



SOUTH PUGET SOUND WILDLIFE AREA 2009 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 South Puget Sound Wildlife (SPS) Area Management Plan http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/ 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, Scatter Creek, West Rocky Prairie, Black River, Skokomish Delta, Skookumchuck, Duckabush, Big Beef Creek, Morgan Marsh and The Koopmans Farm located in Grays Harbor. 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 2008 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2009.

Updates/Changes

In 2008 the first dog training field trials were held on the Koopmans Farm property. We had 11 scheduled events, which were held from April through September. Problems were encountered with regard to vehicles and horses off trails. We currently have 10 events scheduled for 2009.

Scatter Creek will be used as a backup area if

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the Koopmans Farm property is flooded in the early spring. There are usually 2 or 3 field trials held in February and March, which could be affected by water levels due to flooding. If there is too much water on the courses, the event will be allowed to take place on Scatter Creek.

The Kitsap Fly Anglers are interested in working with us to construct a parking area and entrance point at the Morgan Marsh property gate to improve the fishing access to Three Fingers Pond.



The beavers at the SPS Urban Area unit began to effect the Lakewood Fish Hatchery's operations by plugging up a water intake pipe. Cleaning the pipe every day took several hours. A chain link pen was installed around the intake, but it did not take the beaver long to dig underneath it. It was decided to trap the beavers and transport them alive to another location. Two beavers were moved, leaving at least one beaver still on site. The water intake problems stopped with the trapping.

A new pond project has been started at the South Puget Sound Urban Area unit. We are currently working with the Lakewood Fish Hatchery and Pierce County on developing a plan for construction of a new wetland pond for western pond turtles and Oregon spotted frogs. Also incorporated into the plan will be an abatement pond for the fish hatcheries solids.

New Issues

None reported.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Prairie restoration projects continued on West Rocky Prairie and Scatter Creek units using a variety of grant sources including Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) funds from Fort Lewis, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

On the Scatter Creek Unit, 300 acres of scotch broom were mowed, 15 acres were applied with herbicide, and approximately 12 acres were pulled including approximately 1 acre surrounding the Taylor's checkerspot release area. Test plots were used to determine the most effective herbicide to use on scotch broom. The herbicide Milestone showed greater kill rates than Garlon when applied in winter.

At West Rocky Prairie, 200 trees encroaching on native prairie and oak trees were removed; approximately 1,500 fescue plugs were planted in bare areas where trees were removed. During spring 2008, 230 plugs were planted in the Lomatium and Collinsia plots.

Approximately 54 acres were treated to control invasive tall oatgrass at the Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie units as part of a multi-year effort to increase habitat quality for Mardon skipper, Taylor's checkerspot, Mazama pocket gopher, and other native prairie plants. Spray occurred during the months of April and early May. Test plots indicate good within-year control of tall oatgrass with both POAST and Fusilade herbicides. It appears that Fusilade performed better than POAST in test plots and as a result its use will be increased in 2009.

Tansy ragwort was controlled on Scatter Creek, West Rocky Prairie and the SPS sites.

We worked with the State Historical Society on a project to do a controlled deconstruction of the old barn on the Koopmans Farm property and make those materials available to fix up other historical barns. The barn was taken down and the material stored.



Old Barn at Koopmans Farm being demolished

Endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies were released on Scatter Creek Unit with good results.

Three duck hunting blinds at the Union River Unit were completely rebuilt.

A project funded by a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program grant was completed at the South Puget Sound South Puget Sound Urban Wildlife Interpretive Center area (UWIC) area, which controlled Himalayan blackberries and brought in 700 cubic yards of topsoil to enhance the area hillside for western pond turtle nesting. Western pond turtle trapping, monitoring and nest protection continued in 2008 (see photo below).



Status Report of 2008 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 2009.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
Release 1,500 pheasants at Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck units.	At least 1,500 pheasants were released on the areas in 2007.	Pheasants will continue to be released in 2009
Maintain 300 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.	300 Oregon white oaks were maintained in 2008.	Dead trees were replaced, areas around trees were mowed, enclosures repaired.
Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.	Native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds were collected for propagation in 2008.	Seed collections will continue in 2009.
Create 30 nesting cavities on Scatter Creek.	Nesting cavities were not completed in 2008.	This activity has been rescheduled for 2009.
Host two educational events.	Two educational events were completed at the SPS UWIC site.	Educational events will continue on the SPS UWIC site in 2009.
Control weeds on 720+ acres	Weeds were controlled on more then 1,000 acres in 2008.	Scot's Broom and Tall Oat Grass control will continue as needed on the wildlife area in 2009.

Enhance western pond turtle nest sites with 1,000 cubic yards of topsoil.	The nesting hill was enhanced with 700 cubic yards of topsoil.	The remaining 300 cubic yards of soil will be placed on the hill in 2009.
Develop new wetland pond for western pond turtles.	Agreements have been signed between WDFW and Pierce County for a joint pond project.	New pond project will continue with design and water level monitoring in 2009.
Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.	Butterflies surveys and monitoring was completed in 2008.	Butterfly management including identification, surveys and monitoring will continue in 2009.
Monitor dog use on SPS UWIC site.	Dog use on the area was monitored in 2008 with good results. Few problems were noted.	On Leash Dog use will continue to be monitored for compliance in 2009.
Set up canoe access area for Morgan Marsh Unit.	Canoe access area was not completed in 2008.	Due to continuing problems with access issues on the Morgan Marsh site, this project has been rescheduled for 2009.
Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.	Boundary fence was kept on hold. Negotiations to adjust property boundary are also on hold.	We will continue to pursue adjusting the property boundary in 2009.
Monitor and replace when necessary, boundary and rules signs at West Rocky Prairie site.	Boundary and rules signs were placed and maintained on the area in 2008.	The signs will be maintained and enhanced in 2009.
Set up and perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island.	Minimal black-tail deer counts were completed in 2008.	Deer counts will be continued on a time available schedule in 2009.
Continue releasing endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies on Scatter Creek Unit.	Endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies were released on Scatter Creek in 2008.	Taylor's checkerspot butterflies will continue to be released on Scatter Creek in 2009.
Release endangered Mazama pocket gophers on West Rocky Prairie.	Releases of Mazama pocket gophers were not completed in 2008.	Releases of Mazama pocket gophers on West Rocky Prairie will start in 2009.
Lock Gate and monitor garbage dumping at Union River Access site.	Gate was locked during the non-hunting season with good results.	Gate will remain locked during the non-hunting season in 2009.
Work with Field Trialers and Farmer on coordinating activities on the Koopmans Farm property.	Met with trailers before each event to coordinate activities. Held meetings to discuss Scatter Creek and Koopmans Farm field trialing.	Will continue to meet with field trailers and farmer before events to coordinate activities in 2009.
Fix the main Parking Area at	Parking Area was maintained,	Parking Area will be

the Koopmans Farm property.	but not fixed due to coordination problems and weather conditions.	improved in 2009.
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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.

Issued identified in italics were provided by the Citizen 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 funding.

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 strategies.

- A. Strategy: Perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island.
- B. Strategy: Coordinate and advise Department of Corrections on proposed farming activities on McNeil Island that should benefit wildlife.

2. Improve and maintain fish populations

Elements of a fully functional riparian corridor include: 1) vegetation adapted to wet conditions; 2) thermal cover; and 3) stream channel features including pools, riffles, large woody debris and stream bank stability; all these elements are primary factors influencing the quality and health of fish habitat.

- A. Strategy: Coordinate with Department of Corrections on McNeil Island on proposed salmon enhancement projects.

3. 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. It has been subject to loss from land development and invasion of Douglas fir. Approximately 10 % of the original short grass prairies remain in the Puget Sound area. Most of the prairie habitat (90%) is located on Fort Lewis. The remainder is located in several parcels owned by Washington Department of Fish and 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* only

occurs in Washington State 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 these habitats.

- A. Strategy: Use West Rocky Prairie as a release and recovery site for endangered Mazama Pocket Gophers. Begin releasing gophers onto the site as soon as funding for the project is secured.
- B. Strategy: Continue planting native Roemer's (Idaho) fescue on degraded prairie area on the West Rocky Prairie site. Use ACUB and other grant funds to accomplish work to be completed in 2009.
- C. Strategy: Control weeds that may come up in areas where Scot's broom and tall oat grass has been treated. Use ACUB and other grant funds to accomplish work to be completed in 2009.
- D. Strategy: Continue to work with other state and federal agencies on new prairie restoration techniques.
- E. Strategy: Plant 1,000 Oregon white oak trees to enhance oak woodland on the Koopmans farm property.

4. Protect and restore riparian/wetland habitat

- A. Strategy: Continue coordination and planning with the Lakewood Fish Hatchery and Pierce County on new pond development on the SPS UWIC property for endangered western pond turtles.

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: Grade main parking area at the Koopmans Farm.
 - C. Strategy: Setup new parking area at north end of the Koopmans Farm property.
 - D. Strategy: Build field wire fence around oak tree planting area on the Koopmans Farm property.

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: Work closely with the field trail groups to coordinate recreational activities on the Koopmans Farm site.
 - B. Strategy: Work closely with the agricultural lessee on the Koopmans Farm site to coordinate farming and recreational activities.
 - C. Strategy: Work with the Kitsap Fly Anglers on an access parking area on the Morgan Marsh property.

Agency Objective: Ensure WDFW Activities, Programs, Facilities and Lands are Consistent with Local, State and Federal Regulations that Protect and Recover Fish, Wildlife and their Habitats

1. Manage species and habitats in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and Washington State fish passage, road management and forest practice rules.
 - A. Strategy: Rebuild two harbor seal observation blinds on McNeil and Gertrude Islands.

2009 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) Release 1,500 pheasants at Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck units.
- 2) Maintain 300 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.
- 3) Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.
- 4) Create 30 nesting cavities on Scatter Creek.
- 5) Host two educational events.
- 6) Control weeds on 1000+ acres on all sites.
- 7) Enhance western pond turtle nest sites with 300 cubic yards of topsoil.
- 8) Continue with development of new wetland pond for western pond turtles.
- 9) Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.
- 10) Work with local fishing group to enhance access area for Morgan Marsh Unit.
- 11) Monitor Dog on Leash Only use on SPS UWIC site.
- 11) Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.
- 12) Build Reader Boards at West Rocky Prairie site.
- 13) Continue to perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island when time is allowed.
- 15) Continue releasing endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies on Scatter Creek Unit.
- 16) Release endangered Mazama pocket gophers on West Rocky Prairie.
- 17) Work with dog training participants and farmer regarding coordinating activities on the Koopmans Farm property.
- 19) Fix the main parking area at the Koopmans Farm property.
- 20) Plant 1,000 Oregon white oaks on the Koopmans Farm property.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on May 20, 2009 to review management progress and address any new issues or input on existing issues. Those in attendance included representatives from Northwest Field Trial Council, SPS UWIC neighbors, Pheasant Release, Kitsap Fly fishermen and West Rocky Prairie neighbors. Prior to the meeting, additional comments were received from representatives of the Scatter Creek Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen.

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

Issue: *The Koopmans Farm property is not yet a suitable replacement for Scatter Creek. There are many people in the field trial community that do not feel the Koopmans Farm property is ready for field trials, especially in the early spring.*

Response: **The department is committed to working with the field trial community and the agricultural lease holder to make the Koopmans Farm property better suited for field trials. If the Koopmans Farm property is too wet in the early Spring for a field trial (determined by the Wildlife Area Manager), the trial will be moved to Scatter Creek.**

Issue: *The Morgan marsh property needs a better developed access. The Kitsap Fly Fishermen organization would like to work with the Department to develop an access.*

Response: **The Department will work with the Kitsap Fly Fishermen on developing an access near the gate at the end of the Lost Highway.**

Issue: *The West Rocky Prairie property should be opened up for recreation.*

Response: **The West Rocky Prairie property is open for recreation right now. There are walk through gates at the access points that allow for walk in recreation from bird watching, dog walking, deer hunting, etc. Horses or ATV's are not allowed due to the native prairie habitat.**

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

Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

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

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