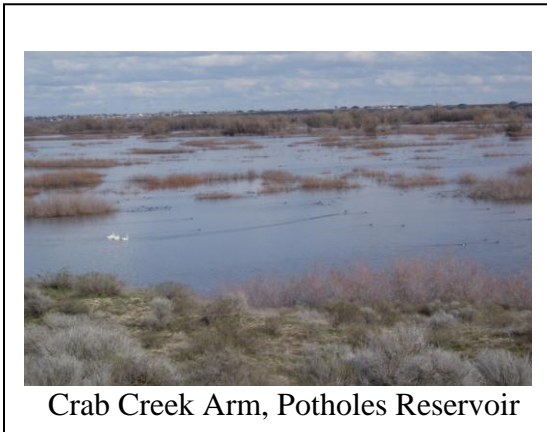




COLUMBIA BASIN WILDLIFE AREA 2010 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Crab Creek Arm, Potholes Reservoir

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Management Plan http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/ that provides management direction for the 14 Units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. The plan describes needs identified by internal and external working groups, and guides activities on the Wildlife Area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife 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 2009 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2010.

Updates/Changes

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) provided approximately \$166,000 for operation and maintenance of the Frenchman Ponds project (TD-01) and the wetland enhancement project near Desert Lake (TD-02).

Funding provided for these projects was approved by BPA for mitigation from impacts caused by construction and pool inundation of Chief Joseph Dam. Wetland mitigation credits in the amount of 1,000 acres were received for these enhancements for breeding ducks, sandhill cranes, rails, black-necked stilts, American avocets, sandpipers, dowitchers, Wilson’s snipes, Wilson’s phalaropes, and black terns.

Inside	
Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
Major Stewardship Accomplishments	2
Status Report of 2009 Performance Measures	3
New Strategies	5
2010 Performance Measures	6
BPA Wildlife Mitigation	7

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has identified the most favorable alternative route to feed irrigation water from Billy Clapp Reservoir to the Potholes Reservoir as the Crab Creek channel, which includes major portions of the Gloyd Seeps Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. This **Potholes Supplemental Feed Route (PSFR)** is a part of the larger Columbia River Water Management Program that seeks to better manage water for late summer downstream water users. Wildlife Area and District Wildlife Management staff has devoted a considerable amount of time this past year assisting in the development of a plan on how best to manage the water. Because the PSFR is a part of the Columbia River Water Management Program and involves the Bureau of Reclamation and the Washington Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Habitat Program has taken the lead in developing the plan. The PSFR plan will provide perennial water to the Middle Crab Creek, an area that has historically been ephemeral at best. Naturally occurring flows within this reach is normally flash floods, early in the spring, with slow dry down. The supplemental irrigation water feed will turn the reach into perennial flows, with flows of up to 500 cubic feet per second (cfs) for the March 15 through June 15 period, and approximately 40 cfs for the remainder of the year. Obviously, these new flow regimes will drastically change the management of the Gloyd Seeps Unit. The management plan is expected to be completed in 2010, water is expected to be turned on in 2011.

The sharecrop agreement on the Gloyd Regulated Access Area was discontinued after attempts to harvest last year's crop were stymied by the arrival of an industrious beaver family. Dam building and the resultant flooding prevented the soil on the Spud Field from drying enough to support equipment, and the harvest was a complete loss. The flooding also prevents any tillage or mowing operations as well, severely limiting our moist soil management options and impacting the quality of the waterfowl hunting.

A wetland enhancement project was initiated on the Gloyd Seeps Unit by the District Wildlife Biologist. The Mansfield Pond project will replace a non-functional water control structure, allowing manipulation of the water within Mansfield Pond for moist soil management activities. With the growth of desirable vegetation, the water level will be raised, flooding the vegetation to attract waterfowl during the hunting season.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Moist soil management projects within the Frenchman Ponds and Winchester wetland enhancement projects produced desirable early-successional stage wetland vegetation. Invasive weedy vegetation was controlled with herbicides and mowing. Water control structures were operated to flood the wetland cells just prior to the fall waterfowl hunting season.



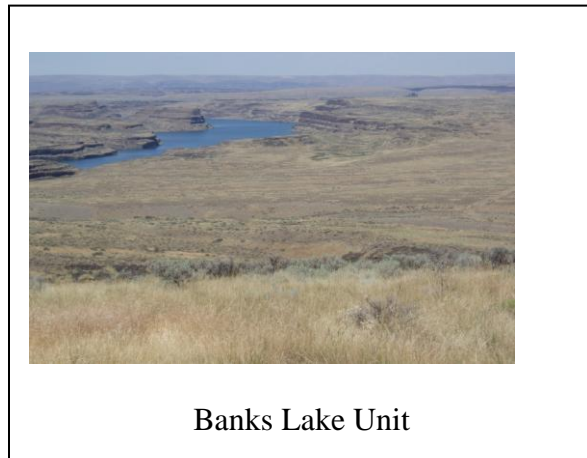
Columbia Basin Shrub/Steppe

Wildlife Area Assistant Manager, Brian Cole, initiated a 10-year sharecrop agreement for replacement of two aging irrigation circles on Unit 75 of the Upland Wildlife Restoration Unit. The maintenance and repair of the old circles were using all the rental income coming from lessee. The new lease allowed the lessee to provide ten years of lease payments up front, which was then used to purchase the new equipment.

In response to Wildlife Area concerns, BOR provided funding to hire temporary help to inventory noxious weed populations along the feed route. Weeds found include Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), and a few species of knapweed (*Centaurea spp.*). The presence of these noxious weeds within or adjacent to an irrigation water delivery system will be a vector for weed spreading and must be addressed before the supplemental feed route is used. WDFW has expressed our concerns to the BOR and the Grant County Weed Board, and indications are the weeds will be controlled.

The District Team decided to close the south gate on the main road through the Quincy Lakes Unit of the Wildlife Area in a reaction to the intolerable level of vandalism. Access personnel spent a considerable amount of time sand blasting graffiti from the outhouses, replacing signs “tagged” by the local gangs and picking up litter. Wildlife Area staff moved barrier rocks into place to prevent off road travel and illegal access and camping.

The budget and scope of work for the next eight years were proposed for funding from BPA and presented to their Interagency Scientific Review Panel.



Status Report of 2009 Performance Measures

2009 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress, 2010 Related Activity, and/or Comments
Maintain, relocate, or remove winter upland bird feeders as appropriate.	Completed through winter 2009.	On-going, continue in 2010.
Maintain irrigated tree and shrub plots.	Completed through summer 2009.	On-going, continue in 2010.
Operate water control structures at Frenchman Ponds (TD-01) wetlands improvement project.	Completed with filling in the fall of 2009, maintained water level through winter and drained February 2010.	On-going, continue in 2010.
Conduct moist soil management activities on 40 acres at Frenchman Ponds (TD-01) project.	Completed 16 acres of moist soil management. Naturally-occurring, desirable vegetation abundant.	A mix of millet and smartweed were planted. Crop failed, smartweed seed was broadcast again in late winter in test plots. On-going, continue in 2010.
Conduct moist soil management activities on approximately 20 acres in the Winchester Restricted Access Area.	Completed 22 acres of moist soil management.	A mix of millet and smartweed were planted. On-going, continue in 2010.
Maintain 80 acres of waterfowl habitat at Desert Lake (TD-02) wetlands improvement project.	Completed	On-going, continue in 2010.
Control vegetation on the shoreline of Westlake Ponds	Completed, berms were checked for repair needs, herbicides and mowing were used to control undesirable vegetation.	On-going, continue to maintain berms, control undesirable vegetation in 2010.
Operate water control structures to create shallow open water.	Completed	Problem beaver dams resulted in less than total success at the Winchester and Gloyd RAAs. On-going, continue in 2010, look for solutions to beaver problems.
Mow tall emergent vegetation on the Winchester Restricted Access Area (WRAA).	Completed	Continue as needed annually.

Weed control, with emphasis on Phragmites and flag leaf iris.	Completed	On-going, Phragmites spreading at an alarming rate. Continue in 2010.
Fire control and training	Maintained fire breaks, applied herbicides to access roads and parking areas to reduce fuel load. Manager and Assistant attended Red Card recertification.	On-going, WA staff will continue to maintain firebreaks, road shoulders and parking areas. Manager and Assistant will attend Red Card recertification.
Post islands within Potholes Reservoir to reduce disturbances to colonial nesting birds.	Staff shortage prevented completion.	Will strive to accomplish annually with help from the District Wildlife Biologist and staff.
Develop interpretive signs for the wildlife-viewing trail on the Sprague Lake Unit.	Progress was made, however staff shortage prevented completion.	Will strive to accomplish with help from the District Wildlife Biologist and staff.
Restrict camping and vehicle travel on the Quincy Lakes Unit.	Completed	Placed barrier rock and posted signs to prevent illegal off road vehicle travel and camping outside established camping areas.
Maintain shop, office, and equipment for safe and effective workplace.	Completed through 2009	On-going, continue for 2010
Exhibit A to the BOR 25-year agreement.	Not completed.	Continued working on completion, complications include BOR's purchasing additional lands as part of the Supplemental Feed Route.
Water service contract with BOR	Information was provided to the BOR.	Continue to work toward completion.
Grazing and agricultural lease administration.	On-going	

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.

Agency Objective: Protect, Restore and Enhance Fish and Wildlife and Their Habitats.

1. Manage upland habitats

A. Strategy: Rehab weed patches totaling approximately 55 acres on the Steamboat Rock Peninsula on the Banks Lake Unit.

Agency Objective: Provide Sound Operational Management of WDFW Lands, Facilities and Access Sites.

1. Maintain equipment, signs and other materials important for management and protection of the wildlife areas.

A. Strategy: Develop signage for new fishing restrictions at Sprague Lake and post in a manner that facilitates enforcement.

2010 Performance Measures

Manage to increase upland game bird populations:

- Maintain 20 populations of California valley quail with supplemental winter feeding.
- Maintain approximately 115 acres of irrigated tree and shrub plots.

Manage to attract migrating waterfowl:

- Operate water control structures to develop approximately 130 acres of attractive waterfowl habitat at the Frenchman Ponds (TD-01) wetlands improvement project.
- Conduct moist soil management activities on approximately 20 acres in the Frenchman Ponds project to improve waterfowl habitat.
- Conduct moist soil management activities on approximately 20 acres in the Winchester Restricted Access Area to improve waterfowl habitat.
- Maintain the 80 acres of waterfowl habitat at the Desert Lake (TD-02) wetlands improvement project by maintaining berms, and controlling undesirable vegetation and fish.
- Operate water control structures on the Winchester Regulated Access Area (4), Frenchman Ponds (8), Gloyd Farm Unit, and Spud Field to create shallow, open water.

Manage shallow ponds:

- Mow 5 acres of tall emergent and shoreline vegetation on the Winchester Regulated Access Area of the Desert Unit and flood to create shallow open water.

Manage weeds:

- Continue with aggressive weed control program on all units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area with an emphasis on Phragmites. Utilize funds provided by the Migratory Bird Stamp and Print program for additional Phragmites control.
- Rehab weed patches on the Steamboat Rock Peninsula.

Provide fire control on agency lands:

- Maintain 3 miles of fire-breaks on the Potholes Reservoir and Banks Lake Units.
- Reduce/eliminate fuel load along access roads and parking areas on all units with herbicides.

Provide recreation compatible with fish, wildlife, and habitat protection:

- Release pen-raised pheasants for hunting opportunities on the Gloyd Seeps, Lower Crab Creek, Priest Rapids, and Upland Wildlife Restoration Units.

Maintain facilities to achieve safe, efficient, and effective management and use of the wildlife area:

- Maintain shop, office, and all equipment to provide a safe and effective workplace.
- Finalize Exhibit A of the 25-year management agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation
- Finalize the water service contract with the Bureau of Reclamation to document the WDFW use of water for wildlife habitat.

Citizen Advisory Group Input

None

Information for BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program

The Bonneville Power Administration provides funding for the development and maintenance of wetland habitat at the Frenchman Ponds project (TD-01) and the wetland enhancement project near Desert Lake (TD-02), within the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. For these wetland habitat enhancements, BPA received mitigation Habitat Unit (HU) credits towards their overall Wildlife Mitigation Debt for the Columbia River hydroelectric system.

Progress towards the obligation is assessed through the use of periodic surveys based on standardized Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP) for the focal species: breeding and migrating ducks, sandhill cranes, rails, black-necked stilts, American avocets, sandpipers, dowitchers, Wilson's snipes, Wilson's phalaropes, and black terns. By measuring a variety of habitat features, HEP surveyors apply habitat models for the focal species to arrive at a numerical figure between 0 and 1 that quantifies the habitat quality for a particular focal species. This figure is known as a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). The figure is then multiplied by the area habitat being evaluated and expressed as a Habitat Unit, the basic currency of HEP.

Reports/Proposals/Plans

Since 2002, the Bonneville Power Administration has provided funding for a portion of the Desert Wildlife Area. Consequently, numerous reports, funding proposals, and work plans have been produced. By following the links below, the interested reader can find detailed information on a variety of topics that the wildlife area is engaged in.

General Information on the Mitigation Project

The 2010 – 2012 Funding Proposal submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January 2009 details the Desert Wildlife Area's history, land purchases, and rationale for mitigation and focal species:

<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1010>

Additional information describing BPA's role in mitigation and crediting can be found on the BPA website:

<http://efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/Wildlife.aspx>

<http://efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/wildlifecredit.aspx>

Management Activities

The 2010 – 2012 Funding Proposal Narrative submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January 2009

<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/narratives/1010.doc>

The 2010 – 2012 Funding Proposal submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January 2009.

<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1010>

Monitoring and Evaluation

The 2010 – 2012 Funding Proposal Narrative submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January 2009

<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/narratives/1010.doc>

Funding Strategy

The 2010 – 2012 Funding Proposal submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January 2009.

<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1010>

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Want to see the full plan?

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/