

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

2019-2020 Management Plan Update



Geese at the South Unit cornfield

This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within 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 Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, WDFW develops a process for revising 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

Using Prescribed Fire to Control Invasive Vegetation (*Goal #1*)

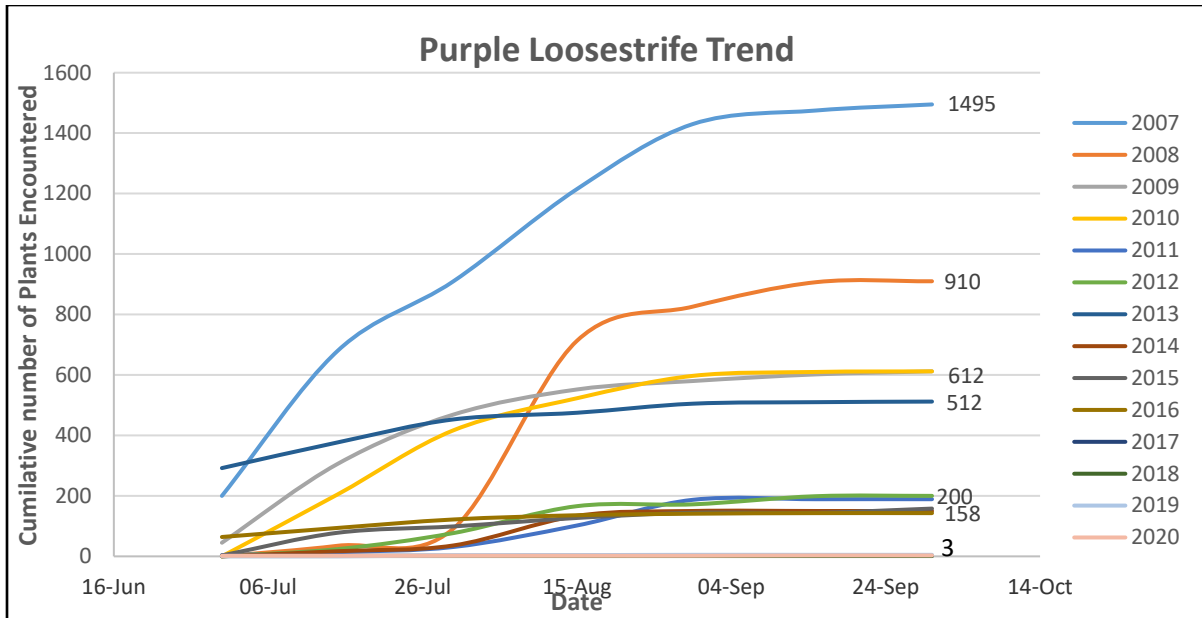
Shillapoo Wildlife Area staff members started using prescribed fire in the fall of 2019 as a method of removing invasive Himalayan blackberry and other unwanted vegetation in the North and South units. Using fire to remove invasive vegetation is beneficial due to increased costs and lack of contractors and equipment. Prescribed fire has the added benefit of being cheaper than hiring contractors, sterilizing much of the weed seed in the ground, removing more acres of invasive vegetation annually, using fewer herbicides to control weeds after the fire, and taking less time than other traditional methods. After an area is burned, it is often seeded with a mix of grasses, which helps to inhibit other weeds from getting established and provide beneficial cover and forage for wildlife. By starting a prescribed burning program on Shillapoo, WDFW has developed a new partnership with the Washington Department of Natural Resources, who assist with the burning and use this opportunity to train their Wildland Fire personnel on controlled burns and wildfire suppression.



Prescribed burning near Bass Lake

Purple Loosestrife Control (Goal #1)

The wildlife area continues its emphasis on controlling purple loosestrife. Over the past several years, a significant decrease has been observed in the number of plants across all units. Since 2007, the trend has been monitored within a 75-acre survey area in the North Unit of the Shillapoo lakebed. The overall number of plants observed in this area has decreased by more than 99 percent, with only three plants being found within the survey area in 2020. This is the fourth year in a row in which the number of purple loosestrife plants encountered and treated were in the single digits. Wildlife area staff members are very confident that efforts are paying off in reducing the size and density of loosestrife infestations. Without the monitoring and control program, it is very likely that the wetlands would currently be dominated by loosestrife and there would be little chance of ever regaining control or eradicating the plant from the wildlife area.



Number of purple loosestrife plants encountered annually from 2007 to 2020

Moist Soil Management to Restore Native Wetland Plant Communities (Goal #1)

To enhance native wetland plant communities, wildlife area staff members conduct moist soil management on 30-70 acres annually. The most successful approach to increase native plant cover while decreasing invasive vegetation includes the following field activities: herbicide application, winter inundation/flooding, spring disking, and cover crop planting. This technique is repeated every 3-5 years in each of the wetlands. This technique results in an increase of over 60 percent of native cover after 1-2 years of treatments.



Blaker's Lake planted with a cover crop of buckwheat

New Issues

Shillapoo Ecosystem Restoration Feature (*Goal #1*)

The \$8-10 million Shillapoo Ecosystem Restoration Feature (SERF) project, which would have restored hydrology to approximately 900 acres in the historic Shillapoo lakebed, is a long-term management goal. However, the original funding for the project is no longer available, and currently there is no alternative funding. Wildlife area staff members remain interested in enhancing hydrology within the lakebed, and have developed a smaller project to block some of the drainage ditches. The smaller project should benefit native wildlife and plant species on more than 150 acres by keeping the area inundated longer with water during the winter and spring months. The approximate cost of this project is \$100,000.



Lakebed drainage ditch, proposed to be blocked to increase inundation levels