



WHATCOM WILDLIFE AREA 2008 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Whatcom Wildlife Area Management Plan (http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/) that provides management direction for the Whatcom Wildlife Area. The wildlife area is located outside Ferndale, WA in Whatcom County, and includes 7 sub-units comprising 5,327 acres. The largest unit is located at the Lake Terrell headquarters.

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 includes 2006-07 accomplishments, and new issues, land management strategies, and performance measures for 2008.

Updates/Changes

The most significant change for the wildlife area occurred in July 2007, when Wildlife Area Manager Tom Reed retired after 34 years of service. The new manager, Shana Winegeart, started work in October 2007. Another new addition, Kevin Brown, is a Whatcom Community College intern who volunteered for 3 months to gain experience in the natural resources field.

Inside

Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
New Issues	1
Major Stewardship Accomplishments	3
Status Report of 2006 Performance Measures	3
New Strategies	6
2007 Performance Measures	8
Citizens Advisory Group Input	8

New Issues

A flood event in 2006 overtopped the Nooksack River levee and created numerous scour holes along a highly used levee trail. In December 2007 high water again overtopped and continued to

enlarge the holes to the point that the levee was in danger of breaching. To protect public safety and minimize erosion, the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) performed a substantial sandbagging effort to reinforce edges and bottoms of the major scour holes. The project used over 3,000 bags, 60 yards of sand, and 25lbs of grass seed to protect eroded areas.

The Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department obtained grant funds to improve the Nooksack levee trail and bring it up to ADA standards. Due to fish/wildlife habitat issues, river effects on the levee, and use constraints placed on the property by a conservation easement, the trail improvement project will not be pursued. The unimproved trail is still available for public use. A coordination meeting between all affected agencies will be held in April 2008 to identify legal obligations regarding future levee maintenance and design a coordinated action plan for long-term management.

Dog walking continues to be a topic of interest and some changes have been made to balance fish and wildlife needs with public recreational interests. To protect newly planted riparian areas in the Nooksack unit, dog walking will be limited to on-leash only, year-round, between Marine Drive and Slater Road. Anyone with a dog on this section of the levee trail (hunters or recreational dog walkers) will need to have their dog on a leash. The purpose is to limit disturbance in the riparian areas during spring and summer when nesting females or young wildlife are most vulnerable, and minimize conflicts in the fall and winter between hunting dogs and recreational dog walkers. Hunters out in the corn field during waterfowl seasons will not have to keep their dog on a leash, but must have their dog under control at all times. An off-leash dog area is available just north of Slater road, and other new off-leash areas will be considered if more BP land is leased in the future. All dog areas will be posted in 2008.

Several Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) members voiced an interest in modifying hunting seasons and boardwalk closure at Tennant Lake. They felt public use had shifted away from waterfowl hunting and more toward non-hunting activities. The boardwalk is a very popular recreation feature, but for safety reasons it is closed during hunting season. Review of the hunting sign-in sheets shows a significant number of hunters still using the lake every day of the week, depending on weather conditions. Since replacement of the old boardwalk was already identified by the CAG as a priority project in need of funding, the design of the new boardwalk will add a spur section away from hunting blinds to allow future access for both user groups.

A county ordinance was passed to have Lake Terrell designated “no wake speed zone” over the entire lake. There was concern that a private in holding on the northern end of the lake would be developed in the near future, leading to dock construction and watercraft use incompatible with habitat protection and fish/wildlife recreation. Prior to this ordinance WDFW could only regulate watercraft use by public visitors, not private landowners.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments



The final phase of the Marietta slough restoration project was implemented, and planting was completed in 2007. (Photo left). Project began in 2001 with the first acquisition of the Nooksack unit.

Substantial wetland restoration, planting, and habitat enhancements have been completed since that time. Twenty photo points have been established to monitor success of revegetation efforts, and sites are revisited annually.

Vegetation management continues to demand a significant portion of wildlife

area staff time. Over 1,200 acres were monitored for noxious weed encroachment, and staff controlled weeds on more than 600 acres using integrated pest management practices. Species controlled included purple loosestrife, yellow flag iris, scotch broom, Japanese knotweed, and reed canarygrass. Annual planting of waterfowl food plots continued, and 262 acres were put into cereal grains by sharecrop agreement or staff planting. All agricultural fields were sprayed for perennial weeds. Native riparian vegetation was planted on Lake Terrell islands to enhance wildlife habitat and control wind-driven erosion of island edges. Similar weed control and planting efforts are planned for 2008.

In 2007, over 6,710 students or members of the public participated in educational programs offered by the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. Jim Edwards, Environmental Education and Outreach Specialist 2, received an award for his outstanding work organizing and teaching these programs.

Status Report of 2006-07 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.

2007 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2008 Related Activity/ Comments
Plant 262 acres of grain (190 ac silage corn, 72 ac barley)	Completed	Corn has been reduced to appx 100 ac due to restoration. Barley planting will continue on 50-60 ac.
Monitor winter and spring waterfowl use of 180 acres of planted grain fields to determine cost benefits	Waterfowl use of fields was significant during two weeks of cold weather, particularly in late winter.	Crop use will be monitored, and more moist soil management will be investigated in the future.
Establish 20 photo points on Nooksack restoration projects to monitor plant progression	Photos taken in 2007	Photo points will be revisited in 2008
Monitor 470 acres of restored habitat	Photo monitoring conducted	Continue photo monitoring
Plant native riparian vegetation on 20 acres	Select islands on Lake Terrell were planted	Monitor success and continue planting as necessary in 2008
Maintain 1 mile of fence line on Lake Terrell unit to protect reserve from trespass	Completed	Continue annual maintenance as necessary
Monitor Tennant Lake Interpretive Center programs to confirm they are meeting environmental education needs of local school districts and the public	Staff applied for a grant to upgrade existing displays and materials	Seek co-operative funding with Whatcom County Parks & Rec to meet program needs
Coordinate local sportsman's club maintenance of archery range	Assist sportsmen in maintaining Intalco range	Continue cooperative maintenance of Intalco range with archery club. New range at Lake Terrell to remain closed unless Intalco property is closed to public use
Coordinate 30-40 volunteers releasing 5,000 pheasants during hunting season	Utilized appx 40 volunteers annually in 06 and 07 pheasant release.	Continue to utilize volunteers. Manager will take a more active role to minimize conflicts among volunteers and ensure fair and consistent releases

Coordinate local waterfowl association's construction/maintenance of 42 hunting/viewing blinds	WA Waterfowl conducted work parties and maintained 42 blinds.	Continue cooperative efforts with WA Waterfowl. 2 damaged blinds need repair
Monitor 5-10% of appx 20,000 waterfowl and 7,000 pheasant hunters to ensure orderly, legal hunts.	Contacted hunters weekly during season. Reported violations to enforcement.	Continue regular contacts and report violations.
Coordinate with enforcement division for eight months of hunting	Coordinated with enforcement on questions/issues as needed	Continue coordination
Coordinate advanced hunter education graduate's enhancement projects	No known advanced hunter applicants	Work with advanced hunter applicants to implement habitat projects
Coordinate volunteer litter patrols on Tennant Lake	W.A. intern assisted with litter pickup	Seek interested volunteer group to continue litter patrols
Monitor 650 acres for reed canarygrass encroachment to facilitate timely control efforts	Completed	Completed annually
Monitor 200 acres for purple loosestrife encroachment to facilitate timely control efforts	Completed	Completed annually
Monitor 300 acres for yellow flag iris encroachment to facilitate timely control efforts	Completed	Completed annually
Monitor 50 acres for alder encroachment into agricultural acreage	Completed	Completed annually
Coordinate control of yellow flag iris (~1 acre) with local volunteers	Completed with WDFW weed crew. Controlled iris at Tennant Lake unit.	Monitor for success and control again as necessary
Coordinate control of purple loosestrife (~1 acre) with WDFW Weed Crew	Biocontrol released on Lake Terrell islands	Monitor for success
Coordinate control of Japanese knotweed (~1/2 acre) with WDFW Weed Crew	Completed	Completed annually
Coordinate control of Scotch broom on 117 acres	Completed	Completed annually
Mow 30 acres of reed canarygrass	Completed	Completed annually
Control perennial weeds on 180 acres of agricultural land	Completed	Completed annually
Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed	Applied for 2 grants	Implement projects that receive funding

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agencies strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species present and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed or new issues or changes on the wildlife area. New strategies may also be in response to adaptive management as staff evaluate the impacts of past management activities.

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

Agency Objective: Provide Stainable Fish and Wildlife-related Recreational and Commercial Opportunities Compatible with Maintaining Healthy Fish and Wildlife Populations and Habitats.

1. Provide and manage resource-compatible hunting and fishing opportunities

- A. Strategy: Create a wheelchair-only waterfowl hunting site on the Nooksack unit. Timeframe: 2009, Funding source: grants
- B. Strategy: Create wheel-chair access to the A-side archery range. Estimated cost \$50,000
- C. Strategy: Replace the Lake Terrell fishing pier. Estimated cost \$700,000.
- D. Strategy: Replace boardwalk at Tennant Lake. Estimated cost \$800,000
- E. Strategy: Raise 2 bridges along slough that block boat access to Tennant Lake. Estimated cost \$250,000.
- F. Strategy: Create small car-top boat launch at Lake Terrell. Estimated cost \$10,000.

Agency Objective: Work with Tribal and Local Governments and Private Landowners to Ensure Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Objectives are Achieved.

1. Develop and coordinate fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation projects.

- A. Strategy: Coordinate with British Petroleum to open their newly acquired 1,100 acres to public hunting and propose habitat improvements for this property. Timeframe: 2008-2010, Funding source: Ducks Unlimited, State Duck Stamp

Agency Objective: Reconnect with Those Interested in Washington's Fish and Wildlife.

1. Market the Whatcom Wildlife Area to a broader audience

- A. Strategy: Create maps detailing wildlife area boundaries and features such as dog-walking areas, hunting blinds, archery range, etc. Timeframe: 2008, Funding source: State operating funds
- B. Strategy: Improve displays at Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. Estimated cost \$350,000.
- C. Strategy: Install wildlife viewing blinds along the Tennant Lake boardwalk. Estimated cost \$25,000 each.

Agency Objective: Provide Sound Operational Management of WDFW Lands, Facilities, and Access Sites.

1. Maintain facilities, structures, and physical improvements

- A. Strategy: Post boundaries and land use regulations on Lummi Island parcels to protect peregrine falcon and potential marbled murrelet habitat. Timeframe: 2008, Funding source: State operating funds
 - B. Strategy: Install in-ground trash receptacles to help control litter. Estimated cost \$20,000
 - C. Strategy: Improve boardwalk at Pine/Cedar Lakes unit. Estimated cost \$50,000
2. **Hire additional staff where necessary**
- A. Strategy: Fund a second full-time Tennant Lake staff position. Estimated annual cost \$60,000.

Agency Objective: Ensure WDFW Activities, Programs, Facilities and Lands are Consistent with Local, State and Federal Regulations that protect and Recover Fish, Wildlife and Their Habitats.

1. **Manage species and habitats in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and Washington State fish passage, road management and forest practices rules.**
- A. Strategy: Survey for Townsend's big-eared bats at the Nooksack barn prior to demolition. Timeframe: 2008, Funding source: volunteer
 - B. Strategy: Research marbled murrelet habitat suitability on Lummi Island unit and conduct surveys to determine presence/absence. Timeframe: 2008, Funding source: volunteer birders, Audubon Society.
 - C. Strategy: Conduct surveys for Oregon spotted frog in appropriate habitats to determine presence/absence on the wildlife area. Timeframe: 2008-2010, Funding source: grants, graduate student
 - D. Strategy: Conduct fish and wildlife inventories on the wildlife area to identify any listed species. Timeframe: 2008-2010, Funding source: grants, graduate student

Agency Objective: Protect, Restore and Enhance Fish and Wildlife Populations and Their Habitats.

1. **Maintain and improve nesting and wintering habitat for waterfowl**
- A. Strategy: Coordinate with Ducks Unlimited to install a water control structure on Intalco unit. Timeframe: 2009, Funding source: Ducks Unlimited, Duck Stamp Fund
2. **Maintain and improve fish populations**
- A. Strategy: Increase summer flows in Terrell Creek to improve chum salmon reintroduction efforts. Timeframe: Ongoing, Funding source: Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association.
3. **Protect, restore and enhance wetland and riparian habitats**
- A. Strategy: Work with British Petroleum to restore wetlands on their newly acquired property. Timeframe: 2010, Funding source: Duck Stamp funds, Ducks Unlimited
4. **Manage for native species diversity**
- A. Strategy: Coordinate with Wildlife staff to determine need/opportunities for black-tailed deer habitat improvement. Timeframe: 2008-2010 following Wildlife Program surveys, Funding source: State operating funds, grants
 - B. Strategy: Investigate opportunities for conifer re-establishment in hardwood stands to improve habitat diversity. Timeframe: 2009, Funding source: State operating funds

Agency Objective: Minimize Adverse Interactions Between Humans and Wildlife

1. Monitor and manage public access to minimize negative effects on fish and wildlife

- A. Survey dog-walkers once per month throughout the year to establish numbers/impacts of dogs on the wildlife area. Timeframe: 2008, Funding source: State funds
- B. Establish on-leash and off-leash dog areas. Post use regulations to protect wildlife and minimize conflicts between user groups. Timeframe: 2008, Funding source: State funds.

2008 Performance Measures

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

- 1) Plant a minimum 180 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl use
- 2) Monitor and/or control weeds on 1,000 acres
- 3) Work with Watershed staff to increase summer flows in Terrell Creek without negative impacts to Lake Terrell.
- 4) Continue 20-site photo point monitoring of Nooksack restoration and coordinate planting maintenance with NRCS.
- 5) Monitor success of Lake Terrell island plantings – replant if necessary.
- 6) Maintain 1 mile of fence on Lake Terrell unit to protect reserve from trespass
- 7) Pursue opportunities to create a wheel-chair only hunting site on the Nooksack unit
- 8) Release 4,000 pheasants with the assistance of 30-40 volunteers
- 9) Coordinate with WA Waterfowl Association to maintain 42 hunting blinds and 4 boat launches at Lake Terrell, Tennant Lake, Nooksack and Intalco units.
- 10) Coordinate with local sportsmen to maintain Intalco archery range.
- 11) Survey dog-walkers twice per month throughout the year to establish numbers/impacts of dogs on the wildlife area.
- 12) Restrict dog use on Nooksack unit. Post signs establishing on-leash and off-leash areas.
- 13) Survey for Townsend's big-eared bats in Marietta barn prior to fall demolition
- 14) Post regulations and boundaries on Lummi Island units.
- 15) Coordinate with Ducks Unlimited to install a water control structure on Intalco unit.
- 16) Coordinate with British Petroleum to open newly acquired land to public hunting.
- 17) Create maps detailing wildlife area boundaries and features such as dog areas, blinds, archery range etc.
- 18) Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed
- 19) Coordinate with other land managing agencies
- 20) Create an action plan detailing efforts to cooperatively manage fish/ wildlife/ habitats affected by the Lake Terrell dam.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held March 12, 2008 to review management progress, address any new issues, and gather input on existing issues. Those in attendance included: Mariann Brown, Doug Channel, Dennis Conner, Jim Edwards, Ken Ford, Lynne Givler, Joe Meche, Ken Miller, Chuck Rameau, Ed Ross, Paul Sadler, Gene Watson, Paul Woodcock, Daniel Tupper, Lora Leschner, and Shana Winegeart.

The following new input/issues were addressed at the CAG meeting:

Issue: *Stop hunting at Tennant Lake – noisy for adjacent residents and closes the boardwalk to any other users.*

Response: A CAG subcommittee met to discuss hunting/boardwalk use issues. Attendees included: Jim Edwards, Ken Miller, Paul Woodcock and Shana Winegeart. Alternatives: move blinds, close some days to hunting to allow opening of the boardwalk, establish a ‘birding-only’ trail nearby, and create a boardwalk section away from the blinds. Conclusions: review of the hunting sign-in sheets shows a significant number of hunters using the lake every day of the week (depending on weather conditions) so there is no predictable day of low use; blinds are situated in specific bird-use locations and can’t just be moved. The boardwalk is a very popular recreation feature, but for safety reasons it is closed during hunting season. Since replacement of the old boardwalk has been identified by the CAG as the Wildlife Area’s #3 priority project, the new boardwalk will be designed to add a section away from hunting blinds to allow future access for both user groups.

Issue: *Odd/Even hunting system of pheasants being abused. Some people hunt early both days.*

Response: Hunters purchasing a 3-day hunting license may legally hunt both odd and even days. Although some hunters purchase two cards (one odd and one even), WDFW Enforcement sees this as additional funds for the program and not illegal. To address hunter crowding, WDFW is working to acquire more acreage for the pheasant release program.

Issue: *Need to establish and post dog walking areas and leash restrictions better.*

Response: A CAG sub-committee met to discuss dog impacts to wildlife and identify areas that might offer better dog use. Attendees included: Ken Miller, Ed Ross, Ann Marie Ross, Gene Watson, and Shana Winegeart. Dog walkers would like to see more consistent dog restriction designations between State and County lands. Manager Winegeart will be meeting with the Hovander Park manager in April to try and block up off-leash areas and post areas more clearly. Changes on WDFW land include new limitations on the Nooksack unit levee between Marine Drive and Slater Road. This area will be restricted to year-round on-leash dog use only to limit disturbance during spring and summer when nesting females or young wildlife are most vulnerable, and minimize conflicts in the fall and winter between hunting dogs and recreational dog walkers. Hunters out in the corn field during waterfowl seasons will not have to keep their dog on a leash, but must have their dog under control at all times. The newly planted riparian wetlands will be closed to dogs outside hunting season; however, a year-round off-leash dog area is available just north of Slater road. Other new off-leash areas will be considered if more BP land is leased in the future, with the understanding that wildlife needs must be met first. All dog areas will be posted in 2008 to clarify use restrictions, identify safety zones near hunting areas, and map available walking locations.

Dog Use on Whatcom Wildlife Area (and some adjacent County lands)

WLA Unit	Trail / area	Acres or Miles	Restrictions	Time of year
-----------------	---------------------	-----------------------	---------------------	---------------------

Lake Terrell	HQ fields/trails	1500 ac	on leash	April 1- July 15
			on leash after 4pm	Sept 15 - Nov 30
			off leash	July 16 - March 31
Intalco	Archery trails, Unick road	1000 ac	on leash after 4pm	Sept 15 - Nov 30
			off leash	year round
Tennant Lake	Boardwalk	.5 mi	closed to dogs	year round
	Levee - Co parks land	2 mi	on leash	year round
	Levee/field - N of Slater Rd	70 ac	off leash	year round
	Ferndale boat launch (County)	25 ac	off leash	year round
Nooksack	Levee - Slater to Marine Dr	2 mi	on leash	year round
	Corn fields	150 ac	voice command	hunting season
BP	Grandview parcel	1000 ac	on leash	April 1- July 15
			on leash after 4pm	Sept 15 - Nov 30
			off leash	July 16 - March 31
	Pt Whitehorn (future lease?)	1000 ac	off leash portions	
Lummi Island	Heritage Trust trail	6 mi	on leash	year round
Pine/Cedar Lakes	Lakes trail	2.5 mi	on leash	year round

Issue: *Add corn plantings to the Lake Terrell barley fields*

Response: Some corn strips will be planted along field edges where appropriate. Seed is usually purchased the winter prior to planting, and if funding is not available in spring 2008, corn planting will be pursued in 2009.

Issue: *Is Claypit Pond (Tennant Lake Unit) still closed to fishing?*

Response: The Environmental Protection Agency took soil samples in 2002, but they did not provide specific recommendations regarding their test results. The sampling data has been provided to the State Health Department. To date, WDFW has not heard back from the Health Department. If findings indicate a health concern, then the lake will be posted 'no fishing'.

Issue: *Consider morning pheasant plants – some people run dogs in the evenings and chase birds.*

Response: Volunteer assistance is very important to the program and evening releases give the greatest number of people an opportunity to participate. Dog use restrictions will be posted to reduce post-release disturbance.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

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

Contacts:

WDFW Mill Creek Office
(425) 775-1311
Wildlife Area Manager
(360) 384-4723