



CHELAN WILDLIFE AREA 2012 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

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 every two years regardless of changes to habitat, species, regulations, scientific knowledge, or administration of wildlife areas. This management plan update includes accomplishments, updates, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for the 2010 to 2011 period.

Figure 1. Gopher Snake, Oklahoma Gulch

Updates/Changes

On July 10th, 2010, a wildfire swept through the Swakane Canyon Unit. By the time it was contained on the 16th of July, it had burned a total of 19,437 acres including state, federal and private lands. On the wildlife area, the fire charred a total of 7,877 acres or 72% of the total 10,989 area.

Thanks to mild temperatures and high moisture content in the fuels, particularly in the higher elevations, the fire was relatively low in intensity. Consequently, shrub cover in some areas was lightly affected. In fact, fire officials describe the fire as an unscheduled prescribed fire. Nevertheless, the fire did result in the loss of mule deer winter range in the lower elevations. Considering that the 2008 Easy Street Fire eliminated

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Figures 2 & 3. Swakane Canyon Fire, July 13, 2010

all the south aspect winter range below Burch Mountain Road, much of this habitat has now been eliminated from the area. On the other hand, the grasses appeared to recover nicely and so have increased the available forage for the unit's herd of bighorn sheep.

On August 4th, just a few days after the fire, an intense thunderstorm and heavy rains caused a severe flash flood in the canyon known as Tenas George, two miles north of Swakane Canyon. With no vegetation to hold back the water, the flood began in the higher elevation of this section and carried with it rocks, trees, and other debris. By the time the flood reached the bottom of the Tenas George it had become a mud flow that covered State Highway 97A and the Burlington Northern railroad tracks before spilling into the Columbia River. As a result, much of the creek side vegetation that would have naturally revegetated the area was completely eliminated. In March 2011, using state funds designated for fire rehabilitation, we hired Central Valley Helicopters to aerially seed the canyon bottom and stream banks with a mixture of native grasses and forbs. As the end of the fiscal year approached, we purchased another order of the same grass/fob mix. In November 2011 with the help of a 6-person WCC crew, we used this mix, to seed by hand, the upper portion of the canyon focusing on the area immediately adjacent to the creek.



Figure 3. Aftermath of Tenas George Flash Flood August 4, 2010

Field Restoration

With the approval of the Rocky Reach Wildlife Habitat Management Plan (WHMP) by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in 2010, Wildlife Area staff began plan implementation in the spring of 2011. Ag fields are being restored to native shrub steppe vegetation to benefit mule deer, bighorn sheep and other shrub steppe dependent wildlife. This year we devoted our time to the highest

priority of the plan: restoration of the agricultural fields on the Chelan Butte and Swakane Canyon units. At Chelan Butte there are approximately 1,100 acres in need of restoration. This acreage is distributed across 27 separate fields ranging in size from 5 acres to 166 acres. In an effort to evenly distribute the work load during the first five years of the WHMP, we separated the fields into groups, each approximately 200 acres. We will be planting one group each year between 2011 and 2015. This requires that we begin field preparation at least one year prior to planting and perform weed control actions for at least one year following planting. Consequently, during the course of one field season we will be performing treatments on as many as 600 acres.



staff attempt to treat the same acreage by

Figure 4. View of Chelan Butte from the 75C

ground applications.

By the end of the year we had completed operations in field groups 1, 2 and 3 for a total of 573 acres. Treatments included mowing, disking, cultivating, harrowing and spraying. In November, we used a seed mixture of 5 native grasses, 10 native forbs and one native shrub – antelope bitterbrush, to seed four fields totaling 150 acres within Group 1.

In Swakane Canyon 12 old agricultural fields total approximately 100 acres. Work here was somewhat simplified as the July 2010 fire removed all the old decadent vegetation and eliminated the need to mow the area. Field treatments in 2011 were limited to herbicide applications and disking. Our initial plan was to plant the area in November. However, due to the continued presence of annual and perennial weeds we chose to delay that one year. This will allow us one more year of weed control efforts. Another adjustment to our initial plan is to use more chemical fallow treatments in 2012. We have found that these fields are extremely rocky which resulted in two challenges: difficulty in effectively disking them and the resultant damage to field equipment. After some thought, we decided to change our approach with this site by using chemical fallow and harrow treatments as much as possible. By maximizing the use of chemical fallow treatments we expect to have more effective, efficient and less costly weed control.

The most significant challenges we face at Chelan Butte are the steep terrain and the annual and perennial weeds within the fields. To address the terrain issue we rented a 300hp tracked tractor, a Challenger 75C. It provided the power and stability required for safe and efficient operation of our farming implements. We also hired Central Valley Helicopters to treat annual weeds in the spring (188 acres) and again in the fall (380 acres). Although this is a fairly expensive operation it is considerably more efficient than having our

Status Report of 2010 - 2011 Performance Measures

2010-2011 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2010-2011 Related Activity/ Comments
Maintain up to 20 acres of food plots as funding allows on the Swakane Canyon unit.	In 2010: Planted 5 acres of winter wheat following July fire.	Continue activity in 2012
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 2012
Inspect and maintain about 90 miles of road and trails to include routine inspection, weed control and repairs to road surface as necessary.	Routinely inspected road/trail system. Performed minor culvert maintenance and weed control. Cleared snow from roads on the Swakane and Pateros Units. Mowed roads to minimize fire hazard.	Continue in 2012
Replace 50 to 75 signs, as needed based on routine inspections.	Completed. Installed new 'Discover Pass' signs on all units. Made and posted signs at Chelan Butte demarcating the pheasant release/non-toxic shot zone.	Continue in 2012
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 five pieces)	Completed. Repaired several breaks in the Swakane irrigation system. Winterized system. Maintained kiosks, buildings and equipment as needed.	Continue in 2012
Control weedy species mechanically and with chemical and bioagents. Extent of weed control will be based on funding.	Completed. Hand pulled and sprayed yellowstar thistle in and around old fields in the Knowles area (Entiat Unit). Sprayed about 13 acres of Russian knapweed, 1 acre of Dalmatian toadflax, 24 acres of diffuse knapweed and 2.5 acres of mixed weeds. In 2010, mowed about 217 acres	Continue in 2012

	of Russian thistle, rye and other weeds. In 2011, released a total of 2,500 <i>Larinus minutes</i> insects (bio-control for diffuse and spotted knapweeds) on the Chelan Butte, Oklahoma Gulch and Roundy unit.	
Inspect and maintain about 20 miles of fence as needed. Remove fence as funding and manpower allow.	Inspected fences as needed. Repaired 600 feet of fence.	2012 - Continue fence maintenance and removal as needed.
Post-fire rehab – Swakane Canyon and Tenas George. Hire aerial applicator to treat annual weeds with glyphosate and seed canyon bottom.	Completed spring of 2011	Monitor in 2012
Post-fire clean-up – Swakane Canyon. Repair damaged irrigation line. Remove and dispose debris including steel irrigation pipe, barn debris and other assorted trash resulting from fire.	Completed in 2010	
Begin Chelan Public Utility District (PUD) funded field restoration.	Completed: In 2011 approximately 377 acres at Chelan Butte were treated by spraying, disking, mowing and harrowing; 146 acres of this amount were then seeded with a native grasses and forbs. At Swakane Canyon, 100 acres were sprayed and disked.	Continue in 2012
Work with Chelan PUD on a wildlife habitat management plan for portions of the Chelan Wildlife Area.	Completed in 2010	Submit monthly reports

New Strategies

Agency Objective: Provide sustainable fish and wildlife-related recreational and commercial opportunities compatible with maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations and habitats. Improve the economic well being of Washington by providing diverse, high quality recreational and commercial opportunities

1. Provide public access compatible with fish, wildlife and habitat protection.

New Strategy: Determine feasibility of establishing a new public access point on Chelan Butte near Chelan Falls. Public access to the southeast portion of the unit was lost in 2011 with changes in private ownerships and closure of a private road.

2012 Performance Measures

1. Maintain Chelan Butte Group 1 fields, up to 180 acres. Seeded in 2011, it will be necessary to control annual weeds to reduce competition with native grasses and forbs. Activities will include periodic mowing and spot treatments with herbicides.
2. Prepare Chelan Butte Group 2 fields, 204 acres, for seeding in November 2012. Activities will include disking, cultivation, herbicide treatments and harrow treatments.
3. Seed Chelan Butte Group 2 fields in November 2012.
4. Begin summer fallow operations on Chelan Butte Group 3 fields, up to 243 acres. Activities will include herbicide treatments, disking and cultivation.
5. Prepare old agricultural fields in Swakane Canyon for seeding in November 2012. Activities will include disking, cultivation, herbicide treatments, and harrow treatments.
6. Seed old agricultural fields in Swakane Canyon in November 2012.
7. Complete spring developments on Chelan Butte and Entiat Units.
8. Complete one acre riparian restoration, three water basins, and one pond on the Swakane Unit.
9. Complete Phase 4 construction/restoration at Beebe Springs Natural Area. Activities will include project planning, construction oversight, restoration of shrub steppe, riparian habitats, and construction of trails, view points, kiosks and interpretive signs.
10. Maintain Beebe Springs unit infrastructure (e.g., trails parking areas, drip irrigation, interpretive displays) and control competing undesirable vegetation in Phase 2 and 3 restored habitats.
11. 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.
12. Inspect and maintain about 90 miles of roads and trails to include routine inspection, culvert maintenance, weed control and repairs to road surface as necessary.
13. Replace 50 to 75 signs, as needed based on routine inspections.
14. Maintain Swakane irrigation system (including pond and outlet), shop, residence and office. Maintain three informational kiosks. Service, repair and maintain equipment and vehicles (estimated five pieces).
15. Control weedy species mechanically, chemically and biologically. The extent of weed control will be based on funding but will at least include some roadside spraying, yellowstar thistle spraying and hand pulling in the Knowles area. Quickly respond to newly discovered weed outbreaks. Work closely with Chelan County Weed Board to prevent and control weed infestations.
16. Inspect up to 20 miles of fence as needed. Maintain and repair fence as needed.

2013 Performance Measures

1. Maintain Chelan Butte Group 1 fields, up to 180 acres, seeded in 2011. It will be necessary to control annual weeds to reduce competition with native grasses and forbs. Activities will include periodic mowing and spot treatments with herbicides.
2. Maintain Chelan Butte Group 2 fields, 204 acres. Seeded in November 2012. It will be necessary to control annual weeds to reduce competition with native grasses and forbs. Activities will include periodic mowing and spot treatments with herbicides.
3. Continue summer fallow operations on Chelan Butte Group 3 fields, up to 243 acres. Activities will include herbicide treatments, disking and cultivation.
4. Seed Chelan Butte Group 3 fields in November 2013, up to 243 acres.
5. Begin summer fallow operations on Chelan Butte Group 4 fields, up to 282 acres. Activities will include herbicide treatments, disking and cultivation.

6. Maintain fields seeded in Swakane Canyon in November 2012. It will be necessary to control annual weeds to reduce competition with native grasses and forbs. Activities will include periodic mowing and spot treatments with herbicides.
7. Complete one guzzler on the Chelan Butte Unit.
8. Complete one acre riparian restoration, three water basins, and one pond on the Swakane Unit.
9. Complete one spring development on the Entiat Unit.
10. Complete Phase 4 construction/restoration at Beebe Springs Natural Area. Activities will include construction oversight, restoration of shrub steppe and riparian habitats, construction of trails, view points, kiosks and interpretive signs.
11. Maintain Beebe Springs unit infrastructure (e.g., trails parking areas, drip irrigation, interpretive displays) and control competing undesirable vegetation in Phase 2 and 3 restored habitats.
12. 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.
13. Inspect and maintain about 90 miles of roads and trails to include routine inspection, culvert maintenance, weed control and repairs to road surface as necessary.
14. Replace 50 to 75 signs, as needed based on routine inspections.
15. Maintain Swakane irrigation system (including pond and outlet), shop, residence and office. Maintain three informational kiosks. Service, repair and maintain equipment and vehicles (estimated five pieces).
16. Control weedy species mechanically, chemically and biologically. Extent of weed control will be based on funding but will at least include some roadside spraying, yellowstar thistle spraying and hand pulling in the Knowles area. Quickly respond to newly discovered weed outbreaks. Work closely with Chelan County Weed Board to prevent and control weed infestations.
17. Inspect up to 20 miles of fence as needed. Maintain and repair fence as needed.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

Chelan Wildlife Area was split from the Wells Wildlife Area in late 2011. The new manager is putting together a CAG as he learns the issues relevant to the area. The Citizens Advisory Group is planning to meet in the fall of 2012.

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Want to see the full plan?

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