



COLOCKUM WILDLIFE AREA 2014 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/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 every two years 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 includes accomplishments for 2012 and 2013, and new issues, land management strategies and performance measures for 2014-2015.

Updates/Changes

Major events and changes that occurred in 2012-2013 affecting the wildlife area are described below.

Fires and Floods

2012-2013 were tumultuous years on the Colockum Wildlife Area with several small and large fires followed by severe flooding. The fires included a small 5 acre fire in the Colockum Creek drainage started by an illegal campfire; a fire started by lightning near Sumac Springs; the 40,000 acre lightning-caused Table Mountain Fire and the human-caused 80,000 acre Colockum-Tarps Fire.

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The 150 acre Sumac Springs Fire started on July 13, 2012 and was quickly contained by a Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Helitac crew. The fire burned in a remote part of the wildlife area, in mostly sagebrush and bunchgrass habitats. Colockum staff submitted and received a grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for native plant reseeding after this fire.

Big sagebrush burns on the Sumac Springs Fire, July 2012.

The 40,000 acre Table Mountain Fire started on September 9, 2012 and burned primarily WDNR and U.S. Forest Service lands, although 1,500 acres of WDFW lands in the upper Naneum Basin burned as well. This fire consumed grasses, shrubs and timber, as well as the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service Snotel Site at located on WDFW property at Grouse Springs. Colockum staff submitted and received a grant from RMEF to purchase and apply native grass seed to dozer lines and severely burned areas of this fire.



WDFW's Naneum Pond before and after the Table Mountain Fire.



The 80,000 acre Colockum-Tarps Fire started on July 27, 2013 on private property in the Colockum Creek drainage. This wind-driven fire quickly spread south onto the wildlife area, burning 10 miles of wildlife area boundary fencing and one outbuilding at the wildlife area headquarters. This fire burned the majority of the shrub-steppe habitats on the Colockum, with riparian vegetation nearly completely consumed in every major drainage including the North and South Forks of Tarpiscan Creek, Tekison Creek and Brushy Creek. Approximately 8,000

Colockum Tarps Fire on the Colockum Wildlife Area, August 2013.

acres of timbered habitats burned, although some areas burned less severely than others. It took until August 15 to contain this fire, culminating with 750 personnel working this fire and expending 11 million dollars in suppression costs

Floods

In the weeks following the Colockum-Tarps Fire three rain events occurred over the northern portion of the fire area, as a result of summer thunderstorms passing through central Washington. In a matter of hours these storms produced several inches of rain, causing major flooding and damage to drainages, fences, buried natural gas pipelines and homes. Roads on the wildlife area suffered significant damage from washouts and slides. Many of these have been repaired, although some have not. Road damage and debris flows made access to the wildlife area headquarters impossible at times.

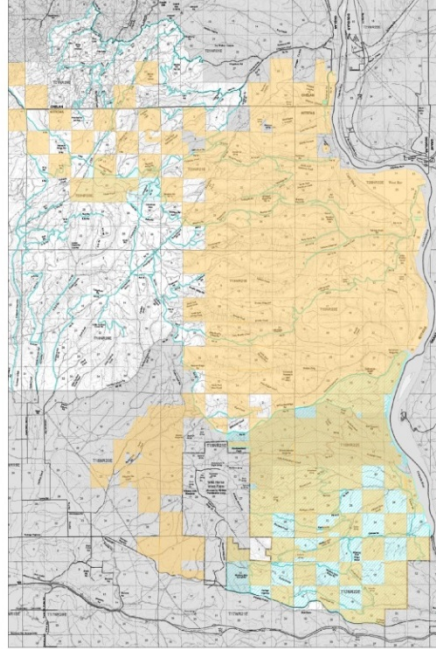
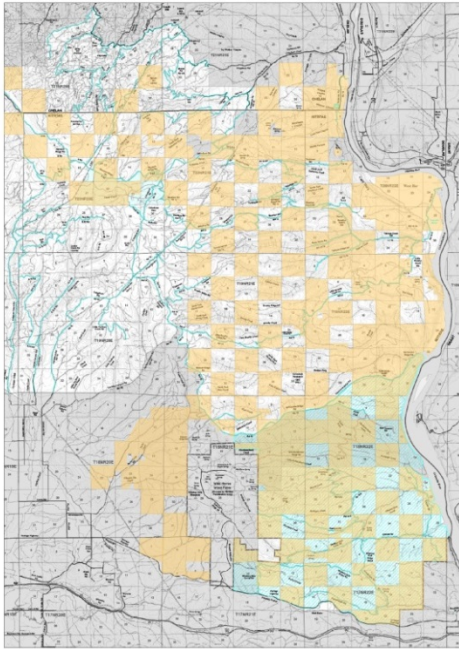


Flood damaged road on Colockum Wildlife Area, Sept. 2013.

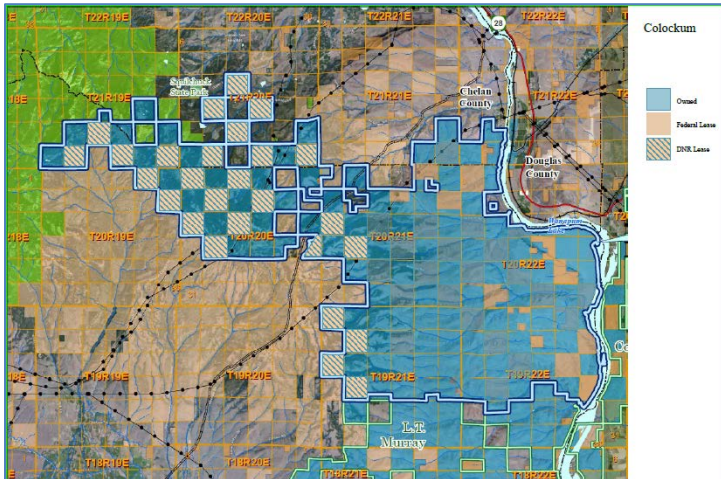
WDFW/WDNR Land Exchanges, Land Leases

In 2012 a major land exchange was completed between the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources. In general, timbered WDFW lands across Washington were exchanged for non-timbered WDNR lands, in an effort to consolidate ownerships and gain management efficiencies. Some WDFW wildlife areas in the state gained acreage, while others

were reduced. For the Colockum Wildlife Area, this meant an addition of 18,275 acres of former WDNR lands, while no WDFW lands on the Colockum were traded to WDNR.



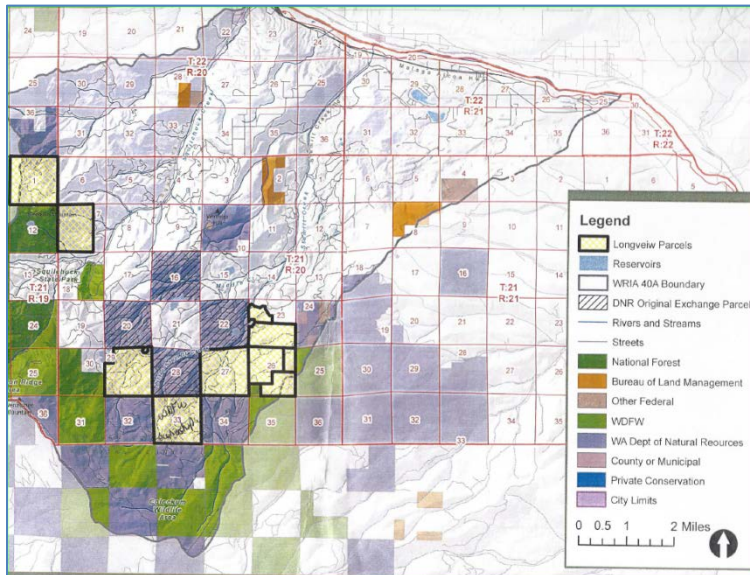
Colockum Wildlife Area, before and after WDFW/WDNR Land Exchange (WDFW lands in yellow).



In addition, beginning in 2013, WDFW entered into a five-year lease of another 13,409 acres of WDNR lands on the Colockum. These are parcels that are interspersed with WDFW ownership, and are managed as part of the wildlife area.

Newly leased WDNR lands on Colockum Wildlife Area, 2013 (leased lands shown cross-hatched).

Stemilt Basin Land Acquisitions

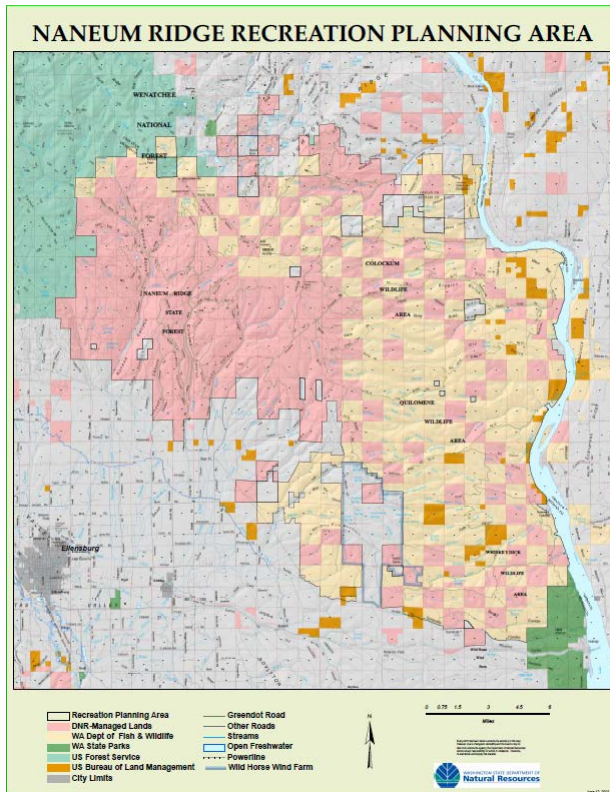


In the spring of 2007 Chelan County established the Stemilt Partnership, a broad coalition of agriculture, wildlife, recreation, development and conservation interests in response to the proposed privatization of 2,500 acres of public land in the Stemilt Basin owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources. WDFW has been an active participant in the Stemilt Partnership and in the development of the Stemilt-Squilchuck Community Vision document

(<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/land-and-water/stemilt-squilchuck-community-vision>). The Community Vision document honors the wishes of the community by focusing on protecting water resources, conserving critical habitat for fish and wildlife, and maintaining recreational access to public lands. Part of the work of the Partnership group included working to secure public ownership of certain lands in the Basin through land trades or purchases. These efforts finally came to fruition in 2013 with the transfer of two sections (sections 20 and 28 – 1,280 acres) of the “original 4” WDNR exchange parcels (sections 16, 20, 22, and 28) to WDFW. At the same time WDFW terminated its lease on the four sections from WDNR. Also in 2013, the Partnership, led by Chelan County, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and WDFW was successful in winning two grants; Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant and a grant through the new U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Program. These funds were used by Chelan County and WDFW to purchase the adjacent private Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands (formerly owned by Longview Timber Co.) in the Stemilt Basin. These larger grants required a local funding match, which was provided by members of the Stemilt Partnership including Stemilt Growers LLC, the Upper Stemilt Irrigation District, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Wenatchee Heights Reclamation District, the Beehive-Squilchuck Irrigation District, the Wenatchee Sportsman’s Association, the Wenatchee Valley Fly Fishing Club, Apple Country Snowmobile Association and Alcoa, plus many other local groups that came through with financial contributions.

Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan (NR2CR)

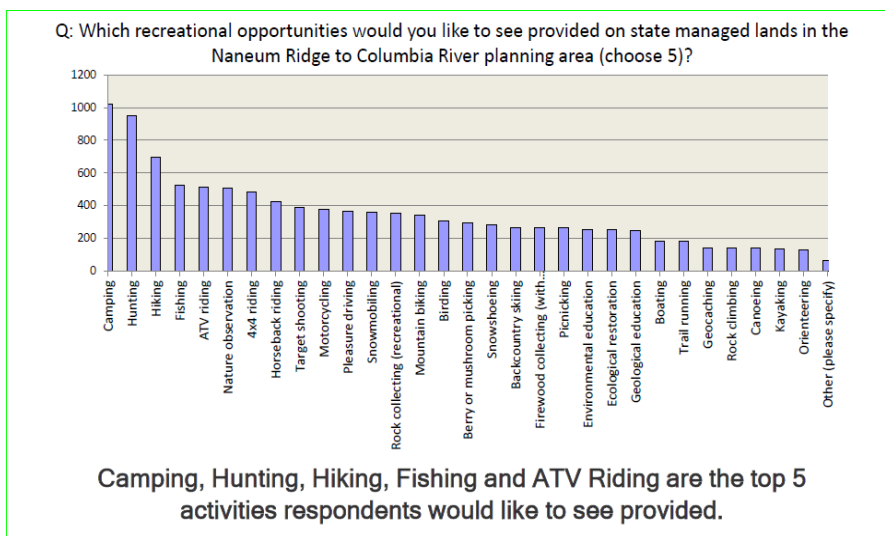
In April of 2012 WDNR launched an effort to develop a recreation plan for the newly designated Naneum Ridge State Forest.



By June 2012 WDFW had partnered with WDNR to create a joint recreation plan to collaboratively develop recreation opportunities. The NR2CR Recreation Plan includes WDNR's Naneum Ridge State Forest and WDFW's Colockum Wildlife Area and the Quilomene and Whiskey Dick Units of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area, for a total of 230,000 acres, or approximately 359 square miles. WDFW and WDNR lands in this area are adjacent and sometimes intermixed, and although the agencies have different mandates, both agencies anticipate increased recreation use of these lands in the future. When the plan is completed, it will guide recreation management for the next 10 to 15 years for these state lands.

Map of NR2CR recreation planning area (pink=WDNR, yellow=WDFW).

The public was polled in an online survey early in the planning process to gather information on types of recreation occurring on the area, and what they would like to see provided.



A portion of the 2012 online recreation survey results, NR2CR Recreation Plan



NR2CR Recreation Planning Committee on a field trip in the planning area.

Also early in the process a 15-member planning committee was formed, made up of individuals with a broad range of backgrounds and included resource professionals, community leaders, recreation user group members and rural residents. The committee met monthly in 2012 and 2013, learning about the planning area and providing input. After presentations by resource professionals on three land suitability modules; the geology and soils module, the management module and the biological module, the information was

combined and presented in a recreation suitability assessment on tri-composite maps. Different types of recreation

developments such as roads, trails and campgrounds were then ranked as high, med or low suitability for each area.

Different alternatives and options were developed and presented as concept maps to the planning committee, and a draft plan was developed in fall 2013. Final planning committee meetings will occur in 2014 as well as a series of public meetings. Late in 2014 more public input will be gathered through the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process before adoption of a final recreation plan.

Road Management/Green Dot

Installation of vehicle gates for the wildlife area has been delayed due to the development of the Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan process. Gates have been built and were anticipated to be installed on several non-green dot roads by 2014 to increase the effectiveness of the green dot road management system. Once the Recreation Plan is complete we will move forward with gating closed roads that receive illegal vehicle use.

In 2012 and 2013 WDFW constructed large new reader boards for the green dot road management system. New signs and maps for the reader boards have been printed on aluminum material and will be installed in the coming year. The signs clearly outline the rules for use of the area, including information on open and closed roads, litter, woodcutting, campfires and camping.

Stewardship Accomplishments

Stray Gulch and Tekison Creek Road Abandonment

WDFW has been working to identify and correct wildlife area road impacts to streams and riparian areas in shrub-steppe zones, similar to those addressed by the Road Abandonment and Maintenance Plans (RMAP) in forested areas. Two dead-end spur roads, the Stray Gulch Road

and the upper portion of the Tekison Creek Road were identified as problematic stream-adjacent roads in the 2006 Colockum Wildlife Area Management Plan. Natural meandering of the streams during high water events was resulting in erosion of the roads and impacting water quality. WDFW closed and abandoned portions of these roads in spring 2013. In 2014, with funding from the State Legislature, WDFW constructed slightly more than 1 mile of new public road in Stray Gulch, in a location farther from the stream and riparian corridor. The new road will be discussed in more detail in the next management plan update.

YoYo Rock Boat Launch Improvements

Improvements to the WDFW's YoYo Rock Boat Launch were completed in 2012. Work included installation of a concrete boat ramp to replace the primitive rock ramp, and paving of the parking area and part of the access road. In the future WDFW will work cooperatively with Grant County P.U.D. to develop and install interpretive signage and safety information for boaters and others that use the area.

Volunteers

Volunteers assisted WDFW with many projects on the Colockum Wildlife Area in 2011 and 2012. Some of these included the Wenatchee Sportsman's Association's help in renovation and maintenance of the WDFW game reserve cabin to make the structure useable and safer for wildlife area and enforcement staff. The Wenatchee Sportsman's Association (WSA) also worked to purchase materials and make repairs to spring developments and upland bird feeders damaged by the Colockum-Tarps Fire. Volunteers from Wenatchee Alcoa Works spent several days dismantling and removing woven wire fencing near the headquarters that was no longer needed and had become hazardous to wildlife. Volunteers from WSA and RMEF also helped with native plant seeding after the Colockum-Tarps Fire, spreading seed by hand and ATV on bulldozer firelines, and assisting with loading a helicopter seed spreader with thousands of pounds of native grass seed.



Wenatchee Sportsman's Association volunteers make repairs to WDFW cabin, June 2012.



Wenatchee Alcoa Works volunteers assist in removal of old fencing, June 2012.

New Issues

Timber Salvage and Hazard Trees

The Colockum-Tarps Fire resulted in approximately 8,000 acres of timbered lands being impacted by fire on the Colockum Wildlife Area. Efforts are underway to determine if any of the burned timber can be commercially salvaged. In addition, the fire created dead trees along roadways that will need to be removed for staff and public safety.

Weed Control

Some impacts of the Colockum-Tarps Fire are still unknown, especially the possibility of a significant increase of noxious weeds. In 2014, WDFW will monitor weed issues and use chemical, mechanical and biological control measure to address weed issues. WDFW will work with Washington State University's Cooperative Extension Service to obtain biological weed control insects as we have in the past. We anticipate it is likely that new releases will be made of the seedhead feeding weevil *Larinus minutus* for diffuse knapweed, and a stem and leaf feeding beetle of purple loosestrife, *Galerucella* spp.

Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans

More RMAP work is scheduled to be accomplished on the Colockum in 2014-2015, including replacing a problem culvert in the North Fork Tarpiscan Creek with a bridge; replacement of another culvert in the North Fork Tarpiscan Creek with a driveable ford; road maintenance work in lower Tekison Creek to resolve a leaking historic stream diversion structure; and other minor road maintenance work on forest roads.

Status Report of 2012-2013 Performance Measures

Key performance measures are identified 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 2014-2015.

2012 and 2013 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress Related Activity/ Comments
Meet periodically with Advisory Committee.	Met twice with WAAC in 2012.	Productive WAAC meetings.
Evaluate the effectiveness of winter range closures.	Colockum elk study concluded.	Study data evaluation not complete.
Remove concrete diversion structure in Tekison Creek.	Project delayed	Engineering staff have inspected diversion and are drafting plans.
Continue process to address stream adjacent roads in Stray Gulch and Tekison Creek.	Stray Gulch and Tekison Creek Roads closed and abandoned in 2013.	
Maintain 180 acres agricultural fields in annual grains or grasses.	Agricultural fields fallowed to control weeds.	Fields to be planted to grasses in 2014 or 2015.
Maintain 35 miles of boundary fencing to exclude trespass livestock.	Completed	Continue maintenance in 2014-2015.
Seed 40 acres of bitterbrush and other native plants on West Bar.	Project cancelled, seed used for fire rehabilitation in 2013.	
Coordinate road management with WDNR.	On-going. New standards, signs for green dot road management developed.	Coordination will continue.
Inspect and maintain spring developments.	Numerous springs and guzzlers repaired after fires.	Wenatchee Sportsman's Assoc. to maintain springs and guzzlers.
Perform mandatory weed control.	Coordinated with Kittitas Co. Weed Board on yellow starthistle control. Staff controlled knapweeds, musk and scotch thistle.	Fires have caused new infestations of weeds.
Install 15 gates on non-green dot roads.	Gate installation delayed due to Naneum Recreation Plan.	Road management decisions not final.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many 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.

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 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).

2014-2015 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) Develop a new Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) to discuss management activities and address emerging issues.
- 2) Continue effort to address road maintenance issues in shrub-steppe areas, including Tarpiscan Road washouts, leaking irrigation diversion in Tekison Creek, culvert replacement in Tekison Creek and maintenance on the Little Brushy Road.
- 3) Continue implementation of RMAP work, including culvert removals and bridge and ford installations in the North and South Forks of Tarpiscan Creeks.
- 4) Work to finalize the Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan and begin implementation once the plan is adopted.
- 5) Install new green dot reader boards with new signs and maps.
- 6) Maintain 35 miles of wildlife area boundary fence to exclude trespass livestock.
- 7) Coordinate cooperative road management system with WDNR.
- 8) Continue to work with the Stemilt Partnership to complete land transactions and begin management planning.

- 9) Work with engineering, regional and headquarters Wildlife Program staff to complete the assessment of the Stray/Tekison project and complete the elements that are feasible within legal constraints and funding resources.
- 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.
- 12) Work with WDFW foresters to begin identifying forest stands needing treatment on forested portions of the wildlife area.
- 13) Coordinate with WDFW foresters on hazard tree removal within the Colockum-Tarps Fire Area.
- 14) Begin installing gates on non-green dot roads to promote compliance with the Green Dot Road System.
- 15) Pursue grants for Colockum-Tarps Fire restoration work.
- 16) Coordinate with WDFW Engineering to replace 10 miles of burned boundary/livestock fence from Colockum-Tarps Fire.

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Input

A wildlife area advisory committee meeting was held in Wenatchee on December 11, 2012. Attendees included:

Jim Stephenson- Yakama Tribe Biologist
 Norm Gutzwiler – Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, local landowner
 Ken Bailey – WA Backcountry Horseman
 Pam Camp – WA Native Plant Society
 Bill Stegeman – Wenatchee Sportsman Association
 Mark Oswood – WA Audubon Society
 Julie Sanderson- Chelan County Weed Board
 Pete Lopushinsky – WDFW Colockum Area Manager
 Greg Schirato- WDFW Wildlife Program Assistant Deputy Director
 Mike Livingston- WDFW Region 3 Director
 Bill and Deborah Essman- Kittitas County Field and Stream Club
 Dennis and Arvilla Ohlde- Kittitas County Field and Stream Club
 Mark Teske- WDFW Habitat Biologist
 Eric Anderson- WDFW Fisheries Biologist
 Dale Bambrick- NOAA Fisheries

Issues:

1. Table Mountain Fire update
2. Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan update
3. Recent Projects
4. Tekison/Stray Gulch Road Abandonment Project

5. CAG questions and discussion

This 2014 Colockum Management Plan Update was shared with the Colockum Wildlife Area Advisory Committee at a March 12, 2015 WAAC meeting. Topics discussed and comments recorded include:

- 2014 update
 - After the fires, WDFW attempted a timber salvage that didn't go through. Now they are working on hazard tree removal along roads. This will take time and isn't hindered by lawsuits or other agencies. There hasn't been any formal assessment of all of the trees along roads, but a consultant did help identify immediate hazards which were removed.
 - The question of whether the wood could be taken for firewood to help get it out of the way. There is a Washington Administrative Code rule that prohibits this.
 - There is a RCO grant for some restoration (\$250,000) available, but it may not be funded. The Arbor Day Foundation and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation have grants available too. The committee offered to write letters and be "partners" for grant applications.
 - WDFW just hired a forester for Oak Creek WLA and a statewide forester. Another statewide forester will be hired soon.
 - Flooding and the road damage related to it were discussed.
 - DNR land exchange in the Stemilt basin is completed.
 - Stewardship accomplishments
 - Stray Gulch and Tekison abandonments are done. A new road was constructed in Stray Gulch – legislatively mandated. It is further away from the creek and is not open yet, waiting for grass seed to take hold and for the prism to firm up. May be open for the spring turkey hunt (April 16).
 - Volunteer project updates are included in the update too.
 - Boat ramps were closed during the Wanapum drawdown and were upgraded. They will open when the pool is filled later this spring.
 - Discussion about guzzlers and sage grouse – federal study says that they may not be conducive to the grouse. Need to look into this as it relates to the management plan.
 - The WDFW weekly wildlife reports were suggested as a way for the WAAC to keep current on WLA management.
- Public comment:
 - There were no comments.

Contacts:

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to -
http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm