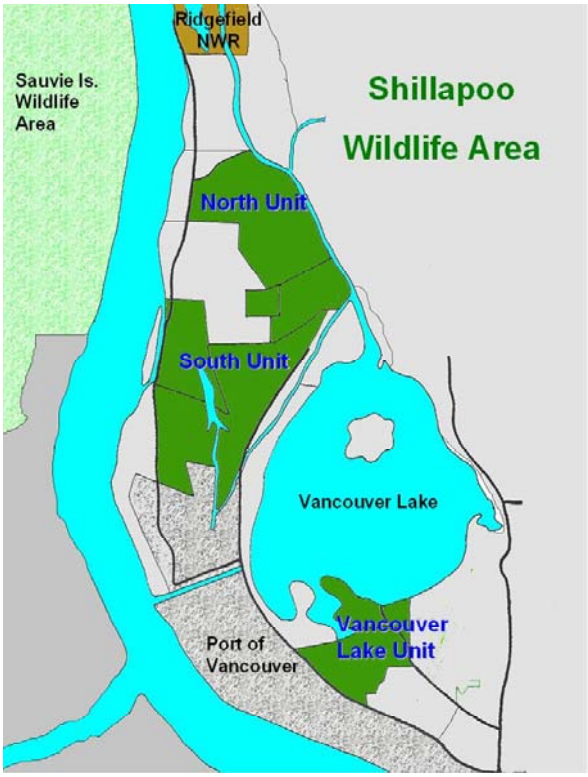
SHILLAPOO WILDLIFE AREA
2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Shillapoo Wildlife Area Management Plan (*http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm*) that provides management direction for the 2341-acre Shillapoo Wildlife Area in Clark County Washington. 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 2006 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies, and performance measures for 2007.

Updates/Changes

In 2006 several changes occurred that affect the wildlife area. Funding from The Bonneville Power Administration was reduced and future funding is being reevaluated which could result in future cuts. A full time assistant manager was hired and new equipment was purchased. Both of these developments have allowed us to make progress on improving maintenance activities and getting several enhancement projects under way. Progress is also being made toward the start of construction on major wetland projects on the North and South Units. Improvements to the South Unit pump station were designed and should be completed in 2007.

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New Issues

One public concern that was not fully addressed in the initial development of the management plan was a desire by some to create a "quality hunting area" in at least a portion of the wildlife area. A strategy was added to the plan based on a comment that was received during the public comment period that states that we will "engage the public and stakeholder groups to determine needs and desires related to managing waterfowl hunting". This includes removal of or providing new hunting blinds and potentially managing some or all of the wildlife area as a "quality hunting area." To this end, during stakeholder group meetings we will ask for input on this topic and may also sponsor a meeting for other interested individuals to provide WDFW with their input.

An internal Agency comment was received that requested an evaluation of all species of concern with regards to all aspects of planned work on the wildlife area. This task would take a great deal of time, at least initially would be administrative in nature, and would not immediately change planned projects; therefore, the following strategy was added: "Develop a list of species of concern, as well as T&E Species, that are either present, likely to be present, or may be reintroduced to the area and assess the potential benefits if any of planned projects to these species. Where specific habitat information is available, consider modification of planned activities where feasible to further benefit species of concern." While it was not stated in the strategy as written in the plan it should be recognized that WDFW will evaluate planned activities for impacts as well as benefits to species of concern.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Substantial progress was made on removing Himalayan blackberry thickets

Probably the most notable accomplishment to visitors to the wildlife area in 2006 was major progress in removing Himalayan blackberry from several sites. One of the more noticeable areas along Lower River Road is pictured to the left. Fences in this area were also replaced or repaired. In some cases they were moved back a few feet from the shoulder of the road to improve public safety. For the first time we were confident that we were able to treat all major stands of Poison hemlock on the wildlife area.

Management of upland goose forage areas improved. All pasture sites were mowed at least once and cover crops were planted in one field that had been fallow in the crop season. One pasture area on the North unit that had been re-fenced was grazed for the first time in several years, improving habitat value and reducing our operating costs.

Wetland management continues to improve. For the first time we were able to treat Reed Canary grass by disking, although some areas remained too wet to accomplish the desired results. Reasonably good flows in the Columbia River also allowed us to keep water levels up in South Unit wetland basins and a noted decline in canary grass was observed in localized areas. Plant communities in the Vancouver Lake unit basins continue to progress more toward native plant dominance and reed canary grass is in decline.

Discussions were initiated with Washington Department of Transportation, Vancouver/Clark Parks and law enforcement agencies regarding changes to discourage and control inappropriate activities/uses along the Erwin O. Reiger Memorial Highway. These discussions are continuing.

Status Report of 2006 Performance Measures

Key performance measures are identified each year to monitor progress and identify any issues that might interfere with planned priority activities. This information will be used to delete, add or alter priority strategies for 2007.

2006 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2007 Related Activity/ Comments
Restoration, enhancement, or improved management of approximately 1,300 acres of wetlands to provide habitat for migratory waterfowl and Sandhill cranes.	Several wetland basins on the South Unit and one in the Vancouver Lake Unit were disked to control canary grass and water management results were good this year. Plans were finalized for the South Unit Pump upgrade and progress was made in the permitting process for major wetland projects in the Lakebed.	South Unit pump improvements should be completed in 2007 and will provide more reliable management capability.
Improved management of 950 acres of uplands for migratory waterfowl and Sandhill cranes and maintenance of other crop areas until they are restored to native-type habitats.	WDFW planted 40 acres of cover crops after harvest by lessees or in fallow areas. Grazing was reestablished in one area and all areas not under grazing leases were mowed at least once. Removal of several areas of large blackberry thickets should also improve use of fields by waterfowl and cranes. A new tractor and associated implements were purchased to help improve the efficiency of our work in this	Reduced cropping may occur in 2007due to wetland projects getting under way.

	area.	
Restoration or enhancement of 108 acres of riparian forest-type habitat.	These planned projects were delayed by cultural resource surveys.	Work was deferred to 2007
40 acres of forested wetland habitat rehabilitated as potential future great blue heron nesting habitat.	We delayed tree purchase until cultural resource requirements were met at which time we could not locate planting stock.	Work was deferred to 2007
Reestablishing a minimum of 10 acres of oak forest habitat.	Oak seedlings were planted in the Reiger Hwy site but not at the other due to the unanticipated need for an archaeological survey.	Work at the second site was cleared and will proceed in 2007.
Improved coordination and management with adjoining areas dedicated to wildlife habitat management.	We are working with Vancouver/Clark Parks on issues related to the Reiger Hwy. We are also commenting or participating in planning associated with the adjacent Port of Vancouver site and the Ridgefield NWR CCP.	Coordination will continue.
A substantial reduction in noxious weeds, Himalayan blackberry, and other plants that negatively influence wildlife habitat quality for target species.	We made good progress on removal of Himalayan blackberry on both the North and South Units. Poison hemlock control also improved and all major stands were treated successfully.	Newly acquired equipment will enhance our ability to control weeds throughout the wildlife area.
Increased monitoring for early detection and control of new invasions of exotic weeds.	English Ivy was discovered for the first time on the wildlife area in the Vancouver Lake unit and then subsequently on at least two other sites one of which is in the North Unit. We are putting a high priority on early control of this plant, which could have a severe impact on forested habitats. We are also noting a large increase in this weed on adjoining ownerships. We were fortunate to have an	Monitoring for new weeds and coordination with Clark County Weed Management will remain a high priority.

	employee that was familiar with Rice field bulrush who surveyed all of our wetland basins for us during the summer. None was found.	
Improved access for appropriate public use and information about the area that is readily available to the public.	Limited staff time largely deferred this activity with regard to producing new materials. Work is progressing toward development of a new access/wildlife-viewing site on the South Unit.	We will be working on an information sheet outlining area rules and other information.
Implementation of measures that protect habitat and other features from damage due to vandalism and other unlawful acts.	Boulders were placed in a problem area on the Vancouver Lake Unit where vehicles were frequently leaving the pavement to travel cross-country. Locks were changed during the hunting seasons due to continued reports of vehicle violations.	Another site near the Vancouver Lake access needs to be evaluated for further work.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agency's strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species present, and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed, 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.

Issues identified in italics were provided by the Citizens Advisory Group. These public comments are captured at the end of this document. Although underlined strategies have no current funding source, identifying these needs is the first step to securing additional funds.

No new strategies are proposed to be added to the Shillapoo Wildlife Area Plan at this time, although one is under consideration as noted in the Citizen Advisory Group Input section below.

2007 Performance Measures

Performance measures for the Shillapoo Wildlife Area for 2007 are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

1) Complete improvements to South Unit Pump station.

2) Continue to work with the US Army Corps of Engineers, Ducks Unlimited, and others in pursuing completion of major wetland enhancements in the lakebed. Target construction starting in summer.
3) Complete planting of ten acres of Oak habitat on two South Unit sites. Also determine if Oak habitat is the best habitat alternative for the abandoned agricultural site on the North Unit in light of other resource concerns in that area.
4) Begin planting and maintaining trees and shrubs in the Lake River riparian zone and abandoned heron rookery site.
5) Clear dense Himalayan blackberry in the portion of the Buckmire slough riparian zone that is East or North of the water body in preparation for understory enhancements. Also undertake the initial removal of blackberry from at least 500 feet of fence line and 50 acres of other areas.
6) Control 200 acres of Canada Thistle and Treat all major stands of Poison hemlock and individual plants to the extent possible.
7) Begin control of English Ivy at all known locations and continue increased monitoring for, early detection and control of new invasions of exotic weeds.
8) Continue to improve upland goose/crane forage areas through fencing to improve grazing management in the North Unit, continued mowing of ungrazed areas, providing cover crops, and removal of undesirable brush.
9) Implementation of measures as needed to protect habitat and other features from damage due to vandalism and other unlawful acts.
10) Complete an informational document and/or poster with basic rules and information about the wildlife area.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on April 24, 2007 to review management progress and address any new issues or input on existing issues. Those in attendance included representatives from Washington Waterfowl Association., Pheasants Forever, Columbia Land Trust, A Neighboring Landowner, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Clark County Weed Management, and the Vancouver Wildlife League. Additional comments were mailed in prior to the meeting by the representative from Vancouver/Clark Parks and Recreation. Jennifer Quan, a WDFW employee, also attended the meeting to discuss the agency's effort to complete a Habitat Conservation Plan for all state Wildlife areas.

The following new input/issues were addressed at the meeting.
Issue: The Wildlife Area Manager had proposed the following strategy to be implemented:

Agency Objective: Provide Sustainable Fish and Wildlife-Related Recreational and Commercial Opportunities Compatible With Maintaining Healthy Fish and Wildlife Populations and Habitats.
1. Manage appropriate public use and recreation in a manner, which minimizes impacts to wildlife habitat and other sensitive resources.

D. Strategy: In summer 2007 implement a year-round closure of target shooting in that portion of the South Unit generally described west of the Erwin O. Reiger Memorial

Highway and west of Buckmire and Mathews Sloughs due to conflicts with hunting, wildlife viewing and uses of adjacent public lands,

The rationale was as follows: Disturbance created from target shooting has been a concern of hunters and other users of the wildlife area, particularly along the Erwin O. Reiger Memorial Highway. The highway is also adjacent to County Park lands on the opposite side of the roadway and WDFW is building a watchable wildlife site near the road. Most of the shooting that occurs here is from the roadway, which is unlawful, and many are shooting into the park property. WDFW is working with the County and other agencies to address many inappropriate uses in this area and closing the portion of the wildlife area along the roadway to target shooting may help in promoting a better atmosphere. Other parts of the wildlife area would remain open to target shooting within existing seasonal restrictions.

The Advisory Group did not oppose implementing this new rule but felt that WDFW should attempt to solicit broader public input before the strategy was formally integrated into the management plan and implemented.

Response: We will attempt to solicit input on this topic including working with the local media to advise the public of the proposal. Any comments received will be considered prior to proposing the strategy again.

Issue: *One member of the advisory group noted that none of the proposed performance measures addressed satisfaction of the public that use the Wildlife Area and suggested that we add a performance measure to evaluate public satisfaction.*

Response: If this were a state funded wildlife area this could easily be added as a strategy and performance measure. However, since the funding source for this wildlife area (BPA) does not allow expenditures for recreation, we cannot add this as a performance measure at this time. However, we can at least partially address this for migratory bird hunting and uses that overlap with the seasons, through a grant we anticipate receiving which includes monitoring distribution of hunters and harvest. Survey questions could be asked at the time of contact. In addition, we will request funding that may allow us to conduct surveys of users at other times of the year or we may ask volunteers to conduct the surveys and compile the results.

Issue: The Wildlife Area Manager asked the group for input on horseback riding within the wildlife area and whether it should be allowed. This is a new issue, as horseback riding has never occurred to the best of our knowledge. Within the past year we have noted that a few riders had begun to use the area sometimes during the late winter period when we are trying to minimize disturbance to wintering geese. There are probably two factors that led to some riders discovering the wildlife area as a place to ride. The first is that in the portion of the South Unit where the use has been noted, the Manager had removed the traditional “fence stiles” at several locations due to requests to have a wider opening to accommodate decoy carts. The stiles that were intended to contain cattle under grazing leases, but allow foot access, were no longer necessary after grazing was discontinued on this part of the wildlife area. The removal allowed passage by a horse that previously was impossible without opening a locked gate. The second

factor that probably contributed to the new use by horses is that a new horse trail operated by Vancouver/Clark Parks terminates at the corner of this portion of the Wildlife Area in question.

The advisory group recognized the concern but in general did not feel that horseback riding would grow in popularity here to the degree where it would become a significant problem and should not be prohibited at this time. There was a recommendation to place bollards or other barriers at times of the year when the use would be inconsistent with wildlife or habitat objectives.

Response: We will pursue the recommendation of the group to use physical barriers to discourage the use at times or places where it is necessary to achieve our wildlife or habitat goals.

The next Advisory group meeting will be held in August or September 2007.

Want to see the full plan?
Go to –
http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm

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