



COLUMBIA BASIN WILDLIFE AREA 2012 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 (CBWA). 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 biannually 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 2010 and 2011 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2012 through 2013.

Updates/Changes

Wetland Enhancements

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has provided approximately \$176,500 per year, for operation and maintenance of the Frenchman Ponds project and the wetland enhancement project near Desert Lake. Funding

provided for these projects was approved by BPA for mitigation from impacts caused by construction of Chief Joseph Dam. Wetland mitigation credits (1,000 acres) were

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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.

Wetland Cell 6, Frenchman Ponds

Banks Lake Drawdown

In order to make repairs to the outlet gates from Banks Lake reservoir into the Main Canal, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) lowered the water level of Banks Lake 35 feet through the late fall and winter of 2011. BOR closed vehicle access to several access areas and boat access to the lake was severely curtailed. BOR closed the Barker Canyon Access Site to vehicle access to prevent potential damage to cultural resources. The plan is for Banks Lake to be back to full pool by the start of the irrigation season early in March 2012.



Coulee City Marina, Banks Lake

Mansfield Pond Enhancement

District 5 Wildlife Biologist Rich Finger initiated a Migratory Bird Stamp and Print project to rehabilitate an existing waterfowl enhancement project at the Mansfield Pond in the Gloyd Seeps Unit. A non-functional water control structure was replaced; a "beaver deceiver" was installed to prevent beavers from plugging the water control structure; and the outlet sloughs and holding pond dikes were rebuilt. Ducks Unlimited contracted for the design work and monitored the construction. The project was completed in June 2011, and water levels were manipulated through the fall. The project provided many hunter days of waterfowl hunting through the 2011 season.



Winchester Lake Fire

On April 26, 2010, a 100 acre fire was started on the Winchester Lake Unit. Wetlands, shrub steppe, boundary fence, and a 30+ year old shelterbelt tree and shrub plantings were impacted by the fire. By far, the most damage was done to the mature black locus trees in the shelterbelt, several on the adjacent private property fell and causing many

“danger trees”. Jody Taylor and Casey Kass (Wenas Wildlife Area) assisted in felling the trees that posed a risk to public safety. Two Washington Conservation Corps crews and CBWA staff spent three weeks cleaning up the downed trees. By the spring of 2011, the wetlands and tall wheatgrass steppe had recovered, the understory of the shrub steppe was coming back and the black locus trees had returned into a dog hair stand of saplings.

Potholes Supplemental Feed Route

CBWA staff and District 5 Wildlife Biologist Rich Finger completed the development plan for the Potholes Supplemental Feed Route (SFR). Starting in the spring of 2014, the BOR plans to release water from Billy Clapp Reservoir into the Middle Crab Creek, to flow through the Gloyd Seeps Unit and Moses Lake and into Potholes Reservoir to ease pressure on the East Low Canal. The SFR plan includes water control infrastructure, riparian habitat development, streambank stabilization and dense nesting upland habitat development.

New Issues

Frenchman Coulee Vault Toilet in the Quincy Unit

For the past several years, CBWA has provided two portable outhouses for the public using the Frenchman Coulee rock climbing area. Vandalism and safety issues prompted the vendor to discontinue service and the outhouses were removed. A coalition of rock climbing clubs approached the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) with a proposal to fund the installation an above-ground vault toilet. Installation and landscaping is anticipated for early spring 2013.



Winchester Lake Fire

Trinidad Creek Purchase

In 2010, WDFW secured an option to purchase the 63.18 acre Crescent View Estates property approximately 6 miles west of the town of Quincy. The acquisition is part of the Priest Rapids Habitat Conservation Project – Trinidad Creek, to protect riparian and stream habitat for Upper Columbia River steelhead, spring Chinook salmon juveniles and coho salmon. Grant County Public Utility District No. 2 (Grant PUD) provided the appraisal value of \$50,000 for the purchase, expected to close in 2012.

North Potholes Wildlife Viewing Trail

Funding was secured by Regional Director Dennis Beich for the 2011 – 2013 biennium for the construction of a wildlife viewing trail in the North Potholes Reserve. Design, scoping and permit application proceeded through 2011, with construction scheduled for fall 2012.

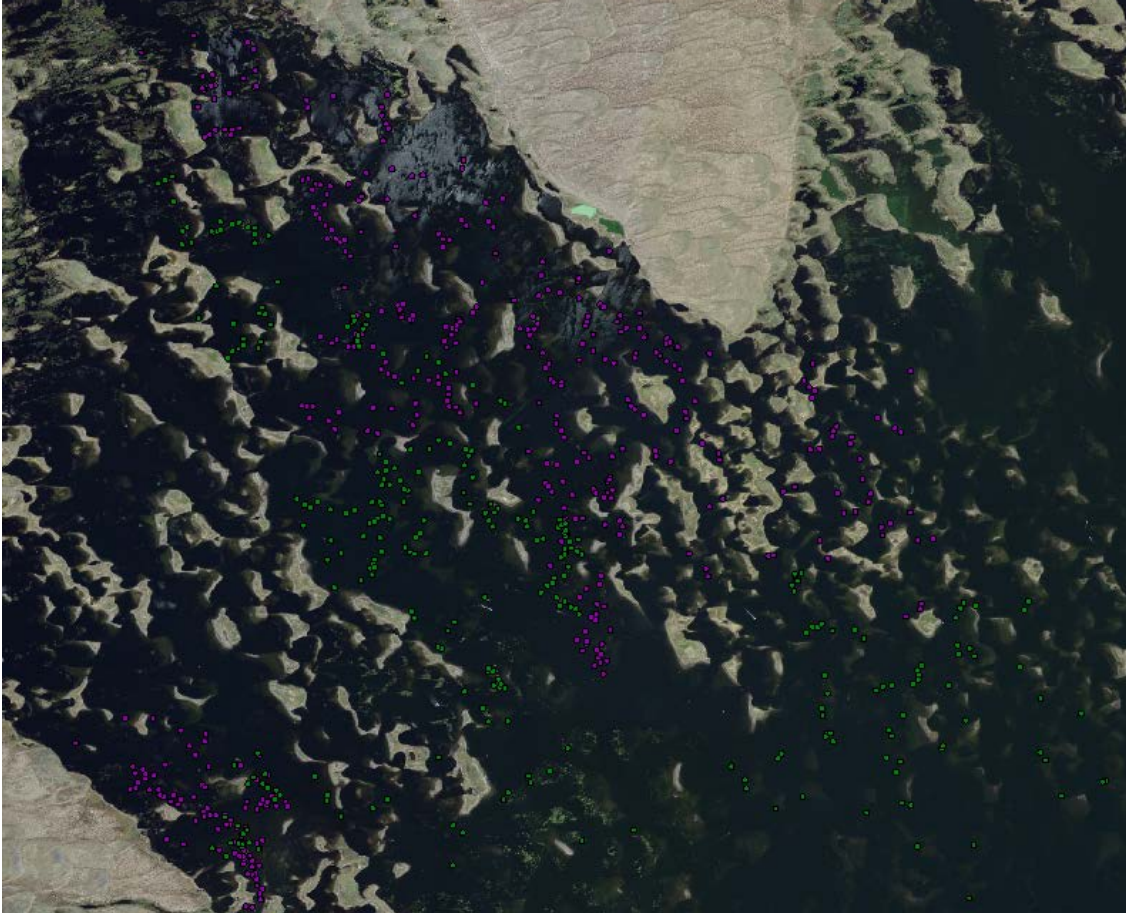
Discontinue Lower Crab Creek Grazing Program

The Wildlife Area Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) recommends discontinuing the grazing program in the northwest portion of the Lower Crab Creek Unit due to potential impacts to sagebrush lizards, *Sceloporus graciosus*, a State Candidate for listing. The HCP conservation measure that addresses grazing and sagebrush lizards states: “WDFW will not renew existing permits to graze within 0.6 mile of known occurrences of the Sagebrush Lizard”.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

North Potholes Phragmites Control

Vegetation Management Specialist Roger Nelson initiated an herbicide application program to control new infestations of Phragmites in the island area of the Potholes Reservoir. Each new infestation of Phragmites is a clone which, if left untreated, will spread through rhizomes to create a dense monoculture of this extremely invasive weed. The Phragmites was spot-sprayed by boat through mid-summers 2010-11, and each clone was marked with GPS to avoid multiple treatments, GPS waypoints were then overlain on aerial photos.



GPS Waypoints showing individual Phragmites clones, Potholes Reservoir 1" = 3,600'

Vehicle Access/Vandalism Control

Steel-rail gates and barrier rocks were installed to eliminate unauthorized off-road travel, trash dumping and vandalism. In the Gloyd Seeps Unit, CBWA staff installed a gate at the Mansfield Pond parking area to prevent off-road vehicle activity and at the Road 10 East parking area to curtail trash dumping. Barrier rocks were added around the south parking area and access road in the Quincy Unit. The CBWA worked with Grant PUD to develop a plan to prevent vehicle access off the main access road in the Priest Rapids Unit. Grant PUD installed gates at the parking area and barrier rock along the entire length of the access road.



Vehicle barrier, Priest Rapids Unit

Agricultural Permit

The CBWA Manager prepared a new bid for a five-year agricultural permit for Farm Units 55 and 80, Irrigation

Block 26, a part of the Priest Rapids Unit. These BOR-owned farm units are managed by WDFW under agreement to attract Canada geese for fall and winter hunting opportunity.

Steamboat Rock Peninsula Habitat Enhancement

The effort of rehabilitating an existing weed patch on the Steamboat Rock Peninsula resulted in the successful establishment of quality Washington ground squirrel, *Uroditellus washingtoni*, habitat. CBWA staff worked closely with District 5 Wildlife Biologist Rich Finger to develop the seed mix, ground prep and seeding (funding provided by BOR). The grass stand was established in 2011. Mowing for weed control was conducted over the summer and fall and artificial burrows and release enclosures were installed fall 2011. Washington ground squirrel translocations will occur early in 2012.



Status Report of 2010/11 Performance Measures

2010/11 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress, 2012/13 Related Activity, and/or Comments
Maintain, relocate, or remove winter upland bird feeders as appropriate.	Completed through winter 2010-11, maintained 46 bird feeders.	On-going, continue in 2012-13.
Maintain irrigated tree and shrub plots.	Completed through summer 2010-11.	On-going, continue in 2012-13.
Operate water control structures at Frenchman Ponds (TD-01) wetlands improvement project.	Completed with filling in the fall of 2010-11, maintained water level through winter and started draining February 2011-12.	On-going, continue in 2012-13, will keep water flowing through the project February – May 2013.
Conduct moist soil management activities on 20 acres at Frenchman Ponds	Completed 5.6 acres 2010, 10.4 acres 2011. Naturally-occurring, desirable	A mix of millet and smartweed were planted. On-going, continue in 2012-

(TD-01) project.	vegetation abundant.	13.
Conduct moist soil management activities on approximately 20 acres in the Winchester Restricted Access Area.	Not completed 2010. Completed 13 acres of moist soil management 2011.	A mix of millet and smartweed were planted. On-going, continue in 2012-13.
Maintain 80 acres of waterfowl habitat at Desert Lake (TD-02) wetlands improvement project.	Completed	On-going, continue in 2012-13, increase Russian olive removal by cut and treating.
Operate water control structures to create shallow open water	Completed	On-going, continue to operate existing water control structures, plus new structure at Mansfield Pond.
Mow 5 acres of tall emergent vegetation at Winchester Regulated Access Area.	Mowed approximately 8 acres 2010, approximately 5 acres 2011. Also mowed berms and access roads.	On-going, will continue in 2012-13 as needed.
Weed control with emphasis on Phragmites.	Controlled with herbicide applications, mowing and biological control 2010 - 2,304 acres of weeds (1,158 acres of Phragmites); 2,624 acres (1,324 acres of Phragmites) in 2011.	On-going, continue in 2012-13, expand program to include Frenchman Hills Wasteway.
Rehab weed patches on the Steamboat Rock Peninsula.	Not completed, planted grass 2010; weed control 2011.	Continue with weed control 2012; seed forbs 2013.
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.
Release pen-raised pheasants for hunting opportunities.	Completed 2010-2011. Gloyd Seeps release site was reduced to reduce conflicts with waterfowl hunters using the managed wetlands.	On-going, continue in 2012-13 at reduced numbers.
Maintain shop, office, and equipment for safe and effective workplace.	Completed 2010-2011.	On-going, continue for 2012/13.

Exhibit A to the BOR 25-year agreement.	Not completed	Continue working on completion: reviewing shapefiles of Exhibit A lands, negotiate additions resulting from land purchases for the SFR.
Water service contract with BOR	Information was provided to the BOR.	Continue to work toward completion.
Develop signage for new fishing restrictions at Sprague Lake.	Completed	Placed buoys at 50 ft around Harper Island, and 4ft x 6ft signs on Sprague Lake shorelines to designate fishing restricted areas.

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: Improve Steamboat Rock Peninsula newly-seeded grass stand to include a native forb component and increase the amount of artificial burrows for Washington ground squirrel.
- B. Strategy: Implement the dense nesting habitat improvement plan for the Supplemental Feed Route. Habitat improvement areas will be fallowed using herbicides and tillage through 2012 and 2013, native grass and forb seeds will be planted in November 2013.
- C. Strategy: Implement the upland cover habitat improvement plan for the Supplemental Feed Route. Plant a variety of shrubs and trees parallel to the perennial portion of Crab Creek; close enough to the water to receive adequate soil moisture.

2. Manage riparian habitats

- A. Strategy: Implement the riparian habitat improvement plan for the Supplemental Feed Route. Plant appropriate woody cover along the perennial portion of Crab Creek. Collect coyote willow from the general area and use for the majority of the plantings.

Performance Measures 2012-13

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 Restricted Access Area (4), Frenchman Ponds (8), Gloyd Farm Unit, and Spud Field to create shallow, open water.

Manage upland habitats:

- Fallow and plant approximately 200 acres into native grasses and forbs. Target areas are abandoned agricultural fields or cheatgrass patches. Funding sources include Pheasants Forever, Columbia Basin Chapter.
- Plant upland cover trees and shrubs parallel to Crab Creek on the Spud Field.

Manage riparian habitats:

- Plant riparian cover along Crab Creek on the Spud Field.

Manage shallow ponds:

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

Manage weeds:

- Continue with an 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 program for additional Phragmites control.

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 (BPA) 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 Procedure (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/