



COLOCKUM WILDLIFE AREA 2017 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Colockum Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for the 91,603 acre wildlife area located in Chelan and Kittitas counties. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) mission “to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities,” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions. The 2006 management plan can be viewed at: (http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm)



Plans are updated 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 2014, 2015 and 2016, and new issues, land management strategies and performance measures for 2017-2018.

Updates/Changes

Major events and changes that occurred in 2014-2016 affecting the wildlife area are described below.

Fire Recovery Update

As detailed in the 2014 Colockum Wildlife Area Management Plan Update, the Wildlife Area suffered major fire events in 2012 and 2013. Much time and effort was spent in 2014-2016 in dealing with the aftermath of these events, including consideration of a post-fire timber salvage project, repairs to damaged boundary fencing, and dealing with hazard trees.

Inside

Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
Stewardship Accomplishments	6
New Issues	8
Status Report of 2014 - 2016 Performance Measures	8
2017-2018 Performance Measures	9
Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Input	10



Post Fire Timber Salvage

Early in 2014 WDFW began work to evaluate a possible timber salvage project after the 2013 Colockum-Tarps Fire. WDFW forestry staff and private consultants were in the field establishing field plots to estimate possible timber yields if a salvage project was conducted. Concurrently, WDFW held meetings with interested constituents to discuss whether a salvage project was appropriate and what the harvest prescription would look like. After considerable time was spent evaluating timber volume,

developing different harvest strategies and discussions with constituents, a consensus was not reached and the project did not move forward. Unfortunately, conifers killed by fire lose their monetary value quickly making a harvest economically infeasible.

Fences and Hazard Trees

The Colockum-Tarps Fire severely damaged nearly 20 miles of Colockum boundary fencing. WDFW subsequently included a request for fence repair in a post-fire supplemental budget request to the Washington State Legislature.

Fence repair work started in 2014 and continued through 2016. New fences built on the Colockum used an all-steel design to minimize damage from future fires. Dead trees were cleared in forested areas to facilitate rebuilding of the fence and to lessen future fence damage by



falling trees. Fence markers were placed on wires in some areas to increase fence visibility and reduce wildlife/fence collisions. All fire-damaged fence should be repaired by fall of 2017.

Newly rebuilt boundary fence running through a burned timber stand.



Fire-damaged fence corner, and a newly rebuilt, all-steel fence corner.



Contract crew working on hazard trees and a newly cleared section of road.

WDFW hired a contract crew to work dropping hazard trees along Green Dot roads on the wildlife area. Several hundred trees were taken down to reduce hazards to people and vehicles along roads and at campsites.

Other fire related work completed on the Colockum Wildlife Area included installation of post-fire vegetation monitoring plots, rebuilding of upland bird feeders, replacement of damaged signs and Green Dot road markers, replacement of burned buildings at the headquarters, and increased weed control work due to a flush of new weeds after the fire.



Columbia River/Wanapum Dam Drawdown

On February 24, 2014, a worker at Wanapum Dam noticed that part of the dam’s spillway deck had shifted slightly. Divers were called in to inspect the area and discovered a fracture below the waterline on Wanapum Dam’s spillway, pier monolith No. 4. The fracture ran in a horizontal direction across the entire 65-foot width of the monolith and had a 2-inch opening. Grant County Public Utility District (PUD) immediately began to draw down the elevation of the Wanapum Reservoir by 26 feet to reduce pressure on the monolith. The PUD started working to identify cause of the problem, and eventually decided to repair the spillway with additional steel reinforcement bored through the concrete into the bedrock below the dam. Immediately after the drawdown the entire shoreline of the Wanapum Reservoir was closed to public entry due to concerns for public safety and protection of cultural resources. Approximately 16 miles of this shoreline borders the Colockum Wildlife Area, and is popular with hikers, fisherman, boaters and campers. WDFW worked closely with the PUD to post the area and publicize the emergency closure and patrol the riverbank. WDFW also took advantage of the drawdown to make improvements to the Colockum’s Yoyo Rock Boat Launch, installing armor matting at the end of the ramp to provide a smooth launch surface. By April 1, 2015 repairs at Wanapum Dam were complete, water levels were restored to normal levels and public access was reopened to the WDFW boat launch and shoreline.



The 26-foot drawdown of the Wanapum Reservoir. WDFW crews improve the Yoyo Rock Boat Launch.

Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan Update

The Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan (NR2CR) was started in 2012 and was completed and signed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and WDFW in January, 2015. The Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan includes DNR’s Naneum Ridge State Forest and the Colockum Wildlife Area, 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. Both agencies are working together to begin implementation of the plan, which includes projects such as building new trails and restoring areas damaged by recreational use.

Stemilt Basin Update

Work continues in the Stemilt Basin to complete acquisitions goals with two remaining DNR sections now in WDFW ownership, and the last two sections are very close to being transferred to WDFW. The Stemilt Partnership continues to work collaboratively with all its partners to move from the property acquisition phase to a management phase for these lands. In 2016 the Chelan County Natural Resources Department began leading an effort to develop a recreation plan for the Stemilt Basin properties. Challenges include managing access and diverse public use while protecting resources. WDFW properties within the Stemilt planning area are considered part of the Colockum Wildlife Area, and recreation planners will work to ensure consistency with WDFW's mission and goals for its lands.



Members of the Stemilt Partnership forestry subcommittee meet in the field.

Mission Ridge Ski Area Update

The Mission Ridge Ski area is a private enterprise operating on public lands, approximately 50% of land ownership includes WDFW and 50% U.S. Forest Service. The 960 acres of WDFW lands at Mission Ridge are adjacent to the Stemilt Basin and are also considered part of the Colockum Wildlife Area. Much has occurred in the last three years relating to Mission Ridge, including its participation in the Stemilt Partnership and its acquisition of approximately 780 acres of private lands that lay between the existing ski area and the public lands in the Stemilt Basin. Plans for these new lands include increasing its skiable acreage and development of housing units. A large landslide also occurred at Mission Ridge Ski Area on WDFW lands in April 2016, prompting WDFW and Mission Ridge to temporarily close the area to public access until the area stabilized.

Landslide at Mission Ridge Ski Area, on WDFW lands. Snow-making equipment at Mission Ridge Ski Area.



Stewardship Accomplishments

Road Maintenance

A variety of road maintenance work was accomplished on the wildlife area during this time period, some required work according to Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans (RMAP) work in timbered areas and also work in shrub-steppe landscapes. RMAP work included removal of a culvert identified as a fish passage barrier in the North Fork of Tarpiscan Creek and replacing it with a bridge. The North Fork Tarpiscan Creek Road also received work to correct drainage issues and reduce road impacts to the creek. Undersized culverts were also replaced and drainage features such as water bars and silt traps were installed on the Brewton and Crossover roads. This work highlights WDFW's efforts to protect resources such as water quality and fish passage while maintaining public access.



New bridge installation on the N. Fk. Tarpiscan Creek. Water drainage issues on the N.F. Tarpiscan Road.



Drainage improvements on the Tekison Creek Road. Large culvert installed on Brewton Road.

Green Dot Road Management

Work has been ongoing to improve the effectiveness and usability of the Green Dot Road Management System on the wildlife area. In 2014, WDFW began installing large reader boards complete with maps detailing the regulations of the Green Dot Road System. These reader boards are very visible and are a great improvement over the previous signage. Several vehicle gates were also installed on non-green dot roads to improve the effectiveness of the road management system.



Colockum staff install a new green dot readerboard.

Stray Gulch and Tekison Creek Road Abandonment

WDFW closed and abandoned the upper part of the Tekison Creek Road and the Stray Gulch Road in 2013 due to natural movement of the stream channels and interaction of the roads with the creeks. In 2014, WDFW constructed slightly more than one mile of new road in Stray Gulch, in a location farther from the stream and riparian corridor. After construction, disturbed areas were seeded with a native grass seed mix and then mulched with straw to help reduce erosion.

Volunteers

Volunteers assisted WDFW with many projects on the Colockum Wildlife Area from 2014-2016. Some of these included maintenance of boundary fencing, rebuilding upland bird feeders damaged by fire, or replacing fire-damaged fencing around spring developments.



Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteers repairing fence.

New Issues

Forest health is a significant issue on the Colockum Wildlife Area, with overstocked forest stands at elevated risk to disease, insect outbreaks and wildfires. Another fire, similar to the 2013 Colockum-Tarps event could easily occur, creating a large and unmanageable fire. Several stands on the Colockum Wildlife Area have been recently identified as candidates for treatment, but no work is currently planned. In the Stemilt Basin, recently acquired WDFW lands are more likely to see treatment as a result of their joint management with the Stemilt Partnership and Chelan County.

Status Report of 2014-2016 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 2017-2018.

2014-2016 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress Related Activity/ Comments
Develop a new Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC).	Completed	WAAC developed, group met once in 2015.
Address road maintenance issues in shrub-steppe habitat.	Partially completed	Tekison Road drainage repaired, culverts replaced. Little Brushy Creek crossing and Tarpiscan Road washouts not repaired.
Complete RMAP work identified in original plan.	Completed	N. F. Tarpiscan Creek bridge and ford installed; Brewton Road work complete.
Naneum Ridge Recreation Plan finalized.	Completed	Plan completed, signed and implementation in progress.
Install new Green Dot readerboards with signs and maps.	Completed	Installed 8 new readerboards.
Rebuild 20 miles burned boundary fencing, maintain remaining unburned portions.	80% complete	Fence reconstruction continues, will be complete in 2017.
Coordinate road management with DNR.	Ongoing	Interagency meetings on road management occur, as needed.
Complete Stemilt land transactions and begin management planning.	Ongoing	Land transactions partially complete, recreation and forest management planning in progress.

Assess Stray Gulch for new road construction.	Completed	New road constructed in Stray Gulch.
Inspect and maintain spring developments.	On-going	Volunteers repair spring developments, as needed.
Perform mandatory weed control.	Completed annually	Weed control focused on high priority weed species.
Identify forest stands in need of forest health treatment.	On-going	Stands in the Colockum Creek and Mission Ridge areas identified.
Reduce danger from hazard trees along Green Dot roads	Completed	Hazard trees felled along open roads.
Install gates on non-green dot roads.	Completed	8 new gates installed on non-green dot roads.

2017-2018 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 the 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 culvert issues on the Little Brushy Creek Road/South Fork Brushy Creek crossing.
- 3) Complete unfinished RMAP work including Brewton Road sediment issues, Crossover Road culvert replacement and North Fork Tarpiscan Creek Ford repairs.
- 4) Continue work to begin implementation of the Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan.
- 5) Maintain 35 miles of wildlife area boundary fence to exclude trespass livestock.
- 6) Coordinate cooperative road management system with DNR. Continue to update Green Dot maps as needed.
- 7) Continue to work with the Stemilt Partnership to complete land transactions and begin development of a recreation plan in the Stemilt Basin.
- 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) Work with Chelan County, the Stemilt Partnership and WDFW foresters to inventory forest stands and plan forest management needs on WDFW lands in the Stemilt Basin.
- 11) Install vehicle gates in the Stemilt Basin on non-green dot roads in cooperation with the Stemilt Partnership.

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Input

A Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting was held in Ellensburg on August 30, 2017.

Colockum Wildlife Area Advisory Committee

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, August 30, 2017

Hal Holmes Community Center, Ellensburg, WA.

6-8 p.m.

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Bill Stegeman, Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association

Norm Gutzwiler, Stemilt Partnership/Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Lee Davis, Kittitas County Field and Stream Club

Bill Deters, Native Plant Society

Ward Whitmire, Mountain biking representative

Mark Johnston, North Central Washington Audubon

WDFW Staff Attendees:

Pete Lopushinsky, Colockum WLA Manager

Ross Huffman, Regional Lands Operations Manager

John Hagan, Colockum WLA Assistant Manager

Welcome and Introductions:

Pete Lopushinsky and Ross Huffman welcomed the group and introductions were made around the room.

Meeting Overview and Ground Rules:

Ross Huffman explained he would act as facilitator and went over the basic ground rules for the meeting.

Review of 2017 Colockum Management Plan Update:

Pete Lopushinsky reviewed the draft management plan update with the group. Comments from the WAAC:

You should plan ahead for future fires and timber salvage. Have reference sheets available.

Why was the timber salvage controversial?

- Petit Road posting- Who did this?
- Stemilt land transactions- who will own these lands?
- Naneum Recreation Plan- how are projects implemented?
- Spring development projects- can we spray poison oak before working onsite? Need to be careful around wet sites.

Stemilt Basin Report, Recreation and Forestry:

- Reviewed handouts.
- Make sure public land purchased by WDFW remains public.
- Will there be public input on projects?

- How do we stop illegal use of lands, roads, graffiti, etc. Need more enforcement emphasis.
- Low enforcement presence marginalizes all these planning efforts.
- Concern that these plans set WDFW up to enforce these rules without money to do it.
- We see an increase in recreational use and a decrease in enforcement.

Weed Control Report:

- Have you used volunteers to help with weeds? This is done in other areas.
- Perhaps use college students to help? Maybe us CWU students and combine weed control work with education experience.

WAAC General Comments:

- Comment that WAAC member likes to ride bikes in the area and bike packing and adventure riding is getting more popular. Appreciates having areas that are non-motorized, but still open to bicycles. Questioned if it would be possible to clear obstructions on closed roads for bikes only.
- How much non-game work is done on the wildlife area? Realizes that much of the work currently done does benefit non-game species.

Public Comment: Lana Cruse, Local community member

- Need to add more Kittitas County membership.
- Get the word out to the public better about the meetings.
- Hold two meetings per year.

Contacts:

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Want to see the full plan?

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