



SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

February 2020 Flood Event Update

As you are all aware, the WT Wooten Wildlife Area, Camp Wooten ELC, and the Umatilla National Forest sustained significant damage in the February 2020 flood event.

Cleanup and repair after the flood is continuing and is going to be a long process.

WDFW installed a replacement foot bridge to access Watson Lake in fall 2021. We are still waiting for FEMA funds to clean out the old Campground 9 so we can access the vault toilet and turn the area into a Day Use parking area, as well as repair or replace the irrigation point of diversion at the Headquarters. We are looking into switching our water right from a surface draw to a groundwater well so we no longer have to chase the Tucannon River.

The United States Forest Service (USFS) is still waiting on the Federal Highway funding process to get the funds needed to complete the repairs to the Tucannon Road and the USFS roads. The roads to Sheep Creek and Meadow Creek were made passable last fall, but were not actually repaired. Additional disaster recovery funding has been given to the Umatilla National Forest and things are moving forward to complete the repairs.

A significant rain event occurred this spring over the area burned in the 2021 Green Ridge Fire, which caused several mudslides on the upper Tucannon River and Panjab Creek. The USFS is working to clean out under the Panjab Trail footbridge before next spring's high flows.

Wooten Floodplain Management Plan

The WT Wooten Floodplain Management Plan did not receive any funding in the 2021-2023 Biennium. The Deer Lake project was still moving forward with design but plans have changed slightly.

In cooperation with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe, WDFW is going to be conducting an assessment of the Tucannon River and associated infrastructure from Camp Wooten ELC to just north of the WT Wooten Headquarters. The assessment will be used to drive the designs of the future projects involving the lakes, campgrounds, and powerline.

New Wooten Wildlife Area Manager

The WT Wooten Wildlife Area has recently been split off as its own standalone wildlife area and is no longer complexed under the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex.

The new Wildlife Area Manager on the WT Wooten Wildlife Area is Kari Dingman. Kari will take over the Wildlife Area Manager duties on October 1, 2022. The WT Wooten Headquarters phone number will remain the same (509-843-1530) and you are welcome to call or email with any questions or concerns.

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TO PRESERVE,
 PROTECT AND
 PERPETUATE FISH,
 WILDLIFE AND
 ECOSYSTEMS WHILE
 PROVIDING
 SUSTAINABLE FISH
 AND WILDLIFE
 RECREATIONAL AND
 COMMERCIAL
 OPPORTUNITIES.

Large Wood Projects

Phase 1 of the large wood project planned for the section of Tucannon River from the Hatchery bridge to the fish trap finally happened! It was originally scheduled for summer 2021 but the February 2020 flood event moved the Tucannon River around enough that parts of the project had to be redesigned.

Phase 2 is planned for summer 2023.

Weed Spraying

WDFW received the RMEF grant again this year and continued treating noxious weeds with the helicopter. The funds were used to treat 360 acres on Abels Ridge on the WT Wooten Wildlife Area.

WDFW also received grant funds from the Blue Mountain Community Foundation to treat 225 acres along Hartssock Grade on the WT Wooten Wildlife Area.

Elk Calf Mortality Study

WDFW conducted a second year of the study this spring/summer to look at elk calf survival. A total of 102 elk calves were captured between May 18 and June 15 and fitted with radio-telemetry collars. The collars were tracked daily by technicians and mortalities were investigated to attempt to determine the cause of death. A rough survival estimate, adjusted to account for shed collars, is 50% to date, compared to 17% at this time last year. Cougar predation remains the leading source of calf mortality, although at a lower rate than last year. A more detailed daily survival estimate will be calculated accounting for dates of mortality and collar loss.

Bighorn Sheep Update

Current population size is 15 sheep, with 0 lambs surviving out of the 8 born last spring. The sheep are still outside the elk fence and have spent the past few years on Don Howard's property.

Wolf Update

There are currently 5 wolf packs in SE Washington. The Touchet (8 members), Columbia (5 members), Tucannon (8 members), Grouse Flats (4 members), and Butte Creek (6 members). Captures are continuing as the opportunity arises to try to get working collars in each of the packs.

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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The W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area consists of 16,481 acres in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. The main valley contains the Tucannon River, along which are located 8 man-made lakes which were constructed in the 1950s. The lakes are stocked with hatchery raised rainbow trout for a put-and-take fishery. There are 10 campgrounds located on the Wildlife Area.

The area was historically a major big game wintering location and lies adjacent to National Forest lands. The bulk of the land purchases occurred from 1941-1944. The elk fence was constructed in the 1960s.

Current management objectives and problems are similar to past goals and problems which include providing maximum winter-range forage conditions while meeting recreational use demands. At the present time there is a harvest season of some type taking place 12 months of the year within the boundaries of the wildlife area.

