



Klickitat Wildlife Area

2007 Management Plan Update

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Klickitat Wildlife Area Management Plan (http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm) that provides management direction for this Wildlife Area. 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.

The Klickitat Wildlife Area is comprised of several units. Most of the units share similar elements in habitat and recreational values, but have different management priorities according to the specific character of the unit location. The largest unit, the Soda Springs Unit, is approximately 13,000 acres in size and is managed primarily as a black-tailed deer winter range. It also provides access to the Klickitat River for steelhead and salmon fishing, and supports a strong population of wild turkeys. Deer and turkey hunting are the primary recreational uses of this unit. Western gray squirrels (a Washington State threatened species) are also present and are a priority species for management. Land purchases for the Soda Springs Unit began in 1948 and continued into the 1990’s. The Mineral Springs Unit, Dillacort Canyon Unit, Neth Unit, Fisher Hill Unit, and other smaller parcels are located in the Klickitat River Canyon, and serve to protect fish habitat and provide access for fishing. They are distributed downstream from the Soda Springs Unit almost to the mouth of the Klickitat River. Collectively these units encompass more than 800 acres. They also offer limited access for turkey and deer hunting. The Mineral Springs Unit features an old building that has been retained by WDFW as an important communal roosting site for Vaux’s swifts. The Goldendale Hatchery Unit is 240 acres in size (excluding the hatchery facilities) and has been managed as a pheasant release site and for trout fishing. The Sondino Unit, on the plateau adjacent to the Columbia River, now totals approximately 211 acres. This unit is a conservation area managed specifically for western pond turtles,

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which are a Washington State endangered species. Purchases of parcels for this unit began in 1992 and continue to present.

Management plans are updated annually as habitat and species conditions change, new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update includes a report on 2006 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies, and a list of performance measures for 2007.

Updates/Changes

In 2006, basic operations at the Klickitat Wildlife Area were affected by changes in management and facilities at the Wildlife Area Headquarters. In late summer, preparations for removal of the bunkhouse (formerly the wildlife area manager's residence) began. The house was sold to a private party, who arranged for the removal of the structure. The house was sturdily built and the moving crew had difficulty lifting the building off its foundation. The house was moved off the premises in two sections. The last section left the compound Oct. 4. The foundation walls remained in place until early 2007, when they were pushed into the crawlspace and covered with topsoil. Other facility problems related to the bunkhouse move included disruption of phone and water service to the office, as well as removal of one gatepost at the entrance to the KWA compound. These structures and systems were repaired during fall 2006 through early 2007.

In August 2006, Wildlife Area Manager Martin Ellenburg accepted a new position outside WDFW. An interim manager was appointed in mid-September. Acting Manager Susan Van Leuven has been serving in this position since that time, and a permanent selection for the Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager will be made in mid-year 2007.

In fall 2006, an extension was granted for use of funds remaining from the purchase of property that was added to the Sondino Unit. A proposal was submitted for restoration of native flora in an old field, weed control, removal of derelict fencing, and replacement of fencing that presents a problem for wildlife passage, and wetland development and/or purchase of more important wetland habitat. All of these proposed actions are for the Sondino Unit. Volunteers removed most of the derelict fencing on Feb. 15, 2007. In early Feb., a survey of the WDFW property lines was completed, which aided in planning subsequent work activities there.

WDFW is working with Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to ensure that KWA roads comply with state standards for protection of water quality. Following a review of the history of KWA roads and field visits to specific sites; two stream crossings were identified for corrective action. One is a ford that must be armored with rock, and the other is an old bridge that must be removed to restore normal stream flow. WDFW Engineering staff is evaluating options and costs for accomplishing the necessary work. DNR is not regulating the upkeep of the roads in upland areas due to their age and/or use history. WDFW still plans to either maintain or formally abandon upland roads as a means of recovering wildlife habitat and limiting disturbance to priority wildlife species.

New Issues

None

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

None

Status Report on 2006 Performance Measures

A list of performance measures is reviewed each year for purposes of evaluating and reporting progress on the management plan. Many of the performance measures will be on the list for several years because they require a long-term effort to achieve the desired result. A report on each calendar year's accomplishments will be included in the annual management plan update. Issues that interfere with accomplishment of these goals will be noted, and may necessitate adjustment of the performance measures for the following year.

2006 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2007 Related Activity/ Comments
1. Maintain 200 acres of agriculture in alfalfa and wheat	One lease on the Soda Springs Unit is active and includes 154 acres under cultivation.	Hatchery Unit lease (118 ac.) expired in 2005. Not all of the fields involved in the Soda Springs Unit lease are currently farmed, by agreement between the lessee and the wildlife area manager.
2. Permit light spring/summer grazing on 2600 acres	Accomplished	
3. Conduct forest thinning and controlled burns	Not completed	This is a long-term undertaking involving field layout, district team review, possible revisions, and harvest. Controlled burns would be a separate, although related, project. Burning should be a separate performance measure.
4. Reduce disturbance to wildlife in sensitive areas and times	Two segments of road were abandoned	Some roads initially closed by the Wildlife Area Manager were later re-opened. Roads were left open all winter. Disturbance is known to have occurred, indicated by behavior of deer when approached by vehicle or on foot

5. Pursue funding for habitat enhancement	None documented	No documentation of recent grant writing is apparent. Some habitat enhancement was accomplished using KWA operating funds (see 7. below)
6. Conduct habitat evaluations to determine suitability of the KWA for augmentation of California bighorn sheep	Ongoing	Much of this work is being done by region biologist(s)
7. Protect riparian habitat	Accomplished	Volunteers completed streamside plantings along Spring Creek in 2006. The planting area is maintained by another volunteer during summer to reduce competition by grass. More plantings farther down the creek were accomplished in March 2007.
8. Develop and maintain water sources used by upland birds	Maintenance was completed	Development activities not documented for 2006. Unmet needs will be assessed for 2007.
9. Determine presence, status, and trends for priority species on the KWA	Aerial survey and driving surveys for deer were done. Also observed elk and bighorn sheep. Western pond turtle population monitoring effort continued in 2006.	Western gray squirrel telemetry study (of juvenile dispersal patterns) tapered off in 2006 and ended in early 2007. Research results to be written up at future date. Pond turtle population monitoring is ongoing.
10. Protect roosting structure at the Ice House for Vaux's swifts	Doors and windows of Ice House were sealed in 2005.	Chimney reinforcement planned for 2007.
11. Limit access by humans and cattle at the Sondino Unit	Property lines have been surveyed and fencing proposal has been submitted. Proposal includes a short section of new fenceline and long sections of fence replacement.	Fencing work is planned for 2007. The scope of the project is being reconsidered to due to cost issues. Replacement of the worst sections of fence will probably be done, at minimum.
12. Prioritize areas for weed control treatment	Not completed	Planned for 2007
13. Control 2 acres of knapweed and Himalayan blackberry at the Sondino Unit	Unknown if this was accomplished in 2006	Planned for 2007

14. Control 2 acres of knapweed, Canadian thistle, and Himalayan blackberry in the Soda Springs Unit	Unknown if this was accomplished in 2006	Planned for 2007
15. Comply with WDFW fire control policy to provide adequate fire protection on the KWA	Accomplished	Planned for 2007
16. Provide wildlife-related recreation at the current level	Accomplished	Planned for 2007
17. Monitor grazing by use of control and exclosure plots to determine if management objectives are being realized	Unknown if this was accomplished in 2006	Planned for 2007
18. Maintain safe work environment	Ongoing	Planned for 2007

2007 Performance Measures

1. Maintain at least 154 acres in alfalfa and wheat.
2. Establish a new agricultural lease on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit.
3. Permit light spring/summer grazing on 2600 acres.
4. Renew existing grazing lease, which expires in June 2007.
5. Pursue funding for habitat enhancement, with help from volunteer grant-writers, if possible. Identify two special projects to seek funding for.
6. Restore native shrubs along Spring Creek. Extend shrub corridor 100 ft., at minimum.
7. Maintain and repair upland water sources. Clean all guzzler reservoirs at least twice during the year.
8. Conduct surveys of black-tailed deer and monitor western pond turtle population at Sondino Unit. Survey for western gray squirrels as needed in relation to forest thinning project. Survey for bighorn sheep and elk during deer survey effort, if opportunity arises.
9. Reinforce chimney of Icehouse at Mineral Springs Unit for Vaux's swifts.
10. Repair or replace fences at Sondino Unit to improve security of habitat for western pond turtles.

11. Prioritize areas for weed control treatment. Consult with Klickitat County Noxious Weed Control Coordinator to identify most urgent needs and methods of treatment, for action in 2007.
12. Perform fire hazard abatement work, such as piling limbs in forested areas for winter burning.
13. Begin layout of forest thinning project (if WDFW forester is available).
14. Address stream-crossing issues identified in KWA's Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan. Bring the ford in the creek up to standards, and begin planning and funding process for bridge removal.
15. Reduce disturbance to wildlife in sensitive areas and times by placing three gates on roads in the Soda Springs Unit, and implementing seasonal road closures.
16. Monitor and develop improved methods of monitoring the effects of grazing on leased unit.
17. Create maps of the Sondino, Neth, and Fisher Hill Units. Write sections for the management plan describing special management strategies for the satellite units.

Citizen Advisory Group and District Team Input

A meeting of the Citizen Advisory Group and KWA Manager was held April 19, 2007, to review progress on the 2006 Performance Measures and discuss new ideas. WDFW District Team members provide comments through internal communication. These ideas and suggestions are presented below. *Input from the District Team (including that of the Wildlife Area Manager) is printed in italics.* Only the Performance Measures that generated discussion are listed.

Input on the 2006 Performance Measures:

1. The actual acreage being farmed under the existing agricultural lease was clarified (154 ac).
3. *Forest thinning and controlled burns are both major projects that should be treated separately. Also, each project should be broken into segments for progressive implementation.*
4. The CAG team feels that disturbance of wildlife is a major issue and offered three ideas for consideration: A. Place a gate on Soda Springs Rd. NE of its junction with Anderson Rd., to curtail all vehicle entry after the end of general deer hunting season until approximately mid-April. B. Disallow any ATV use on the Wildlife Area, as this type of vehicle is capable of causing a disproportionate level of disturbance to wildlife compared to other types of vehicles. C. Institute a system of designating certain roads, using markers, which are open to ATV use. Dept. of Natural Resources employs this system.

WDFW plans to install gates on Anderson Rd., Old Headquarters Rd., and South Breaks Rd. to implement seasonal road closures. These closures will serve to protect wildlife during stressful winter conditions and also protect road surfaces, which are damaged by vehicle use during wet weather. WDFW does not presently have the authority to close the Soda Springs Rd., which is a county road. ATV use on wildlife areas is receiving attention on a statewide basis, with a new rule proposed to make it unlawful for the public to operate ATVs on these areas. If this new rule is rejected, the system of designating specific roads for ATV use may be a workable alternative.

5. The CAG offered the suggestion of recruiting a volunteer to write proposals for grants, for habitat enhancement projects. This could be a great partnership for the Klickitat Wildlife Area, which will be looked into by the Wildlife Area Manager.

6. A biologist on the CAG team suggested that the size of the grassland habitat available to California bighorn sheep could be a limiting factor in the establishment of this species within the Klickitat River Canyon.

7. Protection of riparian habitat on WDFW land is a general policy. It seems appropriate to redefine this item to read: "Restore native shrubs along Spring Creek." This provides a more specific description of the action to be taken.

9. The Performance Measure is described so broadly that it is difficult to meet. A prioritized list of species, with the type of survey needed for each species, should be included to provide more focused direction.

12. Priority weed control areas need to be identified. Action for knapweed control in Dead Canyon should be included in the Performance Measures. Also, Canadian thistle on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit should be addressed.

15. This is standard WDFW policy and probably does not warrant inclusion as a Performance Measure. Redefine this item to read, "Perform fire hazard abatement work, such as piling limbs in forested areas for winter burning."

16. This does not call for specific action and probably does not warrant inclusion as a Performance Measure.

18. This is standard WDFW policy and probably does not warrant inclusion as a Performance Measure, especially since no specific action is proposed.

New concerns and action items were also discussed. Items in italics were initiated by WDFW.

- Performance Measures should be given in more specific terms, so that attainment of the goal is easier to determine, and incremental progress can be quantified.

- Human waste is, or will become, a significant contaminant on the Wildlife Area as more people recreate there. Some provision for sanitation should be made, such as placing portable toilets near camping areas during high-use times. *Proposed new rules for public conduct on wildlife areas should address this issue on WDFW land; this would be unlawful under the new rule.*
- Klickitat Wildlife Area should be more actively involved in public outreach.
- *Consider undertaking special projects to restore native plant communities to abandoned fields on the Wildlife Area.* CAG members favor the idea but suggest that soil testing be done in barren areas to determine whether the effort would fail in those places. Yakama Indian Nation employs a specialist in these kinds of projects, who would be able to offer advice.
- *Consider discussions between Klickitat County Government and WDFW about WDFW acquiring the lower section of Soda Springs Rd. (from the junction of Anderson Rd. to the Klickitat River).* WDFW has mixed views on this but sees potential for conversion from a road to a trail. The CAG group agrees that restoring vehicle access to the river via this road would create numerous problems. WDFW should only acquire the road if it can be converted to a trail.
- *Fill in and/or update information on the smaller Klickitat Wildlife Area satellite units. For example, the Sondino Unit map needs updating, and the plan should include a map for the Fisher Hill and Neth Units. Special management strategies for various units should be given more thorough treatment. The Sondino Unit, Goldendale Hatchery Unit, and Mineral Springs Unit are examples.*

Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

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

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