

2015 Fire Season Update

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Wildlife Program

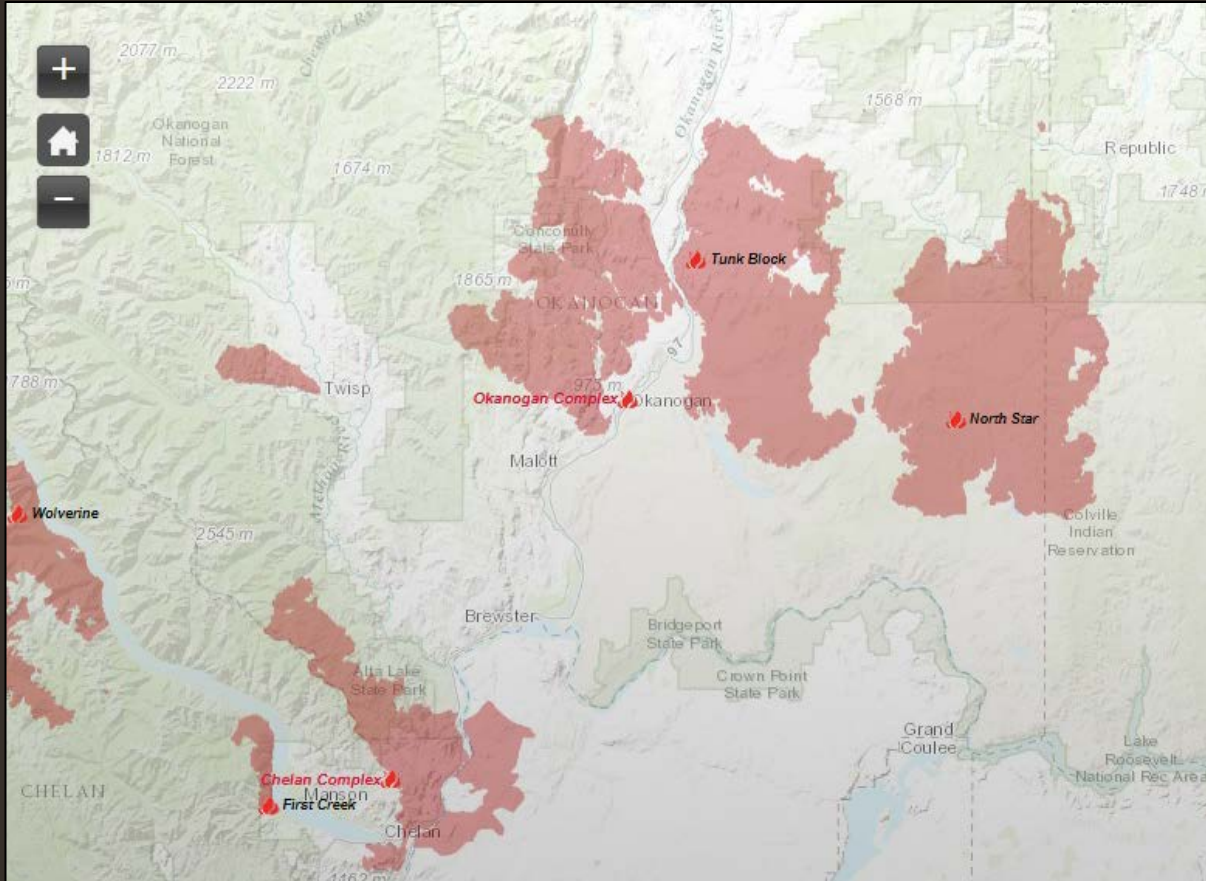


Outline

- Fire Extent
 - North-Central
 - Northeast
 - Southeast
- Suppression Efforts
- Impact of Fires
 - WDFW Lands
 - Wildlife
- Recreational Access Issues
- Outreach
- Next Steps
- Forest Health



Fire Boundaries North-Central Washington



Source: Northwest Interagency Coordination Center (NWCC)

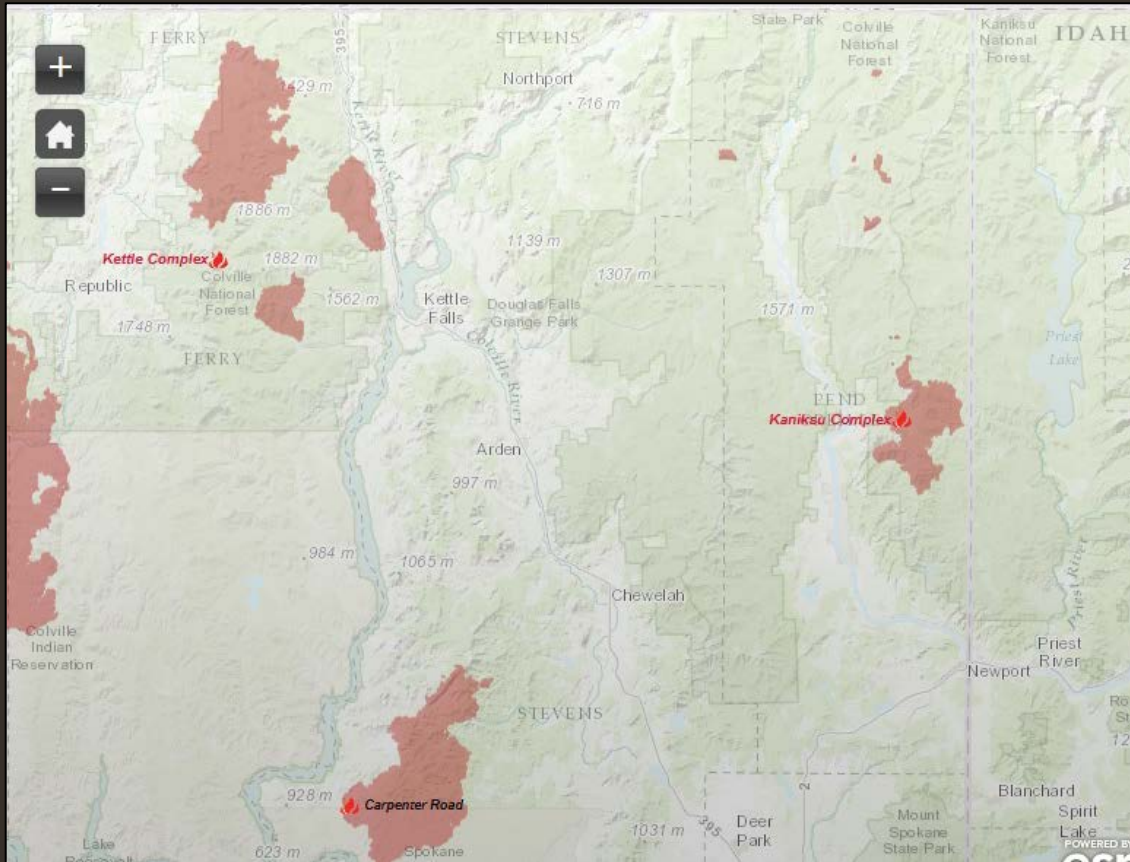
- Okanogan Complex – Over 305,000 Acres
- Chelan Complex – Over 88,000 Acres
- North Star – Over 217,000 Acres
- Wolverine – Over 65,000 Acres

Okanogan Complex Fires

- Over 305,000 acres burned, making it largest wildfire in state history
- Over 170 homes and other structures lost
- Over 1,200 personnel on containment efforts
- Three firefighters killed while fighting the fire
- 95% contained as of 9/17/15



Fire Boundaries NE Washington

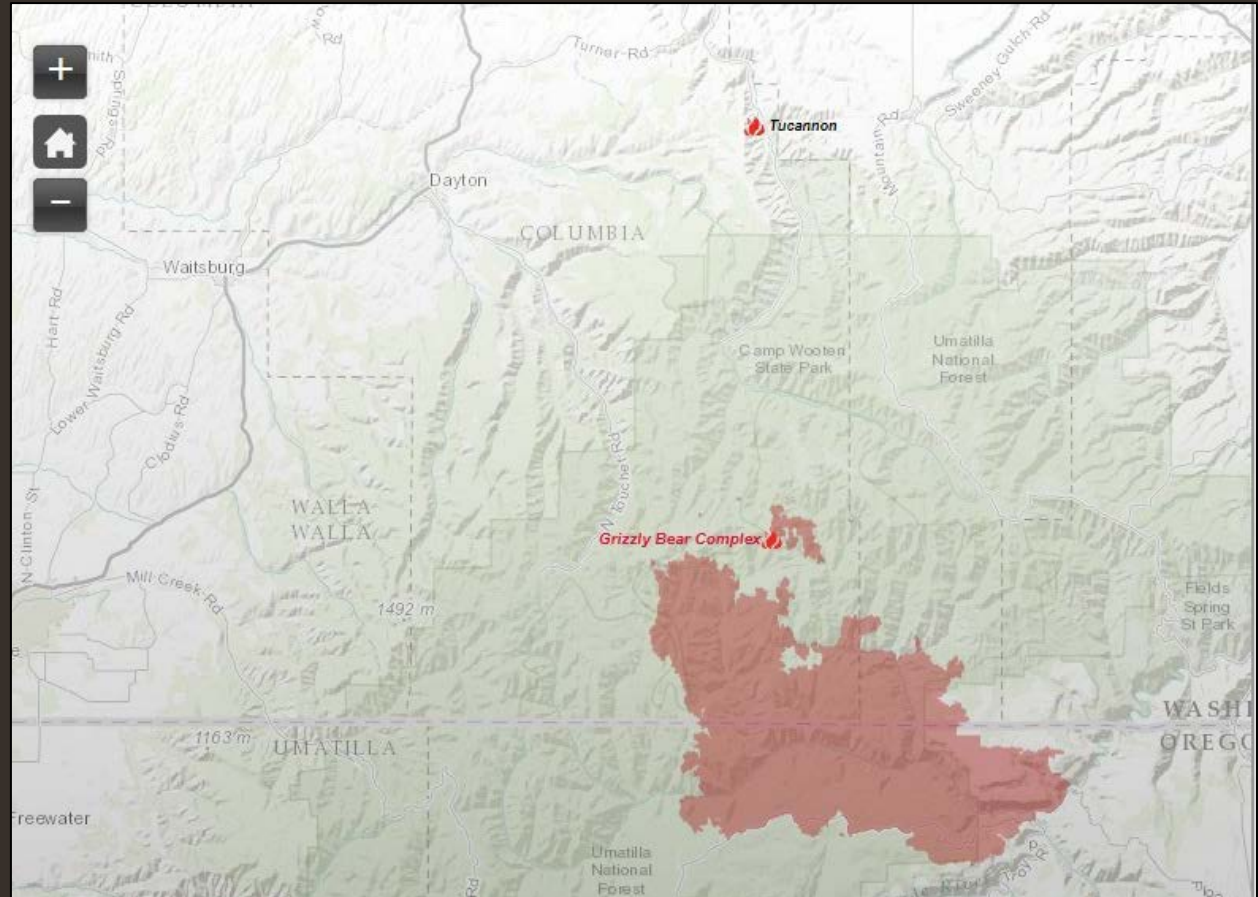


Source: NWCC

- Kettle Complex – Over 76,000 Acres
- Carpenter Road – Over 65,000 Acres
- Kaniksu Complex – Over 26,000 Acres

Fire Boundaries SE Washington

- Grizzly Bear Complex – Over 76,000 Acres
- Tucannon Fire – Over 2,600 Acres



Source: NWCC

Suppression Efforts



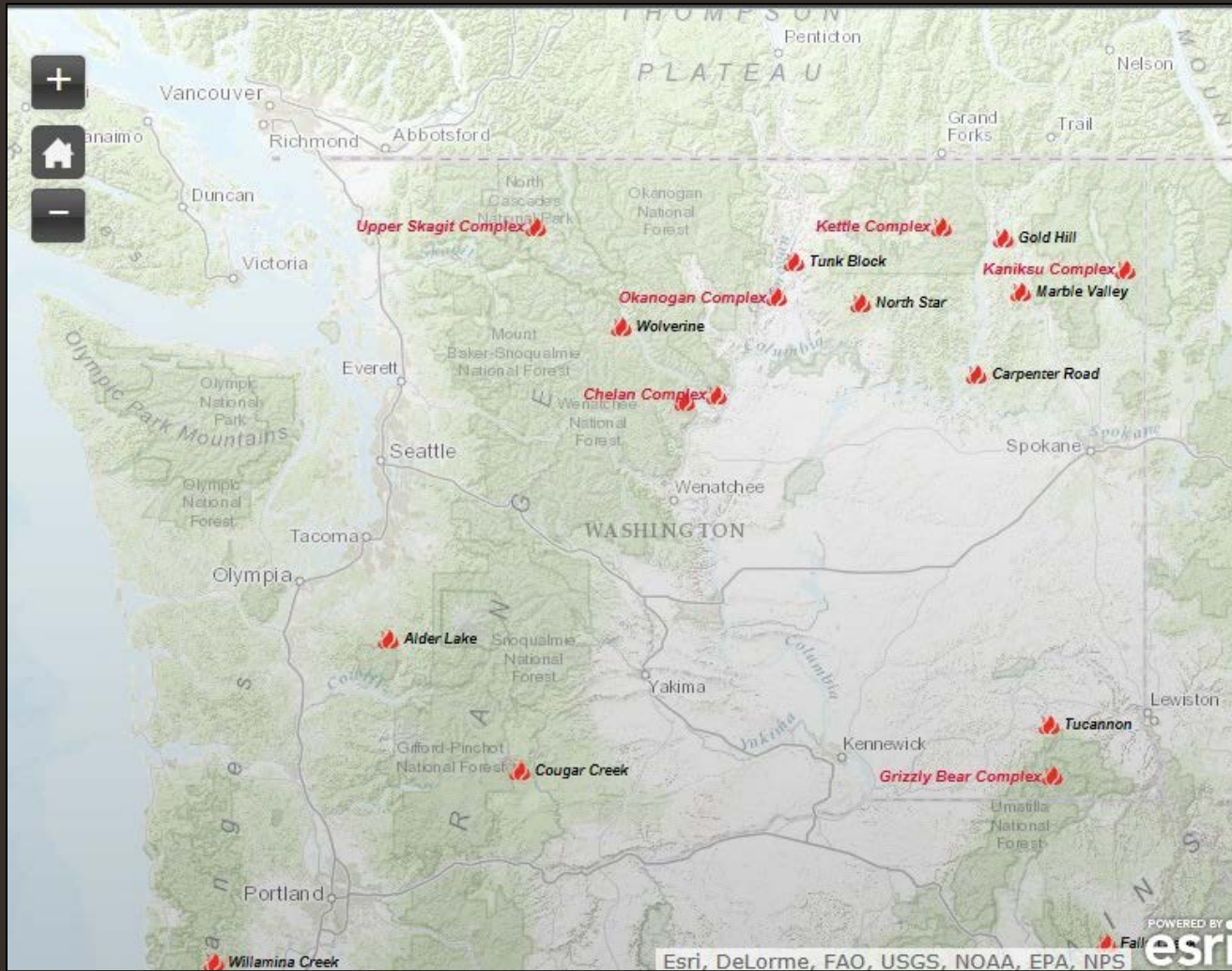
Sinlahekin Wildlife Area
Prescribed burn crew conducts burn-out operations near Blue Lake

Suppression Efforts



7,925 firefighters on containment efforts

Overall Fire Impacts



Source: NWCC

Nearly 1 million acres burned

2015 Fire Impacts: WDFW Lands

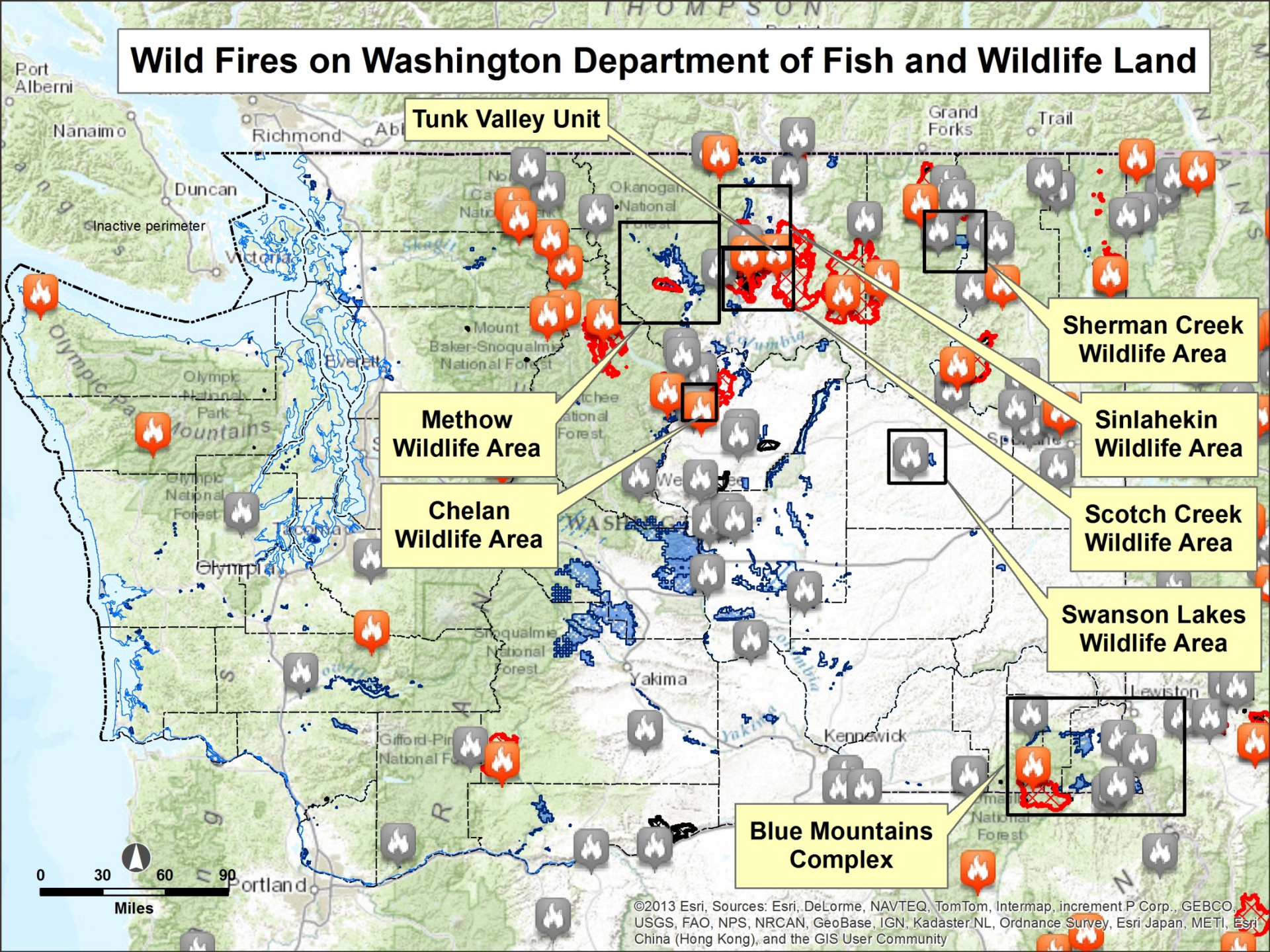


Photo by Jim Olson

Tunk Block Fire



Wild Fires on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Land



2015 Fire Impacts: WDFW Lands



Big Buck Unit of Methow Wildlife Area

- 30,000 acres burned
- Timber loss
- More than 90 miles of fence destroyed
- Grazing lessees impacted
- Infrastructure lost
- Signs/Kiosks destroyed

2015 Fire Impacts: WDFW Lands



Burned boundary fence on
Chelan Butte



Remains of pedestrian bridge
over Toad Creek at Beebe Springs

2015 Fire Impacts: WDFW Lands



Photo by Justin Haug

Scotch Creek Wildlife Area

Photo by Scott Fitkin



Aspen Lake Area on Big Buck Unit - Methow Wildlife Area

2015 Fire Impacts: WDFW Lands

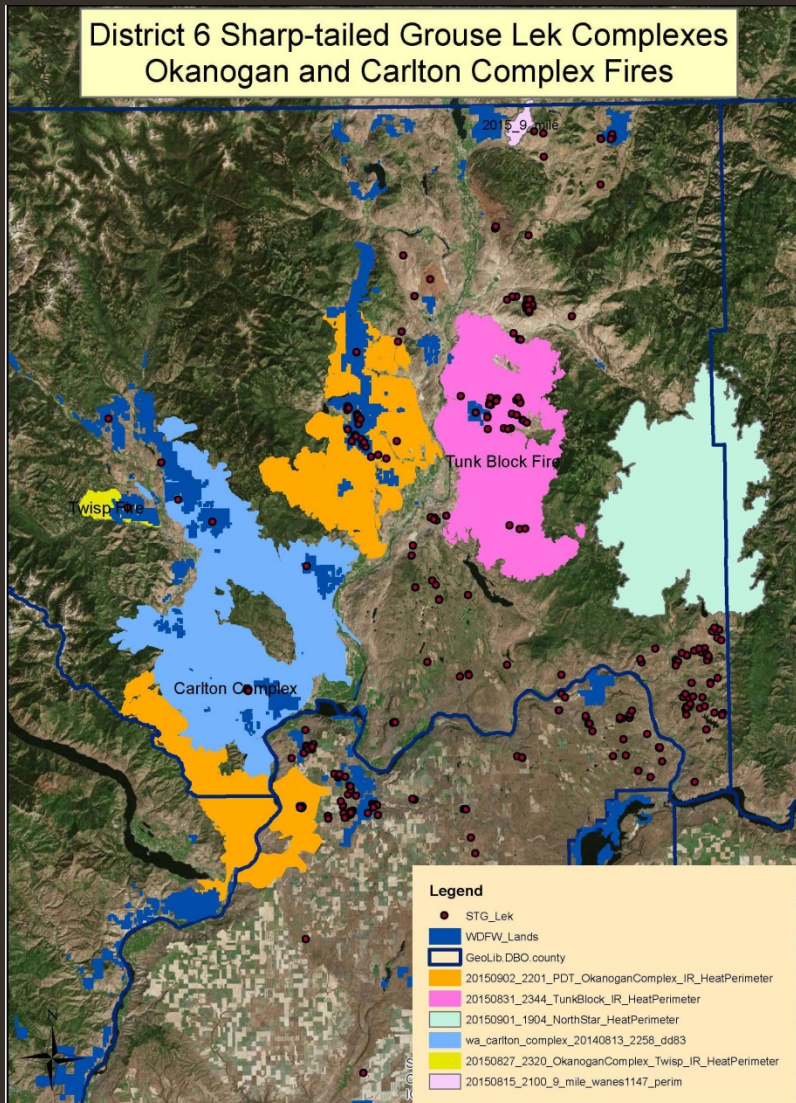
Before and After: Tunk Creek, WDFW Tunk Unit



2015 Fire Impacts: Wildlife



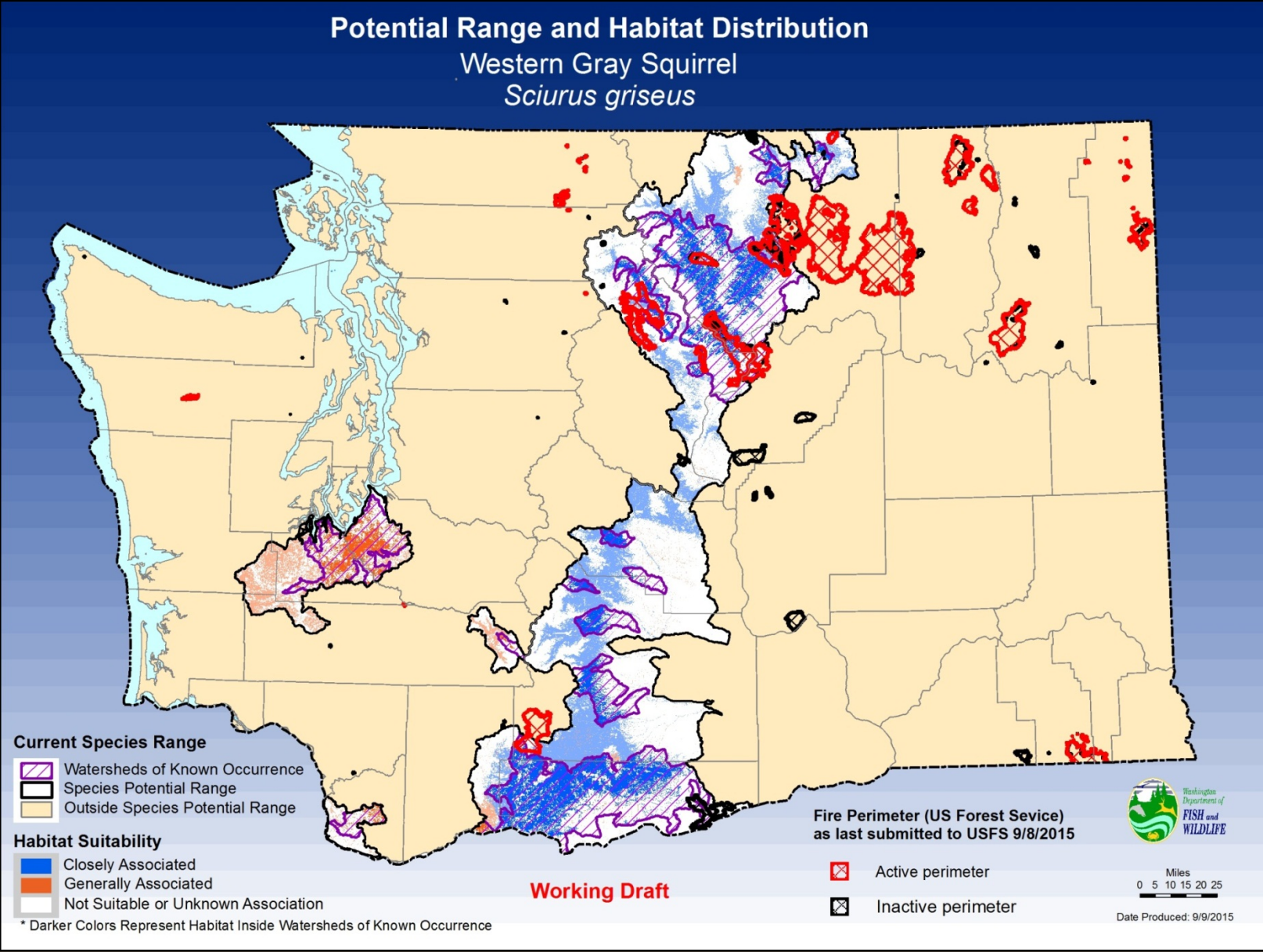
Impacts to Grouse Lek Complexes



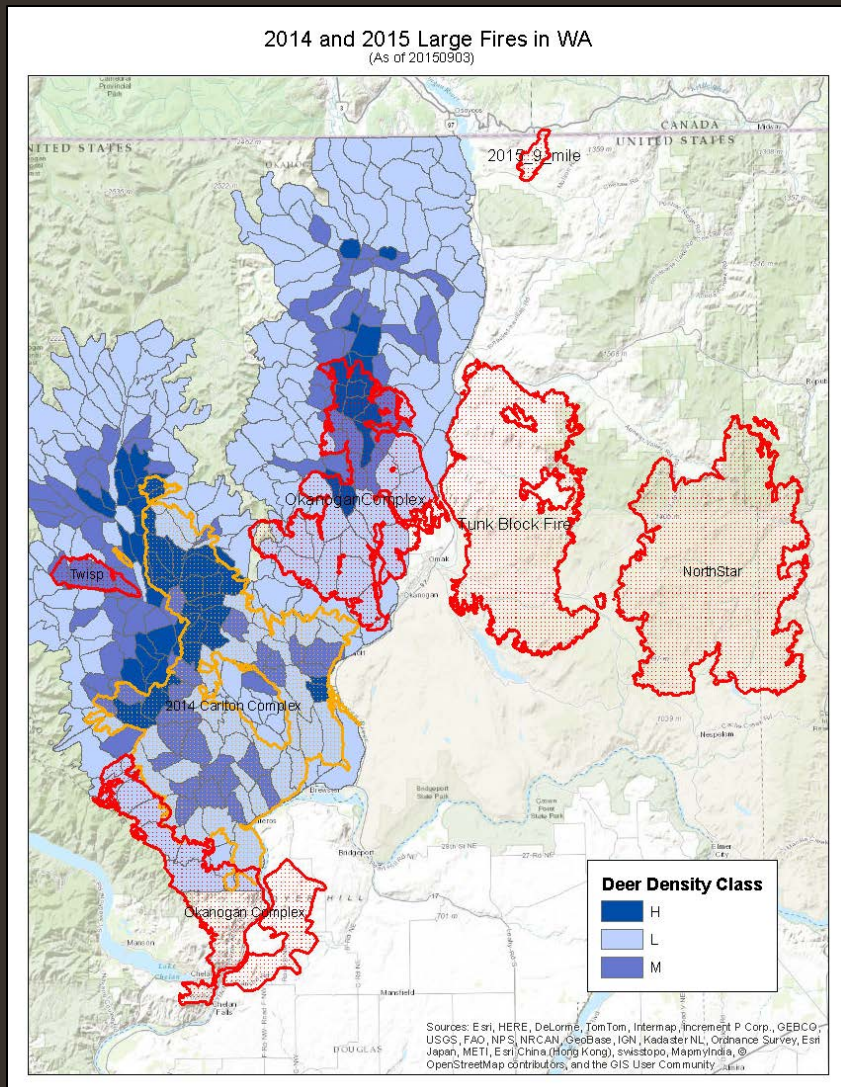
- Burned habitat supported 70% of sharp-tailed grouse population in N Okanogan County
- At least 25% of statewide population
- Birds dispersed, but where?



Statewide Western Gray Squirrel (WGS) Range Fire Overlay



2015 Fire Impacts: Wildlife



- Approximately 150,000 acres of deer winter range burned
- Burned area supports 10,000+ mule deer
- Need to assess full extent of impacts to shrub forage base

2015 Fire Impacts: Recreational Access

- Large area closures (60-75% of all USFS land in SE WA)
- Closures modified as conditions improve; some closures remain effect due post-fire activities
- Some special permit Archery Elk hunters affected by Grizzly Bear Complex fire in SE WA
 - Point restoration option offered
 - 60 permit holders
 - Seven hunts
 - 19 elected point restoration



Scotch Creek Wildlife Area after fire – Photos by Jim Olson

Outreach

- Updates on WDFW Webpage
 - Contact Information for Major Landowners
- July and September News Releases
- Updates in Wildlife Program Weekly Reports
- Email Blast to 50,000+ Hunters
- Hunting Prospects
- ADA Access Hunts
- Attend Fire Meetings with Local Communities



Next Steps: Wildlife

- Assess Range Loss and Population Status
- Possible Department Actions
 - Emergency Winter Feeding
 - Depends on fall green-up, winter severity, and distribution of deer
 - Prep work underway
 - Increase Antlerless Harvest
- Survey for STG Distribution



Next Steps: Wildlife



- Subsequent second deer permit drawing; Oct Hunt
 - Central Okanogan B
 - Omak B
 - Conconully B
- 230 additional permits
- Adding public land within the deer area and later season dates for new permits
- 2015 season already has 500 add'l permits due to Carlton Complex Fire in 2014
- Effort is to bring deer population in line with available habitat

Next Steps: Wildlife Areas



Big Buck Unit, Methow Wildlife Area

- Fence Inventory and Replacement
- Habitat Restoration
 - Dozer Lines
 - Reseeding
 - Erosion Management
- Hazard Tree Removal
- Timber Restoration and Management
- FEMA eligibility?

Forest Health

East Blue Lake – No Treatment



East Blue Lake – June 2003



East Blue Lake – September 2015

Forest Health

PMP 13, Blue Lake (West) – Sinlahekin Wildlife Area



February 2011 – Untreated



May 2013 – Post-Rx Burn

Forest Health

PMP 13, Blue Lake (West) – Sinlahekin Wildlife Area



June 2015 – Post-Rx Burn
Revegetation



September 2015 – Post-Okanogan
Complex Fire

Forest Health Challenges

- Fire-Dependent Ecological Systems
- Century of Fire Suppression—Extensive Fuel Load
- Reduced Timber Harvest
- Stocking Density and Species Composition
- Climate Change/Drought
- Insect/Disease
- Catastrophic Fire; Public Sentiment



Forest Health Solutions

- Healthy Forests; Healthy Wildlife
- Restore Managed Disturbance: Prescribed Fire and Timber Management
- Suppression Strategies
- Land Managers are Behind; Treatments need to be Accelerated
- Fire-Wise Communities



Questions

