



SNOQUALMIE WILDLIFE AREA 2014 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Ebey Island waterfowl and remnant spruce forest.

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2012 Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Management Plan, which can be found online at the following link.

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/. The plan provides management direction for the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Complex, which includes the six Snoqualmie units, approximately 2,780 acres in King and Snohomish Counties. 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 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 2012-13 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies, performance measures for 2014-15, and ongoing projects.

Updates/Changes

Cherry Valley Wildlife Area

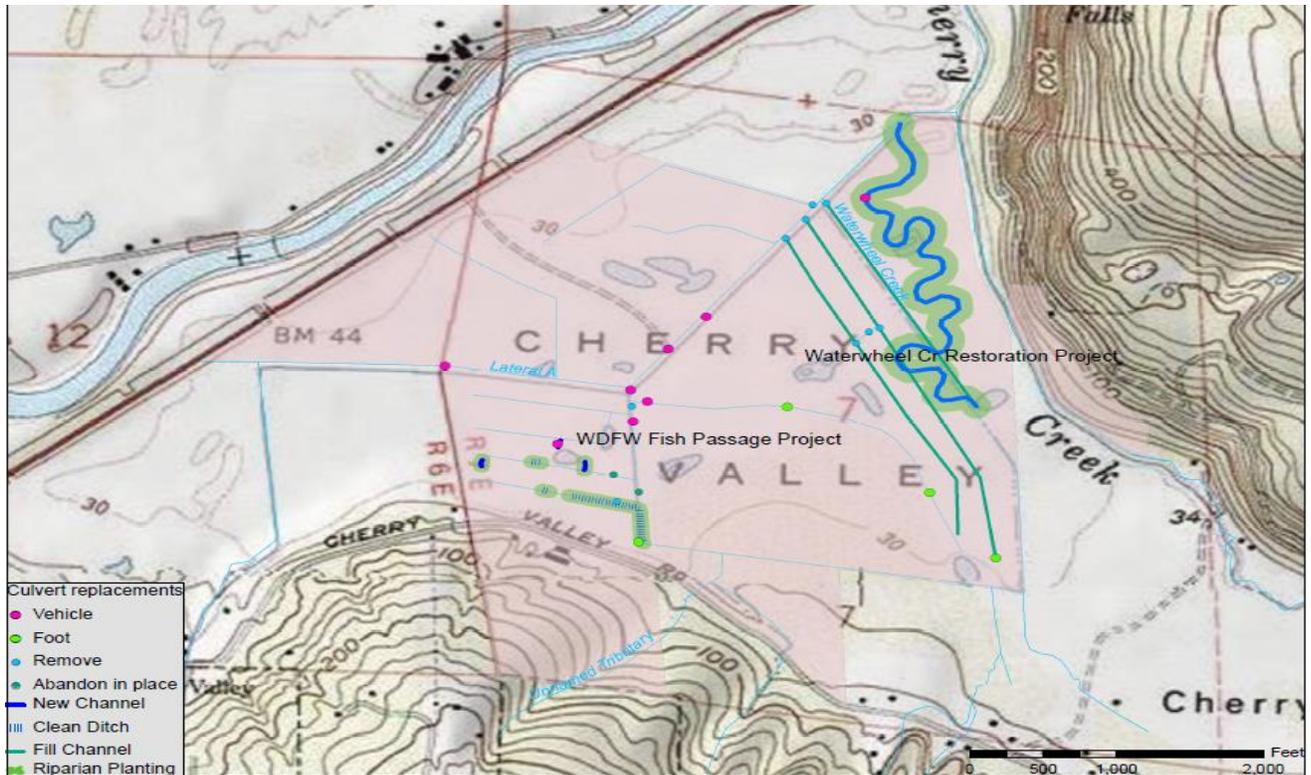
Since 2012, the Waterwheel Creek habitat restoration project and the WDFW Fish Passage Project have been completed. The WDFW Habitat Program-sponsored project corrected 18 fish passage barriers within the unit and connected several isolated ponds to an existing stream to reduce fish stranding following flood events. The Waterwheel Creek Project sponsored by Wild Fish Conservancy combined the conveyance of

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three ditches, Laterals B (Waterwheel Creek), C and D, by filling them and replacing them with a larger, meandering, restored Waterwheel Creek stream channel. This project corrected four existing fish passage barriers. Both projects include additional habitat improvements including placement of large woody debris, removal of reed canary grass, and planting riparian vegetation. A portion of riparian planting remains to be completed but funding has not been secured.

Additionally, an agricultural lease has been entered into and grain crops are once again growing on the Unit. Approximately 35 acres are currently under agriculture, with plans for expansion underway.



Completed habitat restoration on the Cherry Valley Unit

Corson Wildlife Preserve

The Corson Wildlife Preserve near the City of Lake Stevens in Snohomish County is in the process of being surplused.

Ebey Island Wildlife Area

As of April 15, 2014 an agricultural lease agreement goes into effect. Approximately 90 acres on a portion of the East Lobe of the Unit will provide grass for hay as well as grain crops for wildlife forage and cover. This lease begins the transition of the Unit from grazing to crop production. The existing grazing lease is in its final season and it is undetermined if it will be renewed in 2015. Additionally, a Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) grant proposal to acquire two adjoining properties is currently being completed. If these two properties are acquired, public and agricultural access to the existing Unit will be greatly improved.

Crescent Lake Wildlife Area

Agricultural land at this Unit is in its third final season of a three-year lease. Most available acreage is currently in production. Access roads and trails in and around the forest and fields have deteriorated over the years with invasive vegetation closing in. During 2013, major emphasis was placed on reclaiming these areas from windfall trees, debris, and invasive weeds. These activities will continue during 2014, with emphasis placed on the interior access roads which have become extremely difficult to drive over during the hunting season. To improve pedestrian access, a WDFW Capital Projects Proposal to replace the aging boardwalk that crosses the lake has been submitted in 2014.

Stillwater Wildlife Area

Since 2008, WDFW has coordinated salmon recovery work with a number of local restoration groups. All of the projects that were initiated during the 2008-2012 timeframe have been completed. Starting in 2014, Sound Salmon Solutions has received funding to continue restoration work along Harris Creek. This project will provide riparian zone restoration from the previous project's ending point to the Unit's property boundary.

Additionally, approximately 40 acres of agricultural land is under lease. While no crops were planted last season, the lessee intends to work the fields for 2014 and 2015.

In previous years, the Harris Creek pedestrian bridge was destroyed by floods. Proposals to provide funding to replace the bridge have been initiated in 2014.

New Issues

Ebey Island Unit

Limited access has been an ongoing problem. WDFW has begun the planning process to improve access which includes pedestrian bridges across Deadwater Slough and exercising an easement that exists to the southern portion of the Unit. Discussions with Snohomish County and Washington Department of Transportation have been initiated.

Ditch maintenance for improved drainage will need to be addressed with the Dike District. Many of the ditches are clogged with dead reed canary grass, branches and refuse from previous floods and general neglect. Any ditch maintenance actions will likely require Snohomish County permits.

Funder requirements for wetland enhancement and restoration and decreased agricultural production will need to be examined. The Ebey Island Working Group, a team of WDFW cross-program staff is in place to discuss, plan, prioritize, and implement activities relating to the USFWS Coastal Protection Fund requirements.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area

Funding cutbacks over the past 10 years has resulted poor conditions of the wildlife area. The barn needs to be replaced due to a long-term leaky roof. The tractor, mower and pheasant net pen continually require repairs. Access roads, parking areas, and trails require new gravel to remain useable. Encroachment of invasive vegetation and tree windfalls has shrunk the available

acreage for agriculture, requiring extensive labor, equipment rental costs, and basic materials to be purchased. All of this will require additional funding at a time when budgets remain tight.

As urbanization spreads and population increases, new user groups are attracted to the Wildlife Area. New groups bring along new uses, many of which are not consistent with the mission of the wildlife areas. Over-populated hunting areas increase the need for more law enforcement officers and reduce safety because of over-crowding at the hunting areas.

Swan and snow goose populations are increasing in the Snoqualmie valley causing human/bird/utility interaction that can cause injury, death or destruction of property. The need to prevent these interactions at the Crescent Lake Unit is becoming increasingly apparent.

Recent salmon restoration planting projects at Cherry Valley, Stillwater, and Crescent Lake have attracted increasing numbers of beaver. Networks of drainage ditches at Cherry Valley, and at Ebey Island Unit show signs of increased beaver activity as well. While beaver do provide important habitat conditions they can also become destructive to restored and mature vegetation. This activity reflects the need to review and implement the beaver management plan for 2014.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments



Volunteers planting native trees at Stillwater Unit

Riparian Planting Projects

Riparian planting projects have been ongoing since 2008 on the Stillwater and Cherry Valley Units. A number of restoration groups including Sound Salmon Solutions, Wild Fish Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited utilize citizen volunteers to assist with planting native vegetation. All of the funded riparian projects have been completed. During 2014, new funding for the Stillwater Unit's Harris Creek Restoration Project should provide additional community involvement.

Community Involvement

During 2013, revitalizing a community volunteer base had been initiated. Increased outreach, communication, and education by the Wildlife Area Manager while in the field produced dozens of individuals desiring opportunities to become involved on the wildlife area. During 2014, this will continue with the added assistance from a new Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator position that was filled.

Status Report of 2012-13 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 2014-15.

2012-13 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2014-15 Related Activity/ Comments
Work with DFW staff to develop a detailed map and brochure for the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area	Not completed	Competing priorities, limited resources and staff time prevent this from happening.
Construct blinds that are ADA accessible on the Spencer Island Unit.	Not completed	Trail improvements are necessary before ADA blind construction can begin. Additionally, at this Unit, existing blinds are utilized as trash collectors, homeless shelters, bathrooms, and drug and drinking sites. The first step is to work with Snohomish County Parks to remove blackberry hedges that have encroached across most sections of the trail.
Implement projects on the Cherry Valley Unit that will remove fish passage barriers.	Completed in 2013	Need additional funding and project sponsors to complete riparian planting.
Expand the riparian buffer on the Stillwater Unit along Harris Creek.	Project completed in 2013	Funding to complete the remaining riparian edge along Harris Creek has been secured by Sound Salmon Solutions.
Mow and maintain meadow trails at the Crescent Lake and Stillwater Units.	Initiated in 2012	Continue to improve trails during 2014
Mow fields on the Cherry Valley and Stillwater Units.	Initiated in 2012	Continue to mow fields in 2014. Agricultural leases on these Units will reduce the acreage of required mowing.
Release 3,100 to 3,800 pheasants on the Cherry Valley, Stillwater, Crescent Lake and Ebey Island Units.	Completed	Continue to release pheasants at these Units.
Identify noxious and invasive weeds, species, and distribution.	Field identification and distribution may have been conducted, but there is no written or data record available.	An invasive weed management plan was developed in 2013 and will continue to implement it.
Coordinate weed control efforts with other agencies and DFW staff.	No record of activity	Partner relationships were established in 2013 and will continue in 2014.
Plant barley on the Stillwater Unit.	None planted	An agricultural lease was initiated in 2013 and should provide barley and corn for 2014.

2012-13 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2014-15 Related Activity/ Comments
Invasive species removal around Crescent Lake.	No record of activity	Activity initiated in 2013 and will continue in 2014.
Build a door on the west side of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area barn.	Completed	
Replace broken windows and paint the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area barn.	Not completed	Barn needs to be replaced, not repaired. Capital Project Request Form submitted for 2015-2017 budget cycle.
Update and fix all signs on the Wildlife Area.	Not completed	Sign kiosks completed but signage is ongoing depending on the season and user group fluctuations.
Participate in the new Restoration Framework to move Stillwater project down the restoration pathway.	No record of involvement but project is completed.	
Remove all old barbwire fences on the Wildlife Area.	Not completed	Ebey Island needs to be surveyed and existing wire removed.

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.

No new strategies were identified.

2014 Performance Measures

1. Increase the diversity and number of members of the Wildlife Area Advisory Committee
2. Reduce the area of invasive vegetation on all of the Units
3. Increase volunteer involvement, including Master Hunters, clubs, and businesses
4. Continue to have the Ebey Working Group develop a restoration plan for the Unit
5. Identify, apply and receive funds and improved budget estimates to provide additional capital to replace aging bridges, boardwalks, sign kiosks and facilities
6. Improve, maintain, and increase Unit access roads, bridges, and trails
7. Increase acreage of agricultural crops at Stillwater, Cherry Valley and Ebey Island Units
8. Improve user access to the Crescent Lake, Stillwater, and Ebey Island Units by providing trails, service roads, and bridges

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Input

The Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting was held on April 1, 2014. Those in attendance include: Martha Jordan, Trumpeter Swan Society; Bob Dahlheim (for Marilyn

Dahlheim), NW Retriever Club; Mark Ryder, hunter; Mark Thompson, hunter. The following new input/issues were addressed at the meeting.

Issue: Tundra swan and snow goose populations at the Crescent Lake Unit are increasing causing human/bird/utility interaction that can cause injury, death or destruction of property.

Response: It was suggested by the WAAC that informing users about swan incidences is extremely important for the larger goals of the swan recovery program. A communication and information plan could educate users of the issues and inform them of who to call when incidences occur.

Issue: Wildlife areas are becoming increasingly popular and are very crowded during hunting season. New users seem to be uninformed of WDFW's mission concerning wildlife areas and allowable activities.

Response: Improving communication between WDFW and wildlife users could be effective in educating and informing users about allowed and restricted activities. Increased information on the website and targeted kiosk signage at the Units could help with this education process. Providing an avenue for user feedback and comments may also be helpful.

Issue: During hunting season, hunters appear to be following the pheasant release schedule causing over-crowding in the Units and increased safety concerns.

Response: Adjust release schedule to be more random so hunter crowds are spread out over the week. Increased enforcement of the Units could improve safety and violation issues.

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

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