



SOUTH PUGET SOUND WILDLIFE AREA 2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Management Plan (http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.ht) that provides management direction for the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Complex including Union River, South Puget Sound Urban Wildlife Interpretive Center, McNeil Island (Gertrude Is. and Pitt Is.), Nisqually, Ohop Farm, Scatter Creek, West Rocky Prairie, Black River, Skokomish Delta, Skookumchuck, Duckabush, Big Beef Creek and Morgan Marsh located in Jefferson, Kitsap, E. Mason, Pierce and Thurston 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 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 on the wildlife area. One new property was added to the wildlife area complex. West Rocky Prairie is a 684-acre site located near Maytown in Thurston County. It has approximately 200 acres of native mounded prairie. In 2006, using DOT mitigation funds, we were able to hire on a full time and a part time Habitat Tech to perform various habitat improvement projects on Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie. Two new WHIP grants from NRCS were secured for habitat enhancement projects on Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie in 2007.

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Species use on the wildlife area changed in 2006. The reintroduction of Taylor's checkerspot butterflies to Scatter Creek, although ultimately unsuccessful, will continue in 2007. The number of coyote sightings on McNeil Island continues to increase causing more time to be spent in helping DOC personnel cope with them. Deer numbers on McNeil Island in 2006 are down, but it is unclear if this is due mainly to coyote predation, or the hair loss syndrome. Due to the winter windstorm, over 100 large marketable size Douglas fir trees were blown over on McNeil Island. These trees will be salvaged.

New Issues

Off leash dog use has increased on the South Puget Sound Urban Wildlife Interpretive Center (UWIC). With this increase, a few conflicts came up in 2006. Dog use on the site is being monitored closely in 2007, and if problems arise, changes to the dog use rules may need to be implemented.

Changes to the funding of the wildlife area are being considered. If enacted, the wildlife area manager will need to apply for more grants to complete future wildlife habitat development projects.

Changes to the size of the wildlife area are being considered. If enacted, the properties currently in the North Olympic Wildlife Area will be managed along with the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Complex. Management of the North Olympic properties will continue to be addressed in a separate North Olympic Wildlife Area plan.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

To enhance and restore prairie habitat, Scot's Broom control on 500 acres native prairie was completed by mowing and herbicide application on Scatter Creek. 400 acres of old growth Scot's broom was controlled on West Rocky prairie.



Tall oat grass was controlled on 120 acres of native prairie using aerial and ground herbicide applications and mowing on Scatter Creek to enhance and restore prairie habitat.

The wetland ponds at S. Puget Sound UWIC area are managed for endangered western pond turtles. Endangered western pond turtle nesting site areas were enhanced by controlling Himalayan blackberries. Endangered western pond turtle trapping, monitoring and nest

protection continued and 35 baby turtles were hatched and taken to the Woodland Park Zoo Head-Start Program this year.

A long-standing fish passage barrier on the Scatter Creek Unit access road was completed on an unnamed tributary to Scatter Creek.

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
Find suitable recreational replacement area for Scatter Creek unit.	Two areas have been identified and are in the acquisition process.	If the acquisition process finishes in 2007, these areas will be added into the wildlife area and activities will be planned then.
Release 1,500 pheasants at Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck units.	At least 1,500 pheasants were released on the areas in 2006.	A like number of pheasants will be released in 2007.
Plant 150 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.	Due to lack of WCC labor, the trees were not planted in 2006.	Tree planting has been rescheduled for 2007.
Maintain 300 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.	300 Oregon white oaks were maintained in 2006.	Dead trees were replaced, areas around trees were mowed, enclosures repaired.
Plant one test plot of Roemer's (Idaho) fescue on SPS UWIC unit.	Due to lack of fescue seed, this project was not completed in 2006.	Project has been rescheduled for 2007.
Set up native plant nursery at SPS UWIC unit.	Native plant nursery was setup at SPS UWIC unit.	More native plants will be grown in nursery in 2007.
Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.	Native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds were collected for propagation in 2006.	Not enough fescue seed was collected for the fescue test plot. Seed collections will continue in 2007.
Plant Roemer's (Idaho) fescue plugs along ¼ mile of horse trail on Scatter Creek	Roemer's (Idaho) fescue plugs were planted in 2006.	Fescue plugs will continue to be planted on the area in 2007.
Create 25 snags on Scatter Creek.	More than 25 snags were completed on Scatter Creek in 2006.	More snags may be created at Scatter Creek in 2007.
Create 30 nesting cavities on Scatter Creek.	Nesting cavities were not completed in 2006.	This activity has been rescheduled for 2007.

Develop educational materials and host 2 educational events.	Educational materials were completed for the Scatter Creek site. 2 Educational events were completed at the SPS UWIC site.	Educational events will continue on the SPS UWIC site in 2007. Further educational materials will be made in 2007.
Control weeds on 720+ acres	Weeds were controlled on more then 1,000 acres in 2006.	Scot's Broom and Tall Oat Grass control will continue as needed on the wildlife area in 2007.
Install two gates on wildlife area properties.	One gate was repaired and made accessible in 2006.	One access point and gate for the West Rocky Property is in the permitting process and will be completed in 2007.
Enhance western pond turtle nest sites with 100 yards of topsoil.	This project was not completed in 2006.	This project has been rescheduled for 2007, due to changes in personnel.
Develop new wetland pond for western pond turtles.	Initial inquiries were made into a new pond project with Pierce County.	New pond project will continue to be pursued in 2007.
Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.	Butterflies surveys and monitoring was completed in 2006.	Butterfly management including identification, surveys and monitoring will continue in 2007.
Repair 1-mile of fence.	More then 1 mile of fence was repaired in 2006.	Fence repairs will continue in 2007 as needed.
Set up canoe access area for Morgan Marsh Unit.	Canoe access area was not completed in 2006.	Due to continuing problems with access issues on the Morgan Marsh site, this project has been rescheduled for 2007.
Transfer ownership and management of Big Beef Creek properties to Kitsap County.	Transfer of ownership of the Big Beef properties has been put on hold for the present time.	The issue of property ownership with the Big Beef Creek properties will be evaluated in 2007.

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 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.

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.

Agency Objective: Protect, restore and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

1. Maintain big game populations

The Management activities that occur on McNeil, Gertrude and Pitt Islands are based on the Transfer Deed management requirements for the following strategy.

- A. Strategy: Perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island.

2. Protect and restore prairie habitat

Oregon white oak, associated with prairie habitat is uncommon and at the extent of its range on the west side of the Cascade Mountains and north of the Columbia River and has been subject to loss from land development and invasion by Douglas fir. Approximately 10 % of the original short grass prairies are left in the Puget Sound area. 90% of that is located on Fort Lewis. The remainder is located in several parcels owned by Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Thurston County, and The Nature Conservancy. All of these agencies are working to protect, restore and enhance the prairie habitats. Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie are two of the largest parcels, and have some of the highest quality native prairie habitat. Several species of butterflies, mammals and birds depend on this prairie habitat. The Mardon skipper butterfly is a state endangered species in Washington and is found on Scatter Creek. The Mazama pocket gopher, Valley silverspot, and Puget blue are state candidate species that are in very low numbers in Washington State, and depend on the native prairies and associated Oregon white oak woodlands at Scatter Creek. The state endangered plant, *Sidalcea malviflora* var *virgata*'s only location in Washington State is at the Scatter Creek Unit. Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie may also play an important role in recovering the federally endangered Golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*). For all of these species to survive on Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie, it is critical that the native prairie habitat be protected, restored and enhanced. The South Puget Sound unit is one of the last parcels of native prairie and Oregon white oak woodlands in Lakewood. Located in an urban setting, it provides a unique opportunity to educate the public in the importance of native prairie and oak woodlands habitats, and the process of restoring those habitats.

- A. Strategy: Control Scot's Broom on 300 acres native prairie on the West Rocky Prairie site using mechanical and chemical means. Use WHIP grant funds to accomplish work done in 2007.
- B. Strategy: Plant native Roemer's (Idaho) fescue on degraded prairie area on the West Rocky Prairie site. Use WHIP grant funds to accomplish work done in 2007.
- C. Strategy: Control weeds that may come up in areas where Scot's broom has been removed. Use WHIP grant funds to accomplish work done in 2007.

Agency Objective: Provide sound operational management of WDFW lands, facilities and access sites.

- 1. Maintain facilities to achieve safe, efficient and effective management of the wildlife area.

- A. Strategy: Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.
- B. Strategy: Post ownership, rules, and regulations signs on the West Rocky Prairie site.
- C. Strategy: Post “Dogs On Leash Only” signs on SPS UWIC.

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.
 - A. Strategy: Coordinate with Enforcement Division on increased enforcement of Vehicle Use Permits.

2007 Performance Measures

Performance measures for the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Complex are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

- 1) Find suitable recreational replacement area for Scatter Creek unit.
- 2) Release 1500 pheasants at Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck units.
- 3) Plant 150 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.
- 4) Maintain 300 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.
- 5) Plant one test plot of Roemer’s (Idaho) fescue on SPS UWIC unit.
- 6) Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.
- 7) Create 30 nesting cavities on Scatter Creek.
- 8) Develop educational materials and host 2 educational events.
- 9) Control weeds on 1000+ acres on all sites.
- 10) Complete road access on West Rocky Prairie.
- 11) Enhance western pond turtle nest sites with 100 yards of topsoil.
- 12) Develop new wetland pond for western pond turtles.
- 13) Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.
- 14) Set up canoe access area for Morgan Marsh Unit.
- 15) Monitor Dog use on SPS UWIC site.
- 16) Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.
- 17) Post boundary and rules signs at West Rocky Prairie site.
- 18) Set up and perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on April 19, 2007 to review management progress and address any new issues or input on existing issues. Those in attendance included representatives from Northwest Field Trial Council, and SPS UWIC neighbors. Additional comments were received prior to the meeting by representatives from Friends of Puget Prairies and the Scatter Creek Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen.

The following new input/issues were addressed at the meeting.

Issue: *Off leash dog use at SPS UWIC has increased and caused some problems in the past. The area should be enforced as a “Dogs On Leash Only” area. This could be accomplished with a seasonal restriction. Information should be posted on alternative Off Leash areas such as the nearby Fort Steilacoom Park.*

Response: The area will be posted and enforced as a “Dogs On Leash Only” area. Information on alternative Off Leash areas such as the nearby Fort Steilacoom Park will be posted on site.

Issue: *The Wildlife Area does not have adequate funding.*

Response: Alternate funding sources from grants and project funds will continue to be pursued. We will work close with other agencies and interest groups to accomplish plan goals.

Issue: *There have been recent conflicts between people training dogs with live shot, and other users at Scatter Creek. It should be mandatory for all users to wear blaze orange from August 1 – March 31.*

Response: To make wearing of blaze orange mandatory would require changing the WAC’s. We will coordinate with Enforcement Division on how best to address this situation.

Issue: *Vehicle Use Permits are not being enforced enough on Scatter Creek.*

Response: We will coordinate with Enforcement Division to increase the patrols at Scatter Creek to check for Vehicle Use Permits.

At the conclusion of the meeting, another CAG meeting was tentatively scheduled for early October.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

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

Contacts:

WDFW Montesano Office
(360) 249-4628
Wildlife Area Manager
(253) 589-7235