



# OLYMPIC – WILLAPA HILLS WILDLIFE AREA 2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



## Land Management Summary

The Olympic – Willapa Hills Wildlife Area encompasses a total of 23 satellite units comprising of approximately 10,430 acres. Individual units were acquired, dating back to the early 1950's, for their specific benefit for fish and wildlife diversity and recreational significance. These lands include a wide range of important fish and wildlife habitats including riparian, estuarine, freshwater wetland, old-growth/mature forest, upland meadow, and coastal dune systems. Focus units include Olympic, Wynoochee, John's River, Chinook, and Chehalis/Hoxit.

This is an update to the [2006 Olympic – Willapa Hills Wildlife Area Plan](#) that provides management direction for the Olympic – Willapa Hills Wildlife Area Complex. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) 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 2006 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2007.

## Updates/Changes

WDFW acquired a new parcel adjacent to the Anderson Homestead Unit. The “Wynn-Rupp” parcel will add twenty acres to this important elk winter forage area. WDFW is currently seeking grant funds for forage enhancement at the “Wynn-Rupp” property and for the creation of a parking and access area at the entrance of the Anderson Homestead.

## **Inside**

<b>Land Management Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Updates/Changes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>New Issues</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Major Stewardship Accomplishments</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Status Report of 2006 Performance Measures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>New Strategies</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2007 Performance Measures</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Citizens Advisory Group Input</b>	<b>5</b>

Several Duck Stamp proposals were submitted for wetland restoration throughout the wildlife area including projects for the Chehalis, Chinook, and John's River Units. If funded, these projects will help restore and enhance quality freshwater wetland habitats increasing the utilization by migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.

A Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) cost share agreement was submitted for estuary restoration at the John's River Unit. This project would restore approximately 185 acres of critical salmonid habitat. A capitol-funding request was also submitted for biennium 2007-09 for removing fish passage barriers at John's River.

WDFW set-up several sharecrop agreements to provide critical winter forage for elk on private lands adjacent to several of the wildlife area units. Forage enhancement was funded by a series of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation grants with the work be completed by private landowners and WDFW staff. Eight new landowner agreements have enhanced the forage quality and quantity on approximately 300 acres

### New Issues

None

### Major Stewardship Accomplishments

In 2006 WDFW continued its effort to provide quality winter forage for elk. This included mowing approximately 485 acres, fertilizing 400 acres and reseeding 45 acres. These activities occurred at the Olympic, Wynoochee, Anderson Homestead and Chinook Units.

Approximately 210 acres received a fall clipping that will provide enhanced migratory waterfowl habitat. This occurred at the John's River, Chehalis/Hoxit, and Chinook units.

Additionally, 90 and 5 acres were cultivated for waterfowl habitat at the Chinook and Hoxit Units respectively. A series of four ditch plugs were installed at the Chinook Unit, which will expand the habitat that is available to migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.



The cross dike at Willapa Wetlands (Potters Slough) was completed in late October and the ring dike will be breached in the summer of 2007, re-introducing approximately 300 acres to tidal fluctuation. This project will have significant benefits for salmon, waterfowl, shorebirds, and marine invertebrates. Construction of the freshwater wetlands on the west side of the highway is also planned to occur during the summer of 2007.

A new "fish friendly" water control structure was installed at the Hoxit Unit and a new management regime was created for the enhancement of this freshwater wetland.

Three new parking areas were constructed to improve access to the Willapa Wetlands (Potters Slough) and Chinook Units. A determined volunteer group in Chinook area has helped tremendously in creating better access, and a successful new pheasant release site.

**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.

<b>2006 Performance Measure</b>	<b>Status of Performance Measure</b>	<b>Explanation of Progress/ 2007 Related Activity/ Comments</b>
Reseed 30-50 acres of elk forage	Accomplished 45 acres at Wynoochee Unit	Per Wynoochee Mitigation Plan
Mow and fertilize 400 acres of elk forage	Mowed 500 acres for elk forage and fertilized 435 acres	Wynoochee – 200 mow, 200 fertilized Olympic – 200 mow, 200 fertilized Chinook – 70 mow Anderson Homestead – 35 mow, 35 fertilized
Remove brush around the perimeter of 50-70 acres of elk forage	55 acres Wynoochee, Unit 4-B	Location of re-seeding
Test 10-20 soil samples	11 soil samples taken	For development of fertilizer blend specific for each forage management area
Develop 40+ new acres of elk forage (John’s River Mitigation)	Not completed	Awaiting grant funding for mitigation of estuary restoration – Potential parcels have been located
Release pheasants at the Furbache Unit	Completed throughout pheasant season	Will occur throughout the 2007 season as planned
Maintain 4 water control structures for waterfowl habitat	1 structure at John’s River is failing and is scheduled for emergency repair. Three other structures have been maintained by area manager. The Hoxit structure was replaced with a new “fish-friendly” screw-gate with reverse flap-gates	Failing structure is targeted for removal (capitol funding request) and estuary restoration is planned utilizing with NRCS, WRP funding
Plant 2,000 lineal feet of riparian buffer along Newman Creek	Site prep completed in October 2006	Site will be planted in March 2007
Plant 1,000 lineal feet of riparian buffer along Chehalis River Tributaries	Completed in 2005	Plants maintained through the summer of 2006. 80% survival through flood

		events
Remove 9 fish passage barriers/culverts (RMAP on John's River and Olympic)	Not completed	Awaiting completion of other projects, scheduling and funding by engineers.
Restore 400 acres of estuary habitat	Cross dike completed in October 2006 at Willapa Slough Unit	The cross dike needs to settle for 1 year prior to breach of ring dike. Ring dike will be breached in the summer of 07.
Redevelop capitol budget request for Chermack Trail (Potters Slough)	Not funded by the legislature	Project will not be funded for the 2007-09 biennium
Transfer 360 acres to the Access Program (Failor Lake)	Internally transferred to Access Program in 2006	O&M conducted by Access Program
Document contacts/violations of land use rules on Wildlife Areas	Continue to implement through Enforcement Program	Continue to implement through Enforcement Program in 2007
1 Emphasis Patrol on Wildlife Areas for illegal ORV use	Continue to implement through Enforcement Program	Continue to implement through Enforcement Program in 2007
Investigate and take appropriate action on trespass tree cutting and habitat damage on Ocean Shores Airport Mitigation Unit	Still under investigation	

### **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.

Issues identified in italics were provided by the Citizens Advisory Group. These public comments are captured at the end of this document. Although underlined strategies have no current funding source, identifying these needs is the first step to securing additional funds.

### **Agency Objective: Protect, Restore and Enhance Fish and Wildlife and their Habitats**

#### **1. Improve and Maintain Fish Populations**

- A. Strategy: Set-up an agreement with DOT for tide-gate removal on Hwy 101 at the Chinook Unit. Design and construct a winch system for leaving tidegate open.
- B. Strategy: Restore tidal slough through culvert removal at the Chinook Unit.

#### **2. Manage for waterfowl/wetlands**



- A. Strategy: Wet-soil management on 90 acres at the Chinook Unit (three year rotation involving cultivation and mowing for enhanced emergent wetland plant response)
- B. Strategy: Create a series of ditch plugs in wet-soil management fields (5 plugs)
- 3. Maintain big game populations**
  - A. Strategy: Maintain 70 acres of elk winter forage at the Chinook Unit
  - B. Strategy: Create landowner agreements to improve the quality and quantity of elk winter forage on private lands adjacent to wildlife areas and high damage claim locations.
- 4. Manage for upland birds**
  - A. Strategy: Continue pheasant release program on the Chinook Unit
- 5. Protect and Restore Riparian Habitat**
  - A. Strategy: Plant a riparian buffer along the Chinook River and tributaries covering approximately 70 acres and 30,000 new plants

### **2007 Performance Measures**

1. Complete performance measures per Wynoochee Mitigation Plan
2. Reseed 30-50 acres with elk forage
3. Mow 400 acres of elk forage
4. Fertilize 400 acres of elk forage
5. Remove brush around the perimeter of 50-70 acres of elk forage
6. Conduct soil samples for proposed forage locations
7. Develop 40+ new acres of elk forage (John's River Mitigation)
8. Fall clipping on 100-250 acres for waterfowl habitat
9. Conduct wet soil management activities (John's River, Hoxit, Chinook, and Chehalis Units)
10. Remove tidegate adjacent to the Chinook Unit
11. Release pheasants at Furbache and Chinook Units
12. Maintain 4 water control structures for waterfowl habitat (three at John's River until fish enhancement of fish project is implemented, one at Hoxit)
13. Plant 2000 lineal feet of riparian buffer along Newman Creek, Chehalis Unit
14. Plant 70 acres of riparian forested buffer along the Chinook River and its tributaries
15. Remove or replace 9 fish passage barriers/culverts (rmap on John's River and Olympic)
16. Restore a natural slough by removing a failing culvert at the Chinook Unit.
17. Continue Efforts for Snowy Plover Recovery Plan at Oyhut Unit

### **Citizens Advisory Group Input**

A CAG meeting was held on March 21, 2007 to review this update and provide feedback on any major issues or concerns. The major issues are listed her and the full meeting minutes are included as Appendix 5. CAG members were very concerned about continued ATV impact at Olympic Wildlife Area.

**Q.** When will a WDFW emphasis patrol occur? CAG discussed the effectiveness of new signage or barriers, both of which have proven to be ineffective in the past. **A.** An emphasis patrol has been requested by the Wildlife Program to the Enforcement Program. A discussion occurred in regards to a non-completed performance measure – *Remove or replace 9 fish passage barriers/culverts (rmap on John's River and Olympic).*

**Q.** Why isn't WDFW leading the way in replacing these types of barriers when it is expected in the private sector? Instead of a statewide priority list for delegation of these funds why not have

a regional priority list for barrier removal? **A.** RMAP funding is limited and fund allocation is based on priority.

**Q.** What was the cause for the increased elk mortality during the winter of 2005-2006? **A.** The winter 2005-2006 rains are to blame for both hoof rot, and anaerobic bacterial growth in sheet-water areas throughout the Wynoochee Valley.

**Q.** Will there be cow permits issued in the lower Wishkah next year? **A.** A new antlerless and three-point late archery season will be opened for this unit next year. It has been 10 years since the last cow permit was issued for this unit.

**Want to see the full plan?**

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/pdfs/draft\\_olympic-willapa\\_hills\\_plan.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/pdfs/draft_olympic-willapa_hills_plan.pdf)

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