

Wildlife Program

Week of December 21 – December 27, 2015

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Huckleberry Area Follow-Up: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett followed up with a producer in Stevens County that reported a goose depredation to a county commissioner. Data sharing and next steps were discussed with the producer and neighbor.

Equipment Spreadsheet: Supervisor McCanna put together a spreadsheet to collect what non-lethal tools staff currently have and what is needed to prepare for the upcoming calving/lambing and grazing seasons.

WDFW Capacity Building Workshop: Supervisor McCanna completed the baseline survey assessment in preparation for the upcoming WDFW Capacity Building Workshop in Olympia.

Cattle Producer Wolf Questions: Supervisor McCanna received an email from a Columbia County cattle producer asking about the last know location of the Tucannon wolf pack. McCanna received information from Wolf Biologist Roussin and passed on the last known location (landmark), which may aide in the calving operation.

Wolf Near Livestock: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received a call from a cattleman regarding a lone black wolf that was spotted within 50 yards of his calving operation along the Snake River in Whitman County. Advice was given on what he was able to do to protect his livestock.

REGION 1

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites

Wildlife Viewing: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area is a great place to visit right now. The recent snow has brought ring-necked pheasants, gray partridge, and California quail out to the gravel roads. Wildlife Area Manager Anderson has also seen a cottontail, jackrabbit, and coyote traveling over the snow this week. On Wednesday, December 23, Wildlife Area Manager Anderson spotted a red-tailed hawk sitting on the fresh kill site of a hen pheasant right outside the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area headquarters lawn. Later that day, she also flushed a covey of about 20 partridge very close to the kill site.



Red tail flushing off kill site (lower center)



Kill site



No pear tree, but a passel of partridge!

Winter Conditions

Blue Mountains District: Highly unsettled conditions predominated all week, with mountain and valley snows alternating with rain and foggy conditions.

Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area: More snow has fallen this week. Daytime temperatures ranged up to just above freezing, then dropped

to the teens and twenties at night. As of 7:00 a.m. on 12/24, snow accumulation at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area is approximately six inches, although drifting has made it difficult to pinpoint the exact amount of snowfall.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict

Turkey Damage in Spokane County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with a landowner experiencing hay stack damage from wild turkey. More than 100 turkeys began flocking near a cattle producer’s barn and destroyed several bales of hay in just a few days. Damage Permits and additional non-lethal advice were given.

Turkey Complaints Walla Walla: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley responded to four separate homeowners in Walla Walla regarding wild turkeys causing damage to their flower beds. Bait sites will be started next week for future trapping efforts and removal.

REGION 2

No report submitted this week.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart removed the “No Target Shooting” signs from the Green Gate pheasant release area.

Whiskey Dick Winter Closure: Manager Winegeart created a rough draft sign for the Whiskey Dick motorized winter closure area. One road remains open to winter motorized travel through the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area, and the road will be marked with blue-topped carsonite posts this winter. This differs from the Green Dot system, which is in place most of the year across the entire Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area. If approved, the clarifying sign will accompany a map that highlights the open motorized route.

Elk Feeding/Winter Conditions: Natural Resource Technicians Leuck and Hill, along with Assistant Manager Hunt and Volunteer Schnebly, fed elk throughout the week at the Joe Watt and Robinson Canyon feed sites. By the end of the week there were approximately 700 elk at Watt and 400-500 in Robinson. Elk continued to trickle in daily and numbers seemed to stabilize by the end of the week.

Winter Feed Tractor: Staff members continued to troubleshoot a problem with the winter feed tractor. It has reduced power in hydraulic functions and can barely pick up a single bale when it could normally handle two bales at a time. The hydraulic filter was changed, but performance did not improve.

Elk Outside Fence: There are approximately 150-200 elk outside the fence south of the Robinson feed site. Technician Leuck baited the return gate at Robinson in an attempt to lure elk back through the fence and off private land.

Temperatures: Low temperatures were in the high teens, with highs in the low 30s. Next week is forecast to be cold but dry, with some snow Monday morning. Lows will be in the single digits, with highs in the low 20s.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff members spent extensive time plowing, shoveling, and blowing snow to keep the parking lot and elk viewing area open for the public. The Visitor’s Center opened on Monday and is now open most days with Wildlife Education Corp Volunteers. Due to the holiday and vacancies, some days are not fully staffed. In addition, truck tours have not started yet due to a shortage of volunteers and maintenance needed on tour trucks. On Saturday (December 26), State Parks Rangers worked Discover Pass Sales at Oak Creek, selling 22 annual passes and 160 day passes. It was the busiest day Manager Huffman has ever seen based on vehicles in the parking lot.

Oak Creek staff members fed elk and sheep daily at all five feed sites. Work shifts were adjusted to feed on Christmas. A steer has shown up at the Cowiche feed site and Manager Huffman has been in contact with the owner. An attempt may be made to recover the steer, but if elk spook it may be fed until spring. Also, the Cowiche feed site has a spotted elk calf which appears to be only a few weeks old, based on size. Feeding at the Nile feed site has gone smooth despite logging in the area. Loggers have kept the road in usable condition and have skidded all logs adjacent to the feed site.



Steer feeding with the elk on the Cowiche feed site



Spotted elk calf on the Cowiche feed site



Elk feeding with the sheep on the sheep feed site. Later in the week, 18 elk were on the site.

Truck Maintenance: Oak Creek staff members worked on equipment maintenance for a feed truck which has dead batteries and a couple feed trucks whose door handles do not work. Staff members also removed bad batteries from one of the tour trucks. New batteries will be picked up this coming week and hopefully the trucks will be up and running soon.

Visitor Center Displays: Manager Huffman worked on displays in the Visitor's Center. A black bear skull was set up in the display case and old game tags from the 1940s and 1950s were put in the cabinet for display.

Forest Inventory: Forester Mackey addressed needed improvements to WDFW's forest inventory program with the developers and scheduled a meeting with them and other foresters to go over changes. The meeting will take place Tuesday, January 6, 2016.

Peak Elk Counts for Week

Headquarters – 814

Junction – 243

Nile – 242

Sheep – 240 sheep plus 18 elk

Cowiche – 1400

Winter Weather: Snow continued during the past week, with cold temperatures. This coming week is expected to have highs in the 20s to 30s and lows in the teens, with additional snow chances.

Elk Conditions: Elk are in seasonally good condition. There were two mortalities, one on the Junction where a bull died from a significant injury to his hind leg from a gunshot wound. A calf was also found dead on the HQ feed site, more than likely trampled or gored by a bull elk.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom spent the majority of his week on administrative tasks, including email management, responding to hunting questions, and budget management.

State Duck Stamp: Manager Bjornstrom began development of a few project proposals for the upcoming State Duck Stamp application process. One project is slated to expand waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunities on the Mesa Lake Unit, one to improve water management at Windmill Lake, and another to increase efficiency related to wildlife area operation and maintenance.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Marine Waterfowl Surveys: District 13 staff members, along with District 15 staff members and the Marine Waterfowl Specialist, continued flying the 2015-2016 marine waterfowl surveys. These multi-species marine aerial surveys cover the entire shoreline and the majority of open water in the Puget Sound and are the longest continuous dataset of their kind. Information is used to inform marine sea duck harvest guidelines, as well as providing trend data for game species and diversity species such as western grebe and harbor porpoise. When not flying due to weather, data transcription of the survey data is performed.

Aerial survey 50-meter transect is from bottom of frame to string on strut, illustrating birds on-transect and off-transect



Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study: Science Technician Trego has documented 91 trumpeter swan mortalities. Eleven live lead suspects were collected and tested for lead poisoning last week. All eleven tested positive for high blood lead levels and had to be euthanized. There were eight more lead suspects that were found dead on arrival. Lead toxicosis is becoming more apparent in both Whatcom and Skagit counties. At this point, the lead suspects are now outnumbering the powerline strike suspects.

	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas						
Whatcom	32	18	1		2	53
Skagit	8	5	2	1	1	17
Snohomish	2	18	0	1		21
	42	41	3	2	3	91

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Snow Goose Survey: Biologist DeBruyn flew an aerial photo survey of lesser snow goose flocks from the mouth of the Fraser River in British Columbia to Monroe in Snohomish County. Eight large flocks of geese were photographed. The images will be analyzed later to determine the number of individuals and juvenile-adult ratios.

Small group of lesser snow geese near the mouth of the Fraser River



Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo, along with Biologist Wingard, conducted use surveys of Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties, taking notes and resolving any issues regarding the sites.

Public Comment and Questions: Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Supervisory Biologist Caldwell responded to public comments and questions regarding private land access and hunting for waterfowl species. Information was provided on habitat conditions, waterfowl use, hunting success, and web-based access options for reserving and viewing private land access sites across the state.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE



Wildlife Management

Raptor Rescue: Biologist DeBruyn assisted a local rehabilitator by capturing an injured Coopers hawk in the milking parlor of a local dairy. The bird had a large tear in its crop and was sewn up and released.

DeBruyn with injured accipiter

Private Lands/Access Management

Reservation Hunt Analysis: Biologist Wingard continued compiling and analyzing data for the Hunt by Reservation system to assess the rates of booking and use of these sites. The results of this analysis will provide a clearer picture of how

often these sites are used and how successful they are.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator

Instructor Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey answered a new instructor's question on the new Hunter Education policy manual. Dazey activated six new classes during the week. Dazey answered an instructor applicant's questions on the applicant packet. Dazey updated his list of chief instructors who still need to turn in a Chief Instructor Financial Report. This is often overlooked by instructors since they do not accept donations from students and have all zeros to report. Dazey sent out an email letting the instructors know that even if the report is all zeros we still need it for audit purposes. Dazey was able to complete his 2015 class analysis. Data shows that while available seats in classes exceeded sign-ups, the number of students who wait until the last minute in October and November will have difficulty finding available seats. There are still a high number of no-shows in classes. Overall numbers for 2015 looked good.

Hunter Education Support: Coordinator Dazey answered questions from people looking to get into hunter education classes. Since the curriculum covers safety, handling, wildlife management, and conservation, many parents look to have their child enrolled in a class just for the safety aspect. Questions also include what is the best age to enroll a child. Dazey sent the student manual to the parents of two children so that they could start mentoring them prior to a class session.

Hunter Clinics and Advanced Hunter Education Classes: Dazey answered questions on upcoming clinics from students who were interested in what we had coming in the future. Dazey

also assisted the Region 3 coordinator to find mentors for an upcoming pheasant clinic in Region 3.

Terry Hoffer Award Nominations: Coordinator Dazey answered questions from instructors wanting the number of classes and students of other instructors they wanted to nominate for the Terry Hoffer Memorial award. Dazey has sent emails to Region 4 instructors asking them to look around, and if they know of a deserving hunter education instructor to be sure and nominate them for this award.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Management

Computer Migration: District 13 staff continued with the work of obtaining software and hardware permissions and accessories to insure that new computing resources meet field and survey needs.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Hoof Disease Survival Study: Statewide Elk Specialist Hoenes, State Veterinarian Mansfield, and Biologists George, Stephens, and Holman conducted six days of elk captures as part of the Hoof Disease Survival Study. National Council for Air and Stream Improvement (NCASI) Elk Researcher Rachel Cook participated as well. Northwest Helicopters pilot Jess Hagerman masterfully piloted his jet ranger to make the captures possible. A total of 46 cow elk were captured during the effort, including 16 animals new to the study and 30 elk previously captured in February of 2015. Multiple biological samples were taken and will aid in the ongoing effort to understand the effects of elk hoof disease. The elk will be monitored over the next three years for mortalities, movement, reproduction, cause of mortality, overall condition, and progression of the disease. For more information about hoof disease in southwest Washington's elk, visit the WDFW website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2015-2016 southwest



Washington goose hunting season continued this week. WDFW Biologist Butler, Scientific Technician Miller, and Law Enforcement Officer VanVladriken traveled throughout Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties to monitor hunting activity in the field on both public and private land. Hunters continue to be by and large very cooperative. As of Sunday, December 27, approximately 190 hunters have been contacted and 113 geese have been checked. A total of seven dusky Canada geese are known to have been harvested in the area.



Canada geese harvested in Wahkiakum County. The goose on the far left is an example of the resident dark geese found within the area.

As a reminder, the regular season goose hunt closes on Sunday, January 31 within Management Area 2A. The late season goose hunt will open February 10 with significant management changes from previous years. It should be noted that all hunters can now participate in the late season goose hunt on private lands only. It is the hunter's responsibility to acquire permission prior to hunting on any private land. Public lands are closed to goose hunting during the late season. More information on the late season hunt can be found within the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal, with several days of low temperatures in the 20s. Heavy rains during the first half of December did cause some flooding throughout the district. The Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area appears to have lost no more than about 10 acres of forage habitat during the high water events during the second week of December. There was some low elevation snow last week, with depths of perhaps a few inches on the valley floor of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 1,000 to 6,500 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for below normal temperatures and precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The January forecast is for above normal temperatures and an equal chance of above normal, below normal, or normal precipitation. The three month forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available at middle and lower elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are currently snow free below about 1,000 feet, with snow depths increasing in the middle elevations.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The first winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on December 3, with 84 elk being observed.

Animal Condition: The majority of animals appear to be in good condition, but a couple observed have been in poor condition.

Mortality: No mortalities have been observed.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2015, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Precipitation in District 9 continued at record levels, with increased snowpack above 1,500 feet in the south Cascades and western Klickitat County. Current snow water equivalent data indicates that the south Cascades are 140 percent of normal, with most reports indicating that last year's extreme drought conditions are currently over. The Klickitat Wildlife Area currently has approximately four to six inches of snow and 100 % of the area is covered, with no exposed south facing slopes.



Winter Severity: Winter conditions continue to be more typical of December weather in the south Cascades and Klickitat River drainage. Reports from Rock Creek in eastern Klickitat County indicate some recent snow above 1,500 feet and ranchers report favorable conditions for winter forage. There are no current concerns for big game populations in eastern Klickitat County, as most animals came into this winter in favorable physical condition.

Habitat: All habitats in the Columbia River Gorge this week have experienced snow conditions. Clark and Skamania counties are generally snow free or with little snow below 1,000 feet. There are no concerns for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County in the White Salmon River drainage.

Animal Concentrations: Deer are bunched in normal concentrations throughout the district, with deer in western Klickitat County seen more in the timber associated with recent snow depths. Deer have been noticeably absent in open areas as snowpack increases.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported.

Mortality: None reported this week related to winter conditions.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week related to winter conditions.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Dusky Goose: Biologist Sundstrom worked two days this week throughout Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. Fewer hunters are being observed and even fewer waterfowl hunters are hunting geese. Those who are hunting geese are reporting minimal or no birds being harvested. After a phone conversation with the biologist from Region 5, it appears that goose harvest is slow to low throughout both regions and is not a localized issue. We are hoping the New Year will bring something new to report!

On Saturday, Biologist Michaelis conducted goose hunter bag checks in Goose Management Zone 2B. A total of three hunters responded by phone and reported five geese were harvested. An additional five hunters were checked in the field towards the end of their hunt and

they harvested no geese. Earlier in the week, on December 23, a group of three hunters called in to report 11 geese being harvested.

Black-tailed Deer Study: Biologist Ament spent some time last week reviewing the Vectronic's website to determine the locations and recent movement patterns for the five collared does. She also spent some time reviewing her notebooks for information that will need to be entered into the PDA unit.

Ament conducted downloads from one collared doe on December 23, 2015. She was able to obtain GPS, activity, and sensor data for the doe. There were four inches of snow located at the gate that accesses the doe location and snow was falling during most of the collar download. Biologist Ament (from CO) often misses snow and it helped get her in the Christmas spirit.



Snow falling and accumulating at doe location during collar download

Deer Study in Satsop and Capitol Forest: On Monday, Biologist Michaelis checked two does and three fawns for Biologist Murphy in the Satsop cluster. All deer indicated “live” signals. Downloads from six of the eight does in the Capitol Forest have been completed as well.

Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: The volunteers that are monitoring the swans weekly in the Dungeness Valley report the following for last week:

We did our swan count this week yesterday (Dec. 23) around noon most all of the BWB (big white birds) 70 in number were in the fields east of the runway at Sequim Valley Airport, but we did spot 3 (2 A and 1 J) more at the stubble field next to the lavender farm just south of Pt Williams and west of Schmuck. Sort of interesting they have largely stayed at the airport, even with the runway traffic they do not appear to be disturbed.

This is the first season that most of the swans in the Dungeness Valley have used this particular farm field near the Sequim Airport. This shows the value of annual monitoring of the swans and conveys that their habitat use can vary each year. Corn had been planted in these fields and was

recently harvested and cut. No sick or dead swans have been reported to date this season. Biologist Ament will be assisting Martha Jordan with aerial surveys for trumpeter swans this week.



Trumpeter swans located on fields in the Dungeness Valley



Other

Because of the shortened work week due to the holiday season, Biologist Sundstrom performed a variety of tasks that involved wildlife conflict matters, private lands issues, data summaries, and entries for goose surveys, waterfowl flights, snowy plover, and streaked horned larks. During a field check of waterfowl

hunters, Sundstrom was able to quickly snap this photo before the hunters shot. But there was something oddly amiss with this drake mallard...just not quite sure what it was as it 'ho, ho, hoed' out of sight.



GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Duck Hunting at Lower Dungeness: Lands Manager Belson had requested that Biologist Ament try and visit with waterfowl hunters using the Lower Dungeness site. He was interested to get feed-back from the hunters on the new signage and parking for blind allocation at the

site. Biologist Ament contacted two young hunters who hunted all day on December 23. They had encountered three other groups of hunters at the site during the day. The two reported harvesting three ducks, and only one other duck was harvested by other hunters for the

day. Apparently numerous bald eagles were hanging out at the hunt area and ducks were not present in high numbers. The hunters felt that the assigned parking sites to specific blinds were a positive change. They have been hunting at the site for several years. The one negative item they reported was that one of the hunting parties had shot at ducks that were located too far away for any success. They were concerned that ducks could be wounded and not retrieved. Biologist Ament will provide Land Manager Belson with a full report of her contact with the hunters.

Private Lands /Conflict

Elk in Cranberries: Producers were paying attention to their smart phones this week. The remote camera system quickly notified producers that the elk were back. With permits in hand, a couple went after the cranberry munchers. While they were unable to harvest, they were able to aggressively haze them by pursuing them onto neighboring timberlands. The elk were last seen entering a very thick (unthinned) regenerating timber stand. There have been no reports or pictures of elk over the past few days. Overall the remote camera system and aggressive response by producers has drastically reduced elk use in many bogs.

Elk area 6010: Biologist Harris continued to answer calls seeking advice on where to hunt in Elk Area 6010. Interestingly, he also received two calls from producers who reported that the elk have returned. One stated he had given permission to five permit holders and had not seen the hunters since. Biologist Harris gave him contact information for another permit holder. Biologist Harris also gave the landholder permission to use one of his Damage Prevention permit holders in a sensitive area of his holdings if no Elk Area 6010 permit holders were around. The Damage Prevention permit holder harvested over the weekend. An Elk Area 6010 permit holder reported that she harvested her elk over the weekend. She also reported that one of the landholders he had advised her to contact called her to report elk activity. Unfortunately it was the day after she harvested at a different location.

Long Beach Bears: While in the Long Beach area meeting with a Cranberry grower, Biologist Harris and Officer Jacobson made a site visit to a chronic bear problem area. It was hoped that the landholder would be able to meet with them as previously discussed. The landholder had contacted Biologist Harris for suggestions, stating that bears had broken into his reinforced garbage trailer. Based on the initial conversation, it sounded like the landowner had taken reasonable steps to alleviate the problem and was concerned for his tenant's safety. As often happens, a site visit told a different story. While the landowner attempted to fortify a World War II-era trailer, it is clearly not enough to deter bears. Also, it appears that the trailer is only emptied when needed, so it is functioning as a very appealing bait station for several bears. Reports indicate that a sow with cubs is using the trailer regularly, and two sub adults, possibly past cubs of the sow, are also visiting. Unfortunately, we may have several bears that are habituated and food conditioned to humans. Biologist Harris will advise the landowner and communicate with Enforcement regarding the issues with how the garbage is stored at these rental properties. A report will be written and submitted to Enforcement in the near future. Hopefully together they will be able to convince the landowner that better garbage management needs to happen as this appears to be a possible violation of RCW 77.15.790.



Fortified garbage trailer



Trailer with recently replaced door. Door swings up. Bears figured that out.

Cougar Request for Contact: Biologist Harris contacted a reporting party that called because of numerous cougar sightings on his property. The reporting party reported that several observations of two younger, medium sized cougars started in October and now they are regularly seeing one medium sized cougar. It was reported that it has been seen observing their cattle and been near their horses. Advice was given to keep livestock closer to the residence and he was instructed on what he can legally do if his livestock are attacked. The RP stated that he had bought an elk license this year but not a cougar license. He was informed that it may not be a bad idea to purchase the cougar license. He also looked into recent reports of depredations and found that this property is reasonably close to an unresolved depredation on a llama. In the llama case, hounds were deployed and were unable to locate the depredating cougar.

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Wildlife Management

NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Mazama Pocket

Gophers: Biologist Tirhi continues to work on an application for the NRCS ACEP program towards the purchase of a conservation easement on 93.28 acres of private working farm inhabited by federally and state listed Mazama pocket gopher. This is the first of four conservation easements on working farms inhabited by pocket gophers that would be sought in Thurston County over the next three years. Each of these properties lies within a core area identified for the long-term recovery of the species. Applications are due January 15, 2016.

Four working farms and one conservation site (2) being sought for fee title or conservation easement for recovery of federally and state listed Mazama pocket gopher

