

# Swanson Lakes/Reardan/Revere Wildlife Area Management Plan

2021-2022 Update



*Revere Wildlife Area.*

This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [2015 Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities at the Swanson Lakes/Reardan/Revere Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (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.



*Swanson Lakes shrub restoration crew.*

## **Management Highlights**

**Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area- shrubsteppe grassland habitat restoration, post-Whitney Fire. (Goal/Objective 3B) Restoration of shrubsteppe habitat to enhance upland game bird populations and other shrubsteppe obligates.**

The catastrophic Whitney Fire burned nearly all of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area during a large fire event in Eastern Washington on Sept. 7, 2020. Only a few hundred acres of shrubsteppe emerged unscathed, out of 21,000 acres. Shrubsteppe suddenly became grassland, completely burned over. Habitat restoration work began later that fall. After Sept. 7, 2020, the workload suddenly got much larger.

WDFW staff, the U. S. Bureau of Land Management, the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, and the Spokane Audubon Society secured funding to purchase grass seed and young containerized native forbs and shrubs. The seed mix was applied aerially and where possible, scratched by light tillage equipment into the soil surface. WDFW staff and volunteers planted approximately 15,000 shrub and forb plants in spring and fall of 2021, in several locations around the wildlife area. As expected, population counts for sharp-tailed and sage grouse were down in 2021 after the previous year. The experimental sage grouse lek (translocated birds and any offspring) had been failing previously, but the loss of sagebrush in the vicinity of their lek does not bode well for their continued survival in Lincoln County. The outlook for sharp-tailed grouse, which had been holding their own until the fire, is somewhat more positive, as they are more suited to open grassland. The habitat improvement work at Swanson Lakes since the Whitney Fire is intended to hasten habitat recovery for multiple species including upland birds.



*Staff replacing the Z-Lake aeration system, Sept. 2021.*

**Z-Lake Aeration Replacement (Goal/Objective 5A) Support and maintain appropriate recreational opportunities.** WDFW staff worked with outside contractors to replace the combined solar and wind-powered aeration system for Z-Lake on the east side of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in September 2021, after it was destroyed by fire on Sept. 7, 2020. The system, which diffuses air into the lake, provides oxygen for rainbow trout during the winter months and provides a walk-in rimrock lake fishing opportunity for Inland Northwest anglers. Funding was acquired to replace the system with a more efficient one.

The system is powered by two solar panels and one wind turbine to supply power to the batteries. The batteries then supply the power to the air compressor that send the air to two diffusers that are approximately 13 feet deep and 25 feet apart within the lake itself. The automatic timer is set for one hour on and two hours off which leaves the ice open even when the temperatures drop below 0 degrees.

### **Revere Wildlife Area -Wagner Road Fire 2022**

On Aug. 18, 2022, the Wagner Road Fire burned approximately 7,381 total acres of rangeland, stubble and standing wheat. The 2,424-acre Revere Wildlife Area lost nearly 75% of its critical

habitat, which included many established shrub and food plots. Many of the utility poles were destroyed across the wildlife area and were replaced with steel poles. During the pole replacement, the utility company easement was damaged and will soon be repaired back to its original condition with a native grass mix in fall of 2023.

As a result of the Wagner Road Fire, restoration plans were made almost immediately for recovery. In fall 2021 WDFW staff worked with the Spokane Chapter of Pheasants Forever to order shrubs and supplies in the interest of replanting 25 shrub plots to enhance the riparian habitat within the Revere Unit. The project grew quickly with approximately 30 volunteers, and the Puget Sound Pheasants Forever Chapter members.



*Wagner Road Fire 2022.*



*Revere shrub planting (two-day project).*

**Revere Food Plots (Goal/objective 3A) Develop and implement mule deer management to provide spring/summer forage habitat.**

The Spokane Chapter of Pheasants Forever continued their volunteer maintenance and replanted food plots, throughout the Revere Wildlife Area. Crops planted for wildlife included wheat, sunflowers, millet, and sorghum. The annual crops provide high-quality forage for upland birds, deer, and elk. Staff have been performing minimal weed control on these plots and other areas of

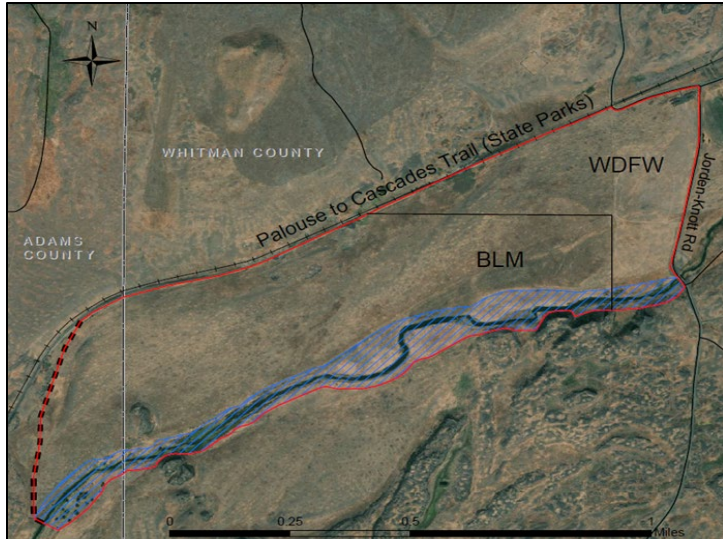
Revere Wildlife Area during this time. Pheasants Forever volunteer work at Revere Wildlife Area has been well-appreciated by local deer and elk, and it allows wildlife area staff to focus their attention on other habitat needs.



**Revere Wetland Restoration (Revere Goal 1) Maintain or improve ecological integrity of priority sites.** A Duck Stamp grant, along with a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant, was acquired to fund a pond renovation on the southern portion of the Revere Wildlife Area. Staff worked with Ducks Unlimited to clear accumulated mud and weeds from the pond and placed the spoils on the banks where it was treated for weeds and reseeded to native grass. The next key component to this project will be removing mud and debris from the pond on the east and west side of phase one. This pond now provides open water for waterfowl use and holds more water on the landscape than before.

*Revere wetland restoration, before and after photos.*

**Revere/Rock Creek Elk Habitat Improvement Project – (Goal/Objective 1E) Acquire additional Revere property.** In 2021, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and WDFW restored approximately 200 acres of BLM uplands, 50 acres of riparian habitat, and 94 acres of WDFW-managed land directly for the improvement of elk habitat. The 94-acre parcel was recently donated from the Puget Sound Chapter of Pheasants Forever in October of 2018. Prior to the restoration, the quality of the uplands and riparian habitats were dominated by noxious weeds and invasive grasses. Restoration actions included a prescribed burn followed by an aerial application of herbicide and aerial broadcast seeding. The results after the restoration actions on the tilled ground were successful.



*Rock Creek elk habitat improvement project.*



*Rock Creek elk habitat improvement project.*

**Reardan-Audubon Unit –Informational kiosk for new acquisition**

**(Goal/Objective 1E) Acquire Reardan /Audubon Lake Phase 2 property from Inland Northwest Land Trust.** A new parking lot was developed on recently acquired land in the Reardan-Audubon Wildlife Area. Plans were soon developed to construct a new kiosk. With community involvement and planning with Reardan High School Teacher Rick Perleberg, a new Kiosk was built and installed by the Reardan High School wood shop class at the new parking lot along Bisson Road. Wildlife area staff installed the framework for the kiosk in concrete followed by the class installing the reader board a few weeks later. The gravel trail system property addition remains on hold. This work will require additional coordination and funding for completion.

## **New Issues**

### **Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area**

Following the Whitney Fire, invasive grass species and annual weeds moved in almost immediately. Locations affected by the highest fire severity will be given top priority for restoration. The success of each restoration project will be based on acquiring necessary funds and resources. Current efforts are underway to test invasive grass herbicides to allow native bunch grasses to flourish in the wildlife area.

The process of rebuilding the wildlife area boundary fence has been ongoing due to delays from Covid-19 and FEMA funding. Wildlife area staff are coordinating with WDFW's Capital and Asset Management Program in this effort. All rebuilt fences will be constructed to wildlife-friendly specifications.

### **Revere Wildlife Area**

Following the catastrophic Wagner Road Fire, it would be beneficial to replant the shrub plots with more fire-resistant species. This process will take additional funding and time to accomplish.

Wildlife area staff are in the process of acquiring funding for modifying the 8.7 miles of existing boundary fences on wildlife area into wildlife friendly fencing. Operations and maintenance costs have increased for maintaining irrigation equipment (hay lease). Funding for repairs is currently being sought out for upgrading the aging equipment.

### **Reardan-Audubon Wildlife Unit**

Funding was recently received for ongoing operations and maintenance at the Reardan-Audubon Unit. Planning for updated management activities based on new funding will need to be developed.