

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

2017-18 Wildlife Area Management Plan Update

This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the 2006 Shillapoo Wildlife Area Management Plan. The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts and public recreation opportunities at the Scotch 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.

Management Highlights

North Basin Wetland Enhancement (Goal #1, Objective 1B)

A new water control structure was installed in the North Basin Wetland in the fall of 2017, replacing an old concrete stand pipe and earthen berm. The project goals were aimed at restoring native wetland plant communities, enhancing waterfowl habitat, and increasing waterfowl hunting opportunities in the North Unit. This project was constructed using State Duck Stamp funds, with Ducks Unlimited engineering and installing the new structure and berm. The project helped to inundate an additional 20 acres and allows for better water management strategies to enhance wetland habitats for numerous wildlife species.



Figure 1: Installation of a new water control structure in the North Basin.

Tree Plantings (Goal #1, Objective 2A)

Over the past two years more than 5,000 trees and shrubs have been planted on 60 acres at four different sites to restore and enhance riparian and oak forest habitats in the North and South units. Due to the hot and dry summers the past two years, survival has been lower than expected, with an average of 60 percent of the trees and shrubs still living when surveyed 18 months after planting. Black hawthorn and pacific crabapple have had the highest survival rate (90 percent) of all the species planted, and black cottonwood (35

percent) has had the lowest survival. Most of the initial plantings have been completed. Future plantings will focus on tree and shrub replacement for those that did not survive.



Figure 2: Technician Fox planting trees and shrubs in the Lake River Riparian Area in the North Unit.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Management (Goal#1, Objective 2A)

Wildlife area staff members periodically observe Columbian white-tailed deer on the wildlife area and surrounding lands. The deer were translocated from the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge to the nearby Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge between 2013-15. The population in the Ridgefield to Vancouver Lowland area is increasing in numbers, and it is estimated that there are approximately 10-15 deer on and around the Shillapoo Wildlife Area.



Figure 3: Columbian white-tailed deer on a South Unit McBride Ridge cornfield.

South Unit Buckmire Slough Salmon Restoration Project (Goal #3 Objective 1C)

The South Unit Buckmire Slough Salmon Restoration Project, which would have breached the levees around Shillapoo to allow juvenile salmonid access to the wildlife area's wetlands, has been placed on hold by the Bonneville Power Administration due to the high cost to benefit ratio of the project. The project, if constructed, would impact waterfowl hunting and wildlife habitats in the South Unit of Shillapoo. The affects from the project would have resulted in the wildlife area's wetlands becoming drier than the current conditions, resulting in transforming historically permanent waterbodies to seasonally inundated wetlands.

Noxious Weed Management (Goal #4, Objectives A, B, C, D)

Wildlife area staff members continue to control noxious and invasive weeds on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Approximately 2,000 acres are monitored annually for weeds, with treatments occurring over much of this acreage as well. Staff members are monitoring weed densities and checking on known locations of weed species for treatments, as well as monitoring for any new weed species that may be appearing on the landscape. Major emphasis is focused on treating all poison hemlock, purple loosestrife, and Italian thistle plants, and reducing Canada thistle, teasel, and tansy ragwort in pastures, reed canary grass in wetlands, and Himalayan blackberry thickets. Increased diligence has paid off with only one purple loosestrife plant found and treated in 2018, compared to ten years ago when 1,500 plants were observed and treated within the same acreage.

New Issues

Lewis and Clark Regional Trail

The Clark County Parks Department has proposed to build a 50-mile paved pedestrian trail across the county starting in Camas and ending in La Center. The preferred route would result in the trail traveling through about two miles of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area on an undeveloped Washington Department of Transportation right-of-way. Impacts are being evaluated by WDFW. The project does not account for unauthorized trails being constructed, damage to vegetation, garbage left behind, and the dispersal of weeds. Wildlife area and Wildlife Program staff members have coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and have been meeting with Clark County Parks to find an alternate route for the trail with less of an impact to natural resources in the area.

ESA Consultation on Streaked Horned Larks and Columbian white-tailed deer

Due to the presence of Columbian white-tailed deer on Shillapoo, and a likelihood that streaked horned larks could use the area from an adjacent nesting site, the wildlife area was required to go through a consultation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if the management activities of the area were affecting the species' survival. It was determined through the consultation that management activities were not likely to adversely affect deer, and not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of streaked horned lark.



Figure 4: Canada geese on the South McBride wetland.