



# COLOCKUM WILDLIFE AREA 2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

## Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Colockum Wildlife Area Management Plan ([http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/index.htm](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm)) that provides management direction for the 91,603 acre Wildlife Area located in Chelan and Kittitas County, Washington. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Mission of “*Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife*” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions.

Plans are updated annually as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update also includes 2006 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2007.

## Updates/Changes

Few significant changes occurred on the Wildlife Area in 2006. Several small fires caused by human and natural causes occurred but these were quickly extinguished. The Wildlife Area Manager wrote a successful grant application for fertilization of elk winter range. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation funds in the amount of \$16,107.00 will be matched with another \$16,000.00 in WDFW funds and used in the fall of 2007 to improve forage on critical elk winter ranges. However, major changes for the Wildlife Area are planned, with a large land exchange between WDFW and WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) currently underway. A checkerboard ownership pattern on the Colockum is expected to be eliminated by exchanging and consolidating ownerships between WDFW and DNR. Timber cruises and appraisals are in progress on the Wildlife Area.

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## New Issues

Concerns about disturbance to big game on winter ranges have been a major issue this year. WDFW is concerned about the level of human disturbance to big game (primarily elk) during the stressful winter months. In some areas elk appear to be leaving the Wildlife Area to seek refuge on adjacent private lands. WDFW is considering several options to limit disturbance of elk during the winter and early spring. Options considered include closing specific problem areas to

all public entry, closing larger areas to motor vehicles, or closing large winter range areas to all entry to provide the most protection.

WDFW is also in the process of evaluating the entire road system on the Wildlife Area to identify problem areas. These include stream adjacent roads delivering sediment to streams or degrading riparian zones, culverts that impede fish passage, high density road areas that impact big game distribution, and other resource issues. Several roads located adjacent to streams in riparian zones have been identified for closure on the Colockum and are generating public attention.

**Major Stewardship Accomplishments**

Public use surveys were implemented in 2006 by the purchase and installation of numerous car counters. These were placed at the main entrances to the Wildlife Area to help monitor motorized vehicle use.

A major effort in fencing was completed in 2006. Boundaries were surveyed around a private inholding at the mouth of Tarpiscan Creek, and ¾ mile of new fence was constructed along this line to better identify the Wildlife Area boundary. An additional 1.5 miles of boundary fence was constructed in the Coleman Creek area to control livestock.

The timber thinning project on the South Fork of Colockum Creek was completed, with several hundred acres of overstocked timber thinned to improve habitat, create browse and reduce fire danger. Disturbed areas were seeded with a mixture of native grasses, forbs and shrubs.

**Status Report of 2006 Performance Measures**

Key performance measures are identified each year to monitor progress and identify any issues that might interfere with planned priority activities. This information will be used to delete, add or alter priority strategies for 2007.

<b>2006 Performance Measure</b>	<b>Status of Performance Measure</b>	<b>Explanation of Progress/ 2007 Related Activity/ Comments</b>
Maintain 35 miles of boundary livestock fencing.	Completed.	Continue maintenance in 2007.
Survey and fence property boundary between WDFW and private inholding.	Completed.	Maintain in 2007.
Maintain 180 acres agricultural fields in annual grains or forage grasses.	Weed control, cultivation completed. No crops planted in 2006.	Fields kept fallow to control weeds. 40 acres in permanent forage grasses.
Implement public use surveys with car counters.	9 car counters purchased, 8 installed.	Refine monitoring procedure.
Complete timber thinning project on South Fork Colockum Creek. Seed disturbed areas.	Thinning completed. Seeded 220 acres. Area needs salvage after July 2007 windstorm.	Pursue salvage operation of blowdown timber in 2007.

Perform mandatory weed control. Control weeds in agriculture fields, along roads.	Coordinated with Kittitas Co. Weed Board on yellow starthistle control. Staff controlled knapweeds, whitetop, goatgrass on 4,000 acres.	Jointed goatgrass control Looking promising. Musk thistles need more control work though.
Review Naneum Green Dot Map, address resource concerns.	Several roads identified for permanent closure (Tekison, Stray Gulch). Archaeological assessments completed.	WDFW seeking additional public input on closures.
Inventory plant species on the Wildlife Area and develop comprehensive plant list.	Plant inventory started, 350 shrub-steppe species identified.	Continue in 2007, higher elevation zones.

### **New Strategies**

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agencies strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species present, and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed or new issues or changes on the wildlife area. New strategies may also be in response to adaptive management as staff evaluate the impacts of past management activities.

If the Citizens Advisory Group provided public comments on new issues, they will be identified (*in italics*) at the end of this document. Although underlined strategies have no current funding source, identifying these needs is the first step to securing additional funds.

### **Agency Objective: Protect, restore and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.**

#### **1. Protect priority habitats and state listed species.**

WDFW began development of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for wildlife areas in 2006 that will inventory listed species and map their habitats, including species no longer present but with suitable habitat to support them still remaining on the wildlife area. As part of this effort, current management activities that occur on a wildlife area will also be inventoried, to determine if such activities are beneficial or detrimental to at-risk wildlife species. Depending on the outcome of the HCP, strategies will then be developed to address identified issues or concerns. Initial HCP development for the Colockum Wildlife Area will begin in 2008.

### **Agency Objective: Ensure WDFW activities, programs, facilities and lands are consistent with local, state and federal regulations that protect and recover fish, wildlife and their habitats.**

#### **1. Protect federally listed species.**

Establish an HCP that inventories existing activities for the wildlife area (see Objective 2, #1 under New Strategies above).

### **2007 Performance Measures**

Performance measures for the Colockum Wildlife Area are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

- 1) Complete CAG selection to reform a group specific to the Colockum Wildlife Area.
- 2) Evaluate the need for winter closures on big game winter range to reduce disturbance. Continue to use car counters and aerial flights to monitor public use.
- 3) Remove artificial ponds and diversions on Brushy and Tekison Creeks, route water back to the stream channel.
- 4) Implement permanent road closures in Tekison and Stray Gulch.
- 5) Create new vehicle camping areas to compensate for those lost in Tekison and Stray Gulch.
- 6) Maintain 180 acres of agricultural fields in the Tarpiscan in annual grains or forage grasses.
- 7) Maintain 35 miles of wildlife area boundary fence to exclude trespass livestock.
- 8) Fertilize 1,000 acres big game winter range through an RMEF grant.
- 9) Coordinate cooperative road management system with DNR to prepare for post-land exchange road management.
- 10) Inspect and maintain spring developments. Maintain springs with help from volunteer organizations.
- 11) Perform mandatory weed control. Control weeds along roads, campsites, boat launch, parking areas.

### **Citizens Advisory Group Input**

None.

#### **Want to see the full plan?**

Go to -

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/index.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm)

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