

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area

2021-2022 Management Plan Update



This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [2022 South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities at the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area (SPS). WDFW periodically 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

Milewa Estuary Restoration (Goal #6B Protect and restore estuarine, nearshore, and riparian habitats on the wildlife area for salmonid recovery.)

In fall 2021, the Milewa Estuary Restoration project was completed on McNeil Island. This project reconnected tidal interchange at the mouth of Milewa Creek, which had formerly been severed by an earthen road crossing with two small culverts. In addition to the road embankment removal, the work also removed World War II-era torpedo netting originally placed as shoreline armoring, a large concrete groin, and other debris. The project was led by biologists and engineers from the Habitat Program and was completed in collaboration with partners at the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Corrections, and Department of Social and Health Services. The connectivity benefits include improving habitat for forage fish, shellfish, and migrating juvenile salmon. Additionally, it contributes toward restoration goals on McNeil Island, which includes two additional estuary restoration projects coming up in 2024.



Union River Waterfowl Hunting Access (*Goal #7A Provide recreation opportunities in the wildlife area.*)

Two floating duck blinds were built in 2021 by volunteers through Ducks Unlimited and were anchored at the mouth of the Union River. In the winter of 2021-2022, one blind was dislodged and pushed upriver, but was re-secured in place on the northern side of the delta in fall 2022 with help from WDFW district biologists and a local volunteer. The location allows it to have walk-in access via a trail that was re-established through overgrown Scotch broom off Highway 300. Safety zone signs were refreshed near the hiking trail loop managed by the Salmon Center, and signage at the hand boat launch was kept up to date. This work has helped increase waterfowl hunting opportunities to the public within the Union River Unit.



Volunteer work at the South Puget Sound Unit (*Goal #9D Maintain productive and positive working relationships with neighbors, partners, and permittees.*)

Biannual work parties continue to be led by the Clover Park Rotary Club at the South Puget Sound Unit in Lakewood. Their projects include parking area cleanup, cement pad replacement to increase accessibility in the picnic area, creating and maintaining a garden of indigenous plants with interpretative signage, pulling Scotch broom, and improving retention walls in the parking area. This group has been successful in applying for and receiving grant funding for this work, which is important to their community and neighborhood. Their next steps will involve restoring native oak prairie wildflowers and grasses in areas of the unit where Scotch broom has largely been controlled.



New Issues

Skokomish Restoration (*Goal #6A Protect and restore estuarine, nearshore, and riparian habitats on the wildlife area for salmonid recovery.*)

Ongoing collaboration is underway with the Mason Conservation District and WDFW's Habitat Program to design a floodplain restoration project at the Skokomish Unit. The project, currently being reviewed under WDFW's internal Restoration Pathway process, will increase side channel features across the floodplain area of the unit. This will help reduce flooding on the southern side of the Skokomish River, while improving fish habitat quality. Additionally, it will benefit recreational opportunities at the unit, improving trail access, the parking area, and relocating the vault toilet out of the floodplain.

Lake Koeneman access agreement work (*Goal #7H Provide recreation opportunities on the wildlife area.*)

Joint work between the wildlife area manager, water access manager, and lands agent for WDFW Region 6 has helped increase progress towards re-establishing an agreement to access Lake Koeneman. The unit, surrounded by timberland owned by Alpine Evergreen, provides great potential for recreation opportunity, but requires an updated access agreement with the company. Continued collaboration should lead to an agreement that will also help with more frequent trail maintenance and updates by WDFW.

