



Cowlitz Wildlife Area 2010 Management Plan Update Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary



This is an update to the 2006 Cowlitz Wildlife Area Management Plan http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/ that provides management direction for the 14,700 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 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requirements to mitigate for the habitat loss due to the inundation from Riffe and Mayfield Lakes.

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

Update/Changes

Pursuant to Article 12 of the Settlement Agreement, the Wildlife Management Coordinating Committee (WMCC) met in 2005 to approve wetland acquisition target zones to guide possible purchases. It is the intent to pursue those properties adjacent to the existing wildlife area boundaries before new tracts of property are purchased outside the target zones. No acquisitions occurred in 2009, but efforts to acquire newly identified target properties will occur in 2010.

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Due to increasing complaints from landowners that elk are damaging their hay fields and adversely affecting their hay production in the Davis Lake Valley east of Morton, a proposal to modify the 505 Game Management Unit (GMU) to include the valley and provide additional hunting

opportunities was implemented by the WDFW. The first hunts occurred in September of 2009 and the animals were subject to hunting pressure throughout the general seasons. Landowners were generally amenable to allowing hunters on their property and winter observations would indicate that the elk have spent far less time on the affected landowner's properties than in previous years.

The winter of 2008-09 was hard on all of Lewis County and the wildlife area did not go unaffected. Flooding and mass wasting brought about several new issues (reported in the 2009 management plan update). Below is the synopsis of the issues and their status as of the end of 2009:

Spears Unit — the approach, placed to access the forage fields, was repaired and the culvert was replaced. The culvert is located on a non-fish bearing drainage ditch.

Kiona Unit — the culvert placed in 2007 was repaired. Kiona creek, during high water, is still flowing across the landscape with no defined channel and entering the agricultural ditch on wildlife area land where it then flows into Squaw Creek. There is still a pending Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) project for work on this project.

Davis Lake — the culvert/crossing on the unnamed channel near the Allen Barn was repaired as well as the culvert below the first field near the Allen Barn. The channels that were being cleaned and maintained under the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA), filled in during the 2008-09 flood event, were mostly finished as part of a FEMA funded project. The remaining work awaits WDFW engineers to complete the project.



Peterman Unit — the complete failure of the 2500 road is still not repaired. The road is closed, sedimentation has been stabilized, and water is flowing through the culvert. The project has been accepted and funded as a FEMA project and is expected to be fixed in 2010. Other locations reported in the 2009 update were fixed and all of the 75 miles of road on the Peterman Ridge Unit will be brought up to Forest Practices requirements by 2015.



Swofford Unit — the bridge over Sulphur creek, undermined during the 2008-09 winter flooding, still needs to be repaired. This is a FEMA funded project for 2010.

New Issues

Off-road activities and vehicular access to areas closed to vehicles for the protection of cultural resources continues to be a major problem. Tacoma Power and WDFW are mandated by law to identify and protect cultural sites and resources. The existing boundary lines were placed in their current locations to maximize recreational access without negatively impacting known resource sites. However, vehicular trespass behind the signs continues to be a problem. Measures to control the problem will be discussed during the Spring 2010 Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) meeting. One idea being considered is to move the boundary to a location that will better control breaches using the natural topography of the area; however, this will further reduce the area in which vehicular access is allowed.

The installation of gates on the Spears Unit to control vehicular access to the road around the Spears Mill Pond will occur in 2010 pending completion of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process. The reason for this proposal is to reduce the dumping of garbage (e.g., household refuse, vehicles, etc.) as well as to restore the pond to its historical state and provide safe pedestrian access. The CAG meeting will be utilized for seeking public input on this project as well.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

In the winter of 2008-09, flooding affected much of Lewis County and the wildlife area did not go unscathed. Cowlitz Wildlife Area (CWA) staff worked diligently to identify projects to be considered for FEMA funding. Four projects were identified and eventually funded and included work on Davis Lake Unit, Kiona Unit, Peterman Unit, and the Swofford Unit (detail described under Update/Changes). Since the Davis Lake Unit was already permitted and in year four of a five year project, staff consulted with all agencies for permission to alter the scope of the project to allow the completion of the project in 2009. After going through the SEPA process, public review, and agency consultation, the WDFW engineers replaced three culverts, fixed the access road, and completed 95 percent of the project's objectives.

A hay agreement was established for the Kiona Unit and approximately 80 acres were mowed and the grass removed. This maintenance method allows for better forage fields for area wildlife. By mowing and removing the reed canary grass, the resulting fall green-up benefits wintering wildlife such as elk. Additionally, the fields then become partially inundated during the winter providing much needed habitat for geese and migrating waterfowl. In addition, the road into this unit needed to be resurfaced to allow access to trucks bringing in farm implements and removing hay. The wildlife area staff partnered with local landowners to complete this project.

In 2009 CWA staff, while implementing the Spears Unit impoundment permit and water right, proceeded to recharge the Mill Pond. It was noticed that water levels initially began to rise and then stalled. Upon investigation it was discovered that the old standpipe infrastructure had rusted out and was leaking water as fast as it was pumped. CWA staff submitted a Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (JARPA) and secured the necessary permits to replace the standpipe structure. After replacing the standpipe, the work window for protecting fish had passed so instead of pumping water from Siler Creek, the pond was left in its shallow state. It was assumed that winter flooding would help to fill the pond. The pond levels gained about two feet over the winter due to precipitation and the remaining water will be pumped during 2010.

In 2009, CWA staff controlled encroaching vegetation on over 17 miles of road on the Peterman Ridge Unit using both chemical and mechanical methods. This maintenance is an ongoing project

necessary to keep roads open for both recreational and operational access. Additionally, approximately 30 acres were treated for Scotch broom.

Status Report 2009 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 2010.

2009 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress 2010 Related Activity Comments
Spray 6 miles of forest road on Peterman Hill to control hardwood saplings.	~17 miles of road were treated.	This is an ongoing project and will continue again in 2010.
Continue improving the wintering waterfowl habitat on the Mossyrock Ponds through moist soil management techniques.	In 2009, a beaver dam responsible for causing flooding to the county road was removed. Extensive tunneling by mammals was discovered throughout the dike.	Additional maintenance activities to clear the ditches of vegetation will continue in 2010. CWA staff will consult with WDFW engineers to repair the dike.
Continue with year 4 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.	As a result of 2008-09 flood damage to this project, FEMA funding was awarded and WDFW engineers finished about 95% of this project.	A work request has been placed for the completion of this project.
Continue timber clearing enhancements on the Mossyrock Unit's lower timber clearings.	As a result of the 2008-09 flooding, the site was inaccessible.	A culvert was plugged by flooding and resulted in water softening the access road. The access will be restored in early 2010.
Conduct forage field enhancements on ~8 acres of forage field on the Kosmos Unit.	Work was accomplished as planned.	A chemical application to control broadleaf weeds will be conducted in 2010 if needed.
Flooding during the 2008-09 winter washed out the 1000 road on Peterman Hill at station 316+40 and the road prism has been greatly compromised at station 129+35. These need to be repaired	Work was accomplished as planned.	There is an additional washout that has been identified as a FEMA project and funded. Expectations are for this road to be fixed in 2010.
Continue with forage field enhancements on approximately 20 acres of forage fields on the Davis Lake Unit.	The reed canary grass has been largely suppressed. The majority of what is appearing from the seed bank is annual rushes. However, there does seem to be some diversity. An additional	This project continues to be plagued by high water events. However, this location received some very high migratory duck use during the last couple of

	grass seeding was conducted on this location.	winters as well.
Conduct annual weed control activities in accordance with legal requirements and guided by the weed management plan. Main activities will focus on the persistent community of Japanese knotweed on the Mossyrock Unit, the newly identified Japanese knotweed community on the Spears Unit, as well as the Scotch broom communities on the Spears and Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Units.	Work on this project in 2009 focused on the Scotch broom communities and the knotweed community on the Spears Unit. The goal of eradicating these species has yet to be met.	The Japanese knotweed on the Mossyrock unit was not treated in 2009 due to many unplanned activities arising from the 2008-09 winter flooding.
Conduct the annual artificial nest box maintenance and use survey.	This project was completed	Annual activity
Prepare the annual report for Tacoma Power to meet their FERC reporting requirements per the Wildlife Settlement Agreement.	The plan was written and submitted for 2009	Annual activity
Work with Tacoma Power to develop a forest thinning prescription plan for Peterman Hill.	Ongoing – not completed	A forester wrote and delivered a prescription for replanting the non-planted and under planted units. Tacoma will plant these units in early 2010.
Conduct annual field maintenance (~200 acres) in accordance with the field maintenance plan.	The 2009 objectives were met	Annual activity
Conduct maintenance activities on the Kiona, Kosmos, and Swofford Units. Flooding during the 2008-09 winter has created issues along the Kiona access road, the Clevenger Road at Kosmos, and the Swofford Pond access road off Green Mountain Road on the south side of Swofford Pond. In general, rock needs to be applied to the roads in several places to restore the grade and downed trees need to be cleared to allow unimpeded access. Culverts need to be cleared in several places to restore the drainage back to its	The projects were completed	There are some FEMA funded projects associated with the flooding that are expected to be completed in 2010. These projects are WDFW engineer projects.

normal course.		
Conduct maintenance activities on the Swofford Pond Trail.	The 2009 objectives were met.	This is an ongoing project that is conducted as needed.
Begin the Spears Unit project (if the ground is dry enough to access the site) to maintain the ditch and breach the south side of the dike along the channel known as "Channel A" in accordance with the plan outlined in the JARPA and HPA.	Projected not started. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) needed additional information to make a final determination.	The project is being reviewed by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to provide a determination to the ACOE so that a permit may be issued.

New Strategies

There are no new or updated strategies proposed at this time.

2010 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. Spray six miles of forest road on Peterman Hill to control hardwood saplings.
2. Continue improving the wintering waterfowl habitat on the Mossyrock Ponds through moist soil management techniques. 2010 projects include improving hydrology by removing restrictive vegetation, fixing breaches in the ditch and pond banks, and improving vegetation diversity through cultural practices such as tillage.
3. Continue with year five 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. This project is 95% complete. A work order has been placed for WDFW engineers to finish the project.
4. Continue timber-clearing enhancements on the Mossyrock Unit's lower timber clearings (6 acres). This is a carryover project from 2009. The access along the power line needs to be repaired so access to these fields can be restored.
5. Conduct chemical applications to control blackberry and thistle species on select fields on the Kosmos Unit (~12 acres).
6. There are three FEMA funded major projects resulting from flooding during the 2008-09 winter that need to be completed in 2010. A culvert/road washout on Peterman Hill, a compromised culvert on the Kiona Unit, and an undermined bridge abutment on the Swofford Unit. These are WDFW engineer projects that were identified and funded in 2009.
7. Continue with forage field enhancements on approximately 20 acres of forage fields on the Davis Lake Unit. Plans are to evaluate the Spring 2009 seeding and reseed in Spring 2010 if necessary. Additionally, chemical control may be necessary to control broadleaf weeds.
8. Conduct annual weed control activities in accordance with legal requirements and guided by the weed management plan. Main activities will focus on the persistent community of Japanese knotweed on the Mossyrock Unit, the newly identified Japanese knotweed community on the Spears Unit, as well as the Scotch broom communities on the Spears and Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Units.

9. Conduct the annual artificial nest box maintenance and use survey.
10. Prepare the annual report for Tacoma Power to meet their FERC requirement.
11. Continue working with Tacoma Power on the forest thinning prescription plan for Peterman Hill.
12. Conduct annual field maintenance activities in accordance with the field maintenance plan. There are approximately 200 acres of forage fields that are annually maintained using common agricultural practices.
13. Prepare burn plans for submittal to the Department of Natural Resources for permits to conduct habitat restoration burns on several units of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area.
14. Conduct maintenance activities on the Swofford Pond Trail.
15. Begin the Spears Unit project (if the ground is dry enough to access the site) to maintain the ditch and breach the south side of the dike along the channel known as "Channel A" in accordance with the plan outlined in the JARPA, HPA and permit restrictions.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on June 30, 2010 to review management progress, address any new issues, and take input on existing issues. Organizations/participants included: Lewis County Weed Board, Cloud Base Country Club (Hang-glider club), Lewis County Wind Surfing Association, Lewis County Horsemen Association, Mossyrock Landowner / Cattlemen Association, Glenoma Landowner, and Davis Lake Landowner.

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

Issue: Historically access to the lake bed on the east end of Riffe Lake has been allowed when the water in the reservoir is down. Off-road activities and vehicular access in areas closed to vehicles for the protection of cultural resources continues to be a major problem.

Response: Of all the issues, this one creates the most discussion and brings out the most emotion. The reasons are many but in general it can be summed up by saying the public sees this as another attempt to take recreational opportunity away. Access to private lands is continuing to dwindle as gates go up. Therefore, when a gate is mentioned on the east end of Riffe Lake to meet obligations to protect cultural resources, the public perceives this negatively. Rebuttals to the proposal included suggestions to place advertisements in the paper highlighting the penalties received by individuals cited on the Wildlife Area, post more signage with the penalties stated on the signs, provide more enforcement, and remove the cultural resources. The most discussed suggestion was providing more enforcement. The general consensus was that Tacoma Power should fund and hire a dedicated enforcement officer to patrol the problem areas. It was explained that Tacoma Power pays the WDFW to manage the lands comprising the Wildlife Area and that we have an obligation to protect the cultural resources as mandated by state and federal law. Also, we do not have the funding and we do not have the authority to have Tacoma Power employ an enforcement officer for the property. Furthermore, Tacoma Power has responsibility for the management of the lands waterward (generally below the ordinary high water mark) of the Wildlife Area

where most of the cultural sites are located. The WDFW does not have the authority to block the installation of a gate preventing vehicular access to this area.

Issue: The installation of gates on the Spears Unit to control vehicular access to the road around the Spears Mill Pond to curb dumping and to promote public safety around the bank of the pond.

Response: This project was accepted by the CAG and no additional input was received.

Issue: The construction of a gun range (100 yd.) at the end of the Clevenger Road on the Kosmos unit.

Response: As this will provide a benefit to the public, it was well received by the CAG. Some discussion was raised about whether or not ambient noise levels would be raised as a result of this project. Additionally, some discussion regarding the safety of other recreational users was raised as well. This project is very preliminary and would require more public review as well as environmental permitting. All of these issues would be addressed as a part of the review/permitting process. The CAG agreed the project should move forward.

Contacts:

Mark Grabski
WDFW – Cowlitz Wildlife Area
PO BOX 758 / 350 State Route 7
Morton, WA 98356
(360) 496-6223

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Go to –

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