

# Wenas Wildlife Area

## 2019-2020 Management Plan Update

This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [Wenas Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities at the Wenas Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, WDFW develops a process for revising the 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

#### **Wenas Watershed Enhancement (*Goal #2*)**

200 acres of overstocked timber stands were thinned on slopes of Cleman Mountain to improve habitat and to reduce fuels in the area, which also reduced the risks of wildfires. Trees from the thinning were placed in North Fork Wenas Creek to provide habitat and structure for fish, including juvenile and threatened steelhead. WDFW partnered with the Yakama Nation Fisheries Program on determining log placement sites throughout the creek. Log placements installed in the creek will reconnect side channels, mine gravels from vertical banks, produce gravel bars and pools and prime cold water fish habitat. Road maintenance on sections of the Cleman Mountain Unit was also complete as part of this project.



*Log structures placed in Wenas Creek*

#### **Wildfires and Post Fire Restoration (*Goal #2*)**

The Wenas Wildlife Area had two wildfires in 2019 and one major wildfire in 2020. In 2019, the Dry Sage and Pipeline fires occurred. Combined, these fires burned approximately 7,000 acres on the Wenas Wildlife Area. The Evans Canyon Fire in 2020 burned 60,132 acres on the Wenas

Wildlife Area. Within the acres burned in the Evans Canyon Fire, approximately 14 miles of elk fence was damaged that needed to be replaced and/or repaired. Contract crews built 6.5 miles of elk fence using steel sucker pipe, making the fence more fire resilient in the future. WDFW staff members propped up 10 miles of elk fence as a temporary fix and rebuilt an additional half mile of fence. The costs tied to necessary management needs following the fire were extremely high and the fence replacement is still being completed. Funding from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) allowed for habitat recovery efforts to take place in the fall of 2020, directly after the fire. Work included post-fire seeding on approximately 1,300 acres with native grasses, forbs, and sagebrush. Ongoing post-fire habitat restoration efforts and fencing replacement will continue over the next couple years after these catastrophic fires.



*Durr Road facing south after Evans Canyon Fire*

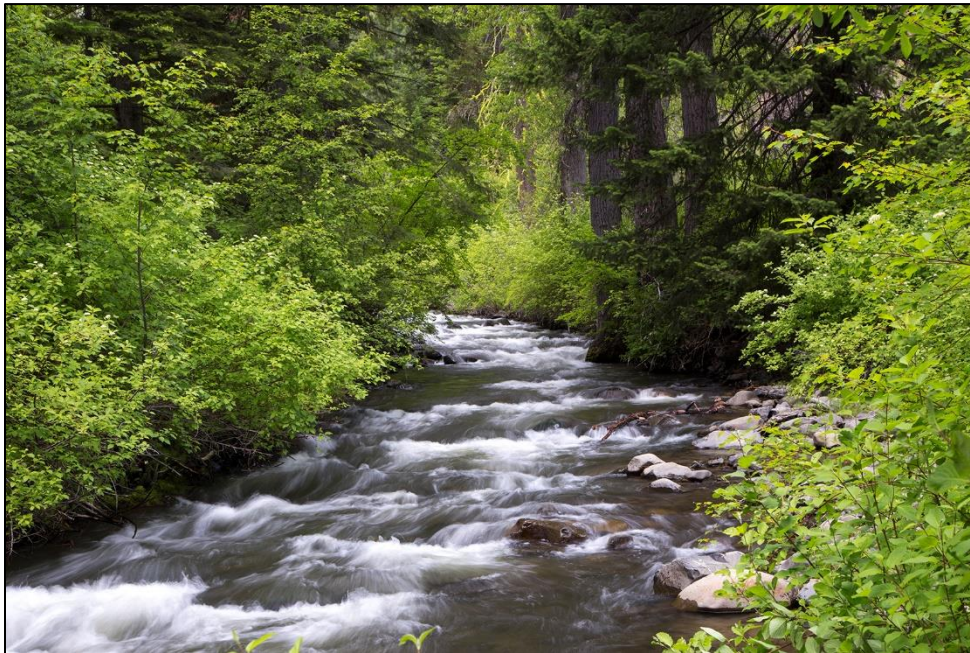


*Post-fire broadcast seeding was organized with several volunteer groups assisting*

## **New Issues**

### **NJK Acquisition (*Goal #1*)**

The Wenas Wildlife Area acquired approximately 1,500 acres of private timber land in the South Fork Manastash drainage. The property contains a range of habitat diversity, including streams and riparian areas, mid-elevation mixed conifer, ponderosa pine, aspen groves, shrubsteppe, and talus slopes. Grant funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Recreation and Conservation Office was received for obtaining and helping manage this property. The goal of the acquisition was to eliminate the threats posed by checkerboard ownership and allow coordinated land management across the diverse habitat that exists through the area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 required the development of a management plan for this property. The property is planned to be managed for the benefit of federally listed northern spotted owl, gray wolf, and bull trout, as well as other state priority species.



*South Fork Manastash Creek in NJK Acquisition*

### **Recreational Management (*Goal #3*)**

The Manastash Ridge Trails are a network of user-built trails within the boundaries of the Wenas Wildlife Area that have been used by residents of Kittitas County for over 60 years. Due to the high level of recreational use and historic use of the area, a management plan has been a priority. The plan outlines management strategies to produce a sustainable trail system. The trail system will accommodate hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and other users while minimizing impacts to the environment. The plan was developed with extensive public participation. The plan will review user-built trails for their cultural and environmental impacts, and determine whether to maintain, improve, relocate, or abandon each trail. An assessment will be done to determine potential new trails, trailheads, and signing locations. The plan is expected to be completed in fall 2021.