

# Colockum Wildlife Area

## 2019-20 Wildlife Area Management Plan Update

This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [Colockum Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities at the Colockum Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, WDFW develops a process for revising the management plans for each wildlife area to identify new management priorities and actions. In between plan revisions, the update focuses on recent accomplishments over the last two years.

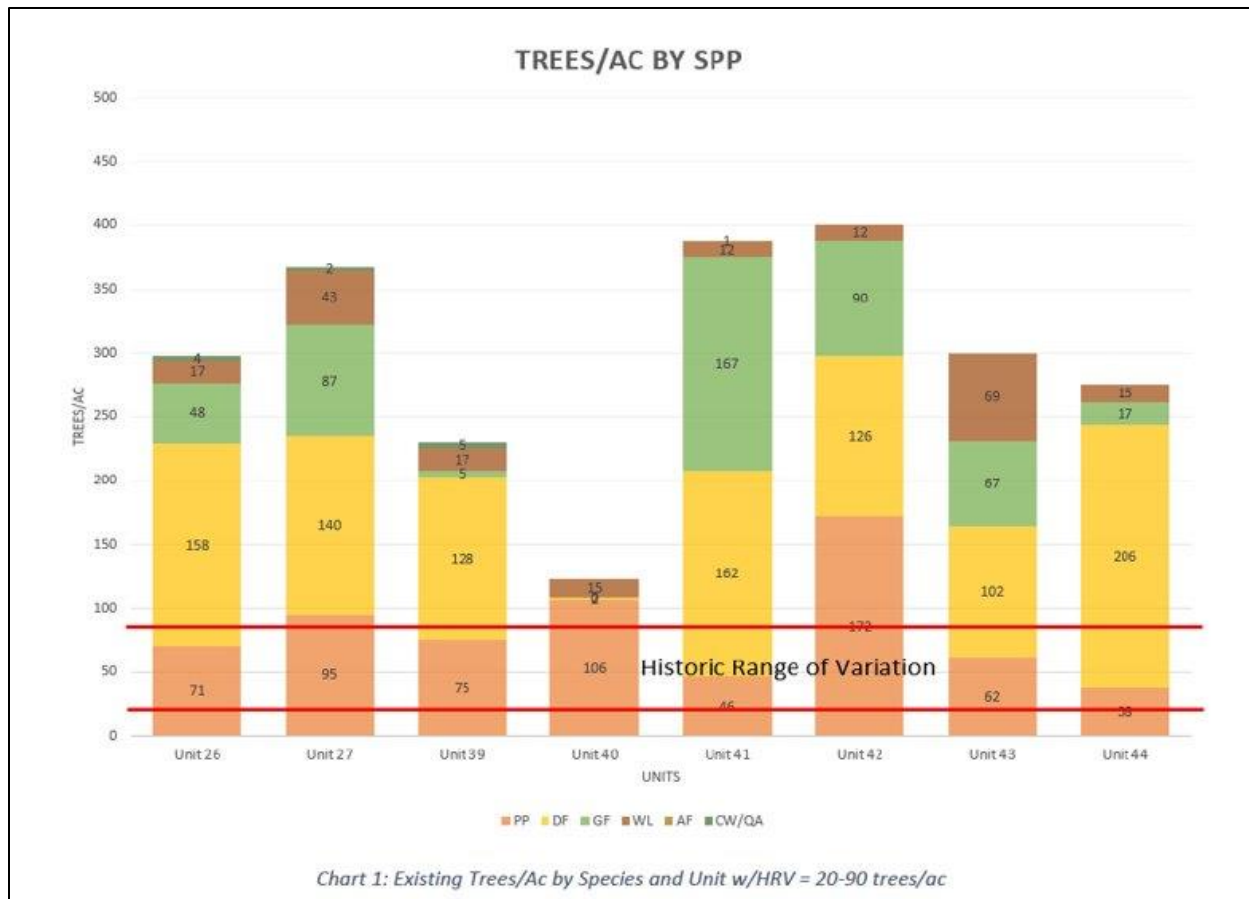
### Management Highlights

#### **Forest Health (Goal 7, Strategy C)**

WDFW completed a timber stand inventory of 4,500 acres on the Colockum Wildlife Area in 2019. The results showed the extent to which Colockum timber stands have departed from a more natural condition due to fire suppression and lack of harvest. The graph below depicts one stand showing the “historic range of variation,” the condition where frequent fires kept timber stands thinned out and patchy across the landscape. As a result of the inventory, about 900 acres were identified for treatment going into 2020 and 2021.



*Typical overstocked stand*



**Timber stand inventory data**

**Forest Health (Goal 7, Strategy C)**

Logging work started in 2019 in the Stemilt Basin portion of the Colockum Wildlife Area. This project was a cooperative effort with Chelan County and the Stemilt Partnership to reduce forest fuels and improve habitat. Approximately 350 acres of overstocked ponderosa pine forest were thinned, with work being completed in mid-October. Other work in this same area included the installation of gates on non-green dot roads, improving compliance with the green dot road system. The combination of opening up these dense forest stands to improve big game forage conditions while reducing disturbance by illegal vehicle use should be a great combination for wildlife and sportsman.



*Selective thinning on newly acquired lands in the Stemilt Basin*

After thinning was completed, work was done in preparation to treat the thinned areas with prescribed fire. WDFW used logging contractors and agency staff members to operate equipment and build lines around the harvest units. It is hoped these units will be treated with prescribed fire in 2020 or 2021.



*Fire lines being installed in preparation for treatment by prescribed fire*

**Weed control and boundary fences (Goal 6, Strategies C and E)**

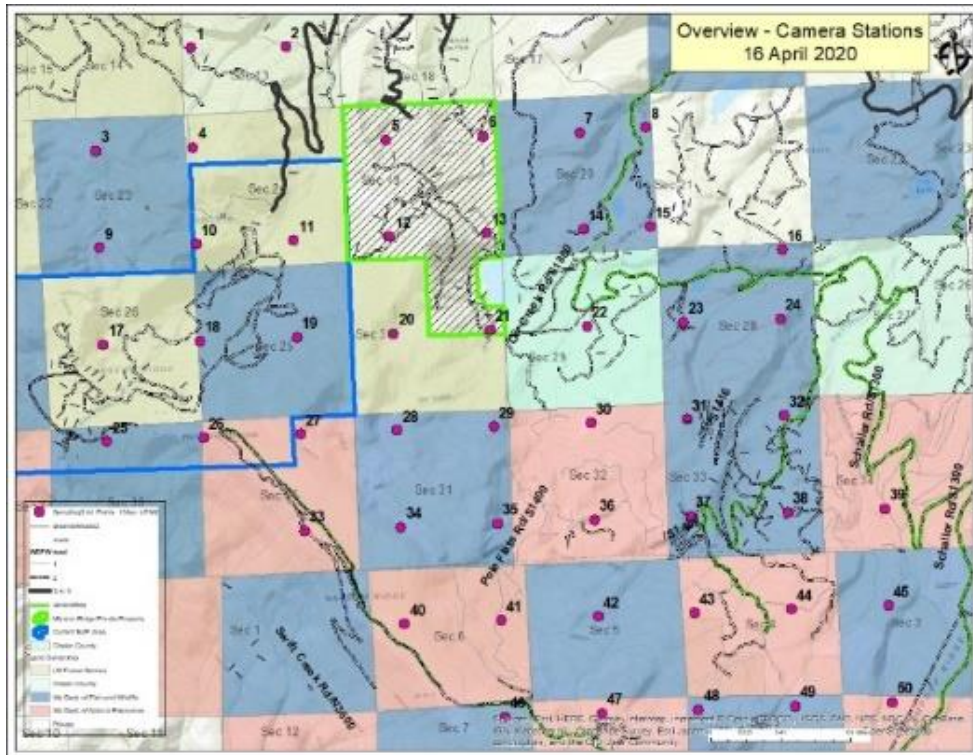
Colockum staff members continued work critical to the health of fish and wildlife habitat on the wildlife area. An aerial weed control project focused on whitetop and Russian knapweed was completed, reducing the spread of these aggressive weeds and their impact to habitat. Staff members also continued work on a boundary fence project, working towards plugging a two-mile gap in the fence caused by the 2013 Colockum-Tarp Fire.



*Helicopter weed spraying and cutting steel pipe for fence posts*

**Elk Habitat Assessment: Stemilt/Squilchuck Watershed**

Starting in May 2020, WDFW partnered with Chelan County Natural Resources, the Washington Conservation Science Institute (WCSI), and the Wenatchee Sportsmen’s Association in an elk habitat assessment study in the Stemilt and Squilchuck Creek drainages. The study was borne out of concern about cumulative effects of ongoing and proposed recreational activities on elk movements and numbers in the two watersheds. WCSI was contracted to install an array of fifty motion-activated game cameras to 1) understand the location and timing of elk movements, and 2) detect timing and location of cow-calf pairs to better understand locations of elk calving in the study area.



*Camera station locations across the Stemilt/Squilchuck Basins. Red dots are cameras and blue sections are WDFW property.*



*Elk captured by one of the cameras*

## New Issues

### Covid-19 Pandemic

On March 25, 2020, WDFW joined Department of Natural Resources and State Parks in closing public lands statewide in response to Governor Inslee’s “Stay Home, Stay Safe” Order due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Colockum Wildlife Area staff members were instructed to work from home under a mandatory teleworking order. All of the main entrances to the Colockum Wildlife Area were posted with the signs below. WDFW lands were opened to the public on May 15, 2020, although overnight camping was prohibited until counties reached Phase 2 of the Governor’s Safe Start reopening plan, a county-by-county phased approach to reopening Washington. Kittitas County reached Phase 2 on June 1, 2020, and Chelan County reached Phase 2 on October 13, 2020. The Colockum Wildlife Area contains lands in both Kittitas and Chelan counties.



*Signs posted at main entrances to the Colockum Wildlife Area*