

# **Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan**

## **Public Scoping Workshop Summary – Final**

**March 4, 2019**

### **Introduction**

The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) hosted a public scoping workshop on Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, from 6:00 to 8:30 PM at Swede Hall, Rochester. The purpose of the workshop was to share information about the wildlife area planning process and to solicit public and stakeholder input.

The workshop begins the planning process for developing a new Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan, one of 33 plans the department will revise every 10 years. This plan will be combined with the South Puget Wildlife Area, which has a separate planning team and public process. The plans are updated every two years to reflect changes in management priorities; however, the larger plan efforts are more comprehensive and consider the status of wildlife species and their habitat, progress towards goals identified in earlier plans, and new wildlife area priorities. The plans will consider the interests of stakeholders and user groups; outline forest management priorities; identify appropriate public use, recreation areas and facility improvements; as well as weed control practices and other operations and maintenance practices. South Puget Sound current plan as developed in 2006, with subsequent updates, are available on the department website at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/).

45 individuals attended and signed in at the workshop including interested parties from Rochester, Orting, Tenino, Oakville, Tumwater, Littlerock, Olympia, Vancouver, Snohomish, Battleground and Seattle. Participants represented several field trial/dog organizations (Field Trial Club, German Shepard Search Dogs, Washington Sporting Dog Training Association, Irish Setter Club of Seattle, Oregon Brittany Club, Washington Brittany Club, Western Washington English Springer Spaniel Club), Washington Waterfowl Association, Backcountry Horseman, Thurston Conservation District, Thurston County Equine Outreach, Scatter Creek Stables, Capital Land Trust, and local landowners. Thurston County Commissioner Tye Menser was present.

### **Workshop Format**

The workshop was designed in a combination open house/presentation format. Individual maps of each of the 6 units were posted, and participants were encouraged to share specific and general feedback after the presentation. Individual stations included recreation, water access/fish; habitat, wildlife and restoration; Skookumchuck restoration project and wildlife area and wildlife area planning.

## **Staff presentation**

Larry Phillips Region 6 Regional Director; Brian Calkins, Region 6 Wildlife Program Manager, welcomed everyone and introduced WDFW employees. Lauri Vigue, project lead planner, gave an overview of the workshop format and reviewed the agenda topics. Other WDFW participants included:

- Darric Lowery, Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Manager
- Josh Cook, Prairie Restoration Specialist
- Michelle Tirhi, District Wildlife Biologist
- Anthony Novak, District Wildlife Biologist
- Chris White, Pheasant Release Program Manager
- Richard Tveten, Lands Division Forestry Lead
- Cory Branscomb, Enforcement
- Matt Curtis, Assistant Regional Habitat Program Manager
- Theresa Nations, Habitat Biologist
- Maggie McKeown, Habitat Program
- Merri Martz, Anchor QEA
- Mike Scharpf, District Fish Biologist
- Lauri Vigue, Project Manager
- Shane Belson, Water Access Coordinator

Public scoping will include SEPA-30 day public review, shared agency priorities, collecting input and reporting in the plan. Lauri noted multiple methods for providing comments at this workshop including flip charts notes and comment cards. Lauri Vigue reviewed the department's overall process for updating all state wildlife area plans. She noted the following new topics the plan will consider including:

- Ecological Integrity
- Forest Management
- Recreation Management
- Expanded public outreach
- Climate change

Lauri summarized the timeline for the South Puget Sound/Scatter Creek WLA plan; staff expects a draft plan by spring 2020.

### Overview of Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Units

Darric provided an overview of each of the six units describing the current objectives, recreation, and original funding source.

### Scatter Creek Unit

Overview: 1,088 acres of Prairie, Mima Mounds, riparian, oak woodland, mixed conifer, and three miles of Scatter Creek and its tributaries; (158 acres of leased land).

Purpose: Small game, conservation and restoration of critical habitat.

Current Objectives: Provide public hunting and recreation opportunities, including hunting dog training and events. Maintain and restore habitat for priority species. Provide research and education opportunities.

Recreation: Hunting, fishing, bird watching, hiking, horseback riding, hunt dog training, and field trial events.

Funding Source: Recreation Conservation Office - Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, National Park Service – Land and Water Conservation Fund, Department of Natural Resources transfer, and WDFW Wildlife fund.

### West Rocky Prairie Unit

Overview: 809 acres of prairie, riparian, wetlands, oak woodland, Mima Mounds, mixed conifer, and 2.5 miles of Beaver Creek and Allen Creek.

Purpose: Endangered Species - conservation and restoration for priority species.

Current Objectives: Maintain and restore habitat for priority species. Provide compatible public hunting and recreation opportunities. Provide research and education opportunities.

Recreation: Wildlife viewing, hunting, and hiking.

Funding Source: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Section 6 and Recreation Conservation Office – Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

### Davis Creek Unit

Overview: 532 acres of prairie, oak woodlands, riparian, wetlands, mixed conifer, agricultural fields, and 2.5 miles of Davis Creek, Chehalis River, and associated off channel habitat.

Purpose: Waterfowl and floodplain conservation.

Current Objectives: Provide public hunting and recreation opportunities. Maintain and restore habitat for priority species.

Recreation: Hunting, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, hunt dog training, and events.

Funding Source: Duck Stamp, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Pitman Robertson, North American Wetland Conservation Act, and donation.

Black River Unit:

Overview: 109 acres of riparian and wetland habitat.

Purpose: Waterfowl and conservation of floodplain.

Current Objectives: Provide public hunting opportunities. Maintain and restore habitat for priority species.

Recreation: Hunting

Funding Source: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Pitman Robertson and WDFW Wildlife Funds.

Glacial Heritage Unit:

Overview: 80 acres of prairie and Mima Mounds.

Purpose: Endangered Species - conservation and restoration of habitat for priority species.

Current Objectives: Maintain habitat for priority wildlife species, education, and research.

Recreation: No public access except on Prairie Appreciation Day

Funding Source: Recreation Conservation Office – Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

Skookumchuck Unit:

Overview: 972 acres (8 acre WDFW water access site) riparian, wetlands, mixed conifer, agricultural fields, and an orchard.

Purpose: WDFW- waterfowl and water access; TransAlta- mitigation for impacts to wildlife from the dam construction. Management focus is elk forage and northern goshawk habitat enhancements.

Current Objectives: Maintain, improve, and restore habitat for priority fish and wildlife species, hunting and fishing access.

Recreation: Fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, hiking, and picnicking.

Funding Source: Mitigation

## General Comments and Questions at Stations

Can members of the public attend WAAC meetings? Yes.

The advisory webpage will have the meeting notes and meeting announcements.

How are we considering landscape conservation in the new plan? Landscape priorities include considerations of wildlife and fish connectivity, land acquisition and restoration projects.

Why is the agency concerned about climate change? It is consistent with the new WDFW policy on climate change. WDFW has had their own climate change coordinator for many years. Federal and state grant programs require climate change information within the grant proposals.

Ag field management occurs at the Skookumchuck Unit and it consistent with conservation. The focus of management on the unit is habitat for elk and goshawk.

When is Prairie Appreciation Day? 2nd Saturday in May

What is the representation of the advisory committee? Are hikers, bicycle groups represented? The WAAC is comprised of stakeholders from key user groups, neighbors, and conservation partners. There is not many designated hiking trails and no designated bike trails, no representation from these groups on the WAAC.

Are you considering fire breaks around the Scatter Creek Unit? Yes. The planning process will look into fire management. Chief Scott is on the WAAC.

Trees were removed for fire risk along Guava and 183<sup>rd</sup> and bush is being removed.

Consider art as a new recreation activity on the wildlife area.

Comments from resource stations:

### Wildlife Area Management

- Are there plans to develop the Black River unit? Who manages the old railroad grade?
- What is the justification for the bridge (and cost) over Beaver Creek - West Rocky Prairie?
- Invite Port Blakely to be on the WAAC and/or include on stakeholder list.

### Recreation

- Look at crowd control methods that other states use in order to spread out hunters
- Alter release dates midweek
- Have more frequent releases though out the season

- Fluctuate midweek release days (keep Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday constant but fluctuate another release between Monday, Tuesday, Friday)
- Look into a hunt by reservation system
- Post signs with hunting season, release dates, shooting hours so other user groups know when there will be shooting
- In order to make traffic safe consider more parking on 183<sup>rd</sup> during release season so case road doesn't have so many people parking along the side of the road
- What days are pheasants released?
- 4 people commented about how much they enjoyed working their dogs and pheasant hunting at the Scatter Creek sight.
- 2 comments from non-hunting neighbors who enjoy seeing the pheasants
- During pheasant season consider providing more parking along 183<sup>rd</sup> and to a lesser extent Case Road to get hunters off the sides of the road – safety issues.
- Need more parking – West Rocky Prairie.
- Enjoy pheasant hunting at Scatter Creek.
- We have so much fun going to field trails at Scatter Creek.
- Want taller grass at Davis Creek (12 inches)
- Repave (gravel) parking lots at Scatter Creek.
- Post more information on hunting at Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie so hikers can plan to avoid areas.
- Re-Install “horse boundary” signs to remind some horse people of the rules.
- Re-evaluate are some areas still okay for horse use?

## **Additional Comments Received**

### **Comment sheet – 15 total respondents**

1. What interests you about the wildlife area?
  - Horse trails, walking with dogs. Vivian Eason
  - Dog training, hiking, hunting. Keep it open for multiple use.
  - Hiking – suggestion West Rocky Prairie – Increase parking currently 4 car lot, land is available to at least double the lot. Ken Koernke
  - The variety of activities: off leash dog activities, horse activities, wildlife and activities, the habitat, north edge wetlands. Charlene Andrade
  - Wild areas so close to urban cities, relief, beauty, quiet. Unique habitats and landscapes. Very accessible yet safe. I go to walk dogs and landscape paint. Sophie Stimson.
  - Horseback riding, healthy habitat. Patricia Betts

- Preservation of important habitats, public access for wildlife/birding, walking in natural areas and horseback riding. Sue Davis.
- It is a great place to have field trials, hunt tests, and dog training. Amy Lutz.
- We come over twice per year for the East Seattle Pointer Field Trial. I'm always frustrated by all the hoops one must jump thru to put on a trial. The permit holder always seems to be the one that has their foot held to the fire by WDFW. The folks that use Scatter Creek as a dog park – give nothing to WDFW and only take from the place. Dan Hoke.
- I have a strong desire that it be kept available for dog training and shooting sports as it is my understanding that was a primary intent when it was gifted to the state. Robert Bullard.
- A perfect place to exercise and train my hunting dogs off leash. I appreciate being able to do year-round dog trainings there, as I hunt upland and waterfowl and need to keep my dogs in top shape. Lily Lo
- We like to come to Scatter Creek Wildlife for field trials each year. We also like to train dogs on occasion there as well. Cali Rothwell
- I go field trailing and dog training 3-4 times a year in the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area. Zachory Klemke.
- I was originally introduced to the South Puget Sound prairie/oak ecosystem in 1988. Since then, I spent more than 25 years studying and securing funding to support our local prairie/oak ecosystem. I particularly interested in the long-term fate of Scatter Creek as to how it can support viable, functioning populations of native organisms such as Taylor's checkerspot, valley silverspot and Mardon skipper butterflies, and the vegetation assemblages to support these species. Also, interested in how we as managers can improve the biodiversity of our unique prairie/oak system. Theodore Thomas.

2. Visits:

Areas Visited Check box below (x)		# of visits per season			
		Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black River	1	3		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Davis Creek	12	1	10	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Glacial Heritage	1		4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scatter Creek	118	127	141	89
<input type="checkbox"/>	Skookumchuck		1	2	
<input type="checkbox"/>	West Rocky Prairie	57	29	55	34

3. What recreation activities do you pursue at this wildlife area?

<b>Black River</b>	<b>Check box</b>	<b>Davis Creek</b>	<b>Check box</b>	<b>Glacial Heritage</b>	<b>Check box</b>	<b>Scatter Creek</b>	<b>Check box</b>	<b>Skookumc huck</b>	<b>Check box</b>	<b>West Rocky Prairie</b>	<b>Check box</b>
Hunting		Hunting		Wildlife Viewing	2	Hunting	4	Hunting	1	Hunting	
Boating	2	Boating		Hiking/Walking	2	Boating		Boating		Fishing	
Fishing	2	Fishing		Photography	1	Fishing		Fishing		Wildlife Viewing	2
Wildlife viewing	2	Wildlife viewing		<b>Search and Rescue TNG</b>	1	Wildlife viewing	6	Wildlife Viewing		Dog Walking	4
Dog Walking		Dog Walking	1			Dog Walking	9	Dog Walking	1	Hiking/Walking	4
Hiking/Walking		Hiking/Walking	1			Hiking/Walking	7	Hiking/Walking	1	Photography	1
Photography		Photography				Photography	3	Photography			
		Horseback Riding				Horseback Riding	8				
		Hunt Dog Training	1			Hunt Dog Training	7				
						<b>Painting</b>	1				



4. Provide any additional feedback:

- Allow horse trail across the prairie to access trails along the border to avoid gravel road. Many horse people prefer barefoot for their horses. Also, would like to see fire breaks put around the prairie to protect homes and farms (Firewise). Vivian Eason
- On info boards put permanent information behind plexiglass. Ken Koernke
- Please only do small prescribed fires, so smoke does not hurt us on the north side – Charlene Andrade
- Have formal wildlife and horse events – combine horse riding with birding and wildlife focus (treasure hunts, nature focus) Charlene Andrade
- Provide means (Facebook group) to report early issues, report wildlife stories, and provide information regarding events, when prescribed fire activities occur, hunting, etc. Charlene Andrade
- Please restore the crest wetlands along the north edge of the north unit of Scatter Creek, filled with reed canary grass.
- Please allow riding access to both north and south Scatter Creek units, along edge near the farthest entry from the north unit. Charlene Andrade
- More info posted at parking areas about hunting (so I can plan to avoid it). Provide tours on the weekends. Promote outdoor painting and drawing at these sites (or encourage other groups to). Sophie Stimson.
- Maintain areas for dog training, hunt tests, field trials. Steve Cosgriff.
- Provide a horse trail through the prairie controlled to avoid damage off trail – main road. Patricia Betts
- From north parking lot, gravel and grade the path going on to the road to keep people from creating new ruts. Patricia Betts
- Provide a path option along graveled road desirable for horses. Patricia Betts
- I am grateful we have these public lands. I hope that WDFW is able to manage them so that these important habitats are protected while allowing public access so that people can use and appreciate it; therefore care about them. Sue Davis.
- Scatter Creek is a valuable area for competitions and pleasure activities. Maintenance of the grounds for public use is important. Amy Lutz.
- Thanks for having us. Glad to see the forest management getting done sooner. Dan Hoke.
- Our springer spaniel clubs use this area for field trials. We want enough cover to hold game birds (especially pheasants). Robert Bullard.
- Please keep Scatter Creek north unit open year-round for dog training! It would be nice to have additional grounds at Skookumchuck for dog trainings too, but my top priority is keeping Scatter Creek north running as it currently is. Thank you. Lily Lo.
- My family has been coming there for years to watch the field trials. Cali Rothwell.
- Is there a way the butterfly park could be put in a different location that people don't use as much? Zachory Klemke.

- I believe it is critical that actions are taken immediately to restore Scatter Creek Wildlife Area through active management. Planning, restoration goals and implementation need to get moving now. Time is of the essence. Make sure seed production and supply (native seed production) is a top priority. Theodore Thomas.

### **Meeting Materials**

The following meeting materials are attached:

- Agenda
- Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Fact Sheet
- Comment Sheet