



COWLITZ WILDLIFE AREA 2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Cowlitz Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for the 14,155 acres of wildlife area lands located in Lewis County. The plan identifies management objectives and guides the implementation of strategies based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Mission of “Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife Resources” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions. Additionally, the plan guides activities to fulfill Tacoma Power’s FERC requirements to mitigate for the habitat loss due to inundation by Riffe and Mayfield Lakes.

The Management Plan is updated annually as habitat conditions and species needs change, new regulations and scientific knowledge are developed, public issues and concerns evolve, and administrative policy regarding wildlife areas change.

Updates/Changes

In 2006, the Region 5 WDFW lands agent and the WDFW Real Estate Services were successful in acquiring two new additions to the Cowlitz Wildlife Area (CWA). These new additions (The Bingaman and Roe properties) are adjacent to the Davis Lake Unit and add 35 acres to the Davis Lake Unit respectively. Two other properties, lying adjacent to the Davis Lake Unit (totaling 55 acres), were acquired in early 2007.

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Winter flooding is a common occurrence along the floodplain of the Cowlitz River and its tributaries. However, in 2006 flooding was quite severe. Fortunately damage to the wildlife area was limited mostly to the plugging of culverts. As these culverts were unplugged, scouring and sedimentation occurred and on the Davis Lake Unit of the wildlife area; the resulting deposition has filled a portion of the “ditch” known as the Unnamed Channel that was being cleaned out per our HPA. Additionally, two undersized culverts on the Kiona Unit were compromised resulting in unusual flooding activity in this unit’s forage fields.

The first phase of the Peterman Trail system (approximately 12 miles) has been completed. Tacoma Power has not officially publicized the trail but the trail is already receiving extensive use by hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders (see New Issues). There is a two-stall vault tank toilet installed at the trailhead and a kiosk. The kiosk will be used to display a map of the trail, the rules and regulations and additional miscellaneous information. The trail is expected to be officially opened summer 2007.

New Issues

The Peterman Trail system has brought about a new issue. Off-road use of ORVs has increased. The extent of use is believed to be minimal at this time, originating from an adjacent landowner. Enforcement is aware of the issue and has made attempts to contact the suspects while in the act but have yet to be successful. Off-road travel by ORVs is a minor problem with less than ten occurrences a year. However, with the new trail it is possible that activity could increase due to the security of being unseen from the roads. No new strategies are being suggested for this issue at this time.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

CWA staff developed a 5-year plan to repair channel breaches and restore existing drainage on the Davis Lake Unit. A Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA) was applied for and all necessary permits were secured. Work began during the summer when fields were dry and water levels in the creeks were at low to no flows. The blackberries were removed from the banks of the channels and silt removed from within the channel down to historic depths. Work was conducted on approximately 1600 linear feet of channel and less than 50 yards of material was removed from the channels in designated wetlands. The removed material was dumped in an onsite upland location. Additionally, the fields were chemically scalped using Roundup Pro™ to remove the reed canarygrass. The future objective is to manage the fields as moist soil units and utilize common agricultural practices to “work” the fields to encourage diverse emergent growth for winter migratory waterfowl.

In 2006, CWA staff restored the Kosmos Access Area (Dogpatch) road to provide safe access by utilizing 3” minus crushed rock to fill existing holes. Additionally, large woody debris was placed to prevent vehicular access from traveling beyond the defined road and causing further resource damage. The area was also signed with Carsonite™ fiberglass posts. The shoreline access areas at Swofford pond had also become rutted and were no longer safe. These locations were also restored utilizing 3” minus crushed rock.

In February of 2006, 1,100 Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) trees were planted to augment the existing visual barriers and provide new ones where none exist. As these trees grow a natural barrier will develop along the roadside. This will help to eliminate off-road travel, enhance habitat value, and control illegal harvesting of wildlife. Additionally, three fields totaling 9 acres were planted with 3,700 trees and shrubs representative of a mixed deciduous forest. The 9 acres were planted with the following tree species: big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), red alder (*Alnus rubra*), bitter cherry (*Prunus emarginata*), black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*), Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), Pacific crabapple (*Malus fusca*), and Pacific willow (*Salix lucida*). In addition, the following shrub species were also planted: red elderberry (*Sambusca racemosa*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), and red-osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*).

Status Report of 2006 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 2007.

2006 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress 2007 Related Activity Comments
Increase habitat quality on the Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Unit of the CWA by restoring approximately nine acres of open field back to a mixed deciduous forest type.	The nine acres has been planted.	A survival survey needs to be conducted and, if needed, additional plantings.
In 2006 a cyclical maintenance plan will be developed to guide maintenance activities on approximately 200 acres of forage fields	A plan has been outlined.	Approximately 200 acres are now being maintained using the schedule outlined in the maintenance plan.
Complete the engineering and permitting for three major wetland projects (Rainey Creek Dike, Kiona Unit, and Spears Unit) by the end of 2006.	Ongoing – completion date has been extended. A buffer planting project was conducted on Squaw Creek on the Kiona Unit.	Available funding drives this activity and current laws and policies govern the viability of the Rainey Creek Dike project.
In 2006, a moist soil management program will be created and implemented on the four ponds on the Mossyrock Unit of the CWA.	Work has begun to ensure the reliability of the existing hydrology.	This includes seasonal drawdown for emergent growth, repairing holes in the dike, fixing malfunctioning risers, and maintaining the ditches that provide the hydrology.
Develop a plan to restore existing drainage on the Davis Lake Unit and submit a JARPA by the end of 2006.	The JARPA has been secured. Work began in 2006 and will continue under a five-year schedule.	Work within the designated wetland areas is limited to less than 50 yards of sediment being removed annually and requires upland disposal.
Conduct weed management on WLA lands	Ongoing with no finished date defined.	Activities are outlined in the Weed Management Plan.
Resurface roads and parking areas on the Swofford and Kosmos Units	Project completed in 2006	

Comply with DNR Road Maintenance and Abandonment Planning (RMAP) requirements.	Ongoing with completion by 2015. Most roadwork on Peterman has been aimed at maintenance – road brushing etc. WDFW engineers brushed out approximately 12 miles of road in 2007.	The RMAP is a cooperative project with work being performed largely by Green Diamond Resources (formerly Simpson Resource Company) and funded by the Cowlitz Wildlife Area.
Management objects on the Peterman Ridge Unit call for reducing road densities of the CWA to a ratio of 1.5 miles of open road per square mile of ground. The 6,855-acre unit has nearly 75 miles of road.	This project is mostly completed. An analysis will be conducted by the end of 2008 to see if objectives have been met.	The objective of the road density plan allows for seasonal openings (i.e. hunting season) if determined to be appropriate.
Write the annual performance report for Tacoma Power as per the Wildlife Settlement Agreement.	The plan was written and submitted for 2006	Annual activity

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 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. Strategies identified in italics are a response to issues provide through the Citizen Advisory Group meetings.

Note to the reader/reviewer: No new or updated strategies are being proposed at this time. However, any ideas that you may have to offer that are not already included in the plan would be welcome and strongly considered.

2007 Performance Measures

Performance measures for the Cowlitz Wildlife Area are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

1. Complete 10 acres of riparian buffer plantings along Squaw Creek (Kiona Unit) to improve the riparian habitat, restore shade, control water temperatures, and control reed canarygrass.
2. Complete the Kosmos Access Area (Dogpatch) road resurfacing project.
3. Continue improving the wintering waterfowl habitat on the Mossyrock Ponds through moist soil management techniques. The first stage of this project involves repairing existing hydrology issues such as leaks in pond dikes, sedimentation in the drainage ditches, and seasonal drawdown by 2008.
4. Conduct forage field enhancements by seeding approximately 20 acres of forage fields.
5. Clear / brush out approximately 11 miles of road identified as necessary for management activities on the Peterman Ridge Unit by 2008.

6. Continue with year 2 of the 5-year project to enhance the wintering waterfowl habitat on the Davis Lake Unit by restoring the existing drainage to a functioning state.
7. Perform a stem survival count survey of the 2004 riparian plantings along Sulphur Creek on the Swofford Pond Unit.
8. Perform a stem survival count survey of the 2006 habitat improvement plantings on the Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Unit.
9. Perform annual trail maintenance where needed.
10. Continue to seek reliable funding through grants and partnerships to complete the Spears and Kiona Wetland Restoration and Enhancement projects.
11. Evaluate existing road density on Peterman Ridge and determine need for additional road closures by 2008.
12. Conduct annual weed control activities in accordance with legal requirements and guided by the weed management plan. Activities will focus on approximately 20 acres of Canada thistle, 30 acres of reed canarygrass and eradication of known Japanese knotweed sites.
13. Conduct annual field maintenance activities in accordance with the field maintenance plan. There is approximately 200 acres of forage fields that are annually maintained using common agricultural practices.
14. Conduct the annual artificial nest box maintenance and use survey on approximately 80 boxes.
15. Prepare the annual report for Tacoma Power to meet their FERC requirement.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on June 2, 2007 to review management's progress and address any new issues or receive input on existing issues. Those in attendance included representatives from the Weed Control Board, the East Lewis County Windsurfers, the Lewis County Horsemen's Association, and the local sportsmen. Invitations were sent to the Cloud Base County Club hang glider's association, several adjacent landowners', and to the representatives of the adjacent private timber companies.

The following new input/issues were addressed at the meeting.

Issue: Does the Cowlitz Wildlife Area have maps of the Peterman Trail?

Response: Tacoma Power is responsible for providing maps for the trail. However, it is possible for the CWA staff to produce a trail map handout for individuals who come to our office seeking information. We will determine what information we need and complete the handout by 2008.

Issue: Unattended dogs from homeless campers are raiding other people's campsites and tend to be aggressive towards others.

Response: The new Land Use WAC will give enforcement the ability to address this issue.

Issue: Mossyrock trail needs maintenance.

Response: Tacoma Power agreed to take over maintenance responsibilities on the Mossyrock Trail so they could include it as part of their trail requirement for their FERC license. The issue will be forwarded to Tacoma Power representatives.

Issue: A possible conflict between the new Land Use WAC and users of the Peterman Trail could occur if enforcement decides to impound a vehicle that is parked in the parking lot for longer than five days.

Response: The Land Use WAC has been revised accordingly to allow flexibility. The likelihood of this occurring is small because most people camping on Peterman would drive to their campsite. However, it is possible. CWA staff will advise enforcement that vehicles in the parking lot should not be impounded until the 21-day camping rule has been violated.

Issue: Peterman Trail is billed as a multiuse non-motorized trail system. However, the possibilities for conflicts exist due to incompatibility between the users. Horses and mountain bikers can meet on blind spots on the trail with neither party having time to react. The non-hunting user could find their selves in an uncomfortable situation during hunting season. Somebody taking a shot at game may not see them. Should they be required to wear hunter orange?

Response: This is a difficult issue to address. There is no legal requirement for a non-hunter to wear hunter orange, though it would be prudent to do so. The hunter is responsible for knowing what they are shooting at and what lies beyond their intended target. Tacoma Power attempted to address the issue between the mountain biker and the horse rider by installing “pull-outs”. It should be noted that, as of the date of this report, there have been no incidents reported. Monitoring will continue and adaptive strategies will be employed as it becomes necessary to do so. For now, we will recommend to Tacoma Power that the kiosk at the trailhead include language to inform the users of the risks involved with using the trail.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

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

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