

Olympic-Willapa Hills Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting

Final Meeting Notes

March 4, 2025

Teams Call

Attendees

WAAC Members

- Mike Bruner - Grays Harbor Tourism
- Greg Green - Ducks Unlimited
- Nansen Malin - Sea Resources
- Mike Nordin - Pacific Conservation District
- Kurt Snyder - Washington Waterfowl Association
- Janet Strong - Grays Harbor Audubon
- Austin Tomlinson - Columbia Land Trust

WDFW

- Brian Calkins, Regional Wildlife Program Manager
- Matt Blankenship, Assistant Wildlife Program Manager
- Nick Bechtold, Wildlife Area Manager
- Monica Martinez, Natural Resource Tech
- Alyssa Magliaro, Natural Resource Tech
- Lauri Vigue, Project Manager

Welcome/Introductions – Matt Blankenship

Matt welcomed everyone. Advisory Committees are vital to the success of the wildlife area management plan. We appreciate your participation and time commitment to this process.

WDFW Mission - To preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.

Planning Overview - Lauri Vigue

WAAC Roles and Expectations - The role of the advisory committee is to provide public and other stakeholders' perspectives in WDFW wildlife area planning and management activities.

The purpose of Advisory Committees is to provide input through the development of each wildlife area plan. They also provide input about ongoing lands management activities that support successful implementation of the wildlife area plans, consistent with the agency

mandate, purpose of lands and state-wide goals. WAAC participation will add credibility and support for land management practices and help build constituencies for wildlife areas.

A recreation survey will go out soon to the public to evaluate public use on the wildlife area complex. It will also be translated into a Spanish.

Comment: How broadly will the recreation survey be distributed? Can the results be weighed differently if comments are received outside the area?

Response: Distribution of the survey will be based on a stakeholder list that we are building specific to this area, and a broader survey that the (Communications and Public Engagement) agency maintains. Currently we have no way of weighting the responses in the tool we are using. The WAAC will receive the final results of the recreation survey at a future WAAC meeting.

A tribal forum was held on January 14th to provide them with an overview of the planning process and gave them options for participating. The following tribes participated: Chehalis, Cowlitz, Hoh, Puyallup, Quileute, Shoalwater Bay and Skokomish. WDFW will meet with the Chinook tribe to give them regular updates.

Overview of Olympic-Willapa Hills Wildlife Area

The management focus of the Olympic Wildlife Area is to provide forage for elk under the Tacoma Power mitigation agreement from the Wynoochee Dam. Managing elk forage also offsets damage from elk browsing on local private lands. Forest health will be addressed under the new management plan.

Johns River Wildlife Area is in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties and has a great deal of species diversity, including Oregon silverspot butterfly, marbled murrelet, streaked horned lark, and salmon. Management focus has been on estuary restoration, shoreline and riparian protection and endangered species recovery.

The Chehalis Wildlife Area includes four separate units (Hoxit, Satsop, Ferbrache, and Chehalis) and includes wetland and floodplain conservation. It currently has five ag leases.

Invasives are problematic in the wildlife area and more resources are needed to manage. Currently they are addressed on a case-by-case basis, e.g., Reed canary grass is a priority on the Chehalis Wildlife Area.

Will this plan address public access opportunities? Yes, that is the purpose of the recreation plan and recreation survey. We are looking to introduce dog training is a possibility.

WAAC membership considerations: include representatives from the Farm Bureau, and the Farm and Forestry Association. Consider a forester and private lands for a broader perspective. Beyond the planning process, the role of the WAAC should include review of acquisitions and

restoration projects, ag leases, and other land use activities. Overall, the WAAC should be a good sounding board for wildlife area activities.

Preliminary Issues List/Leadership Visioning list

The wildlife area complex supports a variety of habitats, providing unique restoration and recreation opportunities. Challenges include flooding, urban areas encroachment, and managing infrastructure that impacts local urban areas. Isolated parcels create management challenges due to the distance to manage and we experience high turnover in staffing.

Comment: Improve relationships with agriculture producers. Land acquisitions should be evaluated based on how they are impacting local neighbors. This applies mainly to the southern part of the wildlife area, near the airport in South Bend.

Response: We are looking at including ag interest on the WAAC.

Discussion and Comment

Comment: Will the species list include Species of Greatest Conservation Need?

Response: Yes. The species list will also include Priority Habitat and Species, federal and state listed species that may occur on the wildlife area.

Comment: Will the weed management plan include exotics like green crab? The Weed management plan should also include measures for gorse, knotweed, common teasel, English ivy, holly, yellow flag iris, purple loose strife, green crab and ghost shrimp.

Response: The management plan will address all invasive species. We will include target objectives for addressing green crab.

Comment: There has been increasing demand for beach weddings (e.g., Oyhut Unit). State Parks has a process for groups less than 25. It becomes more problematic when it becomes larger groups, impacting sensitive species during sensitive times. If a commercial vendor is used, they must apply for a commercial permit on DFW lands.

Response: The plan will address managing recreation and events on our lands. We hope to address the commercial use permitting process on a statewide level in the future.

Comment: Please include education and outreach opportunities in the management plan.

Response: Yes, outreach and education will be addressed in the goal and objectives of the plan.

Wrap-up/Next Steps

- Draft charter comments are due March 18th
- Public workshop April in South Bend
- Field trips summer/fall TBD