

# **WDFW Grazing Program**

Wildlife Program

- Grazing Program Review Update
- Current Grazing Practices



Klickitat Wildlife Area Pasture

# Grazing Program Review Update

WDFW is conducting a programmatic review of its grazing policies and practices to ensure that the agency's grazing program on department lands is consistent with WDFW's mission and strategic goals.

# Components of Review

- WAC 220-500-200
- Commission Policy C-6003
- Grazing Evaluation Framework
- Grazing Management Plans
  - Monitoring and Adaptive Management



# Next Steps & Timeline

- Internal Outreach (spring/summer 2017)
  - Includes cross-program team and Wildlife Program senior staff review.
- External Outreach (summer/early fall 2017)
  - Cattlemen's Assoc., Asotin County Lands Group, Kittitas County Land Advisory Board, USFWS, TNC, Western Watershed, Conservation Northwest, etc.
  - SEPA
- WAC/Policy Revisions (late 2017)

# Current Practices

## Permit Summary

- 53 permits either active or being renewed.
- 94,465 acres permitted for grazing.
- 11,192 animal unit months (AUMs) allowed.
- Numbers include some (4-O, Big Bend) but not all (Simcoe) recent acquisitions.
- Permits may be crossing/temporary (short during) or longer-term up to 5 years.

# Current Practices

## Why We Graze

- Provide for attractive big game habitat and wintering areas.
- Control weeds and/or tall vegetation impeding wildlife use.
- Facilitate coordinated resource management of large, jointly owned landscapes.
- Support community character and economy.
- Important condition of land acquisition in areas where grazing is consistent with habitat management.
- Maintain or improve ecological function.

# Current Practices

## Grazing Requirements

- **Maintain Ecological Integrity**
- Cross-program Review
- Adaptive Management
- **Grazing Plan**





# Current Practices

## Ecological Integrity

- Key land management goal.
- Ecological integrity can be defined as “the structure, composition, and function of an ecosystem operating within the bounds of natural or historic disturbance regimes” (adapted from Lindenmayer and Franklin 2002, Young and Sanzone 2002, Parrish et al. 2003).

# Current Practices

## Grazing Plan

- Background
- Resource Description
- Goals/Objectives
- Grazing Prescription
- Anticipated Effects
- Monitoring
- Contingencies
- Literature Cited



Weatherly Unit Pasture, Blue Mountains

# Current Practices

## Protective Conditions - Grazing Prescription

- Intensity (AUMs) – Conservative Stocking Rates
  - Available forage may be reduced by unpalatable species, terrain, water accessibility.
- Timing – Duration, Frequency, Appropriate Rotations
  - Considerations for each season of the year.



- Specific Exclusions  
(wetlands, research plots,  
available fencing)

Frazer Creek Pasture, Methow Wildlife Area

# Current Practices

## Protective Conditions - Contingencies



Bowen Mt. Pasture, Methow Wildlife Area

- Utilization Limits: Checked by in-season monitoring.
- Fire: 1 to 2 growing seasons of rest may be required.
- Weed Management: Additional control may be required.
- Ecological Integrity: Consistency with Commission policy.

# Current Practices

## Science – Anticipated Effects

- Vegetation Effects
- Wildlife Effects
- Updated/expanded Literature Review



Mountain View pasture, 4-O Wildlife Area

# Current Practices

## Science – Anticipated Effects – Themes from Published Research

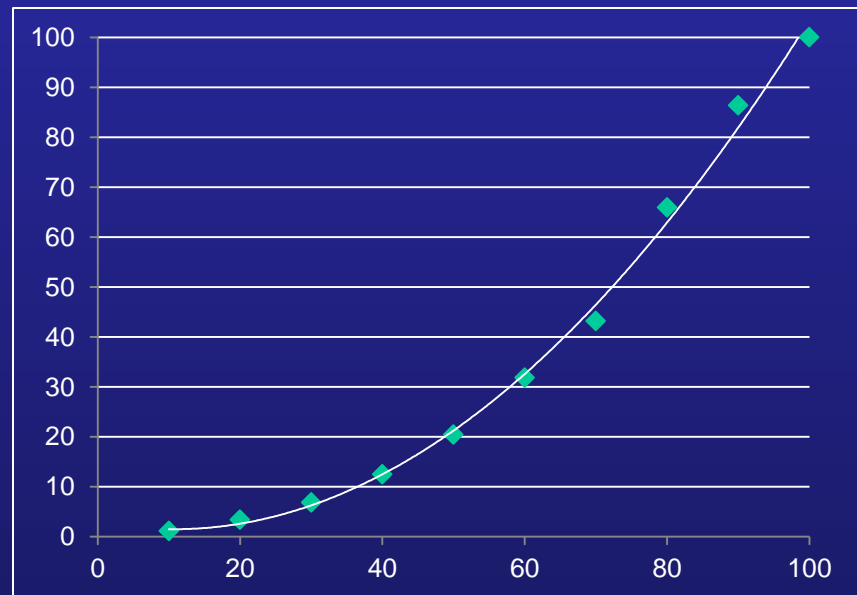
- Ungulates may prefer previously grazed areas.
- Forage conditioning can benefit/attract wildlife.
- Increased vegetation diversity/patterns.
- Fuels management: site-specific importance?
- More annual forbs, shrubs, and other vegetation seasonally important for wildlife.
- Consistency with general idea of ecological integrity.

# Current Practices

## Monitoring – Compliance

- At least semi-annually, using federal protocol
- Utilization (height-weight, landscape appearance)
- Objectives met

Regression of forage weight removed  
vs height removed



# Current Practices

## Monitoring – Ecological Integrity

- Every 3-5 years, depending on permit duration.
- Vegetation cover, gap, frequency/density (federal protocol).
- Additional, species-specific measures are possible.
- Riparian: Multiple Indicator Monitoring (MIM) if applicable.



Monitoring transect, Klickitat Wildlife Area



# Current Practices

## What aren't we monitoring?

- Forage Characteristics (palatability, nutrient content)
- Wildlife Populations, Behavior, Diet, etc.
- Community Character and Economy
- Replication Questions

Where these may be important, we cite scientific literature and/or WDFW planning documents.

# Current Practices

## Adaptive Management

- Learning from management outcomes.
- Decision-making process characterized by flexibility, monitoring, and patience with uncertainty.
- Neither rapid nor inexpensive.
- WDFW always reserves the right to modify grazing terms, including intensity, if needed.
- Grazing plans now report 1) results of previous management, and 2) photographs, for district team review.

# Current Practices

## Outreach

- Internal – District Team Review
- External – CRM Participation (Okanogan County, Klickitat County, Kittitas County)
  
- WCA – Annual Public Lands Forum, Field Day
- Wildlife Area Planning Process
- One-time Events (webinar, interagency monitoring workshop, etc.)

# Questions?

