

2018

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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



*Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW Private Lands Biologist*

# **DISTRICT 5 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Grant and Adams counties

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## DISTRICT 5 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 5 offers a variety of great hunting opportunities for waterfowl, upland bird, and mule deer hunting. Grant County is the leading county for the number of ducks, geese, pheasants, mourning doves, and quail harvested. Popular and productive hunting occurs throughout many of the units in the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (Figure 1). Other opportunities within the district include chukar, gray partridge, cottontail rabbit, bobcat, cougar, coyote, and mule deer. Elk are harvested in GMUs 278 and 284, but resident populations are not abundant.

Habitat types in District 5 are highly variable. Within the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project (CBIP), the landscape is generally flat, with intermixed dunes and sandy soils. Water is plentiful because of the CBIP and the associated irrigation water including both the Winchester wasteway and Frenchman Hills wasteway. Lands surrounding the CBIP include highly fragmented shrubsteppe, dryland wheat, coulees, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. In these areas, hunters can expect to find gray partridge, mule deer, and chukar in the steepest portions of the district (Sun Lakes and Quincy Lakes units). Much of this land is in private ownership, but some is enrolled in private lands access programs with WDFW. For more information, see the [Private Lands Hunting Access webpage](#).

Dominant native upland shrubs include big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), and spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*). Coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), and Woods' rose (*Rosa woodsii*) are the dominant native shrubs associated with riparian habitats. Non-native riparian species include Russian olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*), which dominates much of the landscape on the Desert Unit. Dominant native perennial grasses include bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), great basin wildrye (*Leymus cinereus*), needle-and-thread (*Hesperostipa comata*), and Indian ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*). Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is by far the most common non-native, invasive annual grass found in this area.

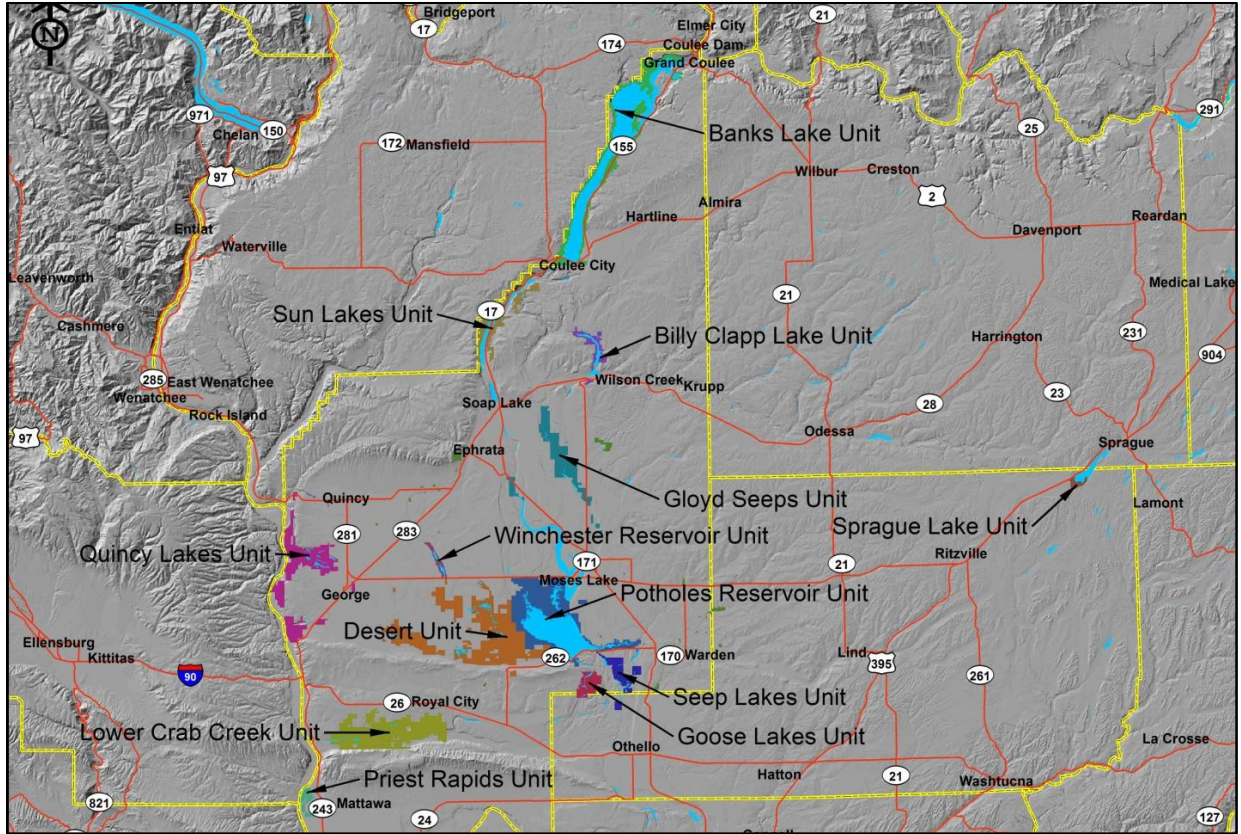
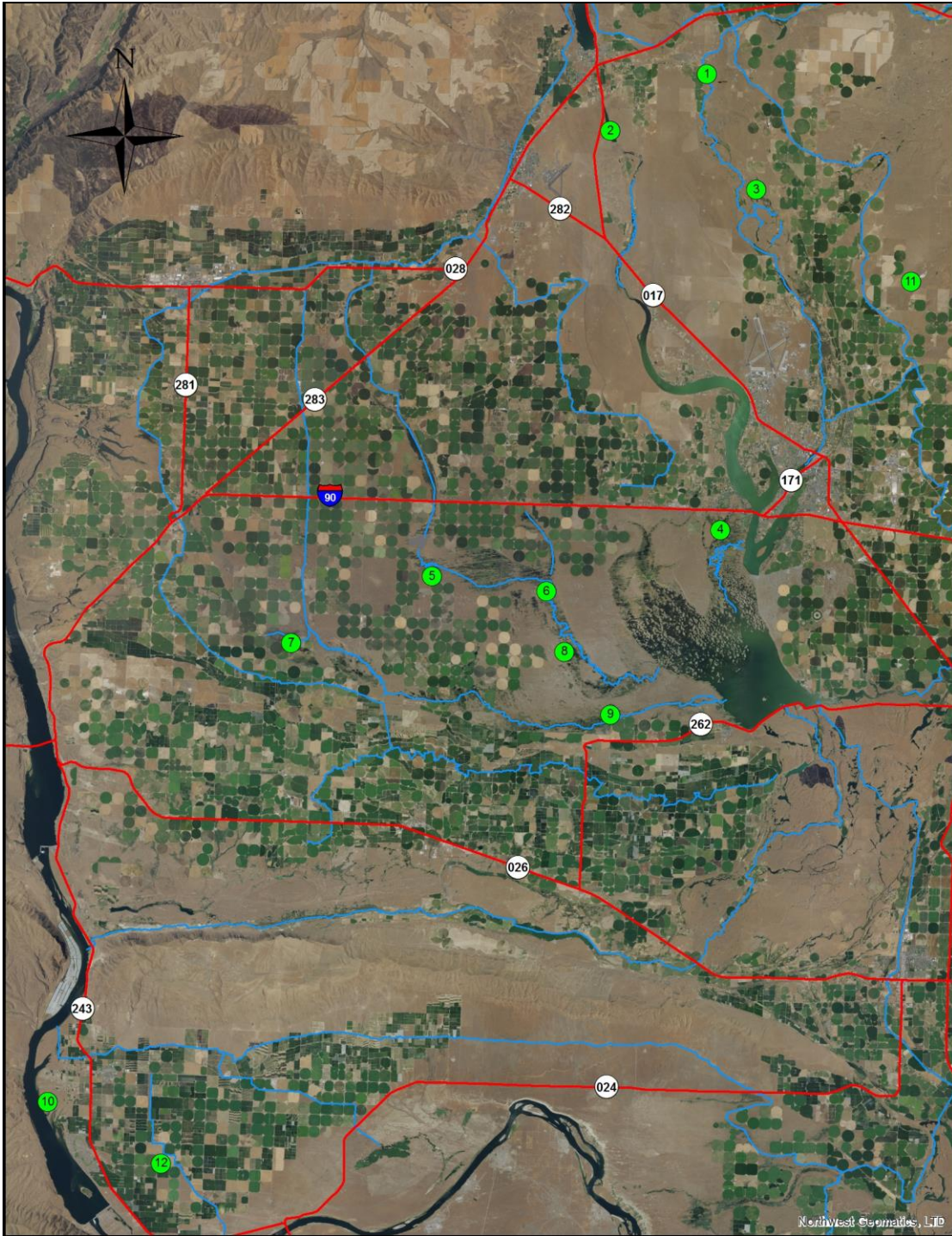


Figure 1. Columbia Basin Wildlife Area units.

## HABITAT MANAGEMENT

The department continues to target grant opportunities for funding to create and recover wetland projects, manage wetland succession, plant food plots, and restore shrubsteppe habitat. Below is a short summary of current wildlife habitat projects.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of waterfowl-related work in Ephrata District. Green circles represent project areas.

**1. Gloyd Road 20 Sharecropping:** This site is sharecropped to provide food and habitat for pheasants, quail, and doves. During most years, alfalfa is grown with requirements for delayed harvest to allow for upland game bird production, but years when wheat is grown this area can be a very productive all bird hunting area.

**2. Ephrata Lake Waterfowl Enhancements:** This lake has historically been an important breeding and staging area for waterfowl. In recent years, there have been notable declines of waterfowl use, and as a result, WDFW took steps to rehabilitate the lake by removing fish in November 2017. We anticipate increased waterfowl use. District staff members will continue to monitor waterfowl response for the next several years.

**3. Mansfield Pond Maintenance:** Efforts to reduce tall emergent vegetation by mowing, burning, and spraying continue, but efforts have been reduced due to limited staff and funding.

**4. West Potholes Reservoir Vegetation Control: *Northern Leopard Frog Management Area (NLFMA)*:** This project consists mostly of vegetation management, primarily aimed at improving northern leopard frog habitat, and it has the added benefit of improving waterfowl habitat by reducing tall emergent vegetation and creating more open-water. Funding is being sought to institute a prescribed burning regime to improve wetland health and reduce tall emergent vegetation to benefit both endangered leopard frogs and nesting waterfowl.

**5. Winchester Regulated Access Area Management:** There continues to be an emphasis on mowing vegetation to improve hunting access. However, hunters should note that water flow at this regulated access area may be limited throughout the waterfowl season. WDFW secured funds to address this issue and is working to secure all the required permits to begin working. Staff members will begin construction as soon as all permits are in place.

**6. Common Reed Control:** Many acres of common reed are controlled along Winchester Wasteway (Dodson to Potholes Reservoir) and throughout North Potholes. WDFW has received considerable positive feedback with regards to the opening of previously closed wetlands.

**7. 239 Drain Project Recovery:** Herbicide treatments for common reed continue in order to maintain open wetland basins.

**8. Harris Ponds Maintenance:** There has been regular maintenance to maintain open water within shallow excavated wetlands.

**9. Frenchman Restricted Access Area Management:** Two ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) blinds were constructed at this project area (Figure 3), which are available for use by contacting the Ephrata Regional Office at (509) 754-4624 for a reservation and combination to the lock.



**Figure 3.** Frenchman Regulated Access Area ADA blind #1 just after installation at the Frenchman Regulated Access Area. Photo by Conner Webster.



**Figure 4.** Millet seeding at Frenchman RAA. Photo by Chattan Mcpherson.





**Figure 5.** Frenchman Regulated Access Area moist soil management work. Photo by Chattan Mcpherson.

**9. Frenchman Regulated Access Area Enhancements:** Frenchman Enhancement project field work started in May 2017. WDFW personnel, Ducks Unlimited Regional Engineers, and contracting crews contoured, excavated, and created a new water delivery ditch. The primary focus was to reset succession and create more open, wetland habitat. Previously, there were large amounts of Russian olive trees within the wetland basins, but WDFW staff members have been working to remove these and replace them with native plants. This will increase the efficiency of vegetation management and moist soil management, and will make the wetland cells better for hunters. Additionally, WDFW created islands that will act as loafing areas for waterfowl and help to make wetlands more attractive to migrating waterfowl.

***Hunters should note that the Frenchman Regulated Access Area will be open seven days a week.***



**Figure 6.** Contouring in Cell 5 of regulated access area. Photo by Chattan McPherson.

**10. Buckshot Goose Field:** The crops within these fields look great and should provide ample forage to waterfowl. There is a pit blind located on site that can accommodate disabled hunters, but it is not fully compliant with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) because there is not a hard packed path to the blind and there is not a loading area near the blind. Disabled hunters with assistance from another hunter have been successful using the blind. Disabled hunters are required to contact the Ephrata Regional Office at (509) 754-4624 in order to get the gate key and access the blind. Additionally, those hunters are required to fill out a “Hunting/Viewing Blind Special Use Permit” prior to each use of the blind.

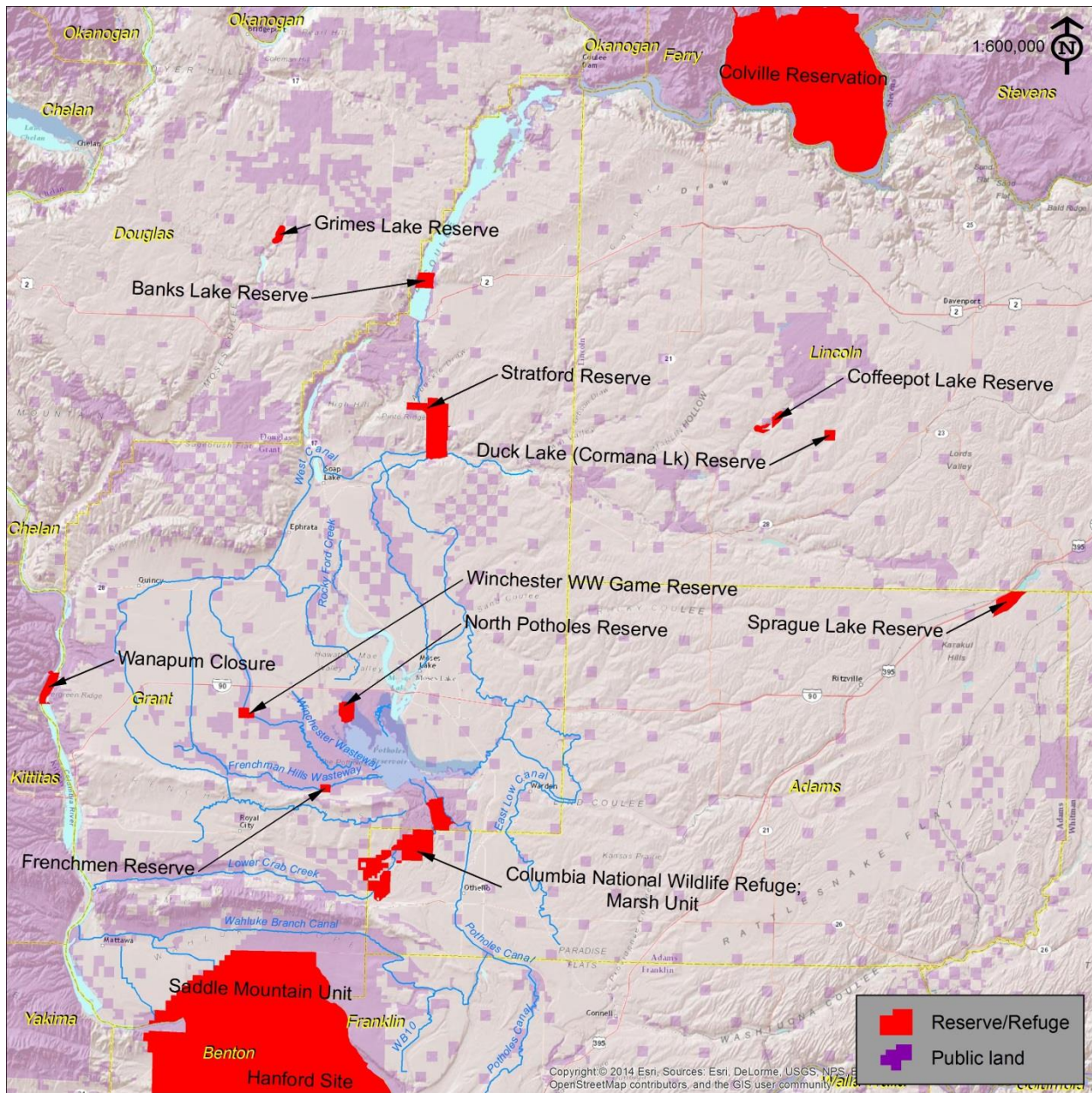
**11. Artesian and Black lakes:** WDFW has been working with partners to explore the possibility of bringing water back into these wetlands systems and also restore the shallow aquifer. Two wells have been installed to monitor groundwater levels and there are plans to construct a water pump to divert water from a nearby irrigation canal that will help rehydrate these wetland basins.

**12. Block 26 Fields:** These fields are located southeast of Mattawa and have both been planted in corn this year, so the overall attractiveness to waterfowl should be good.

## **GAME RESERVES**

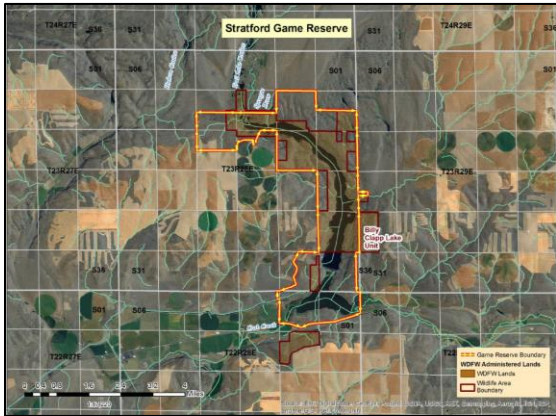
Game Reserves are lands where hunting and wildlife disturbance is not allowed. These undisturbed areas help wildlife in the area and available for hunting locally.

Game Reserve Aerial Maps: [https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/2015\\_game\\_reserves.pdf](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/2015_game_reserves.pdf)



**Figure 7.** Location of wildlife reserves and closed federal refuge units (in red) throughout and adjacent to District 5.

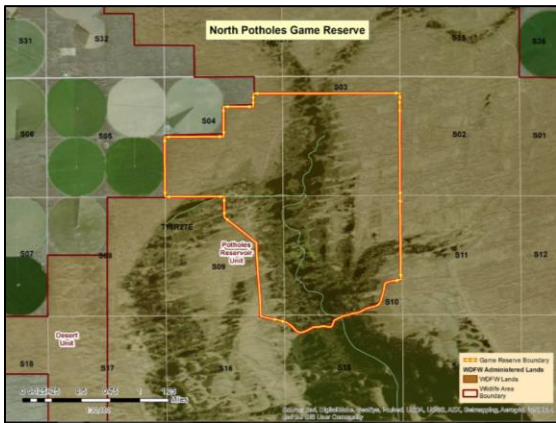
Stratford Game Reserve (Billy Clapp Lake Unit)



Banks Lake Game Reserve (Banks Lake Unit)



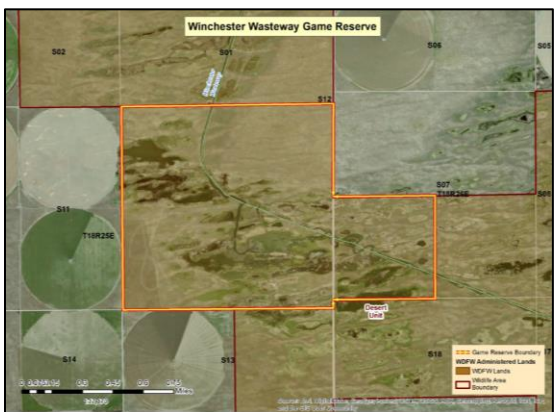
North Potholes Game Reserve (Potholes Reservoir Unit)



Frenchman Game Reserve (Desert Unit)



Winchester Game Reserve (Desert Unit)



Sprague Game Reserve (Sprague Lake Unit)

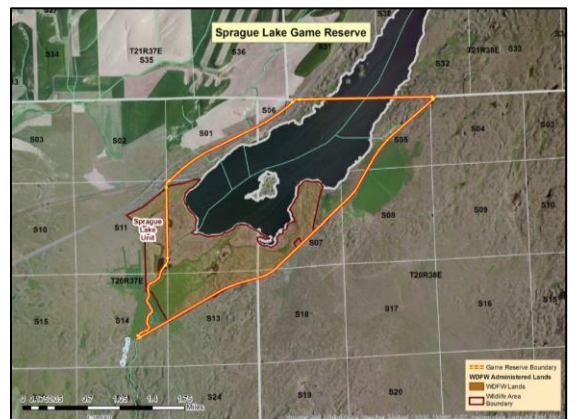


Figure 8. Close ups of reserve boundaries in District 5.

## ELK

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Elk are rare in District 5, and therefore are not a management priority. Resident elk herds do not exist in GMUs 272, 278, or 290. Due to the potential for significant crop depredation issues, WDFW does not encourage the establishment of elk herds in District 5. WDFW allows for *Any Elk* hunting opportunities during the general archery, modern firearm, and late muzzleloader seasons.

The only resident elk in District 5 occur GMU 284. Elk in that GMU are a part of the Hangman Creek sub-herd of the Selkirk herd. This herd is composed of approximately 300 individuals and occurs approximately 16 miles to the northeast at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (GMU 130). These elk enter GMU 284 and are occasionally harvested. Twenty-four elk in GMU 284 (nine bulls and 15 cows) were harvested during 2017, nearly all of which were taken by modern firearm hunters (18 modern firearms, two muzzleloader, two multi-season). There were also two elk harvested in GMU 272 and two elk harvested in GMU 278.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2018 SEASON

If hunters wish to hunt elk in District 5 during the 2018 season, they should seek access on private lands in the eastern portions of GMU 284. Without access to private lands the public land opportunities are very limited.

## DEER

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



**Figure 9.** Bachelor group of mule deer bucks. Photo by Eric Braaten.

**GMU 272** includes 53,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (Gloyd Seeps, Banks Lake, Sun Lakes, Billy Clapp, and Quincy Lakes units), which is predominantly shrubsteppe with deep coulees and interspersed lakes and drainages. Numerous parcels are owned by public entities with the addition of private land parcels that are enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program. The number of deer hunters hunting general seasons (includes multi-weapon permits) within GMU 272 since 2001 ranges from about 1,100 to 1,700. The reported antlerless permit success rates for youth and disabled hunters were 65 percent and 25 percent, respectively. The Lakeview Deer Area second deer antlerless permits typically see variable success rates (27-91 percent), with 60 percent occurring last year.

**GMU 278** includes 36,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (Lower Crab Creek Unit), which is predominantly shrubsteppe habitat. Numerous parcels within DNR and Federal ownership also exist in this GMU. Harvest in this unit generally falls between 20 and 70 deer.

The number of general season deer hunters within GMU 278, including multi-weapon permits, ranges from about 150 to 310.

**GMU 284** is predominately private property, so hunters should plan to seek permission to access private lands and/or plan on hunting lands enrolled in the WDFW Access Program. There are some public lands scattered throughout the GMU, but they tend to be scattered and small (<640 acres). The number of deer general season hunters within GMU 284 ranges from about 650-1,100. The reported Benge Deer Area and Ritzville antlerless permit success rate for youth hunters was 44 percent and 61 percent, respectively. While the disabled hunter rate for the Ritzville Unit was 20 percent. The Benge Deer Area second-deer antlerless success rate was 88 percent.

**GMU 290** is a Quality Hunt permit only unit, thus all hunting opportunities are issued through the public draw. Post-hunt ratios have remained consistent at approximately 50 bucks:100 does, with the majority of bucks being classified as greater than 2.5 years old during aerial surveys. Harvest success for bucks varies greatly by hunt choice. Hunts listed in order from highest to lowest success rates are as follows: late modern, early modern, muzzleloader, late archery, and early archery. This GMU contains very few access roads, and scouting is strongly recommended to increase success. Forty-one percent of the land in GMU 290 is part of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area and managed by WDFW, thus public opportunity is widely available. Public land in this unit consists of riparian areas associated with the Winchester and Frenchman wasteways, and is surrounded by sandy dunes with varying densities of shrub cover. The majority of the private agricultural land in this unit occurs throughout the western half. Hunters with hunting permits will experience much greater success by getting further away from access roads and hiking and scouting the area. Additionally, during many of the permit hunts, other hunting is also occurring, with waterfowl and upland birds being the two most popular.

**Table 1.** Mule deer harvest summary for District 5 GMUs by weapon type.

GMU	Weapon	Antlerless	Antlered	Number of Hunters	%Success	%Success in 2016
272	Archery	42	21	342	18.4	18
272	Modern Firearm	.	180	1102	16.4	21.6
272	Multiple Weapons	8	35	113	38	29.8
272	Muzzleloader	.	18	79	22.8	13.6
272	<b>Totals</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>1636</b>	<b>18.6</b>	
278	Archery	9	10	86	22	20.8
278	Modern Firearm	.	26	154	16.8	30.2
278	Multiple Weapons	2	10	41	29.2	20
278	Muzzleloader	.	7	26	27	42.2
278	<b>Totals</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>20.8</b>	
284	Archery	0	12	49	24.4	19.4
284	Modern Firearm	.	152	639	23.8	25.4
284	Multiple Weapons	0	33	58	56.8	39.2
284	Muzzleloader	.	15	49	30.6	18.6
284	<b>Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>26.7</b>	
290	Archery-early	.	5	11	45	
290	Archery-late	.	5	11	45	
290	Modern-early	.	8	11	73	
290	Modern-late	.	5	5	100	
290	Muzzleloader	.	1	2	50	
290	2nd Deer	14	.	22	64	
290	Youth	1	.	3	33	

For additional information, please see the [Adams and Grant counties Deer Harvest Statistics](#).

### WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

With the exception of the Desert (GMU 290) and Wahluke (GMU 278) units, mule deer in the Ephrata District are largely migratory. Historically, radio-marked mule deer exhibited movements from neighboring GMUs into the Ephrata District (Figure 10). These movements are largely weather dependent, with snowfall and day length likely having the largest effect on fall and winter movements. Mule deer will reverse this migration and return to fawning grounds during spring. South and east movements of mule deer into GMU 272 from neighboring GMUs such as Big Bend, Saint Andrews, and Moses Coulee are believed to occur, but these movements are not as well understood.



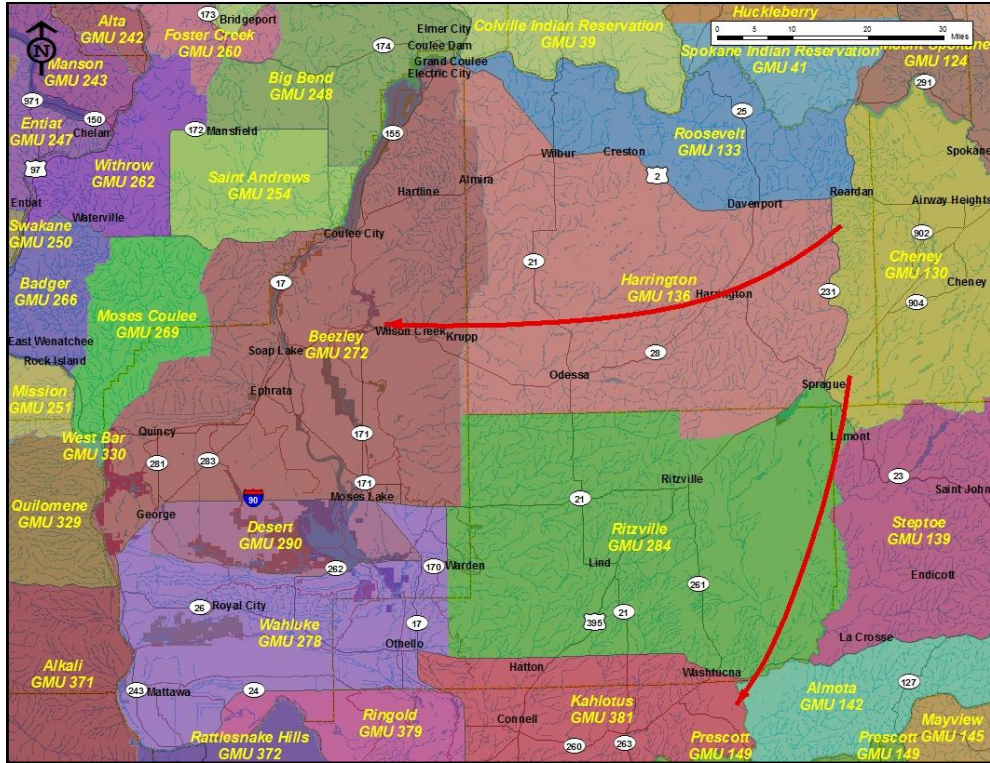


Figure 10. Generalized patterns of fall and winter mule deer migration into the Ephrata District.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2018 SEASON

Most deer harvest occurs in GMUs 272 (Beezley) and 284 (Ritzville). Post-hunt buck:doe ratios from ground surveys in 2017 were 16:100 and 21:100, respectively. Fawn:doe ratios remained favorable in 2017, with 71:100 in GMU 272 and 73:100 in GMU 284. Given the modest escapement of bucks in 2017 and likely good recruitment of fawns, hunters should expect an average year for mule deer hunting throughout the district.



**Figure 11.** Mule deer doe in ripening wheat. Photo by Eric Braaten.

## **DEER AREAS**

There are localized areas in District 5 where deer congregate during harsh or prolonged winters and have the potential to cause crop damage. To address this issue, WDFW provides limited permit-only opportunities to harvest antlerless deer that occur in close proximity to these areas. WDFW defines such areas as deer areas. By providing these opportunities, WDFW hopes to minimize crop depredation by deterring mule deer from congregating. Deer areas in District 5 include Deer Area 2010 (Lakeview), located in GMU 272, and Deer Area 2011 (Benge), located in GMU 284. See the most recent [Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet](#) for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions.

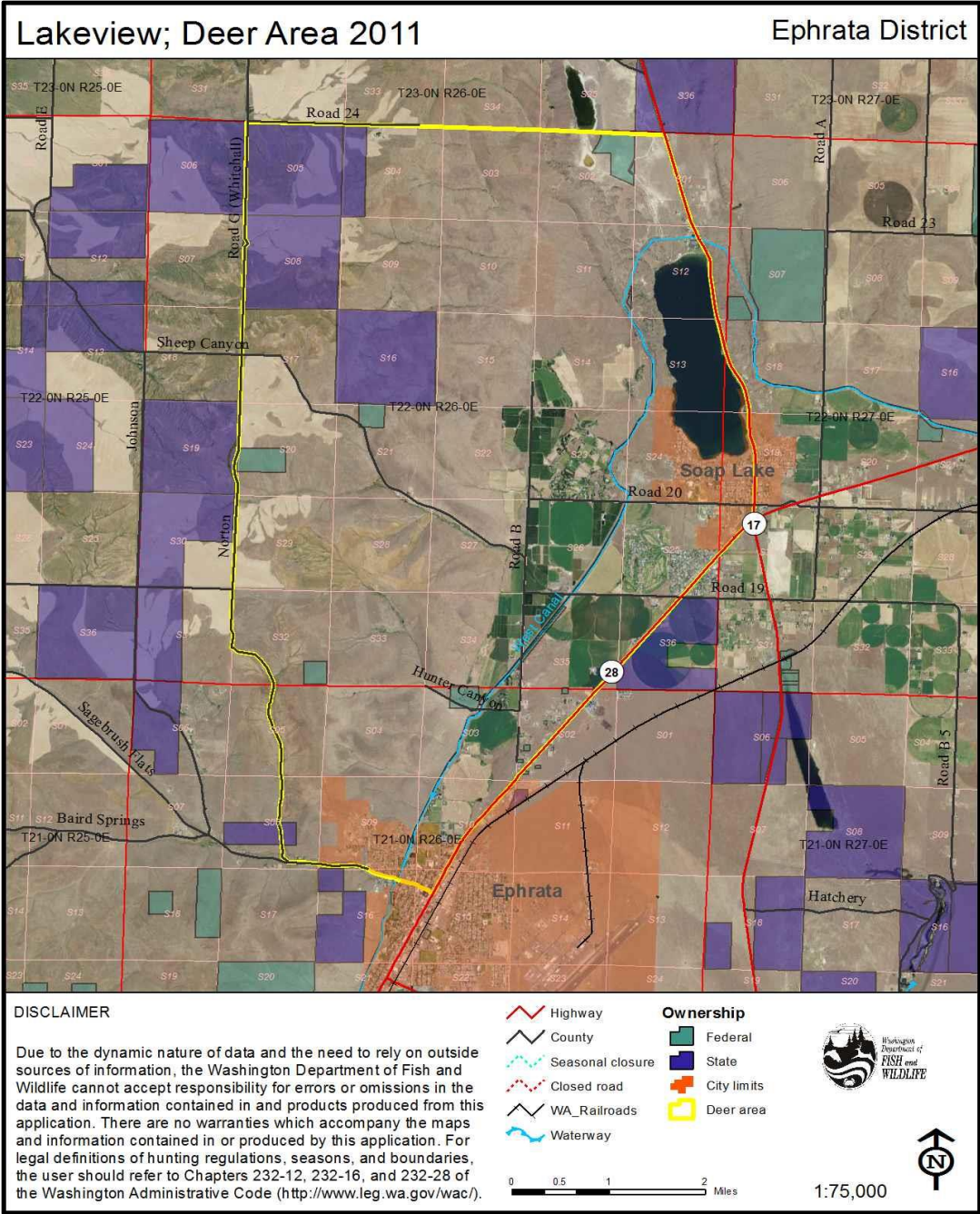
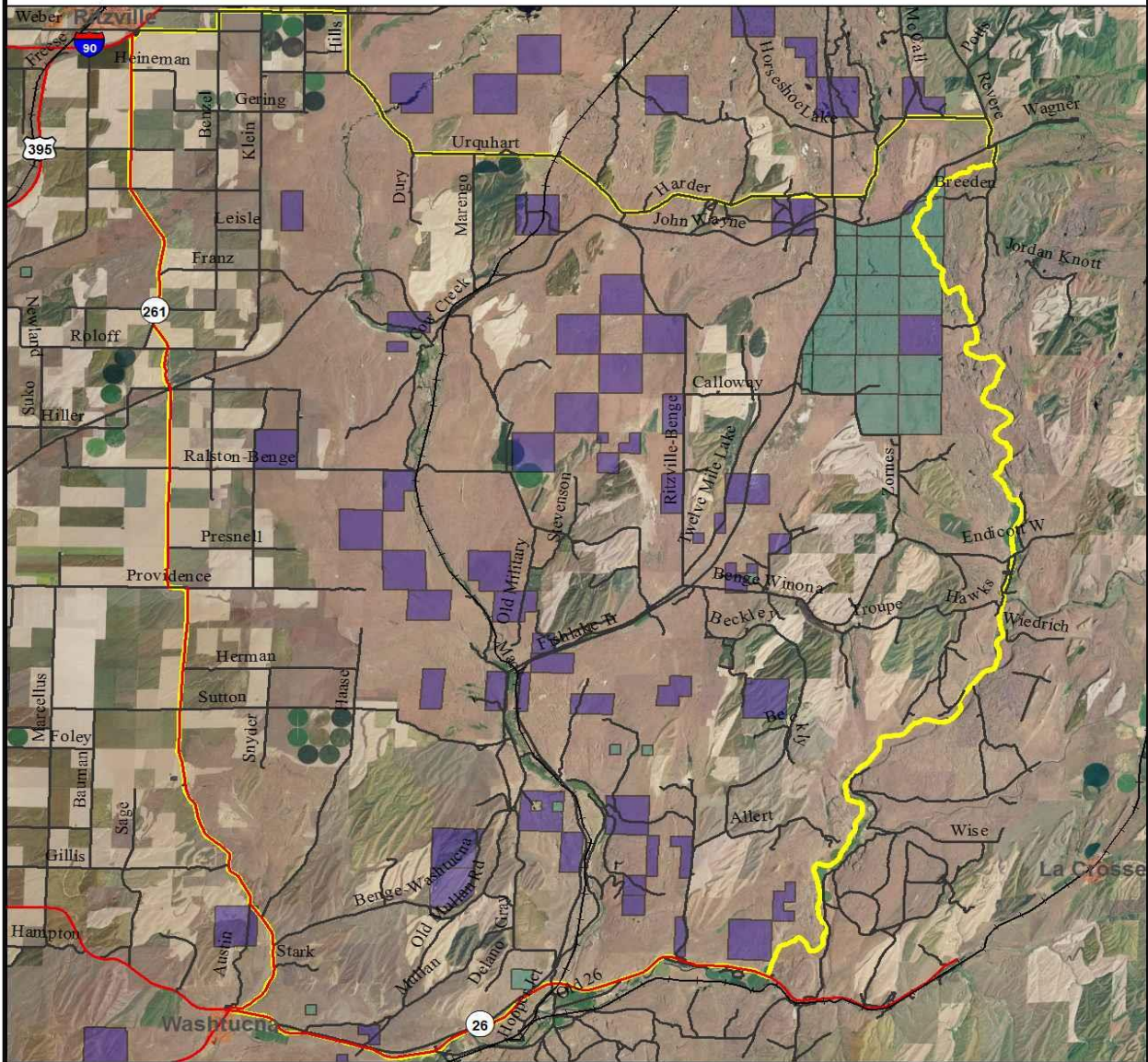


Figure 12. Lakeview Deer Area (boundary highlighted in yellow)

# Benge; Deer Area 2010

Ephrata District



**DISCLAIMER**

Due to the dynamic nature of data and the need to rely on outside sources of information, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions in the data and information contained in and products produced from this application. There are no warranties which accompany the maps and information contained in or produced by this application. For legal definitions of hunting regulations, seasons, and boundaries, the user should refer to Chapters 232-12, 232-16, and 232-28 of the Washington Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

- WA\_Railroads
- Highway
- County
- Seasonal closure
- Closed road
- City limits
- Deer area
- Ownership**
- Federal
- State



1:200,000



**Figure 13.** Benge Deer Area (boundary highlighted in yellow)

## BEAR

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 5 does not have a resident population of black bears. The establishment of a black bear population in this district is not expected in the near future.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2018 SEASON

District 5 is not an optimal area to target black bears. Occasionally bears may disperse through this district, and the most likely places to encounter those individuals are the Beezley Hills and Moses Coulee.

## COUGAR

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Modeling efforts suggest a small population of adult cougars in District 5 and annual harvest is very low (fewer than 10 annually). Cougar harvest comes mostly from GMU 272 (Beezley Hills). Populations are expected to remain stable in this area for the foreseeable future.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2018 SEASON

District 5 is not an optimal area to target cougars. However, the most likely places to encounter cougars are Beezley Hills, Moses Coulee, and adjacent to the Crab Creek drainage upstream from the town of Stratford.

## PHEASANT

Grant County was once again Washington's top pheasant producing county in 2017. This trend has persisted since 2006. Hunters harvested 8,992 birds in Grant County and 1,581 in Adams County for a total harvest of 10,573 pheasants in District 5. Harvest and hunter participation increased from 2016. See the 2017 [Adams and Grant counties Pheasant Harvest Statistics](#) for additional information.

The largest concentrations of wild pheasants on WDFW lands in District 5 are likely to be found within the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George. Mixed bags of wild and released birds are also likely to be had in the Lower Crab Creek and Gloyd Seeps, whereas hunters will likely only find released birds in the Dry Falls, Steamboat Rock, Quincy, and Buckshot sites. Directions to pheasant release sites can be found in the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) pamphlet. Nontoxic shot is required at all pheasant release sites. Please note that the release dates are not released to the public to reduce overcrowding at release sites. Adams County is predominantly private lands, but the area can hold decent numbers of wild pheasants, especially for hunters that have secured access to private property.

Hunters looking for wild birds should focus their efforts on areas of dense cover. Thickets of Russian olive, cattail, roses, weedy areas associated with irrigation ditches, canals, and ponds are most likely to hold pheasants. Hunters should be prepared to do some walking when chasing wild pheasants as they tend to flush well in advance of hunters and are just about as likely to run as flush. Hunters can increase their odds with a dog to both flush and retrieve the birds in the dense cover.

Winter and spring precipitation levels were about average, and reports from the field are painting an optimistic picture for the upcoming hunting season. In 2018, hunters can expect similar to slightly higher numbers of wild pheasants than were observed in 2017. Most hunters who invest effort and cover a lot of ground will cross paths with wild birds. Hunters can increase their chances for a productive hunt by selecting nontoxic shot and diversifying the game bag with waterfowl.

Pheasants are an excellent species for beginning hunters to gain entry into the sport with numerous opportunities available for success and mentorship. WDFW, in coordination with Pheasants Forever, co-hosts numerous pheasant youth hunts statewide where farm raised birds are released in select locations. Mentors and instructors are available to teach kids hunting safety, and the basic techniques to increase success. In District 5, the local Pheasants Forever chapter is Columbia Basin Chapter and information regarding their local hunts can be found on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ColumbiaBasinPF/>.

## QUAIL

Grant County was Washington's highest producing quail county in 2017, with 13,590 birds taken, while Adams County had much lower harvest with 1,476 birds. Overall, participation and success in Grant County increased, while both participation and success decreased slightly in Adams County. See the 2017 [Adams and Grant counties Quail Harvest Statistics](#) for additional information.

Traditional quail hunting areas on WDFW lands in District 5 occur in Grant County. Areas include the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George, Lower Crab Creek between Corfu and the Columbia River, Gloyd Seeps between Stratford and Moses Lake, the Quincy Unit near the town of Quincy, and the Dry Falls Unit at the south end of Banks Lake. Adams County contains few public lands, although birds can be found on private land and access can be gained through the WDFW Private Lands Access Program. Hunters will improve their odds with a trained dog to either flush or point and retrieve the birds.

Large coveys are difficult to find by mid-season on public lands, and successful hunters will benefit by identifying multiple coveys to pursue throughout the season. Riparian areas will offer the best hunting and hunters can increase their chances by securing access to private lands, where pressure can be considerably lower. If pressure is high, some coveys can be found settling into shrub cover a considerable distance from heavily hunted areas. Hunters willing to do more hiking will likely find more birds.

Quail hunting is expected to be good again this year. As mentioned previously, hunters can increase the chances of a successful hunting trip by using nontoxic shot and targeting multiple species.

## CHUKAR AND PARTRIDGE

Hunters harvested 1,408 chukars in District 5 during the 2017 season, with all being taken in Grant County. None were harvested in Adams County, which has little chukar habitat. The harvest success rates in both Grant and Adams counties fluctuate quite dramatically from year to year. However, hunters should not be overly concerned with these fluctuations for two reasons. First, there are not many concentrations of chukars in Grant and Adams counties, and second, the harvest statistics become less reliable for species and areas where few people are hunting (as is the case in Grant and Adams counties where few hunters are pursuing chukars). See the 2017 [Adams and Grant counties Chukar Harvest Statistics](#) for additional information.

Hunters harvested 821 gray partridge in District 5 during the 2017 season, with 696 taken in Grant County and 125 in Adams County. This represented increases in success rates from the previous year as well as for the 5-year average. As mentioned before, harvest statistics become less reliable for species and areas where few people are hunting (as is the case in Grant and Adams counties where few hunters are pursuing partridge). See the 2017 [Adams and Grant counties Gray Partridge Harvest Statistics](#) for additional information.

District 5 is not a popular destination for chukar or gray partridge hunters due to relatively small populations, but birds can still be found throughout much of the district. Most chukar hunting in the district occurs in the Coulee Corridor areas around Banks and Lenore lakes and along the Columbia River breaks north of Vantage. Gray partridges occur in low densities throughout the Columbia Basin, but are rarely targeted by hunters. They are instead taken incidentally while



**Figure 14.** Chukar brood. Photo by Eric Braaten

hunting chukars, quail, or pheasants. Most gray partridges occur on private farm fields, particularly in the dryland wheat portions of Adams County and, to a lesser degree, Grant County. Chukars and gray partridge are resilient birds and likely fared well through the winter, even with the persistent snow cover. Reports from the field paint a very good picture for both chukars and partridge. In fact, during recent spring waterfowl breeding surveys, biologists reported observing more partridge than at any time previously. While these observations are not quantifiable, they do provide some insight into the upcoming season.

## DOVE

Grant County reigned supreme as Washington's top mourning dove producing county in 2017, with hunters bagging 18,468 birds. Hunters harvested 2,088 doves in Adams County, making the combined counties harvest 20,556 doves. Compared to the previous 5-year averages, harvest rates for Grant County increased 17 percent and Adams County decreased 6 percent.

This upcoming hunting season continues with the extension through October 30, and dove hunting is expected to be similar to last year. If conditions are stable, the birds found during scouting trips should be around during the hunt, but unstable conditions often redistribute birds. Hunters may improve their success by securing access to wheat fields for the morning hunt. Evening hunts can be productive in wheat fields or in traditional roosting areas. Look for large stands of trees (ideally with dead limbs) adjacent to water and surrounded by agriculture for the best roost hunt results. Roost site hunting can be found along the north and west sides of Potholes Reservoir, the east side of Winchester Lake, and throughout the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex.

Hunters should be aware that Eurasian collared doves co-occur with mourning doves, and the Eurasian collared doves do not count towards daily bag limits. Eurasian collared doves are classified as a *Deleterious Species* in Washington and as such have few regulations governing harvest, so be sure to take a few when the opportunity arises.

## UPLAND BIRD MANAGEMENT

Upland bird management in District 5 consists primarily of sharecropping, strategic use of bird feeders to increase over-winter survival, and actively working to improve nesting cover throughout the Gloyd Seeps Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. Wildlife area staff members are currently working to establish over 200 acres of nesting cover to benefit upland birds and waterfowl. At this time, there are approximately 82 acres that have been completed, while 54 acres are nearing completion and the remaining 73 acres will require more funds to complete. Grant applications have been submitted to secure the required funds, and if successful, work would begin in spring 2019. In an effort to assess these restored areas, district staff members will monitor nesting effort to aid in securing future funds to enhance and restore other areas.





Grant County was also Washington's top goose producing county in 2017. Last year, hunters harvested 18,255 geese in Grant County, and Adams County hunters added 2,832 for a district total of 21,087. This represents a 19 percent increase for Grant County and a 9 percent increase for Adams County compared to the 5-year average.



**Figure 16.** Drake cinnamon teal. Photo by Eric Braaten

### **NEW FOR 2018**

Hunters should continue to be excited about the goose bag limits being separated by species, meaning that hunters have the potential to put more birds in the bag. Overall, the change will not affect where to go, but goose hunters in mid-October could increase their focus on white-fronted geese around Moses Lake, Winchester Lake, and along the Winchester Wasteway. There are certainly no guarantees for those birds to be around during hunting season, but in typical years, there are 200-500 white-fronted geese for the first few weeks of the waterfowl season.

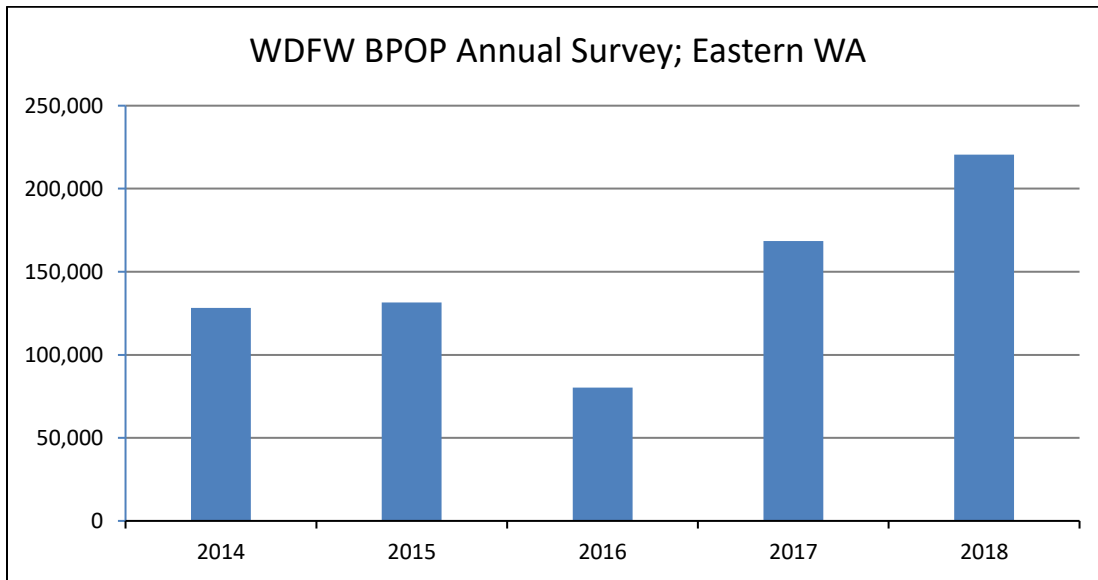
During the later parts of the waterfowl season, there have been increasing numbers of snow geese observed around Potholes Reservoir and even Moses Lake. Hunters pursuing those birds should focus efforts on the grain fields surrounding those reservoirs south of Interstate 90. In 2017, approximately 1,500-2,500 snow geese spent the winter on Columbia National Wildlife Refuge. Those birds were frequently observed flying north towards agricultural fields surrounding Potholes Reservoir.

### **WATERFOWL POPULATION STATUS**

The Washington Breeding Population Survey (BPOP), conducted in May, has been occurring since 2009. These surveys are a regional indicator of waterfowl breeding effort. The data may

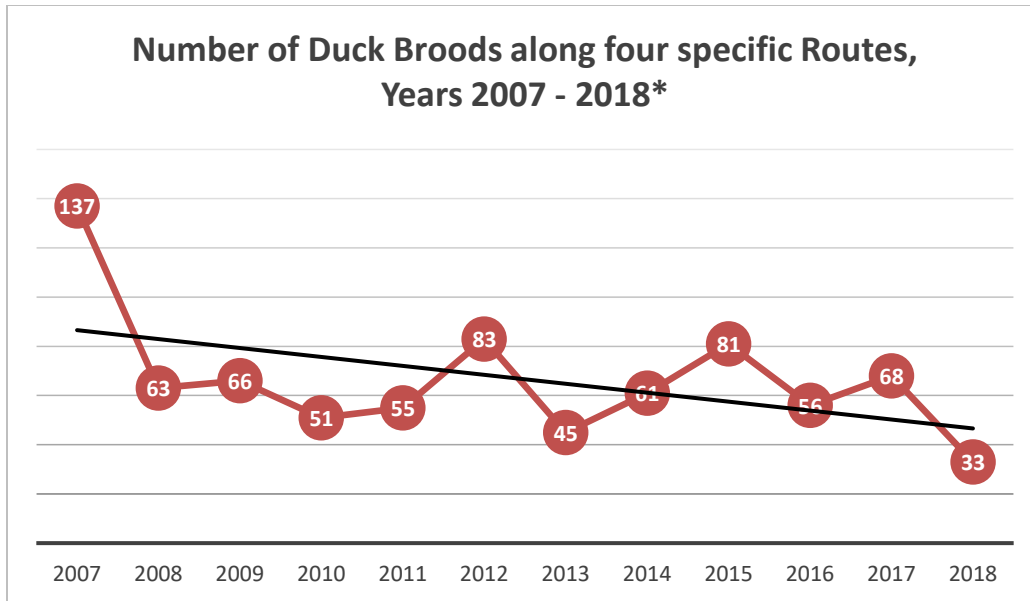
best represent prospects for the earlier part of the waterfowl season (opening weekend through mid-November), since most of the migratory waterfowl will not have arrived.

Early season species that occur in abundance during opening weekend include mallard, gadwall, American wigeon, and American green-winged teal. The mallard estimate of 91,473 for eastern Washington is up 33 percent from 2017, and across the board the estimates for most local dabbling ducks are up. Gadwall were 61.5 percent higher, American wigeon were 9.42 percent higher, and green-winged teal were down 28.9 percent from an all-time high last year. As shown in Figure 17, 2018 was the best spring breeding seasons in the last five years. Hunters looking for some early season success should be able to find birds more effectively than the last few years. However, be sure to take some time to scout ahead of the season to increase your chances for success.



**Figure 17.** WDFW BPOP survey results for eastern Washington 2014-2018.

In addition to the BPOP survey, WDFW also conducts regular brood routes throughout eastern Washington. Routes in the Ephrata District include the East Low Canal, West Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake. The total numbers are presented in Figure 18 for 2007-2018. Surveys have continued to demonstrate a decline in local duck production over the past 10 years. Despite the lower overall production in these areas, production is much greater in other areas and should result in good hunting in the early part of the season.



**Figure 18.** Duck brood count totals for Ephrata District strata, including West Canal, East Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake. \*Be advised values in former reports were incorrect due to a database query glitch.

## **WATERFOWL MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS**

Migration (which peaks in November) will bring the best waterfowl hunting in the basin, as large numbers of mallards, gadwalls, redheads, canvasbacks, wigeon, teal, and scaup arrive from northern breeding grounds. Until then, hunters mostly rely on locally produced birds and early season migrants, such as American wigeon and green-winged teal. December typically provides the peak of mallards, ringnecks, and canvasbacks, while other dabbling and diving species continue their journey south. Goose hunting will typically improve in November, when early season migrant Canada geese (lesser and Taverner’s) begin to scatter from their initial staging area at Stratford Lake to alfalfa or grain fields within feeding distance of Moses Lake and the Columbia River. In average years the best hunting occurs in December and January during warming periods after extended freeze ups.

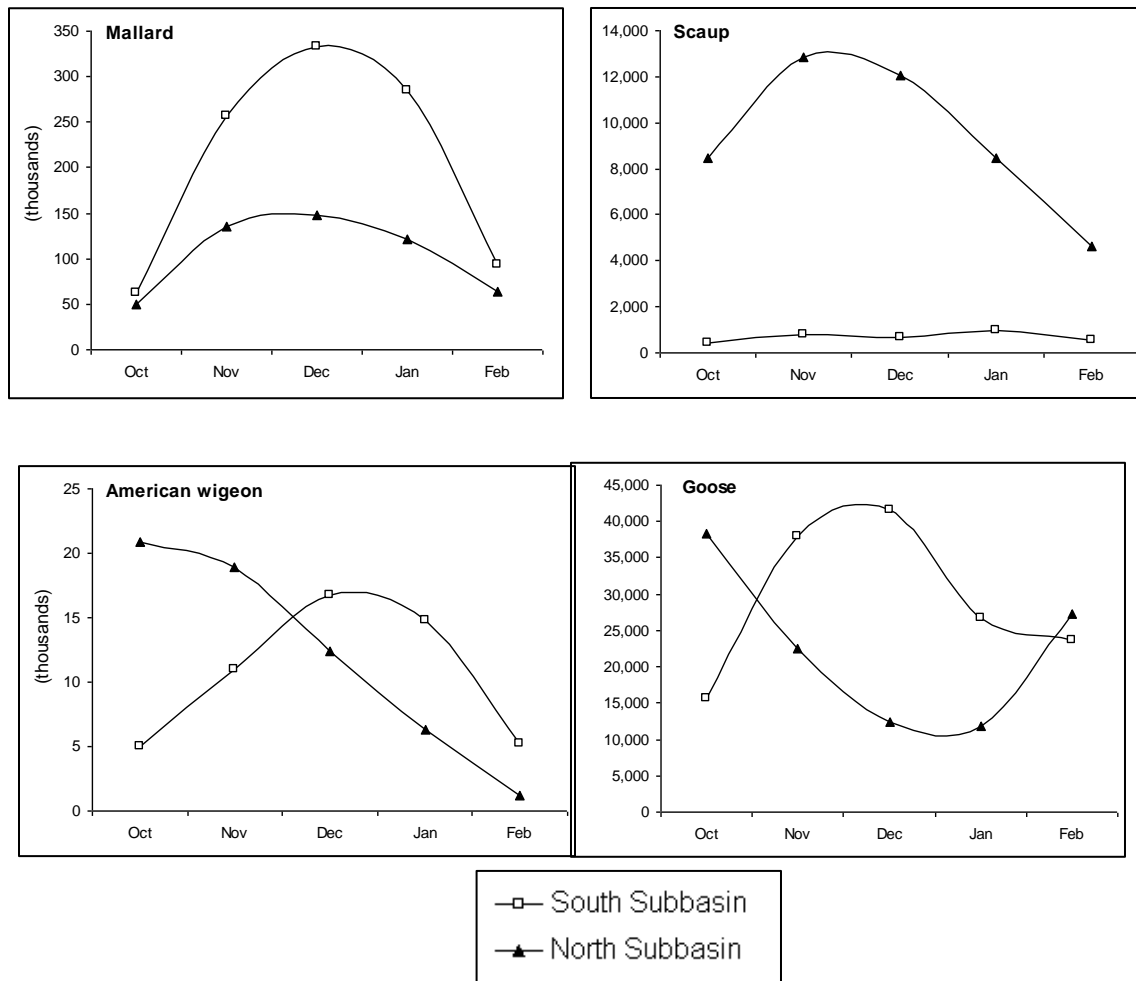


Figure 19. Migration curves for several species that winter in large numbers on the Columbia Plateau.

## UNDERSTANDING WATERFOWL MIGRATION

Waterfowl hunting season in District 5 is largely dependent upon bird production in Alberta, but locally produced birds provide the bulk of early season opportunities. Hunters must use caution when interpreting the spring habitat condition reports. The first step in understanding the relationship between breeding conditions and the expected harvest is to understand where the Columbia Plateau wintering birds are produced. Munro and Kimball (1982) report that the Northern Pacific breeding area (including Alaska, British Columbia, and Yukon-west Mackenzie minor reference area) provides the bulk of the mallards harvested in Washington State.

The second most important breeding area contributing to Washington State harvest is northern Alberta, followed by southwest Alberta, and lastly by locally produced birds in Washington and Oregon. Band recoveries of locally banded birds harvested in Washington exhibit a similar pattern, although over time, these patterns may change, as these band recoveries represent a long-term dataset (1949-2012).

Of additional consideration, Rabenberg (1982) reports that “breeding pair and production indices from southwestern Alberta were negatively correlated with Basin<sup>1</sup> mid-winter mallard populations.” Thus, the degree to which birds produced in southwestern Alberta migrate through the basin may be variable or may not be fully understood. Perhaps the important consideration is that poor breeding conditions on the prairie parklands has been shown to displace birds to the north-northwest to northern Alberta, Alaska, and the Northwest Territories (Buller 1975, Rabenberg 1982). Birds displaced to these areas have a higher likelihood of migrating through the basin during fall and winter. This is evidenced by the peak of mid-winter populations in the basin following severe drought across southern Canada and the Dakotas during the early 60s.

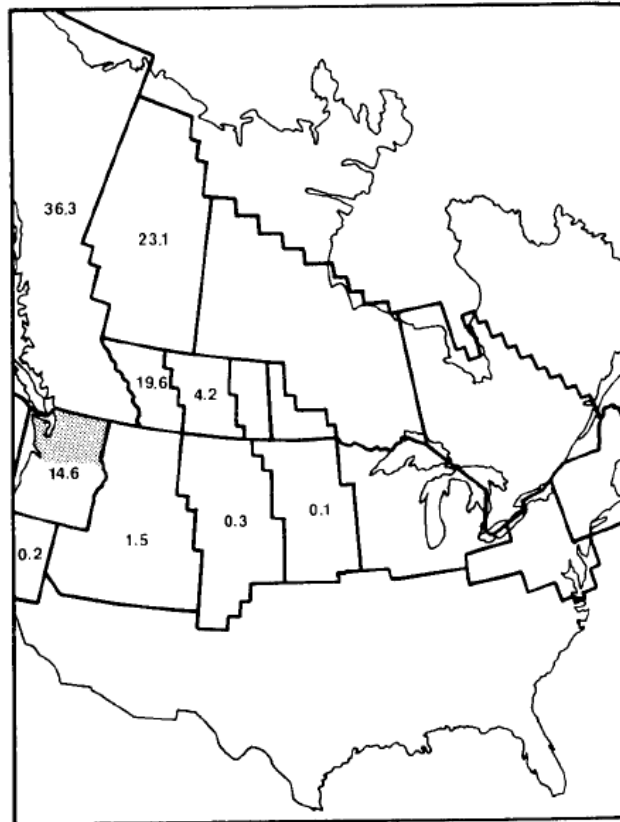
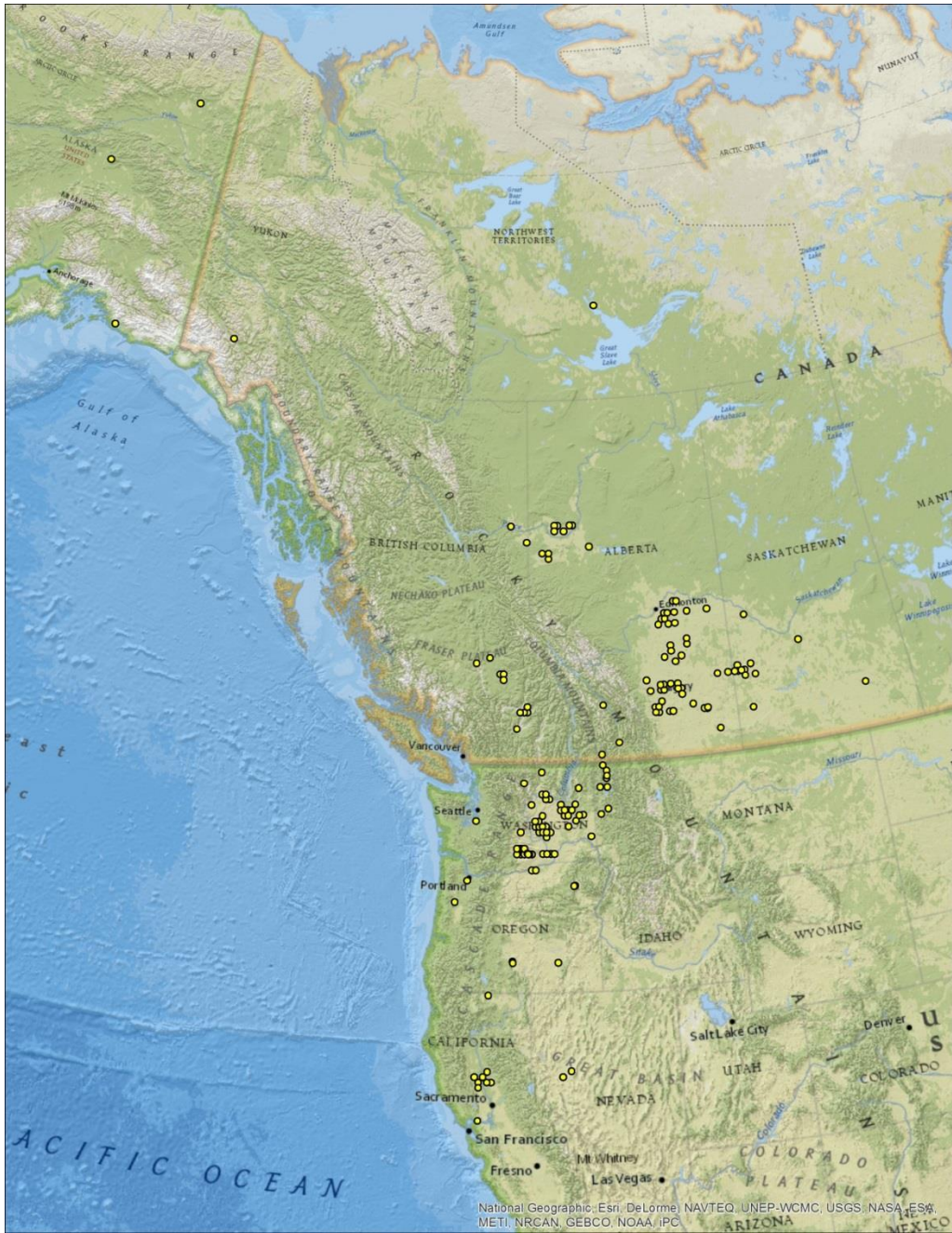


Fig. D-11. Percent derivation of the mallard harvest in Washington (shaded) from major breeding reference areas.

**Figure 20.** From Munro and Kimball 1982 – Population Ecology of the Mallard. VII. Distribution and derivation of the harvest. These percentages describe where the ducks harvested in Washington state are coming from. Note the importance of northern and southwestern Alberta, as well as British Columbia.

<sup>1</sup> Basin includes all of the important waterfowl wintering areas adjacent to, or in-between, Moses Lake, Washington and Hermiston, Oregon.



**Figure 21.** Locations (yellow dots) where local mallards (ducklings) were banded prior to being harvested in Washington state. Based on banding efforts from 1949-2012.

## **HUNTING TIPS**

### ***Scouting***

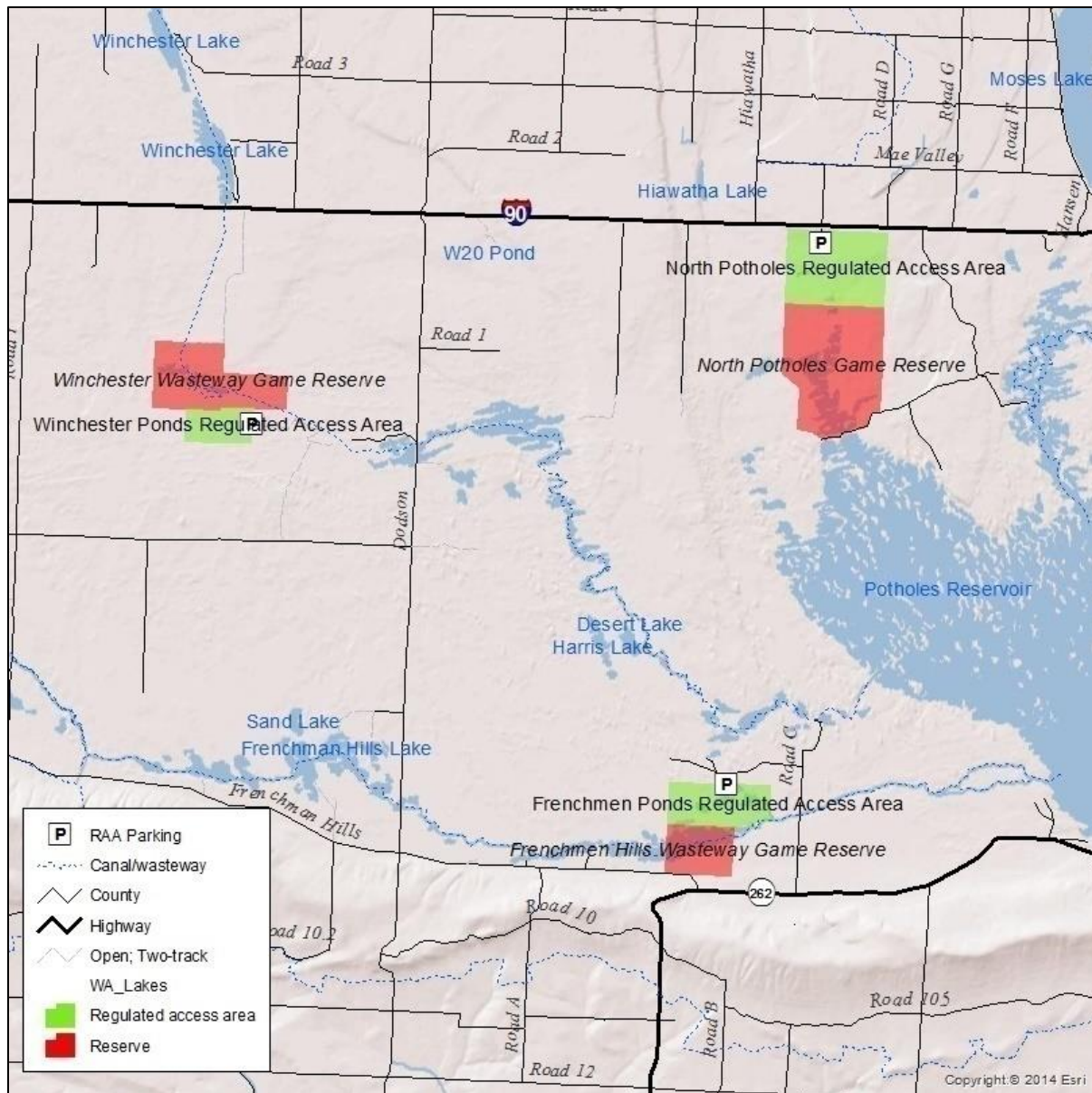
Scouting is the key to consistent success when waterfowl hunting. Many opportunities exist for public waterfowl hunts, but hunters should first identify where birds are feeding and roosting, as well as the general flight paths. Feeding flights for ducks typically occur very early in the morning and late in the evening. Select areas to hunt based on the species you want to target. Dabbling ducks are more commonly targeted on the Columbia Plateau where grain corn and wheat fields attract mallards and pintails and shallow wetlands attract teal, American wigeon, and gadwall. Canada geese feed primarily in wheat and alfalfa fields, so requesting permission from private landowners is often necessary to secure good goose hunting. Diving ducks are typically hunted along the Columbia River, particularly at Wells Pool, Wanapum Pool, and Priest Rapids Pool. They forage over beds of submerged aquatic vegetation such as pondweeds and milfoil. Knowing when and where ducks are feeding and which direction they depart will help hunters determine the best locations to intercept the duck traffic with a spread of decoys. Setting up a decoy spread on waters between the feeding and roosting sites will generally result in some good hunting, particularly when conditions are favorable (wind, snow, fog). Typically, the larger roosting sites will be the Wanapum Closure (Columbia River), Winchester Reserve, Potholes Reserve, and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Marsh units. Hunters should be mindful that water (and muck) depths are highly variable and it takes a lot of trial and error to learn where you can and cannot set out decoys. For some areas, boat access is necessary. Winchester and Frenchman wasteways (the two major drainages entering the west side of Potholes Reservoir) are crossable in some areas with chest waders, but use caution, as deep holes do exist and patches of muck can be difficult to exit, particularly when packing decoys.

### ***Where to Hunt***

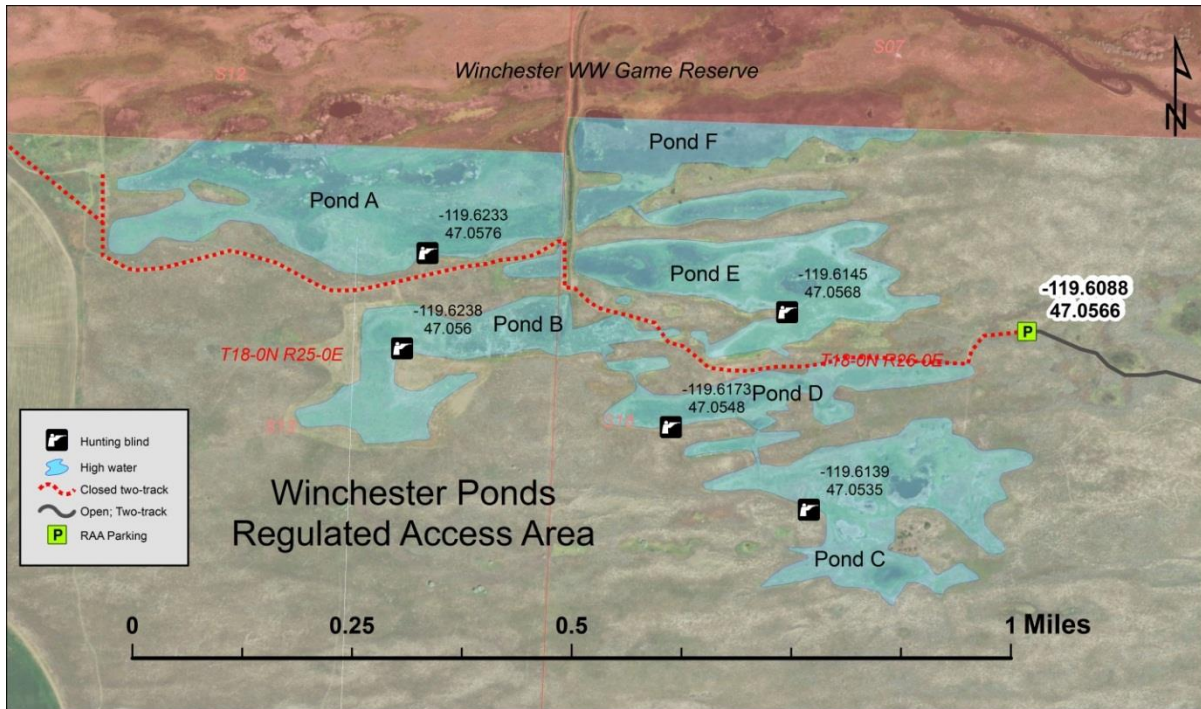
#### ***Regulated Access Areas***

Dogs are often a necessity for retrieving throughout most of District 5, but Regulated Access Areas (RAA) have some shallow ponds that can be effectively hunted with chest waders. Time restrictions and the number of vehicles allowed for the RAA can be found in the hunting pamphlet and Table 2. These sites are Register to Hunt, so be sure to register at the box provided in the parking area. Hunter information collected from these sites is used to inform management decision, and justify further habitat improvements. Below each RAA is discussed in detail.





**Figure 22.** Regulated Access Area locations adjacent to game reserves closed to hunting.

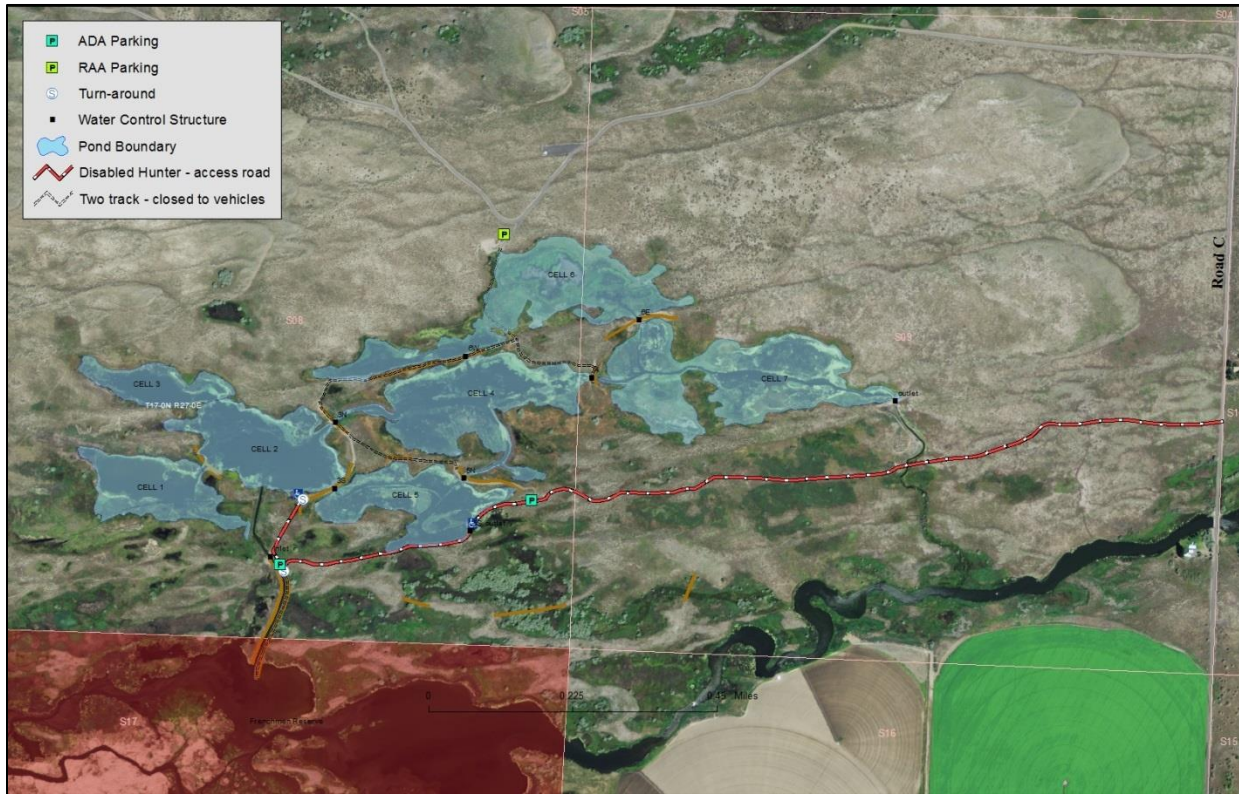


**Figure 23.** Winchester Ponds Regulated Access Area.

### Winchester Ponds RAA

Winchester Ponds RAA is the most popular RAA in the district and consistently produces birds. Five blinds (established in 2012) are distributed throughout the access area and are available on a first-come basis, but hunters are not required to hunt from blinds, as the area is open to free-roam. All five parking spots are often filled as soon as access is allowed at 4:00 a.m.

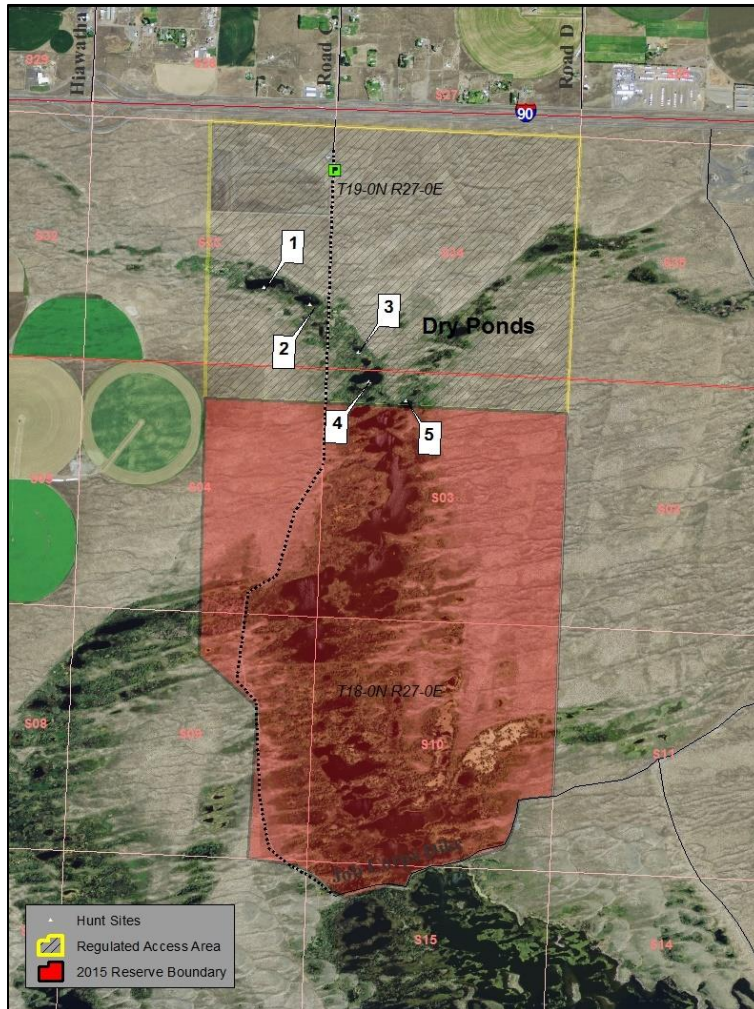
***Hunters should be aware that water levels could be very low throughout the season due to the onsite water delivery ditch being inoperable. Repairs will get underway as soon as possible and there will hopefully be water in this RAA at some point during the hunting season.***



**Figure 24.** Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area.

### Frenchman Ponds RAA

Frenchman Ponds RAA is not as productive as the Winchester Ponds RAA, likely because the adjacent Frenchman Reserve typically supports only a fraction of the mallards that use the Winchester Reserve. As a result, this area receives less attention and hunters are likely to get a spot here, even if showing up late in the morning. The area is open to free-roam. Two wheelchair accessible hunting blinds have been provided by the Washington Waterfowl Association through an Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant and are available to all hunters. However, they must be forfeited by non-disabled hunters in the event that a disabled hunter requests the site. Disabled hunters may check out a key from the Ephrata Regional Office and will be able to drive to the blinds and park relatively close. Call the Regional Office at 509-754-4624 for details.



**Figure 25.** North Potholes Regulated Access Area.

### North Potholes RAA

North Potholes RAA is a relatively new area and has unique hunting conditions because the Potholes Reservoir water level ultimately determines water levels within these ponds. Some identified hunt sites, like Ponds 3 and 5, could be dry, particularly from October through November during the hunting season. The lowest water levels probably occur during the first half of November. Because the deepest portions of these ponds do not dry out, extremely mucky conditions exist for early season hunting. Parking spots correspond to specific hunt sites. Hunters will be required to hunt within eyesight of identified sites in the field. Hunters must not hunt waterfowl away from their designated hunt site, but may pursue other game, such as upland birds, mule deer, coyote, and cottontail rabbits, on a free-roam basis. Hunters pursuing species other than waterfowl are strongly encouraged to stay at least 400 meters (1/4 mile) from designated waterfowl hunt sites.

## HUNTER COLLECTED DATA FROM RAA

**Table 2.** Data collected from Hunters at each RAA in District 5.

Regulated Access Area	Parking Spots	Register to Hunt	Hunt Days	Other
Winchester	5	Register on site	Wed, Sat, Sun; Mgmt Area 4 goose hunting days	No vehicles before 4:00 a.m.
Frenchman	5 + 2 ADA	Register on site	All huntable days	No vehicles before 4:00 a.m.
North Potholes	5	Register on site	Wed, Sat, Sun; Mgmt Area 4 goose hunting days	No vehicles before 4:00 a.m.

<b>Winchester Ponds</b>	<u>Harvest</u>		<b>Frenchman Ponds</b>	<u>Harvest</u>		<b>North Potholes</b>	<u>Harvest</u>	
	Duck	Goose		Duck	Goose		Duck	Goose
2011-12	299	11	2011-12	142	4			
2012-13	738	19	2012-13	300	10			
2013-14	507	26		149	3			
2014-15	1067	34	2014-15	281	4			
2015-16	597	12	2015-16	461	9	2015-16	110	11
2016-17	249	27	2016-17	368	7	2016-17	268	35
2017-18	165	5	2017-18	394	25	2017-18	297	25
Avg.	517	19	Avg.	299	9	Avg.	225	24

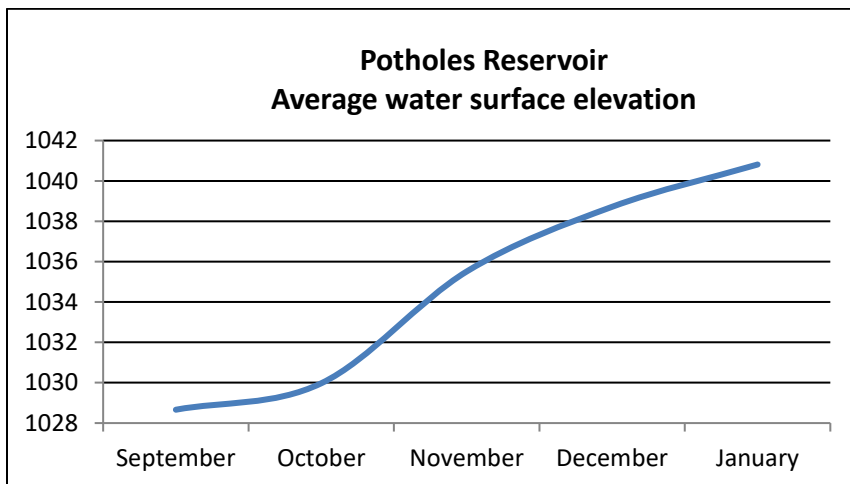
### Other public lands

A common opinion of hunters is that the RAAs discussed previously are the absolute *best* option when hunting waterfowl. While this opinion may hold true in some circumstances, it certainly does not always hold true. When migrant waterfowl are in the area, just about any suitable site can be productive. Many places throughout the Columbia Basin provide excellent hunting.

One of the more popular waterfowl hunting areas is Potholes Reservoir. The abundance of small sand dune islands, where hunters find cover, makes this an attractive area. Most hunters use the northern portion of the reservoir, where they find shallower water and numerous islands. Hunting pressure and competition for the best locations on Potholes Reservoir can be very high. Hunters new to the reservoir should be aware that potholes reservoir water levels do increase dramatically through the hunting season. Hunters looking for less hunting pressure should choose days during the workweek.



**Figure 26.** Aerial imagery showing difference between high water (June) and low water (September) levels on Potholes Reservoir.



**Figure 27.** Potholes Reservoir water surface elevation (in feet) during waterfowl season. Note that water surface elevation is measured at O’Sullivan dam and some lag in flooding will occur in the upper portions of the reservoir.

Winchester Lake is another location where hunters can expect to see good numbers of waterfowl, but hunting pressure is relatively high there too. Winchester Lake sits in a prime location, getting traffic from mallards that feed on grain corn in the surrounding area. Ducks typically come from Winchester Reserve, Potholes Reserve, Moses Lake, and/or the Wanapum Closure to feed in fields, and they occasionally attempt to shorten their commute to the roost by stopping at Winchester Lake.

Realistically, there are very few “*secret spots*” within the Columbia Basin. There are just places that are hunted less frequently. Hunters willing to put some time into exploring new areas will likely discover a few gems. Walk-in areas that hold waterfowl include the following: Desert Unit, Lower Crab Creek, and Royal Lakes. All of these areas are predominantly public.

#### *Private Land hunting opportunities*

Waterfowl hunters should also be aware of private land grain fields enrolled in the Hunter Access Program. This program provides public field hunting opportunity for ducks and geese but also may provide opportunity to harvest upland birds. Fields are typically identified and enrolled during November, after the fields are harvested. The timing of enrollment and field locations will vary annually. Call the Ephrata regional office at (509) 754-4624 or see the Columbia Basin corn stubble information webpage [HERE](#) for details about this program.

## SMALL GAME

### DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION STATUS

Small game in District 5 consists primarily of bobcats, raccoons, foxes, crows, coyotes, and cottontail rabbits. There are no sizeable populations of forest grouse or turkeys in this district, although there is a small population of turkeys in the northern portions of GMU 272. Formal surveys to assess population status of small game species are not conducted. Bobcats occur in small numbers, but harvest is relatively low. Raccoons occur in fair numbers in association with wetlands and residential developments when adequate habitat exists. Fox farms occurred adjacent to the Columbia Plateau during the early 1900s, but declines in fur prices during the 1950s resulted in foxes being released into the wild. A few descendants of these individuals occur and can be found. However, these introduced foxes are still considered relatively uncommon, with most reports coming from areas north of Moses Lake. Crows are typically hunted in areas where damage occurs, but hunting opportunities for crows locally are limited. Yellow-bellied marmots can be hunted, but most hunting opportunity occurs on private lands where rock piles and agriculture are in close proximity. Hunters should also be aware that Washington ground squirrels are *protected*, and they can occur in large numbers throughout District 5. Coyotes are likely the most abundant and wide-spread small game species within the district. Hunters interested in pursuing coyotes should be sure to spend some time refining their tactics and be patient when making calling sets. There are many online resources available to hunters who are interested, and there are many landowners willing to allow access for hunters willing to ask for permission.

Cottontail rabbits are widespread and abundant throughout District 5, in areas of optimal habitat. In native landscapes, hunters should look for rock outcrops, greasewood patches, or other brushy

thickets where suitable escape cover occurs. These rabbits are often found along habitat edges. Therefore, focusing efforts in areas where two or more of their preferred habitats occur will produce the best results, particularly if green forage is nearby. On private lands, cottontails can be found within and around equipment storage areas or rock piles. To be successful hunting rabbits, hunters should cover lots of ground while “kicking” brush. Stopping periodically will cause nearby rabbits to become nervous and they will oftentimes flee when you resume walking, providing a brief shooting window. Another popular way to hunt rabbits is through the use of trained beagles. Using their noses, beagles will find and jump a rabbit, at which point the rabbit will outrun the beagle as the dog works along the scent trail. A cottontail typically runs a large circle and reappears near the area in which it was first jumped. The hunter must correctly predict what path the rabbit will take as it circles around ahead of the beagle and harvest it before it runs into a hole. Hunters targeting cottontails should be aware of the endangered pygmy rabbit, which looks similar to cottontails but is found exclusively in shrubsteppe habitat. Hunters would likely only encounter pygmy rabbits north of the town of Ephrata.

## **PUBLIC LANDS**

### **WDFW MANAGED LAND**

The Columbia Basin Wildlife Area contains about 192,000 acres and provides habitat for a multitude of species. For more information on this wildlife area, please visit the WDFW Lands [website](#). Visitors to the wildlife area need to be aware that a Discover Pass or Vehicle Access Pass is required to access all WDFW lands.

### **DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

The Washington Department of Natural Resources maintains land that is open to the public for recreational purposes. Visitors to DNR land should be aware that a Discover Pass is required for access. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on DNR land can be found [here](#).

### **NATIONAL FOREST**

There is no national forest in District 5.

### **BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Some BLM land is found in District 5 and is open to public hunting. For more information regarding BLM property, please visit the [BLM](#) website.

### **BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) maintains property that is open to public use for recreational purposes. Much, but not all, of the BOR property is managed by WDFW. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on BOR lands can be found [here](#).



## PRIVATE LANDS

### LAND OWNERSHIP

Whether hunting, hiking, or wildlife viewing, it is important to respect private property rights and always ask permission before entering private lands. Fortunately, technology has made this process considerably easier and landownership can now be more easily learned from internet resources. Simply log on and use the interactive map program to zoom into your area of interest. Clicking on the parcels will reveal landowner information.

<http://adamswa.mapsifter.com/>

<http://grantwa.mapsifter.com/>

The disadvantage of these resources is the lack of portability and difficulty scanning a large area for availability of public land. However, these are by far the best available resources for identifying ownership of specific locations. The best resource available for identifying where public land occurs is the Department of Natural Resources public lands quadrangles (1:100k). See the link [here](#) to order a copy for a fee.

### PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through negotiated agreements. Landowners participating in a WDFW cooperative agreement retain liability protection provided under RCW 4.24.210. Landowners receive technical services, materials for posting (signs and posts), and in some cases monetary compensation. In addition, lands under agreement are well known by WDFW Enforcement.

Currently, the private lands access program includes four basic access agreement types: Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt, Hunt by Written Permission, and Hunt by Reservation. More information about WDFW hunter access programs can be found [here](#). Currently, there are approximately 200,000 acres of private property that are accessible to hunters through these agreements. When accessing these lands, hunters should obey all the rules posted and should also be respectful of the private property that is open to public access. Most of the complaints received from hunting access cooperators is that hunters do not follow rules and are disrespectful. However, many hunters are not aware of the tremendous opportunities that are available on these private properties. With a little scouting and planning, hunters could improve their odds of success. More information on where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's [GoHunt](#) site.

Private Lands Access Program	Grant County	Adams County
Feel Free To Hunt	10,596	6,637
Hunt By Written Permission	46,218	117,563
Hunt By Reservation (Online)	18,513	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75,327</b>	<b>124,200</b>

**Table 3.** Approximate acreage of access available by access type.

## ADA ACCESS

The Ephrata District maintains some access for people with disabilities. These sites occur at Rocky Ford Creek (Drumheller Pond), Buckshot Ranch, and the Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area. Hunters must have a Disabled Hunter Permit to access hunting areas behind locked gates. For additional information, please call or write to Dolores Noyes, WDFW, 360-902-2349, Fax: 360-902-2392 or Email: [Dolores.Noyes@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Dolores.Noyes@dfw.wa.gov).

**Rocky Ford Creek Directions:** Travel south from Ephrata on SR 282 for 7.2 miles. Turn right onto Neppel Road (Old Moses Lake Highway). Go 0.1 miles and turn right at the public fishing sign. Continue 0.5 miles to the access site. The access duck blind is on a small pond off the creek. A vehicle can be used to drop off a disabled hunter next to the blind. The ground around the blind is rough and access into the water is best with a small hand launch boat or raft. An accessible vault toilet is in the parking lot located nearby for the walk-in anglers. Use of the blind is by reservation only. Hunters can obtain a key from the Ephrata Regional Office by calling 509-754-4624.

**Buckshot Ranch:** Drive south on SR 243 along the Columbia River from Vantage toward Mattawa. Turn right (west) onto Road 26 SW and go about one mile to the Priest Rapids/Buckshot Wildlife Area. Follow the gravel road into a parking area and turn right between two fence posts. Follow the dirt road north 0.25 miles to a locked gate on the left. A ground level roll-in goose pit blind is available with seasonal success dependent on weather. Call the Ephrata Regional Office at 509-754-4624 to reserve the blind and obtain a key.

**Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area:** From Moses Lake, travel south on Highway 17 to Road M SE and turn right (south). Continue on Road M for about six miles and turn right (west) onto Highway 262 (O'Sullivan Dam Road). Continue on Highway 262 across O'Sullivan Dam and past Potholes State Park, and turn right (north) onto Road C SE. Proceed north on Road C SE for 1.4 miles and look for the disabled access gate on the left hand side of the road. For further detail, see the map in the Regulated Access Area section of this document. Call the Ephrata Regional Office at 509-754-4624 to reserve the blind and obtain a combination to the lock.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### YOUTH HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

#### *Pheasants*

WDFW and the Columbia Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever have been collaborating in recent years to host a day of pheasant hunting during the youth season. This event will take place on Saturday, September 22, 2018, at the [Gloyd Seeps Unit](#) Road 10 parking lot ([here](#)). WDFW Hunter Education instructors will be onsite and will help with shooting instruction and offer “loaner” shotguns, and volunteers will be providing dogs to assist youth hunters. Additionally, Pheasants Forever will provide food for all hunters and parents and will also give away a shotgun to one youth hunting participant. No purchase will be required. For more information, check the

[Columbia Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever - Facebook Page](#) or call the WDFW Ephrata Regional Office at (509) 754-4624.

### *Deer*

District 5 staff members have increased youth hunting permits throughout most GMUs and have also changed most permits from *Antlerless* to *Any Deer*. Interested hunters should check the [2018 Big Game Regulations Pamphlet](#) for additional information.

## **BIRD DOG TRAINING**

District 5 does not currently have any areas designated for bird dog training, although we are working on developing one within the next year. Any training on WDFW land must occur within the established bird dog training season, which runs from August 1-March 31. Please see the website and regulations booklet for more details.

## **TARGET SHOOTING**

Per WAC 332-52-145, target shooting is allowed in developed recreational facilities or areas with an unobstructed, earthen backstop capable of stopping all projectiles and debris in a safe manner. Targets are defined as items that are commercially manufactured for the specific purpose of target shooting. Because of extensive misuse of WDFW managed lands (primarily litter and human safety issues), some areas have been closed to target shooting, particularly in the Lind Coulee, Potholes, and Seep Lakes units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. Many large wildfires have been caused by target shooting on WDFW and other publicly-owned land in the last few decades and has led to extensive habitat and wildlife loss as well as land restoration costs.

**Table 4.** Information for shooting range facilities.

<b>County</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Adams	Lind Golf & Gun Club	509-671-3314
Adams	Othello Gun Club	509-488-3768
Adams	Ritzville Gun Club	Gun Club Road, Ritzville
Adams	Washtucna Gun Club	509-646-3263
Grant	Boyd Mordhorst Memorial Range	509-345-2550
Grant	Coulee City Sportsmen	509-632-5137
Grant	Marlin Trap Club	509-982-2445
Grant	Moses Lake Gun Club	509-765-1382
Grant	Quincy Gun Club	509-787-5506

## **TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY**

Numerous resources exist to assist hunters with finding hunting opportunities and improving their experiences. WDFW has created numerous mapping tools that identify public and private lands and their associated regulations. WDFW also provides the public with access to our Status

and Trends Reports, Management Plans for species, and harvest statistics. These can all be found on the WDFW website under the “Hunting” header on the banner (<https://wdfw.wa.gov>).

Handheld GPS units can help identify your locations in remote places, but even smartphones can work in areas with and without cellular reception. Numerous resources are available through retailers to assist in mapping, disguise, and comfort, but scouting, shooting proficiency and learning the habits of wildlife will provide the best chances of improving your hunting success.

### **BE A WILDLIFE STEWARD - GET INVOLVED**

WDFW and other agencies are always looking for good volunteer assistance in improving habitat for wildlife. Find time to help with wildlife-related projects and encourage kids to learn about nature and our wildlife heritage through our WDFW Volunteer Program. More details can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/volunteer/>

### **LITERATURE CITED**

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Desert Unit (GMU 290) photos



## DESERT UNIT (GMU 290) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q: Where should I start looking for a mature buck?**

A: The highest density of mule deer typically occurs between Dodson Road and Potholes Reservoir, bounded on the north by Interstate 90 and on the south by Frenchman Hills Road. It is recommended to explore all access points around this area when getting to know the unit, then branch out from there.

### **Q: What is the area like?**

A: The unit sits within the heart of the Bureau of Reclamation Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, which delivers water to over 600,000 acres of farmland in the area. As a result, many small ponds and streams have been incidentally created in this area. Hunters should be familiar with the orientation of Frenchman and Winchester wasteways, as they pose a significant barrier and can only be crossed by boat or with chest waders in places. There are many small ponds associated with these wasteways that are used by waterfowl hunters. The Desert Unit provides a rich source of natural vegetation, so although mule deer utilize agricultural fields such as alfalfa, the crops may not be the best place to seek out your deer. Bitterbrush, which is common within the Desert Unit, is an important mule deer food item during winter. Be familiar with the distribution of bitterbrush patches, particularly during the later seasons if snowfall has occurred. The soils are deep, sandy and have been wind-blown, resulting in long east-west running dunes which characterize the landscape (and provide great vantage points to scan for deer). These dunes and sandy soils can make walking difficult at times and will certainly make packing out an animal a lot of work.

### **Q: What size bucks am I likely to encounter?**

A: The typical buck harvested from the Desert Unit is a 4x4 with a 24" spread. Many hunters report having seen larger bucks than the one they harvested.

### **Q: Are there any areas that I cannot hunt?**

A: Hunters need to be aware of the locations and boundaries of Winchester Reserve, Frenchman Reserve, and North Potholes Reserve. Private lands within the Desert Unit are only open to hunting if the hunter first obtains landowner permission.

### **Q: Where should I stay?**

A: The town of Moses Lake is the nearest location, with many amenities (motels, restaurants, etc.). Camping is allowed on WDFW lands, and most folks camp within the parking areas. Expect crowds during the opening weekend of duck and pheasant hunting and lots of hunting activity thereafter.

### **Q: Is there any other hunting going on in the area?**

A: The entire unit is open to hunting. Expect to see waterfowl and upland bird hunters throughout the area. However, these hunters are typically associated with the wasteways and associated ponds. Once you get far enough into the shrub dominated uplands, you will find far fewer people.