

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area

2017-18 Wildlife Area Management Plan Update



Figure 1: Sherman Creek Unit.

This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan](#), and [LeClerc Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts and public recreation opportunities at the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, WDFW revises management plans for each wildlife area to identify new management priorities and actions. In between plan revisions, the update focuses on recent accomplishments over the last two years.

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Management Highlights

Habitat Restoration Forest Thinning (Goal #1, Objective #2)

Forest thinning continued on the northeast wildlife areas. The Sherman Creek/Oak Creek Perpetual Timber Rights Exchange Timber Sale was completed with 150 acres of LeClerc Creek Wildlife Area, and 270 acres of Rustlers Gulch Unit commercially thinned during summer/fall of 2017. Commercial thinning around the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area

headquarters was completed in November 2018. Approximately 35 acres were treated in four small units. Additionally, hazard trees along both Avista utilities and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) right-of-ways, compromised by the Boyds Fire, were added to this project and removed to reduce fire fuels. A pre-commercial thinning project was initiated in the fall of 2018 on the eastern portion of Rustlers Gulch Unit to thin out overstocked small and undesirable tree species. The project includes five units totaling 490 acres, of which two units totaling 120 acres were treated in November 2018.

Habitat Restoration Prescribed Burning (*Goal #1, Objective #2*)

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area staff members joined the WDFW Prescribed Burn Team on continued prescribed burning on thinned forest units of the Sherman Creek and LeClerc Creek wildlife areas. Prescribed burning reintroduces the long absent component of fire to the ponderosa pine forests, which serve as winter range for wild ungulate species.

Approximately 335 acres were treated during the spring of 2017, and 414 acres during the spring of 2018 to reduce fire fuels and improve wildlife habitat.

Cow and calf elk were observed in close proximity during the implementation.



Figure 2: Prescribed fire operations on the LeClerc Unit.

Rustlers Gulch Trailheads (*Goal #2, 3; Objective #6, 11*)

Trailhead maintenance and parking area improvement projects were conducted on the west side of Rustlers Gulch Unit. Backcountry Horsemen (BCH) of Washington received a grant from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, and contributed chapter funds, to make these projects possible, for the benefit of all recreational users. Spring 2018 work at the Holly Road site included culvert installation for drainage, minor grading, and spreading gravel to establish driveway loops and parking locations for improved site utilization. BCH also produced some temporary signage to direct traffic flow and parking. Fall 2018 work at the Beaver Creek site included leveling work with grading and fill gravel to establish a driveway loop and provide for more parking. Future work at the site will include finishing with gravel and perimeter boulder placement. BCH will produce signage for both parking areas to provide directional and parking instruction. BCH is also providing seasonal portable toilets at both sites until permanent restrooms are installed.



Figure 3: Holly Road site with work was performed in spring 2018.

Kettle River Water Access Sites (Goal #2, 3; Objective #6, 11)

WDFW completed the acquisition of the Kettle River Water Access Project parcels, in northwestern Ferry County, during May 2018. Acquisition and development funding was provided by a grant from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. Subsequent parking area development will occur in 2019.

New Issues

Boys Fire

The Boys Fire started on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area, across Highway 20 from headquarters, on the windy afternoon of Aug. 11, 2018. The fire burned over 600 acres of the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. Fire suppression personnel reported their efforts were aided by previous forest thinning and prescribed fire treatments on the wildlife area. Areas highly disturbed by fire suppression activities were rehabilitated and planted with native seed. The areas will be monitored and weed control implemented where needed. The photo below shows part of the Boys Fire path during the initial spread. Even though it was driven by strong winds, the fire stayed on the ground throughout the area.



Figure 4: Boys Fire path during the initial spread.

Trout Creek Beaver Activity

New beaver activity on Trout Creek was observed in 2017, and construction of a new dam just below the ford crossing has deepened the water, making it unsafe for vehicles to cross. Coincidentally, the BPA was planning a project to improve access to its Colville-Republic transmission line. Now, as part of that project, BPA will be installing a bridge on the old access road upstream of the ford crossing. When the old access road is re-opened, the ford crossing will be blocked off. This work is expected to occur in 2019 or 2020.

Forest Restoration Project Funding

Funding was awarded in 2019 through the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office to continue implementation of forest restoration prescribed burning on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area.



Figure 5: Rustlers Gulch Unit - Blue Lake.