowed to populate the Wooten WLA? They are eating all the fish being stocked in the lakes. What can be done?

Response: River otters are wildlife that inhabits the WT Wooten Wildlife Area. We are not sure anything can be done about the otter population at this time.

In addition to general CAG comments, a presentation by Glen Mendel on the current state of the Tucannon Lakes generated the following comments from the CAG.

Comments/Questions on Glen's presentation:

- Who ultimately makes the decision on closing the lakes?
- Is the biggest question on whether to keep Big 4 Lake since it is in most danger of being washed out by the river?
- What are the causes attributed to the dam issues?
- We hate to hear about closing any of the lakes. We should be looking at ways to complete the improvements instead.
- Since Rainbow Lake and Curl Lake are funded differently, we should be looking at them and getting them repaired/improved.
- Are there grants available to help with the repairs?
- Have volunteers been considered to help with the minor maintenance and clean up of the lakes?
- Have increasing user fees been considered?
- Who can we write to regarding the lake closures? This information should be put into newsletters to inform people about the status of the lakes.
 - o Glen's answer: contact local legislators, county commissioners, and the WDFW Commission
- WDFW should quit buying more land and work on repairing and maintaining the lands they already own.
- Contact the outdoors writer in the Tri-Cities and get them to write an article on the Tucannon Lakes and the issues they are facing.
- Can ESA listed fish species presence in the river justify portions of the repairs?
- Consider looking for other funding sources.
- Consider future fishing restrictions. Will they make the lakes even more important?
- What type of public support is WDFW hoping to get at the public meetings?
- What is the liability regarding access to Big 4 Lake to the agency?

Chief Joseph/Asotin Creek CAG

There were not any CAG meetings held in 2009 for the Chief Joseph/Asotin Creek WLA's. Copies of the draft plan update were sent to CAG members for comment.

Issue: Reduce the fire danger to the newly completed elk fence. Recommend using livestock to graze the fence line, if a livestock owner is willing to do this. The second choice would be controlled burning, and the last choice is chemical application.

Response: WDFW is evaluating these options

Issue: Concerned over the loss of winter wheat as an attractant for elk to stay on the Smoothing Iron. This may cause elk to move down onto private land on Cloverland and cause crop damage.

Response: WDFW is using 125 acres on Smoothing Iron as annual food plots to retain elk on agency land. Winter wheat is in the rotation.

Issue: The Campbell Field Project, was a difficult job but well worth the expense. The improvement was long overdue. It should be a real benefit for wildlife.

Response: This was an WWRP project. WDFW will continue to apply for grants of this nature to convert old agricultural fields to native habitat.

Issue: Water availability should help alleviate the riparian area concerns regarding the pilot grazing project.

Response: WDFW has developed extensive water systems for this program that have also benefited wildlife.

Issue: Rainbow Lake is in need of dredging to improve the fishery. All of these lakes could use improvements. They have been heavily utilized in the past by residents from the Tri Cities Area.

Response: WDFW is seeking funding to improve and maintain the Tucannon Lakes.

Issue: Support winter range closures for only a short period of time, only the areas that are receiving heavy wildlife disturbances from the public. WDFW should document the level of disturbances before closing any area. These areas do belong to the residence of Washington and should not be closed without real documentation of over usage.

Response: Wildlife area staff will attempt to document how much use the areas are receiving during sensitive time periods.

Issue: The Koch Family parcel in Charley Creek, and Karl Magden's land in Green Gulch would be good additions for land acquisitions, but only if funds are available to manage these properties.

Response: The agency is seeking additional funding to manage properties we already own, and funds to manage lands identified as high priorities for acquisition.

Issue: Support the Pilot Grazing Program since all of these properties were grazed prior to WDFW purchase. Grazing was one of the reasons wildlife likes this habitat and gravitated to these properties. My one concern would be not to overgraze and defeat the purpose.

Response: The level of grazing WDFW is conducting on state lands is nowhere near historic levels prior to acquisition.

Issue: Why does WSU feel the Shumaker Unit is not feasible for Pilot Grazing?

Response: WSU researchers felt the Shumaker Unit would not fit into their monitoring study plan. The physical features, location, and remoteness also discouraged them from taking on Shumaker.

Issue: Concerned over weed control along public roads that pass through the wildlife areas. Recommend seeking more funding to continued weed control.

Response: WDFW is seeking additional funding for controlling noxious weeds.

Issue: Sensitive period closures: Does "closing area to all human access," mean No Hiking, too? And would this include the shed antler gathering referred to on Page 11?

Response: The closures would mean no human entry.

Issue: Establish an email list of volunteers, and keep the volunteers informed of upcoming projects.

Response: This is something wildlife area staff indicated they would do.

Issue: Regarding the Chief Joseph Area woven wire fencing, is this still needed, in light of the fact that there is no longer a viable domestic sheep operation just south of wildlife area?

Response: The woven wire fence is probably not needed. It will cost time and money to take out and replace with barbed wire. We are also not 100% sure the adjacent landowner will not go back to a sheep operation in the future.

Issue: Can grazing evaluation data be shared with the CAG?

Response: Absolutely.

Issue: Is WDFW required to install water meters on the four wildlife areas?

Response: We are seeking funding to do this since we are being told it would be a very good idea.

Information for BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) funds a portion of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. BPA funded areas are the Schlee acquisitions on Smoothing Ridge and George Creek. The Bickford acquisition in George Creek is also funded by BPA. All together, approximately 10,000 acres out of 33,000 acre Asotin Creek Wildlife Area is BPA funded. Funding the wildlife area mitigates habitat losses through construction of hydroelectric dams on the Columbia River. By funding habitat enhancement and maintenance activities, BPA receives credit towards its mitigation obligation.

Progress towards this obligation is assessed through the use of periodic surveys based on standardized Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP). Habitat Evaluation Procedure was developed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to quantify the quality and abundance of available habitat for selected wildlife species. HEP is based on ecological principles and the assumption that habitat for selected wildlife species can be described as a numerical value based on a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). This value is derived from an evaluation of the ability of key habitat components to supply the resource needs of focal species of fish and wildlife. The HSI values (ranging from 0.0 for no value to a maximum of 1.0) are multiplied by the area of available habitat to obtain Habitat Units

(HUs), which are for mitigation purposes, the ‘currency’ used to measure/compare habitat losses and gains (Schroeder et al. 2008). Completion of baseline and periodic (preferably at 5-year intervals) HEP is a fundamental requirement for management of mitigation areas.

Several wildlife species on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area have been identified as the focus for management planning through the HEP process, because their needs define healthy habitat for many species. Species selected for riparian/ wetland habitats include beaver, great blue heron, and yellow warbler. Species selected for ponderosa pine habitat include elk, flammulated owl, and white-headed woodpecker. For grassland habitat, bighorn sheep, sharp-tailed grouse, mule deer, and grasshopper sparrow have been selected. Additional wildlife species are also targeted to evaluate habitat acquired with BPA mitigation funding. This process is applied to the Smoothing Iron and George Creek units and species include western meadowlark, black-capped chickadee, downy woodpecker, and Lewis woodpecker.

Reports/Proposals/Plans

Since 2003, BPA has provided funding for the Schlee and Bickford acquisitions. Since that time, numerous reports, funding proposals and work plans have been produced. By following the below links, additional information on these activities can be found.

General information on the Mitigation Project

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009.
<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/narratives/1012.doc> Contains detailed descriptions of the area’s history, land purchases and rationale for mitigation and focal species.

Additional information describing BPA’s role in mitigation and crediting can be found on the BPA web site: <http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/Wildlife.aspx>
<http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/wildlifecredit.aspx>

Proposed Management Activities

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009
<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012 - 10>

2010-2012 Funding Proposal. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009
<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012 - 10>

Monitoring and Evaluation

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009
<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012 - 10>

Acquisition Strategy

Lands identified for acquisition must pass the internal Lands Division's 20/20 review process. WDFW has an active lands acquisition process utilizing funding from the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program. Currently there are no lands targeted for acquisition using BPA funding on the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex.

Funding Strategy

2010-2012 Funding Proposal. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009

[http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012 - 10](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012-10) Contains detailed descriptions of proposed management activities for the 2010-2012 time period including proposed budgets plus projected needs through 2018. Also contains detailed descriptions of work elements, capitol projects and cost-share opportunities and all projected budgets.

References

Schroeder, M. A., P. R. Ashley, and M. Vander Haegen. 2008. Terrestrial wildlife and habitat assessment on Bonneville Power Administration-funded Wildlife Areas in the State of Washington: Monitoring and evaluation activities of the past and recommendations for the future. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia, WA

Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/

Contacts:

Bob Dice
Wildlife Area Manager
(509) 758-3151
WDFW Spokane Office
(509) 892-1001

APPENDIX A
BLUE MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE AREA COMPLEX
TOP 10 UNFUNDED ITEMS FROM THE WILDLIFE
AREA PLAN

Task	Explanation	Cost
1. Bury the powerline between the Tucannon Hatchery and Camp Wooten State Park	Existing powerline is a fire hazard and represents a loss in riparian habitat as the power company maintains their right-of-way below the lines	\$500,000
2. Perform dam maintenance to 8 man-made lakes along the Tucannon River	The dams are leaking and in need of repair/replacement. They currently do not meet Department of Ecology and Corps of Engineers specifications	\$2,000,000
3. Perform maintenance to several lakes along the Tucannon River	Several of the lakes need silt removed, modernization of the intake/outlet structures, and improved Americans with Disability Act access.	\$2,000,000
4. Noxious weed control	Though funded, there are simply too many weeds and not enough dollars for adequate control. Weeds such as yellow starthistle, rush skeleton weed, and Mediterranean sage are a growing perennial problem.	\$250,000 annually
5. Chief Joseph boundary fence replacement	The existing boundary fence is not on the property line and is in poor condition. Problems from trespass livestock persist	\$800,000
6. Asotin Creek Wildlife Area boundary fence replacement	The existing boundary fences between USFS, private, and WDFW lands are in poor condition, in need of replacement, or do not exist. Problems from trespass livestock persist.	\$1,500,000
7. Range monitoring	We currently do very little to monitor range conditions over time across the wildlife area complex. Monitoring allows for	\$20,000 annually

	timely management decisions before issues such as noxious weed invasions begin.	
8. WT Wooten boundary fence replacement	Boundary fences outside of the elk fence in the Tum-a-lum area are either on the ground and rotting or non-existent. Problems from trespass livestock persist.	\$100,000
9. Amphibian monitoring	Monitoring and documenting amphibian populations has never been done, and could be used as a measure of environmental health on the wildlife area.	\$15,000 annually
10. Chief Joseph campground renovation	There are several traditional campgrounds along the Grande Ronde river that are in the riparian area causing habitat destruction/degradation. Constructing alternate campsites away from the riparian area with toilet facilities would be a big improvement.	\$500,000