



WELLS WILDLIFE AREA 2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary



Sharp-Tailed Grouse

This is an update to the 2006 Wells Wildlife Area Management Plan (http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/pdfs/draft_wells_plan.pdf) that provides management direction for the 8,170 acre Wells State Wildlife Area including six separate land management units: the West Foster Creek (1,050 acres), Indian Dan Canyon (4,412 acres), Central Ferry Canyon (1,908 acres), Bridgeport Bar (450 acres), Washburn Island (about 250 acres – PUD owned) and Okanogan River Units (100 acres+). The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Mission of “*Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife*” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions.

Plans are updated annually as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update also includes 2006 accomplishments and performance measures for 2007.

Updates/Changes

A new bald eagle nesting territory on the Indian Dan Unit will require protection from disturbance. This will include road closures and possibly entry closure during the nesting period.

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Copies of past annual Wells Wildlife Mitigation Reports (2000-2005) are available at the Douglas County Public Utilities No. 1 (PUD) web site:
http://relicensing.douglaspud.org/background/annual_reports/annual_wildlife_mitigation.asp

New issues

A recent surge in housing development surrounding the wildlife area and Wells Pool will have a negative impact on local wildlife due to associated disturbance of wildlife and habitat.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

None.

Status Report of 2006 Performance Measures

Key performance measures are identified each year to monitor progress and identify any issues that might interfere with planned priority activities. This information will be used to delete, add or modify priority strategies for 2007.

2006 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2007 Related Activity/ Comments
Capture and band 150+/- California quail on adjacent un-hunted sites following the hunting season and relocate on the Central Ferry, West Foster Creek and Indian Dan Unit as needed.	Captured and banded 161 California quail and relocated these on the Indian Dan Unit.	Will continue trapping and releasing quail in 2007.
Survey hunting related public use through the hunter registration program to document use and wildlife population trends.	Completed	To be continued in 2007.
Grow 75 acres of irrigated grain on Bridgeport Bar and Washburn Island (wheat, barley, corn, millet etc.) and 30 acres of dryland wheat on the Indian Dan and West Foster Creek Units.	Established 122 acres of agricultural crops for wildlife food and cover on the area. This included: 95 acres of irrigated wheat (60 acres on Bridgeport Bar and 35 acres on Washburn Island), 10 acres of corn (5 acres on Bridgeport Bar and 5 acres on Washburn Island in strips) and 17 acres of dryland wheat (9 acres on Indian Dan Canyon and 8 acres on West Foster Creek). Planted Fava beans and cover crop peas to provide	To be continued in 2007.

	waterfowl feed and attempt to rotate crops. Most of these plantings failed due to competition with weeds and irrigation system problems. Only about 2 acres of Fava beans on Washburn and 2 acres of peas on Bridgeport Bar remained.	
Establish and irrigate about 50 acres of permanent nesting cover on Washburn Island.	Not completed. Time and resources were limited. Irrigation system failed.	This is planned for completion in 2007.
Plant about 1,000 shrubs and trees. Irrigate and maintain 60 acres of woody plantings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planted 2,340 shrubs and trees on Bridgeport Bar and Washburn Island. -Mowed, rotovated and/or sprayed vegetation competing with these and older woody plantings. -Removed trees Chinese Elm trees encroaching on planted native trees and shrubs and treated stumps with herbicide. -Installed protective wire cages around ~150 cottonwoods. -Installed about 3,500 feet of plastic mulch (6 ft wide rolls) on the Washburn Island Unit to accommodate tree and shrub plantings 	To be continued in 2007.
Fill and maintain 24 bird feeders located throughout the area.	Completed	To be continued in 2007.
Maintain 11 gallinaceous guzzlers and 6 developed springs on the Indian Dan, Central Ferry and West Foster Creek Units as needed.	Not needed.	Not needed at this time. Will inspect these developments and maintain as needed.
Service and maintain about 100 nest boxes and 50 goose nest structures on and in the vicinity of Wells Pool including twenty islands, the Bridgeport Bar, Okanogan River and Washburn Units	Completed.	To be continued in 2007.
Maintain 3 deer exclosures	Completed	To be continued in 2007.

surrounding West Foster Creek shrub and tree plantings. Construct one enclosure.		
Release about 3,000 bio control agents to control knapweed, purple loosestrife and Dalmatian Toadflax primarily in the West Foster and Central Ferry Canyon units.	Released 2,000 <i>Mecinus janthinus</i> , a control agent for Dalmatian toadflax.	To be continued in 2007.
Mow about 25 acres of weeds on the West Foster Creek Unit and treat 85 acres of weeds with herbicides throughout the wildlife area.	Completed: Chemically treated 40 acres of rangeland weeds and 48 acres of agricultural weeds. Mowed 14 miles of road and 45 acres weeds	To be continued in 2007.
Maintain one mile of firebreaks on the West Foster Creek Unit and two miles on Bridgeport Bar.	Completed	To be continued in 2007.
Maintain 13 hunter registration booths, one office building, a shop and storage facilities. Maintain vehicles and equipment.	Completed	To be continued in 2007.
Construct one equipment shelter.	Not Completed	Funding and time did not allow. To be constructed in 2007 if funding allows.
Survey goose nesting on 20 islands and wetlands adjacent to Wells Pool. Coordinate with volunteer to survey kestrel and wood duck nesting.	Completed: The estimated Wells Pool gosling production in 2006 was 574.	To be continued in 2007.
Conduct fall wildlife population surveys on the Indian Dan and Bridgeport Bar Units using other WDFW staff and volunteers. Extent of survey is dependent on volunteer availability.	The Indian Dan and Bridgeport Bar Units fall wildlife surveys (Appendix E) yielded a count of 335 California quail, 17 gray partridges and 8 ring-necked pheasants.	To be continued in 2007. The West Foster Creek and Central Ferry Units will be surveyed.
Cultivate about 20 acres on Bridgeport Bar to be planted to permanent cover in the spring of 2007.	Cultivated 10 acres.	Funding and time limited this work to 10 acres. Wheat will be grown on these 10 acres to further deplete the weed seed bank.

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 new 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.

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

Agency Objective: Protect, restore and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

1. Protect and Manage Listed Species and Other Wildlife.

a) Protect state listed species.

Sharp-tailed grouse numbers in the area have decreased over the last few decades. Statewide, the population of sharp-tailed grouse has declined by nearly 90%. WDFW captured birds in Utah, Idaho and British Columbia and released these in West Foster Creek, within two miles of the West Foster Creek Unit. We continue to ensure optimum condition of herbaceous cover that provide nesting and escape by protecting plants from disturbance. Limited prescribed fire will be used if possible to improve cover quality.

Strategy: Protection of sharp-tailed grouse and its habitat will be a high priority and consideration when implementing management and enhancement activities on the Central Ferry, Indian Dan and West Foster Creek Units. Timeframe: Ongoing.

Strategy: Assist with sharp-tailed grouse transplantation efforts. Timeframe: Annually

b) Protect federally listed species.

Federal law requires the protection of bald eagles.

Strategy: Protect new bald eagle nest site and the Indian Dan communal roost from disturbance by limiting road access to the surrounding area particularly during nesting season and the winter. Timeframe: Annually

3. Protect and Enhance Priority Habitats.

The WDFW defines a Priority Habitat as: A habitat type with unique of significant value to many species. An area identified and mapped as priority habitat has one of more of the following attributes:

- Comparatively high fish and wildlife density

- Comparatively high fish and wildlife species diversity
- Important fish and wildlife breeding habitat
- Important fish and wildlife seasonal ranges
- Important fish and wildlife movement corridors
- Limited availability
- High vulnerability to habitat alteration
- Includes unique or dependent species

The Wells Wildlife Area supports a wide variety of Priority Habitats including shrubsteppe, riparian, steppe, cliffs, talus, snags and logs, freshwater wetlands and aspen stands. Management of these habitats will include protection from disturbance and degradation caused by weed encroachment, fire, vehicular traffic, livestock grazing and other factors.

Strategy: Follow WDFW management guidelines for these habitats. Habitat descriptions and management guidelines can be found at:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/hab/phspage.htm>, Timeframe: Annually

Strategy: See sections 3.1.6, 3.1.7, and 3.1.8.

2007 Performance Measures

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

1. Capture and band 150+/- California quail on adjacent un-hunted sites following the hunting season and relocate on the Indian Dan Unit as needed.
2. Survey hunting related public use through the hunter registration program on the Indian Dan, West Foster Creek, Central Ferry, Washburn Island and Bridgeport Bar Units to document hunting use and wildlife population trends.
3. Grow 75 acres of irrigated grain on Bridgeport Bar and Washburn Island (wheat, barley, corn, millet etc.) and 30 acres of dryland wheat on the Indian Dan and West Foster Creek Units.
4. Establish and irrigate about 50 acres of permanent nesting cover on Washburn Island.
5. Plant about 1,000 shrubs and trees. Irrigate and maintain 60 acres of woody plantings.
6. Fill and maintain 24 bird feeders located throughout the area.
7. Maintain 11 gallinaceous guzzlers and 6 developed springs on the Indian Dan, Central Ferry and West Foster Creek Units as needed.
8. Service and maintain about 100 nest boxes and 50 goose nest structures on and in the vicinity of Wells Pool including twenty islands, the Bridgeport Bar, Okanogan River and Washburn Units.
9. Maintain 3 deer exclosures surrounding West Foster Creek shrub and tree plantings. Construct one exclosure.
10. Release about 2,000 bio-control agents to control knapweed, purple loosestrife and/or Dalmatian Toadflax primarily in the West Foster and Central Ferry Canyon units.
11. Mow about 25 acres of weeds on the West Foster Creek Unit and treat about 85 acres of weeds with herbicides throughout the wildlife area.
12. Maintain one mile of firebreaks on the West Foster Creek Unit and two miles on Bridgeport Bar.

13. Maintain 13 hunter registration booths, one office building, a shop and storage facilities. Maintain vehicles and equipment.
14. Survey goose nesting on 20 islands, artificial structures and wetlands adjacent to Wells Pool. Coordinate with volunteer to survey kestrel and wood duck nesting.
15. Conduct fall wildlife population surveys on the Central Ferry and West Foster Creek Units using other WDFW staff and volunteers. Extent of survey is dependent on volunteer availability.
16. Cultivate about 10 acres on Bridgeport Bar to be planted to permanent cover in the spring of 2007.

Citizens Advisory Group Input:

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on June 14, 2006 to review management progress and address any new issues or input on existing issues.

Mike Schroeder, WDFW scientist and grouse biologist, gave a presentation on the status of Washington's prairie grouse. Jim McGee (Douglas PUD wildlife biologist) and Paul Fielder (Chelan PUD wildlife biologist) gave a short presentation on the Wells and Rocky Reach Dams and the wildlife mitigation role of their respective agency.

We reviewed the maps and posters of the three wildlife areas, discussed the individual areas and distributed a "final" draft of the three management plans along with a list of "performance measures" or accomplishments for the period January 2005 to June 2006.

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

Issues brought up during the meetings:

Issue: *An area between the Chelan Butte North South County Road and Chelan Falls located on the Chelan Butte Unit should be designated as a quality hunting area (perhaps juvenile hunting only) and the road leading into that area ("Goldmine road") be gated and physically closed to vehicles. He expressed his concern about vehicles driving beyond the no vehicle signs.*

We agree that the area should be closed to vehicles but it is impossible to make the area vehicle proof. Gates can easily be circumvented. We have closed the road and will make it as difficult to access as possible. Gates will be installed when we acquire the funding. Currently, WDFW has no funding to manage and enforce a "quality hunting area".

Issue: *Due to CRP acreage limits for Douglas County, WDFW should consider removing their land from the CRP.*

This issue was brought up earlier (see management plans). We elected to retain our CRP contracts to provide us with additional funding needed for operation and maintenance of our lands.

Issue: *Due to their remote and isolated location, the WDFW should consider trading its White River properties for lands adjacent to the major Units of the Chelan Wildlife Area.*

We will consider this land trade but are presently working on other land trades with the Forest Service and DNR, which will be taking up much of our real estate shop's time for the next couple of years.

Issue: *The Chelan or the Douglas County PUD would not be in favor of funding management of the Pateros Unit.*

We do not plan to manage the Pateros unit with either Chelan or Douglas PUD derived funds. We can continue to use matching federal funds to manage this area.

The CAG reviewed the update in early May of 2007 and provided the following input:

Issue: *The Wells plan update seems a bit heavy on game species. Examples: Goose, kestrel and wood duck nesting - only the gosling production is reported. Fall wildlife populations surveys - all game species. More info needed on non-game species populations. After all, you folks are providing great habitat and protection for the non-game species as well. Very glad to hear about the Bald Eagle nest and protection. Also the bio control agent use for invasive species! Please continue to emphasize this approach over chemical means.*

We agree that the management emphasis on the Wells Wildlife Area has been for game species. This is a result of the Wildlife Mitigation Agreement entered into with the Douglas County Public Utilities District No. 1 (PUD), which was part of its Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license. In 1974, when this agreement was signed, management of game species was a priority. This management included habitat restoration projects such as shrub and tree plantings, wetland developments, shrubsteppe restoration which has also benefited non-game species, in some cases, perhaps to a greater degree. Unfortunately, we lack funding to adequately monitor non-game species as indicated in the management plan.

More detail will be included in the Wells Wildlife Mitigation annual report to be released in July and available from the PUD's web site mentioned above.

We are working with the Bureau of Land Management and volunteers to survey Bald eagle winter roosts and American White Pelican and Double crested cormorant using Wells Pool. A volunteer maintains and replaces bluebird, wood duck and kestrel nest boxes that are also used by other non-game species. We will be working with the local chapters the Audubon Society and other interested parties to improve monitoring of non-game species on the area. Emphasis will be placed on monitoring use of restored sites by these species. Our biologists have conducted breeding bird surveys in the past but funding and time for such surveys are limited.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

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

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