



SKAGIT WILDLIFE AREA 2017 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Skagit Wildlife Area Management Plan.

The plan provides management direction for the Skagit Wildlife Area which includes 20 Wildlife Area Units, totaling 16,708 acres in Skagit, Snohomish, Island and San Juan counties. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the wildlife 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. The full plan document can be found at this link:

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

Plans are updated every two years as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge is developed, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This plan update also includes 2014-16 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2017-18.

Updates/Changes

Cottonwood Island and Skagit Forks

Since 2014, various stages of project feasibility and restoration work have been completed on the Cottonwood Island and Skagit Forks properties. The project consists of three distinct but related restoration concepts; Lower Cottonwood Slough Mouth, Cottonwood Slough Inlet, & Skagit Forks Wetland. Lower Cottonwood Slough Mouth was a design and constructed project and the other two were design only. These projects examine various aspects and alternatives related to the reconnection of blind channel habitat in the lower Skagit River.

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Headquarters Unit (Wiley Slough Restoration)

In 2009, WDFW partnered with the Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC) to implement a salmon recovery project on the Skagit Wildlife Area also known as Wiley Slough. The scope of this project was to construct a new setback levee and relocate the Wiley Slough tidegates within the new levee footprint further upstream.

Post project monitoring and adaptive management planning

Funding for post project monitoring was available and targeted for recovery related objectives such as channel development, fish use and vegetation changes. The restoration monitoring and planning efforts were completed and valuable information about fish use is available in a summary report completed in 2015. Pending peer review data, it appears that the salmon use numbers on the site are higher than expected helping us get closer to the recovery goals. Here are some of the high points of the report:

- Site monitoring data includes 2011 channel observation and 2012 and 2013 over the entire site.
- Habitat available and fish use higher than expected
 - Habitat predicted from model ~2 hectares (channels)
 - Habitat observed ~29 hectares (channels + subsided areas)
 - Fish use predicted from model ~38,492
 - Fish use observed 2012: 88,206
 - Fish use observed 2013: 247,692
- The current site conditions are expected to evolve over time to be more in line with channel area predictions from the model for a project of this size and location
 - Sedimentation and erosional processes from the river and Bay will bring the site into equilibrium with the surrounding estuary
- Fish use numbers are expected to decrease over time as sediment fills in from the river and Bay.

As the site transitions from mud flat to emergent wetland vegetation, wildlife area staff continues to monitor photopoints for basic changes in vegetation coverage of the site. WDFW weed crew and the SRSC staff have assisted with monitoring composition and invasive species numbers and distribution. These project partners are working together to develop longer term monitoring and control plans.

Infrastructure

In 2009, the tidegate structure immediately showed design issues after the existing levee structure was breached. WDFW began working with project partners and funding agencies to develop a path forward to repair the tidegate structure and elevate other related drainage issues that developed following project construction. This group identified the installation of a pump station and repair of the tidegate structure as the best path forward. The wildlife area was successful in acquiring WDFW capital funding to install a pump station in 2015 and replace the tidegate structure in the fall/winter 2015-16.

During a storm event on March 10, 2016 the Wiley Slough levee was overtopped in several locations throughout the unit and damaged sections of the levee, trail, road, and vegetation along the boat launch parking lot. Subsequent follow-up indicated the 2016 replacement of the tidegate have all led to a levee infrastructure that does not meet protection standards acceptable to the local diking district, Consolidated Diking and Drainage District #22 (CDD#22) or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).



WDFW Habitat program and Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) are working to understand the exact structural issues with the levee and will work closely with CDDI #22 and the Corps of Engineers to meet the necessary protection standard for the Wiley Slough levee.

Island Unit

WDFW's acquisition of the Island Unit began in the 1950's. The management priorities were to provide hunting access and agricultural enhancements for overwintering waterfowl. Management of the agricultural enhancement program on the Island Unit was evaluated in the early 1990's following a levee breach from the 1990 flood and again in the early 2000's with a partial estuary restoration project (Deepwater Slough Phase 1) that realigned levees and restored intertidal processes to 221 acres of the Unit. Past and current management strategies have been very effective in providing quality waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunities for decades. Waterfowl and shorebird use on the Island Unit typically extends from October to April, providing forage long past the end of the waterfowl hunting season.

The value of enhanced forage for overwintering waterfowl and the recreation opportunity that it provides has been supported by WDFW, local volunteers, and the waterfowl hunting community. The management program on the Island Unit comes with a full set of logistical, infrastructure, ecological and budgetary challenges that continue to evolve.

In early 2011, the old wood barge that had been used to transport equipment and supplies to the Island Unit was inspected, and subsequently condemned, by a marine surveyor. For two years (2011-2012), habitat enhancement activity was greatly reduced and many field areas on the Island Unit began to be taken over by reed canary grass, cattails, spike rush, alders, and other undesirable plant species for that area. In late winter of 2013, a local waterfowl enthusiast came forward to provide the wildlife area with the use of a barge, tug boat, equipment, and volunteers to facilitate transport to the Island Unit and begin to reclaim fields and maintain levees and other infrastructure.

Since 2013, efforts to reclaim and improve the forage acreage as well as incorporate high value wetland and moist-soil plants into this mix have been successful. The table below shows the work that has been done to improve wintering waterfowl forage on the Island Unit.

As the table indicates, habitat enhancement work since 2013 has increased the agricultural forage acreage, increased manipulated acreage to produce moist soil vegetation types that provide waterfowl forage (seed bearing), decreased the transitional (non-seed bearing) areas and reduced the amount of field mowing on the Island Unit.

Island Unit acreage/year	Agricultural Acreage Planted¹	Manipulated (seed bearing)²	Transitional (non -seed bearing)³	Mowing (fields)⁴	Total Forage
2013	50.5	0	38.28	2.9	91.68
2014	67.4	0	21.91	34.7	124.01
2015	100	15.25	5.25	11.5	132
2016	105.79	23.58	0	6.95	136.32
2017 (planned)	122.89	8.89	0	3.22	135

1- corn, barley, fava beans, millet, cereal rye, sunflowers 2- Moist-soil plants (wild millet, smartweed, Bidens, yellow nut-sedge, marsh bristlegrass) 3- Late summer manipulations 4- areas of reed canary grass, cattail, alder, spike rush, and other undesirable species

Wildlife area staff have been monitoring the aging tidegate infrastructure, and determined that both tidegates (Seattle Pond and Barn Field) are compromised to different degrees. The Barn Field tidegate and/or culvert leaks and allows water to flow into the eastern lobe of the Island Unit during each high tide and during high river events, which, depending on snowpack and spring run-off in the Skagit River basin, can inundate field areas and limits the ability to prepare and plant field areas in the spring and early summer. The Seattle pond tidegate does not leak but is compromised inside the levee at the culvert - water control structure connection. This connection is rusted and failing and limits the ability to manage water and improve forage availability. The full extent of the infrastructure issues is difficult to confirm due to the in-water nature of these structures.

A request to initiate repair of the failing tidegate has been submitted to CAMP engineers to develop a tidegate repair proposal for the Barn Field tidegate. Design and permitting funding have been provided through State Migratory Bird Stamp program. A capital funding proposal for construction was submitted for this project but it did not receive funding. Regardless of the incomplete funding package, but because of the potential for tidegate failure, the tidegate repair and the identified mitigation projects were forwarded to permitting agencies for review.

During the permitting process, regulatory agencies and tribal co-managers provided comments and guidance regarding design and construction aspects of the project as well as the extent of mitigation required. The extent of mitigation depends on the type/scope of the project. Comments received indicated the extent and scope of mitigation offered for this project was not acceptable to the tribal co-managers. Without acceptable mitigation, WDFW will not be able to acquire the permit necessary to restore this tidegate's function.

The regulatory agencies and tribal co-managers are concerned that the tidegate repair project would continue to restrict access to Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed salmon for an undetermined period of time. The current level of active farm management of the Island Unit is not possible should the tidegates fail. At this time, Skagit Wildlife Area staff have not identified any additional proposals that will provide

acceptable habitat as mitigation. WDFW is in an ongoing dialogue with the Swinomish Tribe on this matter.



It is important to note that additional estuary restoration at the Island Unit has been identified as a high priority in the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan and the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project. Although short-term management objectives for the Island Unit are focused on forage for waterfowl, the cost of maintaining the islands infrastructure will continue to increase. It is also likely that the Skagit Wildlife Area will come under increasing pressure to pursue estuary restoration on the Island Unit to meet salmon recovery goals, which represents the last significant public lands in the Skagit that lend themselves to an estuary a restoration project.

Leque Island Unit

The Leque Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area is located between Stanwood and Camano Island, with Port Susan Bay to the south and Skagit Bay to the north. In the late 1800's/early 1900's, local settlers built perimeter levees and drainage structures to convert the historic salt marsh to agricultural use. WDFW started purchasing the Island comprised of



approximately 9 parcels in 1963. Today it consists of seasonal wetlands and diked agricultural fields. Contract or sharecrop farmers have for decades planted cereal grain as forage for wintering waterfowl (mainly for ducks and snow geese). This site offers bird watching, bird dog training, and pheasant and waterfowl hunting, as well as other recreational opportunities. Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) maintains Highway 532, which bisects Leque Island and provides the only road access to Camano Island.

Restoration Alternatives Analysis/Design Project

Extensive work has been done regarding feasibility and design of tidal restoration on the Leque Island Unit, as it is identified as a top priority in salmon recovery plans and the perimeter levees are in disrepair. In 2010, the perimeter levees failed in two locations during an extreme high tide. Emergency temporary repairs were implemented to protect the highway, private inholdings, and WDFW-owned parcels from tidal inundation. These repairs were authorized by the Corps in a permit with a condition that required removal within 27 months of installation, which has since been extended. Since implementation of the temporary repairs, WDFW has acquired all private inholdings and WSDOT has completed a construction project that raised and armored Highway 532 so that it will not require any additional levee protection in the future. This has culminated in an opportunity to examine new design options for Leque Island, with some urgency applied through the expiring temporary permit from the Corps.

WDFW and Ducks Unlimited (DU) formed a partnership, received grant funding, and launched the Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project in 2013. The intent of the project was to select a design alternative that will be a long-term solution to the failing levees, while also benefitting habitat and considering impacts to recreational opportunities. Several opportunities for stakeholders, the public, and co-managers to provide input were organized throughout the project.

WDFW held a public open house on October 30, 2013. At the open house, WDFW solicited volunteers to participate in a Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Through this process, 30 people volunteered to participate on the committee, and all were invited to participate in three subsequent meetings over the following year. The volunteers consisted of recreationists, local citizens, jurisdictions, tribal staff, restoration groups, and other interested parties. A major goal of the committee was to provide input regarding which design alternative concepts should be advanced for consideration as the possible preferred design for Leque Island. Consistent with input provided by the committee, WDFW decided to advance a full array of design concepts for consideration. In total, six design alternatives ranging from no tidal restoration on the site to full tidal restoration of the site were developed. DU provided designs for these concepts, and they were advanced for hydrodynamic modeling that was necessary to analyze each of the design alternatives.

WDFW drafted a set of design selection criteria to be used to inform selection of the preferred design alternative. The selection criteria were modified with input from the Committee and then finalized. WDFW and DU then developed a rating system to summarize the analysis of each criterion among all six design alternatives. WDFW and DU drafted initial ratings for each design among the selection criteria, which were then reviewed by Committee. The Committee provided input on the ratings prior to finalization. After the final committee meeting, WDFW sought input from each committee member on their preferred design alternatives among the six under consideration. The majority of Committee members favored design options that involved restoring tidal flows and estuary habitat to the entirety of Leque Island.

WDFW and DU hosted a final public open house for the project on February 25, 2015 to present results of the design alternatives analysis and committee processes, and to gather additional input from people

who elected to not participate on the committee. On April 1, 2015, WDFW met with tribal policy representatives to collect final input prior to recommending the preferred design alternative. On May 19, 2015, WDFW selected the preferred design alternative which involves restoring tidal flow to the entirety of Leque Island. Since selection of the preferred design, WDFW and DU have conducted additional studies that are necessary to advance the design process.

On March 10, 2016, a large windstorm in combination with a high tide caused substantial damage to the levees on Leque Island and created a breach. That breach has been temporarily repaired, but a large portion of the levee system remains damaged. This damage increases the chances of future levee failure, so WDFW and DU accelerated the pace of designing the first phase of the estuary restoration project. The first phase of the project involves preparing the site for levee removal and the major elements are tidal channel excavation and filling of ditches. WDFW has secured funding to complete this work and it is on pace to be implemented during the summer of 2017.

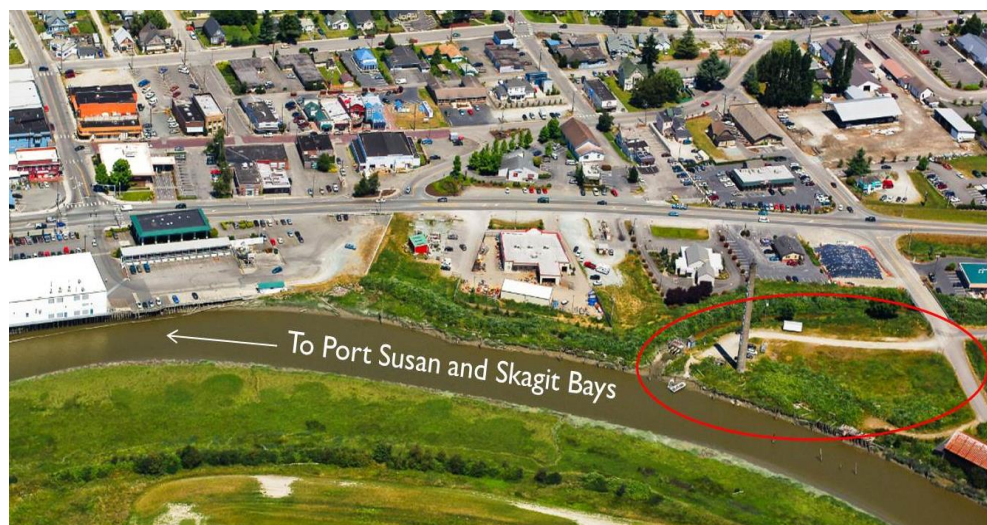
WDFW and DU are in the design process for the second phase of the project, which will involve removing the existing levee. Phase 2 could be implemented as soon as 2018, though construction is dependent upon future funding and permitting timelines.

WDFW formed a Leque Island Recreation Committee, which is a subset of the project's Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The Recreation Committee advised WDFW on elements that could be added to the project that would benefit recreation in the area. Two ideas that were most popular among that committee are to build a motorized boat launch in the vicinity and to acquire property nearby that would provide similar recreation opportunities as Leque Island. Since receiving those recommendations, WDFW has partnered with the City of Stanwood to apply for grant funding to develop a boat launch project at the nearby Hamilton Landing property and to acquire a 180-acre property adjacent to Leque Island that could offer similar recreation attributes.

As project reports and materials are generated, they will be posted on the project webpage. For more information or to track the project developments go to http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/leque_island_project.php

North Leque Tidal Marsh Restoration

North Leque Island is the area north of SR 532 between West Pass and Davis Slough. It was a farmed wildlife unit until early 2000 when the tide gate at the west








end failed and the culvert was plugged which did not allow proper drainage for farming and management. By 2009 the culvert and dike failed and the area was subject to regular tidal inundation. Functionally it is now a salt marsh; however, the full function of the site is crippled by an existing dike along three sides and SR 532 along the fourth. This results in a simplified tidal channel network with reduced benefits for fish. In addition, the single channel outlet has forced Davis Slough north of the unit to resize, eroding the private dike to the west.

WSDOT proposed a restoration project for this area in August, 2010¹ as mitigation for SR 532 work. However, the mitigation for the Highway 532 work was completed on another site leaving this project incomplete. Funding specific to this project was available, so WDFW took over the project and proposed some modification to the WSDOT design to improve the fish access.

North Leque Island Tidal Marsh Restoration Design



 <p>Old dike removed to adjacent marsh surface, approximately MHHW</p>	 <p>Channel excavated to elevation of channel bottom and connected to tidal channel through the old dike cross section</p>	 <p>Existing channel filled</p>  <p>Existing tidal channel that conveys water to and from the site</p>	 <p>Existing dike material spread over interior marsh surface including any vegetation that was growing on it.</p>
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Milltown Island - Future Restoration Efforts at Milltown Island

WDFW was recently awarded two grants; the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and the Estuary Science and Restoration Program, to evaluate restoration efforts at Milltown Island. The funding will build on previous restoration efforts and work toward building a strategy for fully functional conditions. The project is identified in the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan which places estuarine habitat as the highest priority for restoration.

The proposed project would:

- 1) Utilize new and existing data to develop a hydraulic model that will aid in targeting additional sections of the remaining levee system for removal; and identify new and existing channel development.
- 2) Support planning efforts for island access; supporting construction, maintenance, monitoring and adaptive management.
- 3) Support continued efforts to implement vegetation management strategies that convert invasive canary grass and cattail monoculture to targeted native scrub-shrub species.

Recreation Features, Volunteer Projects and Monitoring Efforts

Skagit Wildlife Area staff along with Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) members, local stakeholders and a local boy scout troop has added several new hunting blinds on the Samish and Island units and a new viewing blind on the Headquarters Unit during the past three years. The total number of blinds added to the Samish Unit is six permanent duck hunting blinds, and two portable duck hunting blinds. Eight permanent duck hunting blinds and four temporary seasonal blinds were added to the Island Unit.

WWA members and local stakeholders also assisted wildlife area staff with brushing up the blinds each year and notifying staff of any maintenance issues with individual blinds prior to the hunting season. Some of these same groups also formed work groups to clean out blinds at the end of the waterfowl hunting season and picked up litter throughout various wildlife area units if necessary or as requested by staff.



WWA members also were awarded an Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant to construct a new viewing blind located on Wiley Slough at the Headquarters Unit in 2015. The viewing blind has been constructed and native plants have been planted around the blind. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible ramp will be constructed to provide access from the dike – top trail to the blind.



WDFW staff was able to provide materials and coordinate with Master Hunter volunteers to repair the Skagit Headquarter Interpretative Center. The majority of the work was completed by one volunteer who even after he reached his needed Master Hunter hours, stayed to complete the job.

A funding request was approved to improve the foot bridge crossings at the Samish and Island Units. Wildlife Area staff will work with volunteers and Master Hunters to complete this project as field conditions improve.

To better understand distribution of use on primary hunting sites, we have been using hunter use survey cards and car counts. Hunter survey cards were used from 2015 to 2017 on the Samish Unit; and during 2016 and 2017 season on the Island Unit. The hunter survey cards are voluntary, and provide a general trend of use combined with other observations. The number of responses have been limited in efforts to gather more information. Car counts have also been implemented for the Samish, Headquarters, and Conway parking areas and boat launches to provide an estimate of use during the hunting season.

Waterfowl Seasons Car Count Summary for 2015-16 and 2016-17				
	Days Counted	Vehicles w/trailer	Vehicles w/out trailer	Total Vehicles
2015-16				
Headquarters	62	343	207	550
Conway	39	149	21	170
Combined Skagit Bay sites		492	228	670
Samish	13	NA	116	116
2016-17				
Headquarters	103	741	358	1099
Conway	103	484	123	607
Combined Skagit Bay sites	103	1225	481	1706
Samish	40	NA	276	276

New Issues

Region 4 Replacement Lands Initiative

WDFW owned lands in Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties have historically functioned as a stronghold for Pacific flyway waterfowl management and high quality waterfowl hunting. The majority of these lands were acquired with Pittman Robertson Act funding in the 1950's and later with North American Wetlands Conservation Act funding, for the purposes of habitat protection, agricultural enhancements, and freshwater wetland enhancements for waterfowl and other species. With the ESA

listing of Puget Sound Chinook, lowland farmed parcels with potential for re-establishing estuary function have become of significant interest for restoration to support salmon recovery efforts. Additionally, due to state legislation enacted over the past decade, salmon recovery efforts have been strongly directed at publically owned lands.

As a result, in the last 12 years, WDFW has engaged in significant estuary restoration projects (including planning) on four lowland WDFW owned lands in Snohomish and Skagit counties. To date, 510 acres (Fir Island Farm, Wiley Slough, Deepwater Slough) of WDFW owned waterfowl management and/or hunting lands have been restored to estuary habitat, with a focus on salmon recovery. Future plans include a project at Leque Island. A second phase of restoration at Deepwater Slough also known as the Island Unit is being considered as a potential future project. Restoration of these lands has and will come with resistance from some stakeholders in the wildlife and hunting communities.

WDFW has an interest in providing for salmon recovery and estuary restoration needs as well as waterfowl management and general hunting needs. It is important that we move ahead with a balanced approach. At this time, we are out of balance with regards to providing for replacement of waterfowl management and general hunting needs on farmed and freshwater wetland properties.

Consequently, WDFW is enacting a Region 4 Replacement Lands Initiative with the following components:

- WDFW has set up an interagency team tasked with developing a plan to secure additional lands dedicated to wetland protection, farmed waterfowl forage and walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunity in the Skagit and Samish deltas.
- WDFW will prioritize replacing the lands already converted to estuary habitat on the Wiley Slough (Headquarters) Unit and lands converted on the Fir Island Farm Unit and scheduled to be converted on Leque Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area.
- WDFW properties that were acquired for waterfowl management through targeted funding sources, such as the North American Waterfowl Conservation Act, must be replaced and managed as outlined in the original grant per requirements dictated by the fund source. For properties that don't have specific contract constraints, WDFW is committed to replacing displaced recreation opportunities through acquisition of other properties.
- New land acquired under this Initiative for waterfowl management purposes will maintain an agricultural component on the landscape in perpetuity, if there is already an agricultural footprint on the property at the time of purchase.
- This Initiative does not apply to Milltown Island or Telegraph Slough. These projects, as currently proposed, do not displace traditional waterfowl management programs and are not subject to the above replacement lands need.

Over the past year and a half, WDFW has explored several funding opportunities for replacement lands. During this time WDFW has:

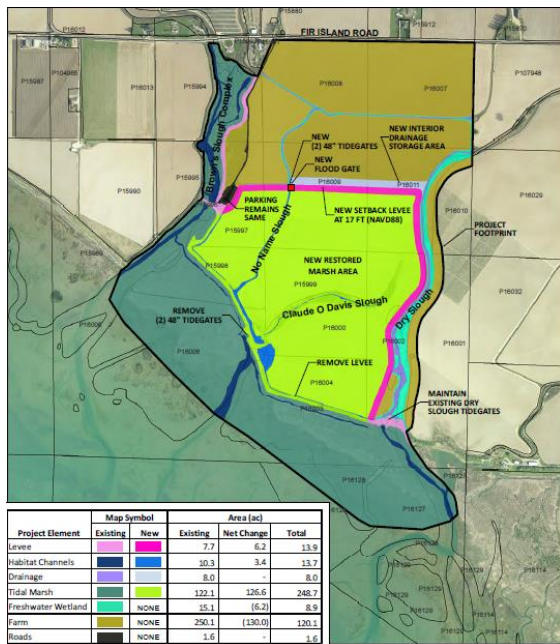
- Included a \$2 million replacement lands line item in the restoration project construction budget for Leque Island and has requested to use surplus funds from the Fir Island Farm project. At this

time, the Recreation and Conservation Office has not approved the use of those funds for this purpose though conversations are ongoing.

- Applied for a grant opportunity through the Washington Department of Ecology’s Floodplains by Design Program to acquire a 180-acre property adjacent to Leque Island to be managed for waterfowl forage and hunting. Success of that application will be known after this June.
- Applied for Washington State Duck Stamp funding to secure waterfowl hunting opportunities.
- Submitted a capital budget request for \$3.48 million to secure replacement lands for the Fir Island Farm and Leque Island projects.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Fir Island Farms/Snow Goose Reserve Restoration



WDFW owns approximately 264 acres in the vicinity of Browns Slough, Dry Slough and Claude Davis Slough on Fir Island in the Skagit River Delta. Approximately 240 acres of the site have historically been farmed. Natural tidal exchange to the site has been eliminated by dikes running along the bay front and along the southeastern side of Browns Slough. The loss of tidal connection, combined with loss of sediment input from the distributary channels of the Skagit River has greatly reduced tidal channel and marsh habitat compared to historic conditions both inside and outside of the dikes. Tide gates that allow for upland drainage but block fish passage through the dikes were located at Browns Slough, Claude Davis Slough and Dry Slough. The historic connection between Claude Davis Slough and Dry Slough has also been eliminated.

In 2009, funding was received from the SRFB for a feasibility study on the Fir Island Farm Unit. The study examined the physical and social issues related to the potential restoration of tidal marsh and slough areas located within the Fir Island Farms Unit. The project objective is to restore estuary-rearing habitat for ESA-listed salmon and improve the habitat condition both in and outside the current dike system on Skagit Bay. This project has been identified in the 2006 Skagit Wildlife Area Management Plan as a part of the House Bill 1418 Report on Tide gates and Salmon Habitat restoration priorities.



Building on the Fir Island Farm Snow Goose Reserve Restoration Feasibility Study in 2011, a comprehensive scope of work was developed for the Fir Island Farm Estuary Restoration Final Design Project which was implemented in three sequential and inter-related phases, over a 2-year period that began in January 2013. The Fir Island Farm Final Design Project completed surveys, data collections, analysis, modeling and engineering necessary to develop final and construction design plans for restoring tidal flooding to approximately 131 acres by setting back approximately 5,800 lineal feet of existing coastal flood dike.

The final design project included independent technical review, permits, an adaptive management and monitoring plan, baseline monitoring data, and landowner agreements. The final design project was completed in March, 2015. Construction of the Fir Island Estuary Restoration Project began in June 2015 and was completed in October, 2016. During the summer of 2015 construction of 5,800 feet of set-back dike; the storage pond; pump station housing; pump station inlet and outlet pipes; pond to Dry Slough and No Name Slough tidegates; and high marsh grading and tidal channels was completed. During the summer of 2016 the setback dike was finished, the pumps were installed into the pump station and tested, the Dry Slough tide gate was installed and the existing (old) marine dike was breached and deconstructed.



For more detailed information on the progress of the Fir Island Farms Restoration project visit http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/final_restoration_study.php

Samish Unit

The Samish Unit (410 acres) is located within the lower Samish watershed, which is a highly modified landscape where much of the former estuary has been diked and drained for agricultural use.

In 2006, WDFW partnered with DU to examine design options and constraints for a wetland enhancement project. Project stakeholders and wildlife area staff considered project goals and constraints which include, but are not limited to existing infrastructure, waterfowl benefits, beneficial vegetation and weed control, water availability and quantity, saltwater intrusion, drainage, flood displacement and conveyance to develop a preferred project design. Additional site monitoring, research and a surface water flood model developed to address the above constraints led wildlife area staff to alter this enhancement project to include one wetland basin (seasonal wetland area, approximately 109 acres) located on the eastern side of the Samish Unit.

In the summer/fall of 2015, the Samish Unit Wetland Enhancement Project was completed. The project included the cleaning of existing ditches to a functional depth, placing water control structures in key locations to improve water level management (potential to hold and drain water throughout the year), creating swales and placing pipes to connect existing ponds to the drainage ditches. The project is intended to provide improved freshwater holding and drainage capacity to facilitate wetland management and/or agricultural enhancements but also create the ability to mimic the hydrology of seasonal wetlands in this watershed.



In the two years since completion of the project, wildlife area staff has been manipulating the water levels and are learning about the system capabilities and limitations. Water depth and duration of water coverage, pond management and overall system drainage has improved from this project. The enhancement project will allow wildlife area staff to move agricultural crops and wetland habitat throughout the unit to benefit recreational users, weed control and overall wildlife/habitat value on the unit. Wildlife area staff will continue to monitor and adapt habitat management strategies into the future.

As part of a wetland enhancement project designed by DU and completed around the year 2000, twenty low areas on the Samish Unit were sculpted into shallow, seasonal ponds and water control structures were installed to restrict drainage off of the site during the fall and winter months. Over the years, the vegetation in many of the ponds developed into a monoculture of cattail, which reduced open water habitat, vegetation quality/diversity and waterfowl forage and hunting opportunity. Beginning in the mid-2000's, wildlife area staff began monitoring vegetation and mowing selected ponds in the late summer to increase open water during the waterfowl season. Incidentally, it was observed that by mowing the cattail low enough in the summer and flooding the ponds for 4-5 months in the winter, cattail plants began to die back and beneficial wetland plants took their place. Subsequently, this mechanical method of cattail control has been implemented on all ponds on the unit where cattail presents a problem. To maintain habitat diversity for multiple bird and animal species, areas of cattail are left standing in sections of some ponds. Wildlife area staff will continue to monitor plant species in each pond through photopoints, and adaptively manage mowing and water level regimes.

Samish Unit Year	Agricultural Acres Planted	Mowed Acres Fields and Ponds	# of Ponds Treated	Leased Acres	Total Forage
2014	160 (barley) 12 (corn)	30 (mowed)	10	70 (potatoes)	272
2015	174 (barley) 10 (corn) 20 (fava beans)	113 (mowed)	16	70 (grass/clover)	387
2016	165 (barley) 10 (corn) 33 (fava beans)	113(mowed)	16	70 (grass/clover)	391
2017 (planned)	145(barley) 15 (corn) 39 (fava beans)	N/A Based on conditions	N/A Based on conditions	70 (grass/clover)	NA



Samish River Unit

The Samish River Unit is a 100-acre property located near the mouth of the Samish River in Skagit County. During the fall of 2015, WDFW's CAMP completed construction of the wetland enhancement design for the Samish River Unit. The Natural Resources Conservation Service holds a Wetland Reserve Program conservation easement that requires hydrologic and vegetative restoration on the site.

Objectives for the Samish River Unit include creating diversity of wildlife habitats with potential for future enhancement including the opportunity to connect to the river or estuary. The site provides a number of opportunities to enhance wildlife habitat. The project design will incorporate these habitat and recreational aspects:

- Creating swales that will have semi-permanent water that could be connected to the river/estuary in future projects (completed in 2015);
- De-leveling areas to create seasonal wetlands (completed in 2015);
- Establishing native vegetation by planting trees, shrubs, and seeding, (2017/2018) and;
- Creating an area for moist soil management that WDFW will be able to manage by compatible use agreement to mow or disk, as feasible (TBD).

Early permitting review indicated that public access features will require separate permitting and funding. WDFW submitted a State Lands Development grant to provide public access on the unit for the 2016 grant cycle. This project has been ranked and funding availability will be determined in the spring of 2017. Planting and additional vegetation work is scheduled for summer and fall of 2017. Design and site planning for the moist soil management unit will continue during 2017.



Agricultural Leases and Enhancements

On the Skagit Wildlife Area between 2012-13, approximately 1,120 acres of agriculture enhancements were provided through various agricultural agreements, including work provided by volunteers and wildlife area staff. Standing crops were provided on the primary hunting units on the Skagit Wildlife Area including: Johnson/ DeBay's Slough, Leque Island, Island, Samish, and South Padilla Bay units. Barley and corn were planted on the Samish Unit in 2014-16, and fava beans and additional mowed area were added to the forage resources in 2015-16. Corn, barley and fava bean have been planted on the Island Unit in 2014-2016, in addition to the wide variety wetland plants that are also in the mix such as smart weed, yellow nut sedge, millet, bidens and marsh bristle grass. The objective of the program has been to increase the diversity of winter forage resources on the sites for waterfowl and to provide enhanced hunting opportunities.

Noxious Weed Control Program

The goal of noxious weed control on WDFW's land is to maintain and improve the habitat for wildlife, meet state legal obligations, provide good stewardship and protect adjacent private lands. To achieve these goals, WDFW uses integrated pest management (IPM). IPM is defined as a coordinated decision making action process that uses the most appropriate pest control methods and strategy in an environmentally and economically sound matter to meet agency programmatic pest management objectives to control noxious weeds.

For the years of 2014-16, Wildlife area staff identified noxious weed species for each unit, in order to control weeds and enhance habitat quality. The summary is provided below:

Unit	Poison Hemlock	Canada Thistle	Bull Thistle	Non-Native Blackberry	Cattails	Reed Canary Grass	Red Alder
Samish	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Leque	X	X	X	X		X	
Johnson/Debay's		X	X	X		X	X
Headquarters	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fir Island Farms		X	X	X	X	X	
Island		X	X	X	X	X	X

The total acreage of weed control in 2014 includes: (mowing = 203.3 acres) assisted by lessee at the Samish Unit (in-kind service) and (spraying = 37 acres) combined total of 240.3 acres. Wildlife area staff have been observing positive outcomes of the noxious weed control program. There was a shift to mowing more of the units due to the assistance of a lessee at the Samish Unit, trying to reduce amounts of rank vegetation, and the types of weeds we are treating. The spraying control method was done post mowing in smaller targeted areas. Wildlife area staff will monitor the effects of treatments at each unit to base what methods of treatment that will be utilized for next year's program.

Wildlife Area Units treating under IPM in acres for 2014				
	DeBay's	Headquarters	Leque	Samish
Mowing	9	5.3	29	160
Spraying	1.5	0.5	10	25

The total acreage of weed control in 2015 includes: (mowing = 235.7 acres) assisted by lessee at the Samish Unit (in-kind service) and (spraying 54.52 acres) combined total is 290 acres. Wildlife area staff increased the program by approximately 50 acres over last year but added a few more units for control (Fir Island Farms and Island Unit). Staff treated the same area as the previous year but we were able to conduct the treatment in a shorter period of time.

Wildlife Area Units treating under IPM in acres for 2015						
	DeBay's	Fir Island Farm	Headquarters	Island	Leque	Samish
Mowing	11.85	5.0	5.3	11.5	7.0	195
Spraying	4.05	0.5	1.54	26	7.43	15

The total acreage of weed control in 2016 includes: (mowing = 350.25 acres) assisted by lessee at the Samish Unit (in-kind service) and (spraying = 50.94) combined total is 401 acres. Wildlife area staff increased the program by approximately 111 acres over last year by repetitive mowing at the Samish Unit to control mustard, thistle and increase grass competition and vigor within treatment areas. Wildlife area staff increased mowing and spraying at most of the other units. Wildlife area staff were also assisted by local stakeholders mowing the Island Units levee top trail system, field entries and field areas not planted with agricultural crops. For the next steps of the IPM, wildlife area staff will experiment with replanting small areas within the larger treatment areas where noxious weeds still continue to be the dominant species at the Samish Unit. If this process is successful, other units will be targeted in the near future.

Wildlife Area Units treating under IPM in acres for 2016						
	DeBay's	Fir Island Farm	Headquarters	Island	Leque	Samish
Mowing	18.0	4.25	13.0	18.0	15.0	282
Spraying	0.51	0.7	14.0	25.02	2.0	8.71

Skagit Bay Estuary Invasive Cattail Management Project

Lesser cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) and hybrid cattail (*T. x glauca*) are non-native, invasive emergent plants that have colonized approximately 650 acres in the estuary of the South Fork of the Skagit River on the Skagit Wildlife Area. Invasive cattail was listed as a C-Class weed by the Washington State Noxious Weed Board in 2014. Colonization and conversion of the emergent marsh vegetation by invasive cattail creates large dominate stands and reduces plant diversity, changes the habitat structure because of its height and threatens to cross with native cattail stands restricting channel development. These changes caused by large blocks of cattails affect associated invertebrate assemblages potentially impacting fish and wildlife species such as salmonids and waterfowl. Initial treatment areas are showing decreased density and height of stems as well as loss of seed head production.

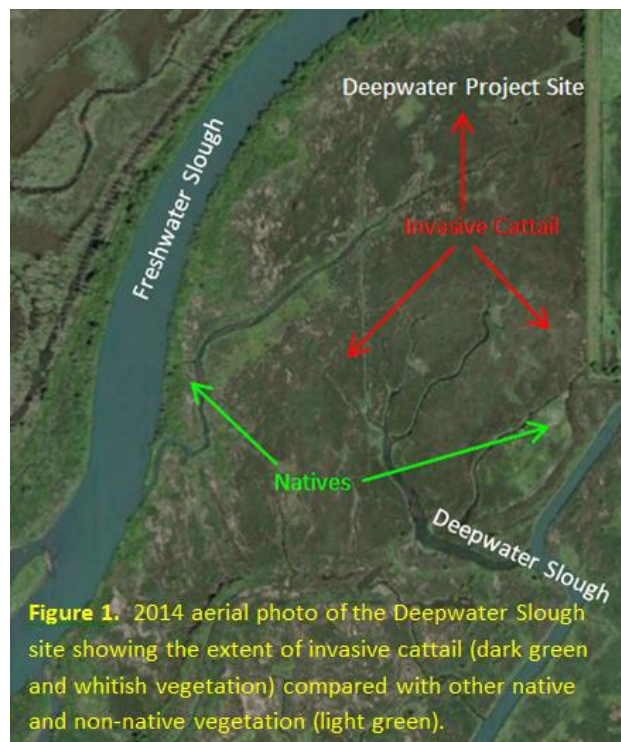


Figure 1. 2014 aerial photo of the Deepwater Slough site showing the extent of invasive cattail (dark green and whitish vegetation) compared with other native and non-native vegetation (light green).

Status Report of 2014-16 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 2017-18.

2014-16 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/Related Activity/ Comments
Update inventory of noxious weeds species and distribution on all units.	Wildlife area staff and North Sound Weed Crew continue to improve inventory.	Priority areas are being treated. New treatment sites are added as time and funding allow.
Coordinate with the Puget Sound Partnership efforts to restore 2,682 acres of wetlands in the Skagit River delta (Skagit Bay Estuary)	Approximately 500 acres of WDFW lands restored or enhanced since 2000 include Milltown, Deepwater , (see below) and Wiley Slough .	Wiley Slough Restoration completed now in adaptive management stage. Fir Island Farms restoration completed. In the monitoring and adaptive Management phase. Cottonwood Island feasibility study in progress.
Work with Habitat Program and contractors on Milltown Island (Skagit Bay Estuary) feasibility project	Additional levee removal, channel development and vegetation work proposed.	Summary provided on page 9.
Implement, with Ducks Unlimited, the restoration of 250 acres on Leque Island to intertidal estuary.	Leque Island North became intertidal by levee, culvert, and tide gate failure.	Leque Island South is in the design, permitting, and funding phase.
Develop a conceptual plan, with Ducks Unlimited, on the Island Unit to improve wetland management capabilities for waterfowl.	Initiate data collection and discussions regarding fish passage and time of use issues.	Priority level of wetland enhancement lowered due to failing tidegate need for repair.
Apply for grants to control weeds, plant native vegetation, and use of the WDFW Weed Crew.	Maintenance of plantings continues on Headquarters site and portions of Johnson/DeBay's Slough . Request funding to examine the feasibility of large scale cattail control in the intertidal marsh.	Grant funding received from Department of Ecology to develop cattail control methods for intertidal areas.
Educate hunters and enforce the 15-shell limit, with enforcement officers, on the Johnson/DeBay's, Samish and Island units to provide quality and increased hunting opportunities.	Working with WDFW enforcement staff to introduce new officers to these locations.	Proposal to add a 15-shell limit at Johnson/DeBay's Slough hunt unit was approved and implemented.

2014-2016 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ Related Activity/ Comments
Work with stakeholders (Ducks Unlimited and drainage districts) to determine the feasibility of improving water management capabilities on Samish, Leque Island, and Island Unit wetlands.	Wildlife area staff are utilizing existing culverts on the Island Unit to manipulate water levels on site. Leque Island Alternatives Analysis completed final design process is currently underway. Samish wetland enhancement project completed 2015.	
Continue to work with interested stakeholders to explore restoration and access options at Cottonwood Island.		Cottonwood Island feasibility study is completed. More information page 1.
Begin Watchable Wildlife Subcommittee process present and recommendation to the District Team and Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) for review of the watchable wildlife enhancements on Johnson/ DeBay's Slough Swan Reserve, Fir Island Farms Headquarters and Samish Units , as necessary.		Preliminary proposals being developed to expanded non-hunting access for Johnson/DeBay's Slough. Begin discussion with the WAAC.
Manage the agricultural lease program to improve habitat and recreational benefit (five leases total).	Continue to work with volunteers and contractors to provide these resources.	
Work with Wiley Work Group to implement adaptive management measures identified by the group for the Wiley Slough Restoration project.		WDFW worked with the Wiley Work Group to implement a pump station installation and repair of tide gate and culvert infrastructure.
Assist with the implementation of capital projects such as the repair on the residence, and redevelopment of the Headquarters' Unit boat launch.		Capital projects submitted 2011 for residence repair, shop repair and expansion, spur levee repair, Island tide gate repair, Headquarters Unit boat launch and Samish River access parking lot.
Coordinate with the Puget Sound Partnership efforts to restore 2,682 acres of wetlands in the Skagit River delta (Skagit Bay Estuary)		Wildlife area staff continues to coordinate with WDFW staff and the restoration community on these issues.

2014-2016 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ Related Activity/ Comments
Implement Samish River Unit Wetland Enhancement.	Completed construction of swales and ponds.	Additional moist soil management unit, shrub and tree plantings, and parking lot access are underway incomplete at this time.
Implement Samish Unit Wetland Enhancement.	Completed construction of swales installation and water control structures.	Additional wetland vegetation planting and minor soil work to be completed 2017.
Continue to coordinate with on the Fir Island Farms Restoration Project Work Group.	Fir Island Farm restoration project construction is complete.	Wildlife area staff continues to work with project partners and monitor the site for adaptive management issues.
Implement Cattail Control Project.	WDFW Weed Crew has begun project work additional details above.	
Coordinate with WAAC on the Johnson/DeBay's Slough public access proposal.	Capital funding for additional features was not received.	Wildlife area staff have created a mowed trail on both the hunt unit and reserve to provided walking a viewing area.
Implement Wiley Slough pump station installation.	Pump house completed 2014-15. Pumps installed 2015. WDFW is currently in operational control before transfer to DD#22.	
Coordinate with WAAC on the development of maps and informational signage on wildlife area units.	Informational maps have been developed and posted by wildlife area staff.	
Complete ditch maintenance work on Island Unit and Wiley Slough.		Completed Wiley Slough dredging.
Coordinate with Capital Asset Management Program on the Headquarters Unit Boat launch repair project.		Wildlife area staff requested funding for the boat launch repairs from WDFW Capital funding process and RCO Boating facilities grants. Grant funding will be determined during this next legislative session.

2014-2016 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ Related Activity/ Comments
Work with WAAC and volunteers to identify photo-monitoring point locations for restoration project and ecological integrity monitoring.		Volunteer Art Kendall installed photopoint marker on the Headquarter Unit.

New Strategies

No new strategies proposed as a part of this plan update.

2017-18 Performance Measures:

1. Manage/maintain the agricultural lease program to improve habitat and recreational benefit.
2. Continue to seek funding opportunities to improve the levee infrastructure on the Wiley Slough Restoration Project.
3. Continue to seek funding to complete the Skagit Headquarters’ Unit Boat Launch redesign.
4. Monitor Fir Island Farm restoration project.
5. Work with the WDFW weed crew to implement the various vegetation control project within the restoration zones of the Skagit Wildlife Area.
6. Complete the Samish River Planting Plan for restoration plantings to enhance plant and structural diversity on the site.
7. Continue to seek funding and implement the access parking area for the Samish River Unit.
8. Complete the evaluation and potential design of the Samish River moist soil management unit.
9. Complete Duck Stamp projects – previously funded, ongoing, and new requests.
10. Begin construction of Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project.
11. Plan, design, and build a boat launch near Leque Island on the City of Stanwood’s Hamilton Property.
12. Continue to seek funding to make progress towards the Replacement Lands Initiative.
13. Begin work on the new Skagit Wildlife Area Management Plan with the assistance of Wildlife Lands Planning staff, District Team and Wildlife Area Advisory Committee.
14. Continue to assist with Milltown restoration feasibility design and development.
15. Continue work with Regional District Team to guide the Leque Island Alternative Analysis and Design Project.
16. Discuss options with Skagit County to try to improve the parking conditions for fish access on the Samish River Unit.

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Input

The Skagit Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) meeting was held on April 19, 2017. Members that attended the meeting area listed by (present) at the end of the affiliation.

A list of members is provided below:

Name	Affiliation
Tim Manns	Skagit Audubon Society (written comments)
Rone Brewer	Washington Waterfowl Association

Edward Connor	Seattle City Light
Curt Kraemer	Fish and Wildlife Advocate
Oscar Graham	WDFW Waterfowl Advisory Committee (present)
Gary Gibbs	Waterfowl Hunter (present)
Steve Hinton	Skagit River System Cooperative
Martha Jordan	Trumpeter Swan Society (present)
Art Kendall	WA Waterfowl Association (present)
Allen Rozema	Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland (executive director)
Allison Studley	Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (executive director)
Albert Vincent, Jr.	Fish and Wildlife Committee for Persons with Disabilities
Dallas Wylie	Neighbor, Farmer, Area User

Cottonwood Island and Skagit Forks

Tim Manns - Looking at the update's aerial photos of the Cottonwood Slough project site and the Skagit Forks Wetland project site (neither of which I've been on, so my thoughts here may be unrealistic), would it be possible to have trails and, as needed, simple foot bridges so that these sites could be readily visited for birding? Both appear to have good potential for a wide diversity of species, and providing access would also promote WDFW's obtaining baseline avian data from volunteers recruited by Skagit Audubon or in other ways (written comments received).

Fir Island Farm

Dallas Wylie would like to request that the dike within the game reserve at Fir Island Farm be open to walk in access from May 1- Oct 7.

The group would like to request seasonal access to an additional portion the dike top as a trail.

Tim Manns - We would, for example, like to see additional portions of the new levee at the Fir Island Farms restoration open to public access. We do not believe this would interfere with the use of adjacent areas by waterfowl.

Headquarters Unit

Dallas Wylie would like to see additional developments to improve bird watching opportunities on the portion of the Headquarter Unit north of the entry road.

Dallas supports the improvements proposed to the boat launch to allow users to launch during a variety of tidal situations.

Audubon members are very appreciative of the bird viewing blind that Washington Waterfowl Association members and other volunteers built at the headquarters area. And we appreciated having the opportunity to visit the site beforehand and talk about the plans. This facility is a good illustration of improving access for wildlife viewing which encourages birders to support WDFW and an active partner.

The group requested a safe walking path over the temporary repair near the Wiley Slough tidegate. They feel it is difficult and for some people dangerous to walk over this surface.

The ADA access ramp to the viewing blind built by Washington Waterfowl Association (ALEA Grant) needs to be completed by WDFW.

The group voiced concerns about the veracity of the fish monitoring data and would like to know if there is more comprehensive peer reviewed information available.

The entire group was solidly behind a boat ramp upgrade at the Skagit Headquarters. Please note in your final update how important we feel this project is for WDFW personnel, the general public, and first responders\ to have safe access during all tides and water conditions. The sooner this can be accomplished the better.

Island Unit

Dallas Wylie is concerned about the conversion of the Island Unit to the second phase of salmon restoration. He believes that it is important to hold on to what hunting grounds remain in Skagit County.

Dallas supports the Quality Hunt Program units but he does not believe that they provide the same level of use and benefit to wildlife when compared to the wildlife area.

The group is very concerned that repair the tidegate is not moving forward. There was a good deal of discussion about their views of the salmon recovery process in general and the effects on the wildlife area.

Gary Gibbs and Art Kendall -The Island unit tide gate situation needs a little clarification. We don't believe there was any "confusion" on the permitting challenges to install upgraded tide gates. It's quite clear that the project is being objected to by the Skagit System Tribes (SST) for reasons we don't agree with. That being said, we believe that considering the significant funds already spent in the design phase of the tide gate replacement, we should not abandon the project, and continue to negotiate with the SST's in the interim to see if a solution can be found.

Gary Gibbs brought up that we should acknowledge the generous contribution of Jay Koetje's endowment toward the ongoing crop planting program on the Island Unit. This will help the WDFW policy makers realize how important this area is, and the overwhelming support it has with local residents, as well as the hunting, and bird watching communities.

Johnson /DeBay's Slough

Tim Manns - We want to reiterate the importance to Skagit Audubon of Johnson/DeBay's Slough Game Reserve staying in non-hunting status. This area continues to provide an essential night roost site for swans and supports many other bird and mammal species as well. As farmland in the lower Nookachamps Watershed shifts to filbert orchards and berries, the swans have lost quite a few acres for foraging, and the game reserve field becomes increasingly important for them. Perhaps some of the replacement acres that WDFW needs to find could be Nookachamps farmland that would then be committed to row crops that would also support swans.

Martha requested improvements to clarify in the reserve signage regarding dogs such as no dogs allowed in reserve, in parking area dogs must be on leash and no target shooting.

Martha also requested the replacement of the stewardship group sign.

Martha also mentioned that she will begin work on the proposal for the development of the recreation features discussed in the commission tour of the site in 2008.

Martha would like to request to open up site to seasonal use trail around the field.

Leque Island

Tim Manns - Both Pilchuck and Skagit Audubon have been involved in the stakeholders group that considered restoration alternatives for Leque Island. As you know, this is a highly popular site for birders and bird photographers. Providing whatever viewing opportunities are possible over the eventual restored area will be important. That could mean an elevated platform or simply an elevated area of fill from which people could look out over the wetland with spotting scopes and telephoto lenses.

Gary Gibbs is concerned about the limited access that the new Hamilton Boat Launch will provide due to the tidal variations in this area.

Milltown Island

The group supports investigating the effectiveness of vegetation management and the potential to improve recreational access to the site. This site historically provided very good waterfowl hunting even after the dike was breached in the early 1970's. They believe that there is some potential to improve this site.

Samish Unit

The group supports the diversity of the planting plan and efforts to spread hunting opportunity over the site.

No new issues were brought forward.

Samish River Unit

Tim Manns - At the Samish River Unit Wetland Restoration Project, which we were happy to support before the Skagit County Hearing Examiner, we hope that WDFW will continue to seek funds for constructing a small parking area and restroom. As at the "West-90", a regionally famous birding spot, a smaller parking area at the restoration project could serve as place from which birders with spotting scopes could safely scan the area even during hunting season and avoid interfering with the hunters or causing safety hazards.

Oscar Graham comment: Instead of moving the blinds or excavated depressions to hold more water adjacent to the blinds I have another suggestion. Continue to limit the number of hunters to the two existing parking spots but allow them to hunt anywhere outside of the safety zone. This approach would allow hunters to utilize the newly created channels as well as areas of sheet water and would result in a quality hunting experience while requiring no modifications to the site with the exception of refreshing the safety zone signage.

The group agrees to work with the wildlife area staff on the other wetland enhancement proposal and placement of hunting blinds.

The group whole heartedly supports a new parking lot proposal. Gibbs suggested that in the interim, the two parking slots on the west side of the unit be extended to allow trucks, hunters, and dogs, to be fully,

and safely off the busy Samish Island Road. With the steep grade angle now, if you don't have 4X4 your probably out of luck.

There were numerous requests to remove the toilet that was placed by vandals it deface the site.

Noxious Weed Program

No comments provided

Skagit Bay Estuary Invasive Cattail Control

No comments provided

Replacement Lands

The group wants to be sure that watchable wildlife opportunities are considered as a part of the replacement land process.

Tim Manns - In purchasing replacement lands for those areas restored to wetlands, we hope that accessibility and interest for wildlife watching will be among the criteria used for selection. We would be happy to help with that.

Art Kendall and Gary Gibbs think the replacement lands component for restoration sites needs to be changed. We believe that sites of equal quality, and size should be acquired before restoration begins. Another words, included in the original budget, before, not after restoration begins.

General Comments

Skagit Audubon supports the importance of doing wetland restoration projects, both estuarine and otherwise. While the emphasis of our organization's mission is on birds, we're committed to supporting the protection and restoration of habitat for fish, mammals, and birds too.

Tim Manns - We're eager to see provisions for birding access in all such projects when it's possible to provide it without undercutting the purposes of the restoration and when funds, if needed, can be used for access projects. Please continue to look to us for support with grant sources and elected officials when it comes to applying for such funds.

The group is glad to hear about the foot bridge upgrades and would like to be sure they have markers that are visible for improved use.

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

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

