



# SAGEBRUSH FLAT WILDLIFE AREA 2010 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

## **Land Management Summary**

This is an update to the 2006 Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area Management Plan



[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/) that provides management direction for the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area located in Douglas County. 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, scientific knowledge develops, new regulations and public issues and concerns evolve. This update includes accomplishments in 2009

and performance measures for 2010.

## **Major Stewardship Accomplishments**

In 2009 we treated approximately 1,100 acres for weed infestations, nearly doubling the amount treated in 2008. Approximately one-third of this acreage was the old Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields planned for rehab on the Bridgeport Unit. Our primary target was Dalmatian toadflax and we invested nearly 350 hours of staff time to systematically cover these fields.

In August, the wildlife area staff constructed two large fenced exclosures on the Bridgeport Unit. These sites are sub-irrigated throughout the summer making them suitable to support water birch and other riparian tree/shrub species. Planting these species began this spring. This project is part of our long-term goal to establish tree and shrub species that provide food for sharp-tailed

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grouse throughout the winter. We have identified numerous sites on the Bridgeport Unit for this purpose. Many of them, however, are infested with Canada thistle, Russian olive trees or other non-native species. Consequently, the wildlife area staff spent considerable time treating these areas.

In October we rented an excavator to remove approximately five acres of Russian olive trees from riparian areas of the Bridgeport Unit. Cut stumps were treated with herbicide to prevent roots from re-sprouting. Spot treatments will be necessary to kill any re-sprouting that may occur in the future. As conditions allow, we will plant native trees and shrubs in these areas.

On the Bridgeport Unit, we seeded ~70 acres of native grasses in a former wheat field. Due to a persistent annual weed problem, we are using a two-phase seeding procedure. In first phase we seed only grasses. This allows us to control the annual broadleaf weeds the following spring and summer. Once the broadleaf weeds are under control, after a period of one to two years, we can seed forbs directly into the established grass.

**Status Report of 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.

| <b>2009 Performance Measure</b>  | <b>Status of Performance Measure</b> | <b>Explanation of Progress/ 2010 Related Activity/ Comments</b> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Summer fallow and seed contour and mound areas in CRP field at the Sagebrush Flat Unit   | This area was seeded in November.    | Control weeds as needed.  |
| Begin shrubsteppe restoration project on Bridgeport Unit by mowing up to 335-acres currently planted with non-native grasses. This project is anticipated to last three years and is funded through a grant from Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. | Delayed due to existing CRP leases.  | Will begin in fall of 2010 when current leases expire           |
| Remove up five acres of Russian olive trees on Bridgeport Unit.  | Completed                            | Control weeds and tree re-growth as needed.                     |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Plant trees and shrubs on the Bridgeport Unit to enhance and expand riparian habitat  | Created two large deer exclosures within which shrubs and trees can be planted. Approximately 2,000 feet of deer fence was constructed. Three other sites were prepared for planting.       | Continue in 2010   |
| Treat up to 150 acres infested with annual and perennial weeds. Treatments will include chemical, biological and mechanical methods.                              | Completed. Approximately 1,100 acres were treated for noxious weeds.  | Continue in 2010   |
| Release up to 6,000 bio-control agents to treat perennial weeds, particularly Dalmatian toadflax on the Bridgeport, Chester Butte and Dormaier units              | No bioagents were released. <i>Mecinus janthinus</i> , the bioagent for D. toadflax, are well distributed throughout this area of Douglas County.   | Purchase bioagents only as needed  |
| Maintain 400 acres of reseeded fields planted in the past four years on the Bridgeport Unit. Weed control, mow and interseed as needed.                           | Completed. Weed control including spot herbicide treatments and mowing were completed as needed. Interseeded a 20-acre field on the Bridgeport Unit.  | Continue in 2010   |
| Maintain shrubs and trees planted since 2000 as well as native riparian habitat with weed control, fencing and replacement of shrubs and trees lost to mortality. | Completed. Performed manual and mechanical weed control within fenced enclosures. Repaired fencing as needed. Planted shrubs and trees within enclosure to replace those lost to mortality. | Continue in 2010 as time allows. Seek cultural resource compliance prior to work at Dormaier unit. |
| Maintain the firebreaks (15 miles) at the Sagebrush Flat Unit to protect the area from fire.  | Completed   | Continue work in 2010  |
| Maintain up to 50 miles of boundary fence on all wildlife area units.   | Completed. Repaired fences and gates as needed.   | Continue in 2010   |

|  |   |                          |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| Remove up to two miles of old dilapidated fence from four units, old corral from the Chester Butte unit and unsafe building rubble and wreckage from the Chester Butte and Dormaier units. | Incomplete. Corrals and fencing were removed at the Dormaier and Bridgeport units.  | Continue in 2010         |
| Maintain 15 miles of roads, 10 parking areas, five culverts and numerous informational signs.  | Completed. Graded three miles of road on the Bridgeport Unit. Repaired road on Bridgeport Unit. Performed weed control and sign maintenance at parking areas as needed. | Continue in 2010         |
| Monitor sage and sharp-tailed grouse leks. Search for new or satellite leks on or adjacent to the area.  | Completed   | Continue in 2010         |
| Seed 50 acres of shrubsteppe habitat including grasses and bitterbrush on the Bridgeport Unit. Interseed adjacent 20-acre field. Control annual weeds as needed.                           | Completed   | Control weeds as needed. |

### **New Strategies**

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agency’s strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species presence, and public issues and concerns. No new strategies were identified.

### **2010 Performance Measures**

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

- 1) Continue shrubsteppe restoration on the Bridgeport Unit. Mow and disk up to 335–acres currently planted with non-native grasses. This project is anticipated to last three years and is funded through a grant from Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.
- 2) Summer fallow 45-acre field on the Bridgeport Unit. This field is currently dominated by quackgrass, pubescent wheatgrass and bulbous bluegrass.
- 3) Remove Russian olive trees at McLean Lake on Bridgeport Unit.
- 4) Plant water birch trees at 4 – 5 sites on the Bridgeport Unit to enhance and expand sharp-tailed grouse winter habitat.
- 5) Build four drip irrigation systems to provide water to newly planted trees
- 6) Develop three springs on the Bridgeport Unit.
- 7) Construct deer fence at 3-4 sites on the Bridgeport Unit to protect tree plantings.

- 8) If needed, release bio-control agents to treat Dalmatian toadflax and diffuse knapweed.
- 9) Treat up to 700 acres for annual and perennial weeds. Treatments will include chemical, biological and mechanical methods. Treat up to 30 miles of wildlife area roads.
- 10) Maintain approximately 250 acres of reseeded fields planted in the past four years. Weed control, mow and interseed as needed.
- 11) Maintain shrubs and trees planted since 2000 as well as native riparian habitat with weed control, fencing and replacement of shrubs and trees lost to mortality.
- 12) Maintain the firebreaks (15 miles) at the Sagebrush Flat Unit to protect the area from fire.
- 13) Remove old dilapidated fence from four units, old corral from the Chester Butte unit and unsafe building rubble and wreckage from the Chester Butte and Dormaier units.
- 14) Maintain 15 miles of roads, 10 parking areas, five culverts and numerous informational signs.
- 15) Maintain up to 50 miles of boundary fence on all wildlife area units.
- 16) Complete Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area annual management plan update.
- 17) Produce Bonneville Power Administration required PISCES and annual reports
- 18) Monitor sharp-tailed and sage grouse leks.
- 19) Conduct cultural resource reviews as required.

**Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Input:**

The draft management plan update was mailed to the CAG for comment. The CAG members did not identify any new issues.

Wells, Chelan and Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Areas Citizens Advisory Group - 2010

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Jim McGee     | Public Utilities District No. 1 of Douglas County                                |
| Von Pope      | Public Utilities District No. 1 of Chelan County                                 |
| Bill Stegeman | Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association  |
| Bob Fischer   | US Army Corps of Engineers – Chief Joseph Dam/ Adjacent Landowner /Recreationist |
| Tim Behne     | Adjacent Landowner/Cattleman/Wheat Grower/Foster Creek Conservation District     |
| Steve Wetzel  | Washington Department of Natural Resources                                       |
| Mary Hunt     | Douglas County Commissioner  |
| Mike Mackey   | Chelan County Weed Board   |
| Vacant        | North Central Washington Audubon Society   |
| Vacant        | The Nature Conservancy   |
| Neal Hedges   | Chelan - Douglas Land Trust  |
| Mallory Lenz  | U.S. Forest Service  |
| Bob Stoll     | Adjacent Landowner   |
| Vacant        | US Bureau of Land Management   |

## **Information for BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program**

The Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration to mitigate for wildlife losses from the construction of Chief Joseph Dam and Grand Coulee Dam. The project provides an estimated 6,411 Habitat Units (HUs) toward their overall Wildlife Mitigation Debt for the Columbia River hydroelectric system. By funding habitat enhancement for a set period of time, and maintenance and operation costs for the life of the project, BPA receives credit towards its mitigation obligation.

Progress towards this obligation is assessed through the use of periodic surveys based on standardized Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) for four focal species: Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, greater sage grouse, pygmy rabbit and mule deer. By measuring a variety of habitat features, HEP surveyors apply habitat models for each of 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). This figure is then multiplied by the area habitat being evaluated (acres of shrub steppe, riparian, woodland, etc.) The result is expressed as a Habitat Unit (HU), which is the basic currency of HEP.

## **Reports/Proposals/Plans**

Since 1992, the Bonneville Power Administration has provided funding for the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area. Consequently, numerous reports, funding proposals and annual work plans have been produced, most recently in January of 2009. 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 Narrative submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NWPCC) in January of 2009

(<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/narratives/990.doc> pages 1-12, 15, 16 contain detailed descriptions of the area's history, land purchases and rationale for mitigation and focal species)

Additional information describing BPA's role in mitigation and crediting can be found on the BPA web site: <http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/Wildlife.aspx> and <http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/wildlifecredit.aspx>

### **Management Activities**

The NWPCC 2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative (pages 1-12 and 23-28) includes detailed descriptions of proposed management activities for the 2010-2012. It also includes proposed budgets and projected needs through 2018.

(<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/narratives/990.doc>)

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The NWPCC 2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative (pages 18-23, 28, 36-49) contains detailed descriptions and summation of wildlife surveys conducted on the area since 1995.

Habitat evaluation reports with detailed analysis of habitat conditions for the Bridgeport, Chester Butte and Dormaier units are included in the following:

<http://pisces.bpa.gov/release/documents/documentviewer.aspx?doc=P106525>

<http://pisces.bpa.gov/release/documents/documentviewer.aspx?doc=P106526>

<http://pisces.bpa.gov/release/documents/documentviewer.aspx?doc=P106527>

### **Acquisition Strategy**

WDFW pursues an active acquisition program based on criteria described in management plans for sage and sharp-tailed grouse, pygmy rabbit and the internal Lands 20/20 review process.

### **Funding Strategy**

The NWPCC 2010-2012 Funding Proposal includes detailed descriptions of proposed management activities for the 2010-2012 time period including proposed budgets plus projected needs through 2018. It also contains detailed descriptions of work elements, capitol projects and cost-share opportunities and all projected budgets.

#### **Contacts:**

Marc Hallet  
Wildlife Area Manager  
(509) 686-4305  
WDFW Ephrata Office  
(509) 754-4624

#### **Want to see the full plan?**

Go to -

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/)