



WHATCOM WILDLIFE AREA 2012 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 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 7 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 bi-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 2010 and 2011 accomplishments, new issues and management strategies, and 2012-13 performance measures.

Budget Updates

The 2010 operating budget was virtually the same as 2009 with no major cuts or additions (\$110,596). The budget in 2011 was the same with no cuts and two additions. We received the first annual payment of \$10,000 from the Port of Bellingham for the use of the Tennant Lake property for the Port’s wetland mitigation enhancement project. Also in 2011, we received \$15,000 in grant funds to improve the Archery Range on the Intalco unit.

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New Issues

Tennant Lake Unit: The Port of Bellingham has finalized the wetland restoration proposal for the area north of Slater road and began work on the project in summer of 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. Due to budgetary restraints, the project is now going to be completed in two phases. The first phase will occur in 2012, and will enhance 14 acres. The second phase will occur in 2014 with the remaining 23 acres. 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 have 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 14 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.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

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, scotch broom, Japanese knotweed and reed canary grass. 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 2010 were 75 acres of barley and 100 acres of corn. 10% of the planted corn was left standing for waterfowl winter feeding. All agricultural fields were sprayed for noxious weeds.

Status Report of 2010 and 2011 Performance Measures

2010 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2011 Related Activity/ Comments
Plant 160 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl (100 acres corn, 75 acres barley)	Completed. 100 acres of corn was planted at Slater Rd. 55 acres of barley were planted at Lake Terrell and British Petroleum (BP) planted 20 acres of barley.	2011 corn planting is expected to be 100 acres, Lake Terrell barley will remain at 55 acres. BP is 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 scotch broom, and 25 acres purple loosestrife. Cut flower heads off scattered yellow-flag iris. Monitored weeds on 2,000 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.
Work to increase summer flows in Terrell Creek without negatively impacting Lake Terrell	Completed in 2010	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 Spring 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
Monitor water control structures on Lake Terrell and Intalco units.	All water controls checked and maintained.	Continue monitoring of water controls.
Monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack Units.	Completed	Continue to monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack Units.
Mow area north and east of parking area for off-leash dog use while Port of Bellingham enhancement project is being constructed.	Completed. Off-leash dog area was mowed, including the 37 acre work site.	Continue to mow off-leash dog use area while construction continues.
Assist WDFW Engineering staff with planning for the new Lake Terrell fishing pier project.	Completed. Construction was completed in late summer 2011.	Continue coordination throughout the construction project.
Build cedar rail fence to protect the native bald overlook on the Lummi Island property.	Completed. Construction occurred in 2010.	Monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island Bald. Install interpretative materials on site.
Coordinate with BP to open more land to hunting and recreation	Ongoing, opened up a portion of the Safety Zone to Hunting on Grandview in 2010.	Will continue coordinating with BP on hunting and recreation.
Coordinate with local sportsman's club to maintain archery range	Assisted Custer Sportsmen in maintaining Intalco range. Improved safety by installing new signs and changing first target.	Improve course safety and design. Continue cooperative maintenance.
Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed	Ongoing	Continue to apply for new grants when available.
Coordinate 30-40 volunteers releasing 4,500 pheasants during hunting season	Utilized approximately 25 volunteers in 2010 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 PUD on easement clearing.	Continue cooperative work as issues arise.
Investigate option of new Lake Terrell dam structure, and grants to fund upgrade.	WDFW again applied for capitol fund project to upgrade the Lake Terrell dam for fish	Continue searching for funding sources for dam improvement.

	passage and increased water retention.	
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2011 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2012-13 Related Activity/ Comments
Plant 160 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl (100 acres corn, 75 acres barley)	Completed. 100 acres of corn was planted at Slater Rd. 55 acres of barley were planted at Lake Terrell and British Petroleum (BP) planted 20 acres of barley.	2012 corn planting is expected to be 100 acres, Lake Terrell barley will remain at 55 acres. BP is 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 scotch broom, and 25 acres purple loosestrife. Cut flower heads off scattered yellow-flag iris. Monitored weeds on 2,000 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 public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald. Install interpretive materials at site.	Completed in 2011	Continue to monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald.
Work to increase summer flows in Terrell Creek without negatively impacting Lake Terrell	Completed in 2011	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 Spring 2013
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
Monitor water control structures on Lake Terrell and Intalco units.	All water controls checked and maintained	Continue monitoring of water controls
Monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack Units.	Completed	Continue to monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack Units.
Mow area north and east of parking area for off-leash dog use while Port of Bellingham enhancement project is being constructed.	Completed. Off-leash dog area was mowed, including the 37 acre work site.	Continue to mow off-leash dog use area while construction continues.
Assist WDFW Engineering staff with planning for the new Lake Terrell fishing pier project.	Construction was completed in late summer 2011.	Monitor constructed pier for any wear or damage from use
Coordinate with BP to open more land to hunting and recreation	Ongoing, opened up a portion of the Safety Zone to Hunting on Grandview in 2010.	Will continue coordinating with BP on hunting and recreation.
Coordinate with local sportsman's club to maintain archery range	Assisted Custer Sportsmen in maintaining Intalco range. Improved safety by installing new signs and changing first target.	Improve course safety and design. Continue cooperative maintenance.
Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed	Ongoing	Continue to apply for new grants when available
Coordinate 30-40 volunteers releasing 4,500 pheasants during hunting season	Utilized approximately 25 volunteers in 2010 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 PUD on easement clearing.	Continue cooperative work as issues arise
Investigate option of new Lake Terrell dam structure, and grants to fund upgrade.	WDFW again applied for capitol fund project to upgrade the Lake Terrell dam for fish passage and increased water retention.	Funding has been secured to complete the Lake Terrell dam remodeling. A salmon enhancement grant and a grant from British Petroleum will fund the remodel in Summer 2012.

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 2012.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies strategies or activities that address the Agency'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 Lake Terrell unit. Timeframe: 2012
Funding source: Washington Waterfowl Association, state operating funds
- B. Strategy: Provide increased wheelchair accessibility at the Intalco unit archery range Timeframe: 2012
Funding source: Archery Range Improvement Grant, state operating funds
- C. Strategy: Renovate boardwalk at Tennant Lake. Timeframe 2013, Estimated cost \$350,000 Funding source: RCO Grant, Capitol Project funds
- D. Strategy: Install artificial fish nesting structures around the new fishing pier at Lake Terrell. Timeframe: 2012, Funding Source: Borderline Bassin' Contenders
- E. Strategy: Make Tennant Lake and the Clay Pit Pond Catch and Release fisheries. Timeframe: 2012, Funding Source: State operational 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.
Timeframe: 2012. Estimated cost: \$60,000 annually

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

1. Maintain facilities, structures, and physical improvements

- A. Strategy: Pursue grant funds to replace the Tennant Lake unit boardwalk.
Timeframe: 2012 Timeframe 2013, Estimated cost \$350,000 Funding source: RCO Grant, Capitol Project funds
- B. Strategy: Improve boardwalk at Pine/Cedar Lakes unit. Estimated cost \$15,000.
Timeline: 2012

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

1. Maintain and improve fish populations

- A. Strategy: *Install artificial fish nesting structures around the new fishing pier at Lake Terrell.* Timeframe: 2012, Funding Source: Borderline Bassin' Contenders
- B. Strategy: Construct roadside berm to keep Lake Terrell Rd from flooding and hold more water in lake. Timeframe: 2012. Funding source: state operating funds.

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: 2012, Funding source: Port of Bellingham
- B. Strategy: Pursue purchase of last 3-acre parcel of privately owned lakebed at Lake Terrell Timeframe: 2012, Funding source: Grant funds, state operating funds
- C. Strategy: Provide co-op funding to county or city to buy out properties in Marietta and allow levee breaching on the Nooksack unit. Timeframe: 2012.

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 Port of Bellingham on construction of cedar rail fence and signage to limit access to wetland mitigation project area. Timeframe: 2012-14. Funding source: Port of Bellingham.
- B. Strategy: Mow the area north and east of the parking area at the north of Slater Rd unit to provide an alternate area for dog walkers. Timeframe: 2012. Funding source: State operating funds.

2012-13 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 half 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 4,500 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 on crops to plant for wildlife.
- 11) Coordinate with Whatcom Conservation District on the Lake Terrell dam remodel project.
- 12) Coordinate with other land managing agencies
- 13) Paint and update plumbing in Lake Terrell residence
- 14) Improve equipment parking at Lake Terrell unit
- 15) Install artificial habitat reefs at Lake Terrell around new fishing pier

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held April 12, 2012 to review management progress, address any new issues, and gather input on existing issues. Those in attendance included:

Dennis Conner – Whatcom County Parks
Ken Kiesner – Washington Waterfowl Association
Paul Sadler – Pheasant Hunter
Bob Harriman – Borderline Bassin' Contenders
Anna Marie – Wildlife Area User
Edward Ross – Wildlife Area User
Andrew Gamble – Custer Sportsmen's Club
Scott O'Day - Washington Waterfowl Association

Andrew Gamble and Scott O'Day submitted comments after the meeting.

New Issues from the Citizens Advisory Group:

Whatcom Wildlife Area: Hunting from the ADA accessible wildlife hunting blind at Lake Terrell needed to be shut down due to the completed construction of the new fishing pier. The new pier is too close to the hunting blind to allow safe hunting and fishing at the same time. We continue to allow wildlife viewing from the blind. Working with the Whatcom County Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association we have identified a new possible location for the ADA blind at Lake Terrell. It is located in the southwest corner of the lake off the access road that parallels the lake edge. We hope to have the blind built and ready for use in the 2012-13 hunting season.

Lake Terrell Unit: The Borderline Bassin' Contenders bass fishing club would like to install fish artificial nesting structures around the new fishing pier to help improve fishing from the pier. The artificial structures would last much longer than natural structures, and would look identical to natural ones in a couple years. We will test the use of these artificial nesting structures around the new pier, pending acquiring a Hydraulic Project Approval permit.

Lake Terrell Unit: Pheasant hunters would like to make the small field along Lake Terrell Rd into a handicapped hunter's only area. People registered with the Department as handicapped hunters would be the only ones allowed to hunt the field. This year we will assess the need for a handicapped hunter's only area at Lake Terrell and decide if that field is the best site for it.

Tennant Lake Unit: Due to the past pollution problems from the 1970's and 80's, the Clay Pit Pond and Tennant Lake should be designated Catch & Release Only fishing areas. In the late 70's, it was discovered that an adjacent business was polluting the Clay Pit Pond with runoff from their property. This was stopped, and the Department of Ecology (DOE) had the water and fish tested for heavy metals. Although the fish had elevated levels of heavy metals, they were still in the safe to eat range. Although there is a landfill close to Tennant Lake, when researched, no incidences of pollution from it into Tennant Lake were found. It has been confirmed that no newer testing of water or fish has been done by DOE in Tennant Lake or the Clay Pit Pond. We will not be designating the area Catch and Release Only at this time.

CAG Top 10 project list for 2012-13 in order of priority (all currently unfunded)

1. Fund Tennant Lake Interpretive Center programs and Naturalist position
2. Reinstate WA Managers' limited commission to increase enforcement on State lands
3. Renovate Tennant Lake boardwalk
4. Create ADA pheasant hunting at Lake Terrell
5. Install artificial habitat reefs at Lake Terrell around the new fishing pier
6. Create ADA hunting blind at Lake Terrell
7. Apply for grant funds to make the Intalco archery range course more 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.

Contacts:

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

[Hhttp://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/)