



# SCOTCH CREEK WILDLIFE AREA 2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



## Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for the Scotch Creek, Mineral Hill, Pogue Mountain, Tunk Valley and Chesaw units in Okanogan County. 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. For a complete copy of the 2006 management plan, go to:

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/pdfs/draft\\_scoth\\_creek\\_plan.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/pdfs/draft_scoth_creek_plan.pdf)

## Updates/Changes

- 2006 was the year of the large Tripod fire complex in Okanogan County. The eastern edge of the fire burned as close as 3 miles from the west boundary of the Mineral Hill unit, but no wildlife lands on the Scotch Creek units were burned from this event. However two neighboring ranchers to Scotch Creek had summer ranges burned in this fire, and emergency grazing was provided on Happy Hill of the Scotch Creek unit for 421 AUM’s of grazing.
- Project staff time was reduced by 2 months for 2007, and the WCC crew help reduced by 3 months to bring into balance, salaries and benefits with goods and services. Area projects and habitat enhancements that needed funding were going to be cut without some adjustments in the budget. Future funding cuts from BPA are anticipated in 2007,

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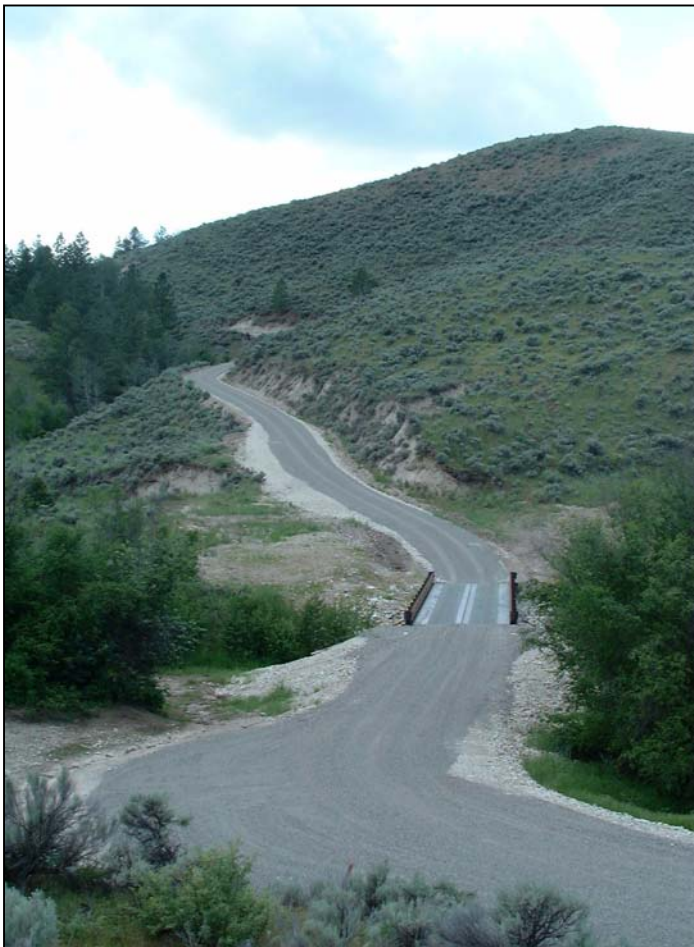
and it is hopeful that the DFW will be successful in legislative requests to help make up this shortfall on all mitigation projects statewide. Two Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) grants were written and approved for 2007, which will help continue the habitat enhancements as O&M funding gets more restricted.

- A wetter than usual spring in 2006, and a good winter snow pack, was great for water resources in this arid climate with springs and lakes rebounding from several years of drought. However the timing may have had a negative impact on upland bird production. Three broods of sharp-tailed grouse were observed just prior to two weeks of heavy rain and cold windy weather. Hungarian partridge, the most abundant game bird on Scotch Creek were noticeable down in 2006, but the impacts on sharp-tails won't be known until lek counts are taken in the spring of 2007.

#### New Issues:

No new issues were brought up in the February 2007 Citizens Advisory Group meeting.

#### Major Stewardship Accomplishments



The Tunk Valley unit has been without legal access for the past 15 years due to the washout of a culvert on Tunk Creek at the only entrance road to this unit. In 2006 we were successful in replacing the washout with a new bridge, 1-¼ miles of road repairs, and a large parking area on the upper slopes to provide much improved public access to this unit. The road will be seasonal access, with a delayed opening in the spring (June 1) to protect disturbance to nesting wildlife and a closure in the fall (December 15) for public safety due to winter conditions and the icy North Slope road.





In the summer of 2006 four structures on the Happy Hill, LLC acquisition were auctioned to the public and the materials were removed, one piece at a time. This included a residence, shop, and two large barns. All work was accomplished well within the time allotted and all involved did an excellent job of cleaning up the remaining debris.

**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   |
|---|---|--|
| Re-seed 100 acres of ag fields on the Scotch Creek unit to native shrub-steppe habitat. | Accomplished 45 acres.                              | Identified and treated 45 acres of the worst Russian Knapweed problem on Scotch Creek unit for summer fallow and re-seeding. The remainder was mowed and treated with herbicides. Plans for 2007 include 80 acres on the Happy Hill, LLC property. |
| 1,000 trees and shrubs planted to expand deciduous riparian habitat on all units.       | Not accomplished, funds were not available in 2006. | 500 Water Birch have been ordered for 2007. We will fill in areas lacking this most important winter food source for Sharp-tails.  |
| Expand and maintain nest boxes.   | Complete  | Built 50 new bluebird nest boxes and placed on the Scotch Creek unit. Monitored use and success of all boxes. We will expand this activity in 2007 to the Chesaw and Tunk Valley units.  |
| Maintain all previous shrub plantings.  | Complete  | Spring and fall maintenance complete. 500 transplants ordered for 2007.  |

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| Stop all Musk Thistle seed production on Chesaw with spot spraying and hand pulling crews.   | Complete  | Accomplished with staff and WCC crew effort. Included approx 700 hours hand pulling. This effort will continue in 2007.   |
| 5 Structures removed and/or repaired that have been identified as safety concerns.   | Cultural resource surveys completed and 4 buildings removed on Happy Hill.                | Held public auction and surplused 4 large buildings. Demolition of public safety structures will continue in 2007.  |
| Survey and repair 60 miles of boundary fence on all SCWA units.  | Completed all boundary fence repairs outside leased grazing areas.                        | Will repeat in 2007, and include boundary sign positioning.   |
| Replace flooded reed canary grass marsh with a functional stream channel that mimics natural stream morphology (.25 miles) on the Scotch Creek unit. | Not completed and not funded for 2006. We are working on design, and permitting for 2007. | Time and funding did not allow completion. We are currently in the process of permitting. SEPA submitted and DNS received, JARPA near completion. Hope for construction in July 2007. |
| Monitor all existing sharp-tailed grouse leks, and search adjacent lands for new leks.   | Complete  | Three active leks surveyed on Scotch Creek and 1 on Chesaw. Total numbers slightly up from 2005. Will continue in 2007.   |
| Plans completed including WLA plan, weed plan, and RMAP.   | Complete  | Will continue updates in 2007.  |
| Initiate timber thinning and prescribed burning projects on Pogue Mountain and Chesaw units.   | Not completed.  | Will pursue in the future if funding, and liability issues are resolved. Unfunded in 2007.  |
| Monitor 2 grazing permits  | Complete  | Added two emergency permits due to the Tripod fire in Okanogan County.  |
| Survey and list all fish species on wildlife area streams.   | Not complete  | Not completed due to lack of available equipment. Not in 2007 Statement of Work.  |
| Complete construction of Tunk Creek Bridge; improve access road and construct parking area on Tunk Valley unit.                                      | Complete  | Project complete, see photos above.   |

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| Implement weed control plan  | On-going   | Successful at removing all Dalmatian Toadflax plants from Tunk Valley and Pogue Mountain. Completed plans to increase Houndstounge and Russian knapweed control. Will continue in 2007. |
| Move unneeded water rights to trust  | Not complete   | Time did not allow for completion.  |
| Survey and fence 2 miles of Boyce south boundary line.   | Not completed  | Unfunded measure. Not funded in 2007.   |
| Assess the possibility of DNR and private lands lease to create public access to Pogue Mountain. | Wrote letter to private landowner and discussed the project with DNR district manager. | Neither landowners nor managers were interested in the project. Will pursue access from the west off of Green Lake road.  |

### **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.

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

#### **1. Protect and restore riparian habitat.**

It is evident that certain previous tree and shrub plantings are experiencing severe deer browsing resulting in stunted growth of the new transplants. Some “rubbing” from maturing bucks also occurs killing the larger basal diameter trees. To protect and help these important habitats to establish, temporary deer fencing will be installed.

- A. Strategy: Construct deer exclosure fence around the established plantings near the HQ and below the corrals on the Scotch Creek unit. Approximately 1 mile of fence for each site will be required. BPA and WHIP funds are approved for these two projects in 2007.

#### **2. Protect and restore shrub steppe habitat.**

- A. Strategy: Research methods and set up trials to test different methods to increase forb diversity in restored steppe fields.
- B. Strategy: A WHIP grant has been approved to enhance shrub-steppe on previous agriculture fields. 165 acres has been identified on Happy Hill, which will be accomplished over the next two years.

### **2007 Performance Measures**

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

- 1) Shrub-steppe restoration. Summer fallow 80 acres and fall dormant seeding of native grasses and forbs on the Happy Hill, LLC acquisition on Scotch Creek.
- 2) Riparian restoration. Maintain over 100,000 trees and shrubs previously planted. Include 500 new Water Birch transplants where needed.
- 3) Deer exclosure fence. Install approximately 2 miles of deer fence to prevent browsing damage to new tree and shrub plants. Two existing plots will be fenced, one near the Scotch Creek HQ, and the other below the “corrals” along Scotch Creek.
- 4) Continue with weed management plan. Plans for 2007 include 40 acres of White-top, 200 acres of Russian Knapweed, and 20 acres Canadian Thistle on Scotch Creek. 40 acres of Houndstounge and 125 acres of Musk Thistle on Chesaw. 10 acres of Russian Knapweed on Pogue Mountain and 40 acres on Tunk Valley.
- 5) Restore proper hydraulic function to Scotch Creek below the HQ. Includes dredging a new meandering channel to mimic natural conditions, and a 2-year plan to eliminate the reed canary grass invasion and plant new riparian vegetation.
- 6) Boundary fence repair and signing. Inspect and repair in early spring as much of the 60 miles boundary fence as feasible on all units. Install or replace wildlife area boundary signs as needed.

### **Citizens Advisory Group Input**

A major discussion occurred on the issue of a “functional stream channel” project scheduled for 2007. Most agreed that a shallow meandering channel would not work in this particular situation, due to the low water volume and heavy vegetation. They were concerned that a similar situation would quickly occur in the low gradient meadow. I will work on the design and with WDFW environmental engineer to find the best approach.

Another comment was to include more photo points and monitoring of grazing and enhancements. We will incorporate this into 2007 plans.

#### **Want to see the full plan?**

Go to -

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/index.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm)

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