



COLOCKUM WILDLIFE AREA 2009 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://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/ 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 2008 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2009.

Updates/Changes

The wildfire that occurred in the N. Fork Tarpiscan drainage in May 2008 resulted in dramatic impacts to the riparian shrub-steppe habitats in the Tarpiscan. WDFW conducted aerial seeding in the fall of 2008 (with locally-adapted, native seed) along roads and in other areas disturbed by fire-fighting efforts, as well as some of the more severely burned sites.

The year 2009 continued to be a busy year for forest road management on the Wildlife Area, with WDFW completing many of the road maintenance issues required by WDFW’s Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) for the Colockum. The main focus of this work is to improve water quality and fish habitat by reducing delivery of sediments from forest roads into streams. Road work that was completed included installing water bars, improving drainage, replacing undersized culverts, and blocking

Inside

Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
New Issues	2
Major Stewardship Accomplishments	2
Status Report of 2008 Performance Measures	3
New Strategies	4
2009 Performance Measures	5
Citizens Advisory Group Input	5

and abandoning non-maintained roads. Changes in the land ownership pattern of the Wildlife Area are still underway. The land exchange between WDFW and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is still moving forward, but at a slower pace and in a phased approach. The checkerboard ownership pattern on the Colockum complicates agency land management, and is the main justification for exchanging and consolidating ownerships between WDFW and DNR.

New Issues

Concerns regarding disturbance to big game on winter ranges has been a major issue in the past. 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. After a series of public meetings with stakeholders including local sportsman's clubs and the local Big Game Management Roundtable (BGMR), WDFW implemented a winter motorized vehicle closure on portions of the Colockum elk herd's winter range. WDFW also initiated a new elk study in 2008, in part, to determine if the winter range closure is effective in reducing the movement of elk to private lands during the winter and early spring months.

WDFW is also still in the process of evaluating the entire road system on the Wildlife Area to identify problem areas. These include areas where road densities are high, leading to animal harassment and low spike bull elk escapement during fall hunting seasons. Other issues include stream adjacent roads in shrub-steppe habitat areas that are not addressed by the forest road RMAP plan.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments



In the fall of 2007 the Wildlife Area Manager wrote a successful grant application to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for the planting of bitterbrush and other important big game winter range forage plants on the West Bar area of the Colockum. This seeding was delayed but will take place in the fall of 2009. Another 2009 RMEF grant provided funds to install four vehicle gates on non-green dot (closed) roads to improve compliance in problem areas. Two other grant proposals submitted to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) were approved for

funding in 2009. These include funds to improve the primitive boat launch just north of the Wildlife Area headquarters. The second WWRP grant will assist in addressing resource impacts to water quality and fish and wildlife habitat from two stream-adjacent roads. In addition to these successful grants other more basic stewardship activities were continued. This includes the continued monitoring of public use through digital car counters that are installed at major

entrances to the Wildlife Area. Weed control, boundary fence repair and maintenance of the green dot road system also continued to be a large part of the stewardship activities on the Colockum in 2008 and 2009.

Status Report of 2008 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 2009.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
Complete CAG selection for Colockum WA	Completed	Colockum CAG meeting held August 2009
Evaluate the effectiveness of winter range closures.	8 car counters monitored, 3 enforcement flights conducted.	Continue monitoring public use. Colockum elk study underway.
Remove concrete diversion structure in Tekison Creek.	Project delayed	Tekison Creek dam to be breached in 2010.
Continue process to address problems with stream adjacent roads in Stray Gulch and Tekison Creek.	Issue discussed in CAG and public meetings	Unknown to what extent this project will move forward. Grant funds are in place pending project approval.
Maintain 180 acres agricultural fields in annual grains or grasses.	Weed control and seeding completed	120 acres planted to native forage grass seed in fall 2008.
Maintain 35 miles of boundary fencing to exclude trespass livestock.	Completed	Continue maintenance in 2009

Seed 40 acres of bitterbrush and other native plants on West Bar through RMEF grant.	In progress	Seeding scheduled to take place in fall 2009.
Coordinate road management with DNR.	On-going. Developed new standards and signs for green dot road management.	Coordination will continue, bi-annual meetings held with DNR, Enforcement and land managers.
Inspect and maintain spring developments.	Two springs maintained, 4 upland bird guzzlers repaired.	Wenatchee Sportsman's Association received a grant for work on springs.
Perform mandatory weed control.	Coordinated with Kittitas County Weed Board on yellow starthistle control. Staff controlled knapweed, whitetop, goatgrass.	Jointed goatgrass control in progress. Diffuse knapweed needs renewed control efforts in burned areas.
Complete RMAP work in the Grouse Springs, Swift Creek, Ingersoll and N.F. Tarpiscan areas.	Complete	RMAP work in these areas completed in 2009.
Seed 40 acres burned in the May 2008 Tarpiscan fire.	Completed	Fire lines, cat trails, and severely burned areas seeded with native grasses.

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 presence, 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 WA began 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).

2009 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) Meet periodically with new Colockum WA CAG to inform them of management activities and receive public input.
- 2) Evaluate the success of winter closures on big game winter range to reduce disturbance. Determine success through continued use of car counters, enforcement flights and the on-going Colockum Elk Study.
- 3) Continue effort to remove concrete diversion structure in Tekison Creek.
- 4) Continue process to address stream adjacent roads in Stray Gulch and Tekison Creek.
- 5) Evaluate success of 120 acre native grass seeding in agricultural fields in the N. F. Tarpiscan.
- 6) Maintain 35 miles of wildlife area boundary fence to exclude trespass livestock.
- 7) Coordinate cooperative road management system with DNR.
- 8) Inspect and maintain spring developments. Maintain springs with help from volunteer organizations.
- 9) Perform mandatory weed control. Control weeds along roads, campsites, boat launch, parking areas.
- 10) Complete RMAP work in the S.F. Tarpiscan including culvert removal and bridge installation.
- 11) Seed 40 acres of bitterbrush and other native plants on West Bar through RMEF grant.
- 12) Complete the installation of four vehicle gates funded through an RMEF grant.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

The previous “Regional CAG” was formed to gather public input for the management of the Colockum, Oak Creek, L.T. Murray, Wenas, Quilomene and Whiskey Dick Wildlife Areas. A new CAG was formed in 2009 specifically for the Colockum Wildlife Area.

The following new input/issues were addressed at the August 2009 Colockum CAG meeting:

Issue: WDFW/WDNR Land Exchange.

Responses: *If the land exchange goes through, and the game reserve is in DNR ownership would it managed for timber? The game reserve is not currently part of the exchange. Does the land exchange have any implications for wildlife/habitat management? The current checkerboard pattern complicates management for both agencies. Are wildlife corridors being considered in this trade? The primary focus of the exchange has been to block up ownership between the two agencies.*

Issue: Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans.

Responses: *Would you consider planting wheat on the roads that are being abandoned? Many of the roads have been taken over by trees and other vegetation. Many are too rocky to cultivate. What species of fish are you providing passage for (culvert replacements)? Several of the streams on the Colockum support resident trout species, and some support steelhead.*

Issue: Green Dot Roads.

Responses: *If you close the Stray Gulch and Tekison Road spurs, would the main road stay open? The Brewton Road and the lower portion of Tekison Road would remain open to vehicles. What is the timeline for this project? We are currently going through an agency/public process to determine what will be done to address the problems on these stream-adjacent roads. We have grant monies available through 2012. Is the goal to get the green dot system eventually solidified everywhere? Yes, WDFW Region 3 has been reviewing the extensive green dot road system on the Wildlife Areas and addressing problem roads both in the timbered and shrub-steppe areas. Would this method of closing road spurs and creating camps at the base be a good model to follow? What about leaving roads just for pedestrians? We have identified Stray Gulch and Tekison because of the resource concerns associated with stream-adjacent roads. Short spurs usually pose few problems if located in the proper area. What about the dam leaking onto the road between West Bar and Tekison Creek? The Tekison diversion dam has been identified for removal, possibly in 2010. Motorbikes scare elk out wherever they go. They are running elk onto private land. This problem is being studied on the Colockum elk's winter range with a partial winter range closure to motorized vehicles. What about opening up poor habitat areas to motor-biking and closing good habitat? WDFW tries to provide reasonable motorized access where resource impacts are minimal.*

Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlif
e_areas/management_plans/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlif
e_areas/management_plans/)

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