



CHELAN WILDLIFE AREA 2008 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Chelan Butte Bighorn Sheep - 2007

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Chelan Wildlife Area Management Plan

(http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/) that provides management direction for the Chelan Wildlife Area Complex including the Swakane, Entiat, Chelan Butte, White River and Pateros Units. The 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 accomplishments, updates, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2008.

(The above photo taken in 2007 shows 12 bighorn rams in a Chelan Butte field. Six of the rams were ear-tagged indicating they were some of the 36 sheep released in 2004.)

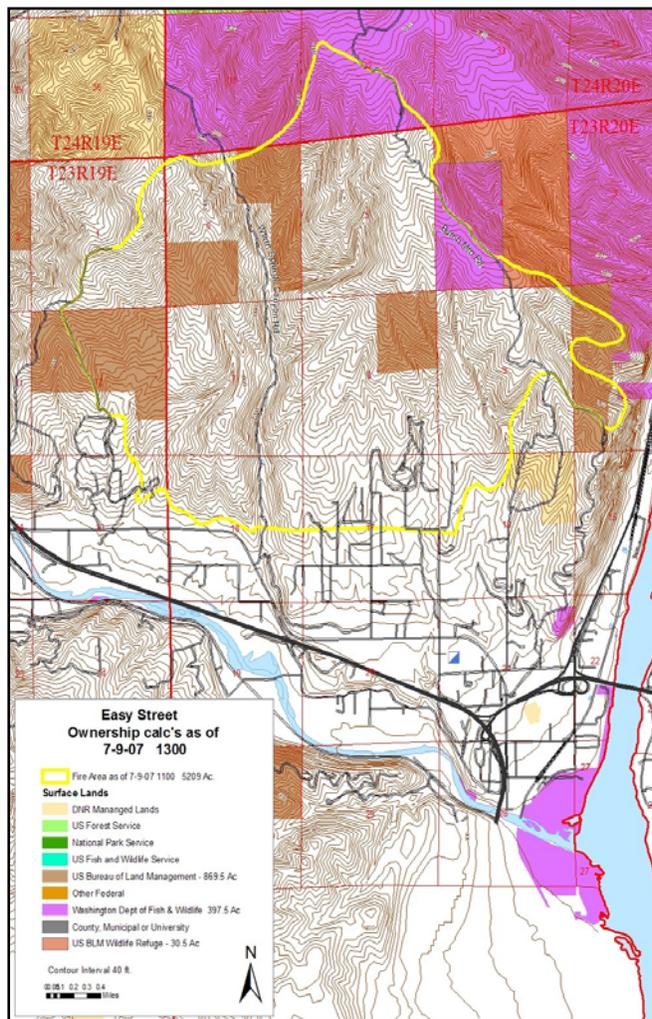
Updates/Changes

Funding: The Chelan PUD and WDFW continued discussions regarding a wildlife habitat development plan associated with the Rocky Reach Project re-licensing. Funding provided by this agreement will be primarily aimed at habitat restoration on Chelan Butte. Information on relicensing is available on the Chelan County PUD web site:

<http://www.chelanpud.org/licensing-compliance.html>

Inside

Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
New Issues	2
Major Stewardship Accomplishments	3
Status Report of 2007 Performance Measures	3
New Strategies	5
2008 Performance Measures	5
Citizens Advisory Group Input	5



Fire: The Easy Street Fire, north of Wenatchee, totaled 5,210 acres. This included about 1,300 acres of public land (~400 acres of WDFW land and ~900 acres of BLM land) and is located in steep terrain with primarily a southern exposure. The area affected by the fire was an important mule deer wintering area supporting an estimated 800 to 1,000 mule deer. The fire has eliminated almost all the bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) and sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) in the burn but much of the herbaceous components will likely survive. In 2007, WDFW with seed provided by the Mule Deer Foundation seeded about 90 acres of bitterbrush. Additional restoration is planned for 2008.

Wind damage: In January of 2007, high winds downed many trees in the Swakane and Knowles area. Most trees lost were large ponderosa pines. WDFW forester Doug Kuehn inspected the area and determined that the downed trees were too dispersed to be cost effectively salvaged.

Changes in the Strategies:

All reference to potential Chelan PUD funding in the “unfunded strategies” (underlined in the management plan) will be deleted. This is in response to the PUD’s concern that most of the “Unfunded Management Strategies” listed the Chelan County PUD as a potential funding source. *“Chelan PUD staff are concerned that this document sets unrealistic expectations for other agencies and members of the public regarding wildlife and habitat projects for which Chelan County PUD may be liable.”*

Chelan PUD being listed as a potential source of funds does not in any way make it liable for such funding. The PUD may however provide WDFW funding for some of the listed “strategies” through agreements in the future.

New Issues: See Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAG) input (page 5).

1. There is a need for a fire management plan including post-fire treatment of affected site(s).
2. WDFW should consider the use of forage Kochia in firebreaks
3. Reintroduction of a species such as the pygmy rabbit may not be effective and a good use of limited funding.

4. WDFW should consider working with other agencies and volunteers to conduct surveys and studies and produce GIS maps.
5. Protection of known cultural artifacts should be a priority.
6. Several roads on the area need maintenance.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

None reported.

Status Report of 2007 Performance Measures

Key performance measures are identified each year to monitor progress and identify issues that might interfere with planned priority activities. This information will be used to delete, add or alter priority strategies for 2008.

2007 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2008 Related Activity/ Comments
Maintain up to 50 acres of food plots annually as funding allows	Planted and irrigated about 5 acres of grain food plots on the Swakane Unit. Cultivated 50 acres and planted 25 acres of spring wheat on the Chelan Butte Unit.	Continue activity in 2008.
Coordinate the maintenance of 30+ winter wildlife feeders, 35+ water structures (guzzlers and springs) and 25+ nest boxes.	The Wenatchee Sportsmen’s Association (WSA) maintained and repaired most of the spring developments and assisted in filling 32 feeders. Volunteers continue to monitor and maintain nest boxes.	Continue activity in 2008.
Inspect and maintain about 90 miles of road to include routine inspection, weed control and repairs to road surface as necessary.	Routinely inspected road system. Performed minor culvert maintenance and weed control.	Continue in 2008
Replace 50 to 75 signs, as needed based on routine inspections.	Replaced about 50 signs.	Continue in 2008.
Maintain Swakane irrigation system (including pond and outlet), shop, residence and office. Maintain three informational kiosks as funding allows. Service, repair and maintain equipment and vehicles (estimated 5 pieces)	Completed.	Continue in 2008.

Control weedy species mechanically, and with chemical and bioagents. Extent of weed control will be based on funding but will at least include roadside spraying, control of perennial weeds in the Chelan Butte fields, yellowstar thistle spraying and hand pulling in the Knowles area.	Completed: Hand pulled yellowstar thistle in and around old fields and Houndstongue on the Entiat Unit.	Continue in 2008.
Inspect, maintain and repair about 20 miles of fence.	Inspected 20+ miles fence and removed about 5 miles of fire damaged livestock fence.	Continue fence maintenance as needed.
Habitat restoration: Maintain (apply herbicide and/or mow) 50 acres of seeded shrubsteppe and steppe habitat on the Chelan Butte, Knowles, Deppner and Roundy Units. Reseed where seeding failed. Continue summer fallowing and seed about 75 acres of shrubsteppe on Chelan Butte. Continue monitoring older seeding and reseeding as needed. Control weeds in 8 acres of perennial cover planted in the fall of 2006 in the Swakane bottom.	Completed except for seeding the 75 acres of shrubsteppe.	Did not seed due to persistence of noxious weeds that will need additional treatment. Continue monitoring of older seeding and reseed as needed.
Place brush piles in areas needing wildlife escape cover when material is available.	Not completed	Funding and material not available. Cooperate with volunteers in 2008 to move apple trees to the area to build brush piles.
Unanticipated restoration.	Seeded about 90 acres of bitterbrush in the Easy Street Fire burn with seed provided by the Mule Deer Foundation. Spot sprayed Dalmatian toadflax in the burn.	
Other	Provided a road kill carcass dumpsite for DOT. Inspected downed trees with WDFW forester.	

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 present, and public issues and concerns. The following strategy has 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.

Fire Management Plan:

Strategy: Draft a fire management plan including a wildfire recovery plan particularly for weed-infested areas that may benefit from some immediate post-fire herbicide treatment followed by native plant seeding.

2008 Performance Measures

1. Maintain up to 40 acres of food plots as funding allows including 10 acres on the Swakane and 20 acres on Chelan Butte.
2. Coordinate the maintenance of 32 winter wildlife feeders, 35+ guzzlers and springs and 25+ nest boxes throughout the wildlife area. Salvage and replace guzzlers as needed.
3. Inspect and maintain about 90 miles of road and trail to include routine inspection, weed control and repairs to road surface as necessary.
4. Replace 50 to 75 signs, as needed based on routine inspections.
5. Maintain Swakane irrigation system (including pond and outlet), shop, residence and office. Maintain three informational kiosks. Service, repair and maintain equipment and vehicles (estimated 5 pieces).
6. Control weedy species mechanically and with chemical and bioagents. Extent of weed control will be based on funding but will at least include roadside spraying, control of perennial weeds in the Chelan Butte fields and yellowstar thistle spraying and hand pulling in the Knowles area.
7. Inspect, maintain and repair about 20 miles of fence as needed. Remove about 5 miles of old fence.
8. Maintain (apply herbicide and/or mow) 50 acres of seeded shrubsteppe and steppe habitat in Chelan Butte, Knowles, Deppner and Roundy. Reseed where seeding failed. Continue summer fallowing and seed about 75 acres of shrubsteppe on Chelan Butte if weeds are controlled. Continue monitoring older seeding and reseeding as needed. Control weeds in 8 acres of perennial cover planted in the fall of 2006 in the Swakane bottom as needed.
9. Place brush piles on Chelan Butte in areas needing wildlife escape cover when material is available.
10. Inspect and maintain about 20 miles of fence as needed. Remove fence as funding and manpower allow.
11. Seed portions of the Easy Street burn as weather and funding allow.
12. Trim woody vegetation along the Homestead Canyon, "East Draw", and the Entiat cemetery roads.

Citizens Advisory Group Input:

Wells, Chelan and Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Areas Citizens Advisory Group - 2008

Jim McGee	Public Utilities District No. 1 of Douglas County
Von Pope	Public Utilities District No. 1 of Chelan County
Bill Stegeman	Wenatchee Sportsmen’s Association
Bob Fischer	US Army Corp of Engineers – Chief Joseph Dam/ Adjacent Landowner /Recreationist
Tim Behne	Adjacent Landowner/Cattleman/Wheat Grower/Foster Creek Conservation District
John Musser	Wildlife Biologist, Recreationist
Steve Wetzell	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Mary Hunt	Douglas County Commissioner
Terry Nouka	Chelan County Weed Board
Vacant	North Central Washington Audubon Society
Vacant	The Nature Conservancy
Vacant	Chelan - Douglas Land Trust
Mallory Lenz	U.S. Forest Service
Bob Stoll	Adjacent Landowner and Member of Lands Management Advisory Council
Neal Hedges	US Bureau of Land Management

The Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) provided issues and comments that are identified in italics. CAG members were requested to provide comments regarding prioritizing “unfunded strategies” listed in the management plan. Some of the input listed below was provided in response to this request.

Fire Management: Mallory Lenz indicated: *“My one overriding concern is fire management, and the need to anticipate and plan for fire, rather than respond to it as if it were unanticipated. Some of these areas have and will burn regularly, and it's generally going to be easier to work with the fire rather than against it (Fire management vs. fire suppression concept). I recognize that it is a difficult challenge.*

Possibly pre-plan wildfire recovery actions, most specifically in weed infested areas that may benefit from some immediate post-fire herbicide treatment followed by native grass seeding. Strategic bitterbrush seeding (or planting) may also be an appropriate strategy, though on ranges shared by mule deer and bighorn, “strategic” is the operative word. The Easy Street fire occurred at a time when some cheatgrass seed may have been consumed by the fire, giving an opportunity for some effective post-fire weed control responses”.

If WDFW has funding and time, it treats weeds and seed the burn to native plants including grasses, forbs and shrubs. Shrubs and forbs may be left out if treatment with herbicide is needed. In the fall of 2007, we spot-sprayed Dalmatian toadflax in the Easy Street burn before seeding.

John Musser stated: *“Fire management plan for shrub steppe should be done, many shrub steppe habitats are not adapted to frequent fire and respond poorly or unpredictably to fire – even prescribed fire. Be careful here.”*

We will add a management plan strategy to address fire management and will use extreme caution when implementing prescribed fires especially in shrubsteppe.

Potential use of forage kochia as a firebreak:

Tim Behne suggested the use of forage kochia as a firebreak. He indicated, *“This is a perennial form of the plant with good forage value that might keep the dust down and create a firebreak, not an easy thing in this dry country. It may not be native but then neither is bare ground”*. Bob Fischer voiced his support adding *“ it may have high potential for all of us”*. Mallory Lenz voiced some concerns: *“Non-native plantings can be extremely problematic. Though the forage kochia is not the same species as the “weedy” kochia, they are related (same genus, different species). Forage kochia is “highly aggressive for moisture” to the point where it robs it’s own potential seedlings. Yes, this will provide competition with other weedy species like cheatgrass, but it will compete with native plants, and would not be an appropriate species to consider in areas where the goal is restoration of the shrub steppe or grassland ecosystem, even if it does provide a fuel break or forage. It just depends on what your overriding goal is.”*

WDFW’s primary goal for using forage kochia is to create firebreaks (green strips) and protect wildlife habitat from wildfires. These “green strips” could also facilitate control burns. WDFW will seed these “green strips” in old agricultural fields and disturbed areas and does not favor replacing existing shrubsteppe or other native habitat with kochia or any other non-native species.

Weed Control: *Mallory Lenz asked how close we are to controlling weeds and is it still reasonable to expect to seed 75 acres this year or is more intensive weed control warranted instead?*

We still have a long way to go and we will never control 100% of the weeds. New infestations are occurring faster than we can control (or find) them (about 1,400 acres of weeds occur just in old agricultural fields). WDFW needs to prepare some ground for seeding in order to take advantage of the seed we presently have. Acreage treated may change depending on funding, effectiveness of weed control and other factors. Seeding permanent cover in disturbed areas is an important part of our weed control program.

Species Reintroduction:

Tim Behne indicated: *“My only reservation concerns the re-introduction of a species. The pygmy rabbit efforts are representative of my concerns. As I understand it even a successful re-introduction of pygmy rabbits in the Sagebrush Flats area would require regular releases of bunnies with genetic input from outside the area to sustain viable genetic diversity in the population. To me if the population is not likely to have enough habitat or become large enough to become self sufficient then all we are doing is prolonging the inevitable loss of the species. You are in effect just running a zoo out there. In these cases I feel more could be done with limited funding by spending it to help sustain wildlife populations that have a reasonable chance of succeeding or are succeeding in the existing environment. I am not as familiar with the sharp tailed grouse situation but if the chances of success are similar to that for the pygmy rabbits then this also may not be the best use of limited resources. If a wildlife population can be preserved or enhanced with a little input from us then it could be a worthwhile project but artificially sustaining one that has a low probability to exist on its own is not likely to be worth the effort in the long run.”*

Wildlife Area staff will not have the final word in deciding on re-introduction of wildlife species. It will however be working on improving habitat on the wildlife areas for species of concern like the sharp-tailed grouse and pygmy rabbit as well as other species.

We have already had some success in re-introducing sharp-tailed grouse in Washington. Sharp-tailed grouse re-introductions have a better chance to succeed since local remnant populations still exist and the bird's mobility can facilitate genetic exchange between populations. Columbian sharp-tailed grouse (the sub-species native to Washington) are also readily available from several other states and British Columbia. The quantity and quality of the habitat available to sharp-tailed grouse in the future will greatly affect its long-term survival.

Regarding sharp-tailed grouse re-introduction, Von Pope asked: *“Is there sufficient quality habitat to support a re-introduction now? Or does the habitat need to be obtained/improved prior to reintroduction?”*

Part of the Chelan Wildlife Area is in the sharp-tailed grouse recovery area. Currently however, WDFW does not consider it a priority for sharp-tailed grouse reintroduction. As sharp-tailed grouse populations recover in priority areas (such as north Douglas County), the Chelan Wildlife Area will be re-assessed for re-introduction.

John Musser – comments regarding “unfunded strategies”:

- When assessing impact of water development on listed species *at least evaluate springs and guzzlers to remove those that pose a risk to wildlife.*
- Conduct *only* waterfowl nesting and annual deer surveys on all suitable Units necessary to satisfy regional data needs. *Stand-alone data is not a priority for wildlife area.*
- Perform cultural resource survey and assessment as required. Protect American Indian and other artifacts. *Protection of known cultural artifacts would be a priority.*
- Determining species use by conducting and/or facilitating surveys of various bird, reptile, amphibian and mammal, vascular plant, moss, lichen and selected insect species *would be useful information that would be expensive if contracted, focus on qualified volunteers, universities, possibly exchanging work with other agencies etc.*
- Evaluate the area for western gray squirrel and sharp-tailed grouse re-introduction *in conjunction with other wildlife programs involved with these species.*
- Develop GIS layers of all resources, roads, trails, parking, *camping* areas and other facilities available to the public. *BLM / Nature Conservancy has a GIS specialist at the BLM office in Wenatchee. You may be able to accomplish what you need through interagency agreement.*

WDFW agrees with these comments and suggestions. Wildlife area staff will work with qualified volunteers, other agencies and WDFW programs as much as possible to increase efficiency in implementing these strategies.

Von Pope - Comments and questions

- Strategy: Construct and maintain fences to protect habitat from trespass livestock. *“Is there a way to get the livestock owner(s) to limit trespass?”*

Fencing is the most effective way to control trespass livestock, particularly in “Open Range” areas. Fences also help control vehicular activity. We have not had much of a problem in the last few years with trespass livestock and will limit fence building where trespass is anticipated.

- Strategy: Conduct upland bird surveys. *“Could this be done through cooperation and coordination with NCW Audubon?”*

When possible WDFW plans to use qualified volunteers to conduct these and other surveys.

- Strategy: Control public access and use of wintering areas *“This is a great plan. Where feasible (Burch Mountain) CCPUD may be able to assist”.*

Wildlife Area staff plan to cooperate with the enforcement program to address public use on big game wintering areas (such as shed hunting). Assistance from the Chelan PUD will be appreciated.

- Strategy: Develop GIS layers of all resources, roads, trails, parking and camping areas and other facilities available to the public. Define vehicle restriction areas and include them on the resource map(s) *“Define vehicle restriction areas within CWA to limit off-road impacts and provide walk-in recreation.”*

We plan to include vehicle restriction areas and/or closed roads on our resource and public information map.

- Strategy: Remove and dispose of useless fences. *“For wood fences, maybe the posts could be used in brush piles and only the wire would have to be removed”.*

We plan to salvage the wood posts when they can be cost-effectively used for brush piles or other projects.

Road Maintenance: Bill Stegeman indicated that the access roads to the “Roundy Ranch” and “Knowles Ranch” would need grading and water bars. Also, brush alongside the “East draw” Road, Entiat Cemetery Road (Maple Canyon) and Homestead Canyon road will need to be trimmed to allow for vehicular travel. He offered the help of Wenatchee Sportsmen’s Association volunteers to “brush out” roads.

Due to a shortage of funding and equipment availability, road grading activity will be minimal this year. We gladly accept and appreciate the Wenatchee Sportsmen’s Association’s offer to help with the tree/shrub-trimming project along the roads.

Highway 97 sheep and deer mortality: Mallory Lenz inquired about WDFW’s efforts to reduce wildlife mortality related to Highway 97.

Volunteers from the Wenatchee sportsmen's Association have developed and are maintaining springs in the canyons above Highway 97. These springs provide available water for deer and sheep, which reduces their need to cross the road and access the river.

WDFW, WSDOT and Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association are working cooperatively to construct 8 miles of wildlife fence along Highway 97A between Rocky Reach Dam and Spencer Canyon. They plan to complete fence construction by the summer of 2009.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

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

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