



SHILLAPOO WILDLIFE AREA 2009 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Shillapoo Wildlife Area Management Plan

(http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/pdfs/shillapoo_plan-final.pdf)

that provides management direction for the 2341-acre Shillapoo Wildlife Area in Clark County Washington. 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 2008 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies, and performance measures for 2009.

Updates/Changes

In 2008 several changes occurred that will affect the wildlife area. The funding level that we receive from Bonneville Power (BPA) for enhancement, operation, and maintenance was restored to 2006 levels. As a result we were able to resume enhancement work that was scaled back last year. Although a final decision is pending, we believe that we will also see an increase in funding from the State Migratory Bird Stamp fund, which will allow us to undertake a number of activities, not permitted under the BPA program. The wildlife area manager has been engaged over the past several months in the Northwest Power and Conservation Council’s (NPCC) three year update and review. NPCC provides oversight and recommendations to BPA on their fish and wildlife programs. At the end of the review NPCC will provide funding recommendations which will have a bearing on future funding levels for the Shillapoo Wildlife Area as well as many other projects. WDFW is also

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pursuing a longer term agreement with BPA which would provide a greater level of certainty of funding levels over a longer period (ten years).

Because BPA funds many of the activities on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area, they have an obvious interest in the management plans, updates, and reports. In 2008 BPA contacted WDFW with a concern that information about the linkage to their mitigation program was lacking to varying degrees in the management plans for wildlife areas where they fund activities. We have added a separate section at the end of this Management Plan Update to provide this information, which will be added to the Management Plan. Much of the information in this section is provided through web links to other documents or sites where annual work plans, reports, or other information can be found.

As part of the Habitat Conservation Plan for WDFW wildlife areas, the Shillapoo Wildlife Area was inventoried for species and activities in 2008. Inventories statewide should be complete in 2009 and the Habitat Conservation Plan is projected for completion in 2010.

New Issues

Due to unexpected county floodplain permitting requirements, construction of the storage building on the South Unit has been delayed. The change requires the building to be above the 100 year flood elevation, which would require placing approximately 5 feet of fill material prior to construction. According to WDFW's engineering section, the estimated cost increase for fill placement and associated mitigation would be as high as \$100,000. An additional budget request has been submitted but we will also be exploring other options. The planned wildlife viewing site that would have been collocated with the storage facility was also put on hold due to a funding shortfall within WDFW's Watchable Wildlife Program account. Hopefully we will be able to restart the construction of this site in the next budget cycle.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Tree planting occurred at five locations as part of our enhancement efforts directed toward riparian and oak habitat and maintenance of great blue heron nesting habitat. A total of approximately 5,750 seedlings or cuttings were planted in the spring. All rooted stock had tree tubes and mats placed on them to increase soil moisture, reduce competition, and reduce rodent damage. Survival rates were not quantified but were very good in comparison to other years, which can be attributed at least partially to more timely completion of mat and tube placement.



Lake River Riparian Planting

Several years of effort appear to have reduced the purple loosestrife problem on the North and South Unit. A coordinated release of biological control agents for purple loosestrife occurred in the summer around Vancouver Lake, including part of the Vancouver Lake Unit. All major

stands of poison hemlock were treated and all known English ivy patches were pulled, treated, and removed from the wildlife area. We increased our efforts to control other broadleaf weeds including Canada thistle and teasel in particular, which have been a problem in our efforts to improve waterfowl pasture habitat.

Two pasture sites totaling about 38 acres were replanted in the spring with a grass/clover mix. One site established very well but poor germination and weed problems have created the need for additional work at the second. Several areas totaling about 50 acres were sprayed to control Himalayan blackberry and Canada thistle, which improved habitat value. One other site was improved as a waterfowl forage area by removing blackberries, and a number of berry thickets were removed on the Vancouver Lake Unit.



McBride Pasture Planting

Status Report of 2008 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 2008.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
Continue to work with the US Army Corps of Engineers in pursuing completion of major wetland enhancements in the lakebed. Target construction starting in summer.	Progress was made and several key permits were obtained. Two other permits from the Department of Ecology are still pending.	Continue to work towards construction. A feasibility study has been proposed to evaluate how alternative approaches may or may not benefit salmon in the future.
Continue planting and maintaining trees and shrubs in the Lake River and Buckmire Slough riparian zones, abandoned heron rookery site, the old ag site in the North Unit, and others where planting has already been initiated. Initiate planting the old slough site (Chapman Island) if fencing is completed.	Planting occurred at all locations except the old slough site. Survival rates were good.	Planting will continue for several years until plant density and survival reach desired rates.

Continue clearing dense Himalayan blackberry along Buckmire Slough in preparation for ongoing understory enhancements. Begin removal of Himalayan blackberry in the Vancouver Lake unit.	Good progress was made in the Vancouver Lake Unit; however, only minimal work occurred along Buckmire slough due to the short work window at this site and our allotted budget for this activity being expended.	Continue to maintain as a performance measure. When ever possible focus efforts on the Buckmire Slough area.
Continue wetland basin enhancement through the removal of reed canary grass by disking.	Due to wet conditions in 2008 the acreage covered was reduced and limited to only two sites.	Continue to retain as a performance measure. Consider contracting some of the work particularly in new areas that we have previously disked.
Control 200 acres of Canada thistle and treat all major stands of poison hemlock and individual plants to the extent possible.	This work was accomplished through both routine mowing and an increased spraying effort.	Continue to maintain as a priority performance measure.
Continue monitoring and control of English ivy at all known locations and maintain diligence in monitoring for, early detection and control of new invasions of exotic weeds	No new locations of ivy were found. Control occurred at four locations and it appears that we have eradicated it from another. One meadow knapweed plant was found on the Vancouver Lake Unit and Italian thistle was identified for the first time (North Unit). Yellow toadflax was found at least two locations and we plan increased monitoring and control of this plant.	This is among the most important aspects of land management and should remain a priority.
Continue to improve upland goose/crane forage areas through fencing to improve grazing management in the North Unit, continued mowing of ungrazed areas, reseeding 38 acres of pasture, and removal of undesirable brush	38 acres of pasture was replanted but one site did not germinate well and will need more work in 2009. Fencing projects were deferred due primarily to workload timing. All areas were mowed, and progress was made on brush control.	Increased budget in 2009 should allow planting 50 acres of pasture. New equipment will also be purchased to speed the construction of fences.

Implementation of measures as needed to protect habitat and other features from damage due to vandalism and other unlawful acts	Finished installing boulders around parking area at Vancouver Lake and placed fence posts and brush at another location that unexpectedly became a problem.	Continue to monitor and address issues as they arise.
Complete an informational document and/or poster with basic rules and information about the wildlife area	Work on the flyer was deferred partially due to time spent providing information for a website upgrade.	Retain as a performance measure in 2009. Add the information to the back of the wildlife area map available at the regional office.

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 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.

In 2007, the wildlife area manager had proposed adding a strategy to the plan that would prohibit target shooting on the easternmost portion of the South Unit. The rationale was as follows: disturbance created from target shooting has been a concern of hunters and other users of the wildlife area particularly along the Erwin O. Reiger Memorial Highway. The highway is also adjacent to Clark County park lands on the opposite side of the roadway and WDFW is building a wildlife viewing site near the road. Most of the shooting that occurs is from the roadway, which is unlawful, and many are shooting into the park property. WDFW is working with the County and other agencies to address many inappropriate uses in this area and closing the portion of the wildlife area along the roadway to target shooting may help in promoting a better atmosphere. Other parts of the wildlife area would remain open to target shooting within existing seasonal restrictions.

Although the advisory group did not oppose the measure at the time, they encouraged us to solicit more input. Since that time, support has been voiced by both the Washington Waterfowl Association and the Vancouver Wildlife League. This year the wildlife area manager brought this issue up again to the group and the members present supported putting the measure in the update for implementation. Implementation of the strategy may require further review and/or

approval by program staff in the Olympia office. If approved, the new plan strategy will read as follows:

Strategy: Implement a year-round closure of target shooting in the portion of the South Unit lying west of the Erwin O. Reiger Memorial Highway and east of Buckmire and Mathews Sloughs due to conflicts with hunting, wildlife viewing, and uses of adjacent public lands.

2009 Performance Measures

Performance measures for the Shillapoo Wildlife Area for 2009 are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

- 1) Continue to work with the US Army Corps of Engineers in pursuing completion of major wetland enhancements in the lakebed. Target construction starting summer 2009.
- 2) Continue planting and maintaining trees and shrubs in the Lake River and Buckmire Slough riparian zones, abandoned heron rookery site, the old ag site in the North Unit, and others where planting has already been initiated. Initiate planting the old slough site (Chapman Island) if fencing is completed.
- 3) Continue clearing dense Himalayan blackberry along Buckmire Slough in preparation for ongoing understory enhancements. Continue removal of Himalayan blackberry in the Vancouver Lake Unit and other areas.
- 4) Continue wetland basin enhancement through the removal of reed canary grass by disking.
- 5) Control 200 acres of Canada thistle and treat all major stands of poison hemlock and individual plants to the extent possible.
- 6) Continue monitoring and control of English Ivy at all known locations and maintain diligence in monitoring for early detection and control of new invasions of exotic weeds.
- 7) Continue to improve upland goose/crane forage areas through fencing to improve grazing management in the North Unit, continue mowing of ungrazed areas, reseed 50 acres of pasture, and remove undesirable brush.
- 8) Implementation of measures as needed to protect habitat and other features from damage due to vandalism and other unlawful acts.
- 9) Complete an informational document and/or poster with basic rules and information about the wildlife area.
- 10) Conduct a survey of waterfowl hunters to evaluate satisfaction and opinions on management issues funded through the State Migratory Bird Stamp grant. Explore funding options to include other user groups and consider using volunteers to collect some of the information.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

Two Advisory Group meetings were held since the last update. The first meeting was held on December 18, 2008 to gather input on three proposals by separate parties for commercial or other uses on parts of the wildlife area. The advisory group reviewed the proposals and provided input which was later reviewed by a group of WDFW employees (District Team) including representatives from the Fish, Wildlife, Habitat, and Enforcement Programs.

The Washington Department of Transportation (WDOT) provided the first proposal, which is to construct a turn around on Lower River Road at the northernmost point of WDFW ownership on the roadway. If parking for users of the wildlife area is included as a provision in the development, both groups felt this proposal could move forward. Constructing a parking facility at this location has been one of the highest priority unfunded items in the Wildlife Area Plan for several years.

The second request was by the Port of Vancouver who needs to secure access to areas they are developing as a combination of light industrial area, business park, and a wetland mitigation bank south of the Vancouver Lake Unit. One option under consideration is LaFrambois Road which is owned by WDFW. While on the surface the impact may seem minor, the increased traffic could impact public use as well as adjacent areas managed for wildlife habitat by WDFW, Clark County, and the City of Vancouver. WDFW also has concerns regarding how the Port property is developed as well. The CAG and District Team both felt that it would be in WDFW's best interest to negotiate with the Port to allow use of the right-of-way and to seek at least two important provisions. The first would be to provide suitable buffers along the roadway and property boundary to address habitat and recreational impacts. Secondly, it is important to have the Port assume responsibility for security services on the road to reduce the wildlife area's current operating costs. WDFW employs a security company to open and close the gate to this unit on a daily basis and the cost of this service has increased substantially over the past several years.

The third request came from a private business owner who operates a marine repair business on a DNR tideland lease in Fisherman's Slough on the Columbia River. It recently became apparent that in order to reach the DNR owned tidelands one must first cross a narrow strip of WDFW owned land between Lower River Road and the river. The request was for continued use of the existing gangplank and installation of a new elevator to move heavy objects between the mainland and the docks. Although one member voiced concerns about having businesses operating on the river and the associated impacts, the Advisory Group felt that it would be acceptable to grant a permit. The District Team felt otherwise and was more concerned with the impacts to fish and riparian habitat even though the area is currently degraded habitat. The decision was made to not grant any permit until the operator could demonstrate that the facility was in compliance with all environmental and other permits. Allowing the new elevator is unlikely. We also plan to schedule a meeting with DNR staff to discuss concerns relating to this tideland lease and other similar facilities along the lower Columbia.

The second Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on April 28, 2009 to review management progress, and to address any new issues or provide input on existing issues. Those in attendance included representatives from The Vancouver Wildlife League, Washington Waterfowl Association, an adjacent property owner/diking district, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Port of Vancouver. The representative from Clark County Weed Management was unable to attend but provided written comments supporting many of our weed control efforts.

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

Issue: The members present at the April 28 meeting supported moving forward with implementing the target shooting closure along the Reiger Highway (see discussion above).

Response: We will seek any needed approvals of the strategy and implement as soon as practical. A public notice or other measures prior to the closure implementation may be appropriate.

Issue: At a previous advisory group meeting, one of the group members suggested that we include a user satisfaction survey as a performance measure. At the time we could not add it as a performance measure due to funding restrictions.

Response: We believe we have at least partially addressed the funding issue by securing a Migratory Bird Stamp grant that includes this type of survey for waterfowl hunters using the wildlife area. Prior to initiating the survey, we will look into other sources of funds to broaden the scope to include other user groups.

Issue: The Wildlife Area Manager gave the group background information on a memorandum of agreement between WDFW, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and Bonneville Power that is intended to improve habitat for juvenile ESA listed fish in the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam. One of the proposed projects listed in the document involves a study of the benefits of setback levees which could include parts of the wildlife area and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. *Some of the advisory group members expressed concern about the feasibility and benefits of including the Shillapoo Lakebed in such a project and were concerned about how it would impact habitat for bird species that are important in the area and one member noted that predation on juvenile fish would be a problem. Another member stated that Post Office Lake in the Refuge was more practical because the flood control levee is failing there and such a project could benefit adjacent private owners there by maintaining flood protection.*

Response: The wildlife area staff will continue to monitor and participate in this process as it develops. Implementation would require modification of strategies in the management plan and would possibly affect the wildlife habitat crediting under Bonneville's wildlife mitigation program.

Issue: The representative from the Port of Vancouver told the group that they had become concerned about the number of dead birds they were finding in the vicinity of the area where they are developing a mitigation bank and are working with BPA to try to resolve the issue. Currently they are looking at placing markers on the lines to reduce bird strikes.

Response: We are glad that progress is being made as this has been a concern of WDFW as well. We have similar concerns regarding a line that crosses the Vancouver Lake Unit and have asked to be included in future meetings with BPA.

Issue: The 2008 list of the top ten unfunded items in the wildlife area plan was reviewed by the group. No recommendations were made to reprioritize the items

Response: The Prioritized list of unfunded items can be found in Appendix A of this update. Updates have been made to some of the items.

Information for BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has received mitigation credit for funding land acquisition, habitat enhancement, and ongoing management of habitats on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. The project provides an estimated 1,581 habitat units (HUs) toward their overall Wildlife Mitigation Debt for the Columbia River hydroelectric system. Habitat Units are related to a portion of the wildlife impacts from Bonneville, John Day, and The Dalles Dams. The number of habitat units achieved is based on the sampling of a number of habitat characteristics that are components of mathematical models for individual species that generate a numeric value of habitat quality from zero to one, known as a Habitat Suitability Index. The suitability index is then multiplied by the number of acres being evaluated to generate the number of HUs. This process is commonly referred to as a Habitat Evaluation Procedure or HEP. Species models being applied to mitigation activities on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area include: black-capped chickadee, western meadowlark, yellow warbler, mink, great blue heron, Canada goose, mallard, and dabbling duck.

Most of the management strategies relating to habitat management identified in the Shillapoo Wildlife Area Management Plan are funded through BPA's mitigation program. A summary of these activities can be found in our most recent project review and funding proposal to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council who provides oversight of BPA's mitigation programs. The Shillapoo Wildlife Area Proposal (Project #200301200) is located at: <http://www.nwcouncil.org/Fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1008>. This document includes a summary of activities (work elements), a link to the project narrative, an itemized budget request for 2010-2012, and estimated budgets through 2018.

A number of activities are included in the mitigation work plan that are designed to monitor the effectiveness of the project including habitat/plant community monitoring, wildlife population response, and periodic HEP surveys to track progress toward mitigation goals. Wildlife response surveys have been suspended for two years due to a decision by BPA to not fund wildlife monitoring. Hopefully this decision will be reevaluated, particularly in instances like the waterfowl counts that were being done here, which were intended to evaluate the effectiveness of habitat enhancement measures.

As mentioned above, BPA helped to acquire portions of the wildlife area as part of their mitigation commitment to this site. One key parcel, that included the remaining portions of the Shillapoo Lakebed that is still in private ownership, was not acquired as the landowner was not willing to sell at the time. This parcel remains the highest priority for acquisition for this wildlife area, however, other properties in the vicinity should be considered as the opportunity may arise, including the area lying between the wildlife area and the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

While BPA funds most of the habitat management activity on the wildlife area, other contributions have come from outside sources including grants obtained in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited, Columbia Land Trust, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Vancouver Clark Parks and Recreation, Clark Public Utilities, and others. These grants have helped to fund many of the wetland enhancement projects on the wildlife area. We continue to work with the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Lower Columbia Ports on a project to reestablish wetland plant communities in the Shillapoo Lakebed. While habitat work

has been well funded, dollars for wildlife surveys and recreational management have lagged behind. Improvement of recreational activities will have to be funded through state funding or other grant sources. Much of the recreational emphasis in recent years has been directed toward waterfowl hunting through State Migratory Bird Stamp grants. A wildlife viewing area and parking facility is planned to be constructed on the South Unit with WDFW Watchable Wildlife Program funding, and a storage facility is needed, but additional funds will be required to complete construction.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/pdfs/shillapoo_plan-final.pdf

Contacts:

WDFW Vancouver Office
(360) 696-6211
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APPENDIX A

SHILLAPOO WILDLIFE AREA “TOP TEN LIST” OF UNFUNDED ITEMS FROM THE WILDLIFE AREA PLAN 2009

The following table identifies the top unfunded items from the Shillapoo Wildlife Area Plan. The list was developed with the help of the Wildlife Area Advisory Group in April 2008 and reviewed again in 2009. When the plan was written many of these items were considered funded. However, due to funding reductions, increases in material costs, and other factors their status has changed. The wording of the tasks has been edited somewhat from the text in the plan for purposes of clarity in this exercise. In some cases only part of a task from the plan is presented here. The reader should bear in mind that the cost estimates may be rough. Actual costs, particularly for capital projects, could differ substantially. It is also important to note that additional labor is needed to support many of these activities; otherwise activities currently funded will suffer.

Task	Explanation	Cost Estimate
1) Establish parking area on the North Unit with associated trails along dike and to the northern lakebed area.	This is currently a safety issue that limits use potential of this part of the wildlife area. The cost indicated is for the first phase only, which will develop the parking area. DOT may be constructing a turnaround in this vicinity that would include parking for visitors to the wildlife area. See discussion in Plan Update.	\$250,000 (one time)
2) Maintain and enhance the benefits of existing grazed pasture and agricultural areas through continued cooperative lease arrangements and enhanced activity by WDFW by: 1) Fertilizing 200 acres of pasture annually, 2) Annually plant 100 acres of fall grain crops.	These two activities have been curtailed in some years due to reductions in the level of funding from both BPA and the State Migratory Bird Stamp account. Cost estimate includes ~1 mo. temporary labor.	\$12,000 (annually)
3) Maintain a diverse and palatable grass/legume mixture in green pasture areas by over-seeding or replanting a minimum of 50 acres annually.	Acreage we treated in some years reduced due to BPA funding cuts. Pastures need replanting every 5 years on a rotating basis to maintain a high forage value. Cost estimate includes ~1 mo. temporary labor.	\$12,500 (annually)
4) Lease, purchase, or construct an operational facility adequate to accommodate project equipment, supplies, and activities and secure equipment necessary to complete designated tasks.	Construction of an on-site shop facility to adequately accommodate wildlife area equipment and supplies. Currently funded in Capital Budget but need additional funds to satisfy floodplain permitting requirements.	\$250,000 (one time)
5) Develop and publish a pamphlet for public distribution, with maps, that	Needs funding for printing and possibly graphics work.	\$6,000

outlines history, objectives, and rules for the Wildlife Area. Develop similar products for posting at public access points.		(one time) \$2,000 (annually)
6) Install control structures to restore an 80-acre wetland within the North Unit by the end of FY 2007.	Reestablish wetland hydrology in a drained wetland to restore native plant community. Would rate higher but there is a likelihood we will be able to locate other grant funds for this project.	\$110,000 (one time)
7) Consider a cooperative agreement with neighboring landowners to manage wetland basins, establish and maintain 150 acres of upland goose forage, and establish and/or maintain a minimum 10 acres of new upland and associated wetland forest habitat on the Vancouver/Clark parks South Vancouver Lake Area.	Consolidating the management of adjoining lands (at least 400 acres) to increase the wintering forage and nesting habitat for waterfowl and other wetland-associated species. Maintenance would include mowing, weed management, pasture replanting, tree plantings, and wetland disking. (This area is managed as a non-hunting wildlife viewing site.)	\$50,000 (annually)
8) Enlarge the South Parking Lot access site on Lower River Road.	This site typically overflows during hunting season and has awkward dimensions for efficient parking. Estimated cost is speculative and has not been scoped by engineering.	\$150,000 (one time)
9) Maintain existing hunting and other public use opportunities. Work with the Wildlife Area Advisory Group, stakeholder groups, the public, and game and diversity management programs to address issues related to conflicts between different user groups (e.g., upland bird hunters, waterfowl hunters, dog trainers, and non-consumptive wildlife users), and to determine the needs and desires of these groups related to managing waterfowl hunting. This includes removal or providing new hunting blinds and potentially managing some or all of the wildlife area as a "quality hunting area." Also evaluate potential impacts to key species and habitats.	One time cost includes .75 FTE needed to create a public survey, distribute to user groups, and conduct field interviews and surveys. May be partially funded by a pending Migratory Bird Stamp grant. Information from surveys would be organized and used to evaluate user distribution, satisfaction, and the need for changes in public use rules or facilities available. Annual cost is for labor and materials to support recreational use and habitat programs on the wildlife area that are currently not allowed or are at risk under our current funding base.	\$50,000 (one time) \$40,000 (annually)