



WHATCOM WILDLIFE AREA 2010 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Recreational Use at Lake Terrell

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2009 Whatcom Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for the Whatcom Wildlife Area.

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/ The wildlife area is located outside Ferndale, Washington in Whatcom County, and includes seven sub-units comprising 5,327 acres. The largest unit is located at the Lake Terrell Headquarters.

The plan identifies resource needs and guides management activities 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 includes 2009 accomplishments, new issues and management strategies, and 2010 performance measures.

Updates/Changes

The 2009 operating budget was cut due to state and federal budget shortfalls. A significant statewide reduction in WDFW staff and funding caused changes to the wildlife area. Due to the loss of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area manager’s position, Manager Richard Kessler started a process which concluded with him taking over the Whatcom Wildlife Area, and Manager Shana Winegeart taking the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area in Ellensburg. Jim Edwards’s Environmental Education Specialist position at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center was also cut. Due to receiving funds from the Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park Foundation, he continued in the position until September.

Inside

Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
New Issues	2
Major Stewardship Accomplishments	2
Status Report of 2009 Performance Measures	4
New Strategies	6
2010 Performance Measures	7
Citizens Advisory Group Input	8

New Issues

Tennant Lake Unit: The Port of Bellingham has finalized the wetland restoration proposal for the area north of Slater road and will begin work on the project in summer 2010. This project is mitigation for wetlands lost in the Bellingham Airport expansion and will entail controlling reed canary grass, planting trees and shrubs, and creating open water to improve wetland function and waterfowl habitat on WDFW lands. Access to the project area will be restricted during the construction phase of the project, and for the first three years or until the year 3 performance standards has been met, to allow for undisturbed growth of the planted vegetation. A cedar rail fence will be constructed as a boundary along the existing trail from the parking area to the dike trail. Native Growth Protection Area Signs will be posted along the public interface boundaries of the project area and parking area. An alternate area north and east of the parking area, outside of the project area, will be mowed to allow for continued off leash dog use at the site. After the construction and three-year growth period the fence will be removed, and recreational access including hunting, dog training, and wildlife watching will resume on the project area. While the Port of Bellingham will be the responsible party for ensuring that the mitigation project meets defined wetland performance standards during a 10-year monitoring period, the area will remain in WDFW ownership and be managed as a wildlife habitat conservation area (predominately waterfowl habitat). Until such time as the mitigation project meets its 10-year performance standard, WDFW will provide the Port of Bellingham at least 60 days advance notification of future amendments or updates to this WDFW Whatcom Wildlife Area Management Plan which may affect the project area so they may coordinate with the appropriate local, state and federal wetland agencies.

Nooksack Unit: We continue to pursue a fully handicapped accessible hunting/wildlife watching blind at the pea pit area on the Nooksack unit. In the short term, we will be allowing limited ATV access off of Shady Lane to allow handicapped hunters closer access to two existing blinds.

Lummi Island Unit: The native bald overlook on the Lummi Island property is getting degraded by the increased use of the site by recreational users. A cedar rail fence will be built on the site to protect the majority of the site from over use. Signage will be posted which will inform the public of the fragility of the habitat.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Lake Terrell underwent a 3-foot drawdown in the summer of 2009. The lake is lowered once every five years to invigorate shoreline vegetation, which provides important cover and forage for fish and wildlife. During the drawdown WDFW controlled noxious weeds (purple loosestrife), surveyed the island vegetation and removed boat hazards.

The Nooksack River levee sustained additional damage after the January 2009 flood. High water created a shallow notch in the levee crest and caused existing scour holes to erode an additional 1-2 feet further into the levee. A cooperative repair project with Whatcom County Public Works was completed in May 2009. The project entailed filling scour holes, covering the areas with geotextile fabric, and reseeding with grass. It has grown back well.

The old barn at Marietta was a safety hazard due to its age and condition. The WDFW construction staff deconstructed it in June, with the materials saved and stored at Lake Terrell.

Washington State Parks are interested in using some of the materials to repair their existing buildings.

Vegetation management continues to demand a significant portion of wildlife area staff time. Over 1,000 acres were monitored for noxious weed encroachment, and staff controlled weeds on more than 600 acres using integrated pest management practices. Species controlled included purple loosestrife, yellow flag iris, Scot's broom, Japanese knotweed, and reed canarygrass. Annual planting of waterfowl food plots continued, and 160 acres were planted into cereal grains by wildlife area staff and a contracted sharecropper. Total acres planted in 2009 were reduced from previous years due to a significant increase in fertilizer and fuel costs. Also, an unusually wet spring left standing water in some fields late into the year, and these areas could not be planted. All agricultural fields were sprayed for noxious weeds.

Over 6,000 students or members of the public participated in educational programs offered by the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center in 2009, and it is estimated the center hosted over 57,000 visitors this year. Jim Edwards provided an excellent outdoor education program comprised of field trips and school outreach classes, nature day camps, a young naturalist program, and numerous family outdoor education programs. This was the last year of the program due to budget and staff reductions.

Work has begun on the new Lake Terrell fishing pier. Planning and permitting is almost complete. Test holes have been dug to prepare for post driving this summer. A second Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Grant has been applied for to extend and construct a "T" section on the end of the pier.

Ducks Unlimited completed the installation of a new water control structure at the Intalco Unit, and the repair of another control structure on Lake Terrell. The old structure on Intalco's 40-Acre Pond was approximately 25 years old and leaked profusely. The new concrete structure was installed in August. The control on Lake Terrell was leaking water around and under the structure, which was installed in 2007. Clay material and ecology blocks were used to seal it up, and both controls are now working well.



Intalco Water Control Device

Status Report of 2009 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 2010.

2009 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2010 Related Activity/ Comments
Plant 160 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl (100 acres corn, 60 acres barley)	Completed. 100 acres of corn was planted at Slater Road. 40 acres of barley were planted at Lake Terrell and British Petroleum (BP) planted 20 acres of barley.	2010 corn planting is expected to be 100 acres. Lake Terrell barley will remain at 40 acres due to budget restraints. BP still expected to plant 20 acres of barley.
Monitor and/or control weeds on 1,000 acres	Completed. Mowed 20 acres reed canary grass, 2 acres alders. Sprayed 20 acres Scot's broom and 25 acres purple loosestrife. Cut flower heads off scattered yellow-flag iris. Monitored weeds on 2000 acres.	Coordinate with WDFW weed crew to control purple loosestrife and Japanese knotweed. Increase reed canary grass mowing to 60 acres to improve hunting/ recreation and reduce reed canary grass vigor.
Monitor photo points on Marietta Slough restoration project	Not completed. Delay in agency shift to new GPS/ mapping software.	Points will be revisited when WDFW completes shift to Vista software (2010?)
Work to increase summer flows in Terrell Creek without negatively impacting Lake Terrell	Completed in 2009	Continue summer flow enhancement in Terrell Creek
Monitor success of Lake Terrell Island plantings	Some islands still lacking vegetation.	Further planting will take place in 2010
Maintain one mile of fence line on Lake Terrell Unit to protect reserve from trespass	Completed	Continue annual maintenance as necessary
Pursue opportunities to create an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) hunting site at the Nooksack unit lagoon.	WDFW staff submitted capital project request for work sometime in the future.	Open up handicapped access to adjacent blinds while lagoon site is being worked on.

Coordinate local Washington Waterfowl Association's (WWA) construction/maintenance of 42 hunting/viewing blinds	WWA conducted work parties and maintained 42 blinds. WA manager attended WWA meetings and assisted as necessary.	Continue cooperative efforts with WWA.
Coordinate with Ducks Unlimited to install a water control structure at Intalco Unit	One control structure completed, one repaired on Lake Terrell.	Replace smooth boards with double tongue and groove boards.
Survey dog-walkers twice per month	Not completed	Monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksak Unit.
Mow the off-leash dog area north of Slater road to control weeds and make it more appealing to dog walkers.	Completed. Off-leash dog area was mowed.	Mow area north and east of parking area for off-leash dog use while Port of Bellingham enhancement project is being constructed.
Assist WDFW Engineering staff with planning of Lake Terrell fishing pier grant project	Completed. Construction will begin in Summer 2010.	Continue coordination throughout the construction project.
Survey for Townsend's big-eared bats in Marietta barn prior to summer demolition	Completed. No bat colony or large numbers of bats were found. Barn was deconstructed.	
Coordinate with BP to open more land to hunting and recreation	Ongoing. Opened up a portion of the Safety Zone to Hunting on Grandview.	Will continue coordinating with BP on opening more areas to hunting and recreation.
Coordinate with local sportsman's club to maintain archery range	Assisted Custer Sportsmen in maintaining Intalco Range.	Improve course safety and design. Continue cooperative maintenance.
Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed		
Coordinate 30-40 volunteers releasing 4,000 pheasants during hunting season	Utilized approximately 30 volunteers in 2009 pheasant release.	Continue to utilize volunteers.
Coordinate with other agencies	Ongoing. Worked with Port of Bellingham on mitigation, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation on land use, and Whatcom County Public Utility District on easement clearing.	Continue cooperative work as issues arise.
Investigate option of new Lake Terrell dam structure, and grants to fund upgrade.	WDFW applied for capitol fund project to upgrade the Lake Terrell dam for fish passage and increased water retention.	Continue searching for funding sources for dam improvement.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies strategies or activities that address the WDFW's goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species presence, and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added in response 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: Provide Stainable Fish and Wildlife-related Recreational and Commercial Opportunities Compatible with Maintaining Healthy Fish and Wildlife Populations and Habitats.

1. Provide and manage resource-compatible hunting and fishing opportunities

- A. Strategy: *Create an ADA accessible waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing site at the Nooksack unit vegetable washing lagoon.* Timeframe: 2010
Funding source: Migratory Bird Stamp funds, Washington Waterfowl Association match, capitol projects or possible RCO grant
- B. Strategy: *Provide wheelchair accessibility at the Intalco Unit archery range*
Timeframe: 2010
- C. Strategy: *Replace boardwalk at Tennant Lake.* Estimated cost \$800,000
- D. *Raise two bridges along slough that block boat access to Tennant Lake.*
Estimated cost \$250,000

Agency Objective: Work with Tribal and Local Governments and Private Landowners to Ensure Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Objectives are Achieved.

1. Develop and coordinate fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation projects.

- A. Strategy: Continue negotiations with British Petroleum to open some portion of the 1,100 acre Point Whitehorn Property to public hunting. Timeframe: 2010
Funding source: State operating funds

Agency Objective: Reconnect with Those Interested in Washington's Fish and Wildlife.

1. Market the Whatcom Wildlife Area to a broader audience

- A. Strategy: *Fund naturalist program and a full-time naturalist position at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center.*
Estimated cost: \$60,000 annually

Agency Objective: Provide Sound Operational Management of WDFW Lands, Facilities, and Access Sites.

2. Maintain facilities, structures, and physical improvements

- A. Strategy: Assist WDFW Engineering staff with planning and construction of new Lake Terrell Fishing Pier. Timeframe: 2010-12
Funding source: state operating funds
- B. Strategy: Coordinate Nooksack levee repair project with Whatcom County Public Works. Timeframe: 2010
Funding source: state operating funds

- C. Strategy: Pursue grant funds to replace the Tennant Lake Unit boardwalk and raise two bridges. Timeframe: 2010
- D. Strategy: Improve boardwalk at Pine/Cedar Lakes Unit. Estimated cost \$15,000. Timeline: 2010

Agency Objective: Protect, Restore and Enhance Fish and Wildlife Populations and Their Habitats.

- 1. **Maintain and improve fish populations**
 - A. Strategy: Investigate options for replacing Lake Terrell dam to improve fish passage. Timeframe: 2010-2012
- 2. **Protect, restore and enhance wetland and riparian habitats**
 - A. Strategy: Assist the Port of Bellingham in implementation of the Slater Road Wetland Mitigation Project. Timeframe: 2010
Funding source: Port of Bellingham
 - B. Strategy: Pursue land acquisition to protect wetlands adjacent to Tennant Lake.
 - C. Strategy: Purchase last 3-acre parcel of privately owned lakebed at Lake Terrell
 - D. Strategy: Provide co-op funding to county or city to buy out properties in Marietta and allow levee breaching on the Nooksack Unit.

Agency Objective: Minimize Adverse Interactions between Humans and Wildlife

- 1. **Monitor and manage public access to minimize negative effects on fish and wildlife**
 - A. Strategy: Coordinate with British Petroleum to realign safety zones where appropriate.
Timeframe: 2010. Funding source: State operating funds
 - B. Strategy: Coordinate with Port of Bellingham on construction of cedar rail fence and signage to limit access to wetland mitigation project area.
Timeline: 2010-2013. Funding source: Port of Bellingham
 - C. Strategy: Mow the area north and east of the parking area at the north of Slater Road Unit to provide an alternate area for dog walkers.
Timeline: 2010. Funding source: State operating funds
 - D. Strategy: Build cedar rail fence to protect the native bald overlook on the Lummi Island property.
Timeline: 2010. Funding source: State operating funds

2010 Performance Measures

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

- 1) Plant a minimum 160 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl use
- 2) Monitor and/or control weeds on 1,000 acres
- 3) Continue monitoring 20 photo points when GPS/mapping software is updated.
- 4) Plant some of Lake Terrell's islands that lack cover around hunting blinds.
- 5) Pursue grant opportunities to create an ADA hunting site on the Nooksack unit lagoon
- 6) Release 4,000 pheasants with the assistance of 30-40 volunteers
- 7) Coordinate with Port of Bellingham on north of Slater wetland enhancement project.

- Build fence along trail, limit access to project site for three years.
- 8) Coordinate with WWA to maintain 42 hunting blinds and 4 boat launches at Lake Terrell, Tennant Lake, Nooksack and Intalco Units.
 - 9) Coordinate use and maintenance of Intalco Archery Range with Custer Sportsmen.
 - 10) Coordinate with British Petroleum to open newly acquired land to public hunting.
 - 11) Assist WDFW Engineering staff with construction of Lake Terrell fishing pier grant project
 - 12) Coordinate with other land managing agencies

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held April 7, 2010 to review management progress, address any new issues, and gather input on existing issues. Those in attendance included: Doug Channel, Gene Watson, Sylvia Goodwin, Greg McHenry, Lynne Givler, Dennis Conner, Ken Miller, Kenn Kiesner, Paul Woodcock and Richard Kessler. Kenneth Ford and Paul Sadler submitted written comments prior to the meeting.

CAG Top 10 project list for 2010 in order of priority (all currently unfunded)

1. Fund Tennant Lake Interpretive Center programs and Naturalist position
2. Reinstate W.A. Managers’ limited commission to increase enforcement on State lands
3. Replace Tennant Lake boardwalk
4. Improve/replace Lake Terrell dam
5. Create ADA hunting/wildlife viewing site at Nooksack unit lagoon
6. Raise bridges over Tennant slough
7. Fund improvements on the Intalco Archery Range to make course wheelchair accessible
8. Pursue land acquisition to protect wetlands adjacent to Tennant Lake
9. Purchase 3-acre parcel of privately owned Terrell lakebed
10. Provide co-op funds to county or city to buy out properties in Marietta

The following new input/issues were addressed at the CAG meeting:

Issue: The Intalco Archery Range needs changes to the first shooting stations to avoid safety problems for other recreational users.

Response: The Custer Sportsmen’s Club that runs the archery course will supply new signs at the parking area that better inform the public of the archery course. They will also move the first shooting station to make it safer for all users.

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Want to see the full plan?
 Go to –
http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/