



WHATCOM WILDLIFE AREA 2017 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Whatcom Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for the Whatcom Wildlife Area.

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/ The wildlife area is located outside Ferndale, Washington in Whatcom County, and includes seven units comprising 5,327 acres. The largest unit is located at the Lake Terrell headquarters.

The plan identifies resource needs and guides management activities based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) mission “to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities,” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions. Plans are updated every 2 years 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 2014 - 2016 accomplishments, new issues and management strategies, and 2017-18 performance measures.

New Issues

Lake Terrell Eurasian Milfoil

Weed surveys in 2013 found an increase in the amount of milfoil in Lake Terrell. Samples were collected for identification. It was found that the milfoil in the lake is Eurasian milfoil, an extremely persistent noxious weed. In March 2017 we were successful in acquiring a \$50,000 grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology (WDOE) for noxious aquatic weed control. The control work will begin summer 2017 and in order to prevent the spread of milfoil to other lakes in the county, the focus will be on eradicating the milfoil from the area within 1,500 feet of the boat launch. We will also begin control work on the main infestation in the north end of the lake. The focus of this treatment will primarily be with the use of chemical controls.

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Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation

In 2013, WDFW was successful in obtaining a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant for \$180,000 to repair and renovate the Tennant Lake raised wood boardwalk. This boardwalk was built in the 70's, with some flood repair work completed in the late 90's. Over the years, Tennant Lake's water level has risen, causing a majority of the boardwalk to be under water for several months of the year. In 2014, the RCO funds were used to make the short section of the boardwalk



ADA wheelchair accessible, and raised the low sections of the loop trail by adding a higher level surface. The boardwalk was made fish friendly by installing fiberglass grating at the overlooks. This allowed light to reach the water. Increased beaver management at Tennant Lake also occurred in conjunction with this project and assured that the new boardwalk will stay high and dry throughout the year.



Intalco Pond and Rainbow Pond Water Control Replacements

In 2015, we were successful in acquiring Duck Stamp funds to replace the failing water controls on the Intalco Pond, and Rainbow Pond. We coordinated with Ducks Unlimited who managed the project. Both controls were replaced and are now working perfectly, creating over six acres of impounded water for waterfowl breeding, nesting and resting. The impounded water is also available during the summer months to help keep Terrell Creek charged with minimal water flow for native fish.



Waterfowl Trapping and Banding

In 2014, we began to trap and band waterfowl during the spring on the Lake Terrell and Intalco units. Floating traps were built and baited with corn to draw in the birds. In one 3-week period, over 125 individual wood ducks were trapped and banded at Lake Terrell. Other trapped species included common mergansers, mallards and teal. This trapping effort continues through 2017.



New ADA Waterfowl Hunting Blind at Lake Terrell

In 2014, the Whatcom County Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association planned out and built a new ADA accessible waterfowl hunting blind at the Lake Terrell Unit. The previous handicapped hunting blind was lost due to safety reasons when the new fishing pier went in too close to the blind. A new, better hunting location was identified, and a new blind was built. This blind is fully wheelchair accessible, and is only available to disabled hunters. Since its completion, it has received very good and successful use from many waterfowl hunters.



New Lake Terrell Walking Trails

In 2015 and 2016, the local Trail Life USA scout troop performed two work projects to plan out and create new trails on the east side of Lake Terrell, connecting three access parking areas. The scouts cut trees, shrubs and roots to clear a wide path for recreational use. The project was well managed by the scouts, and was completed in a very professional manner. The scouts will continue to be invited back to work on

future projects.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Noxious Weeds

Vegetation management continues to demand a significant portion of wildlife area staff time. Over 1,000 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 canary grass. All agricultural fields were sprayed for noxious weeds.



Status Report of 2014 - 2016 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.

2014 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2015 Related Activity/ Comments
Plant 167 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl (100 acres corn / 67 acres barley).	Completed. 100 acres of corn was planted at Slater Rd., 47 acres of barley were planted at Lake Terrell, and British Petroleum (BP) planted 20 acres of barley.	2015 corn planting is expected to be 67 acres, Lake Terrell barley will be 62 acres and 5 acres alfalfa. BP is expected to plant 20 acres of barley.
Monitor and/or control weeds on 1,000 acres.	Completed. Mowed 25 acres reed canary grass, 2 acres alders. Sprayed 20 acres Scot's broom, and 25 acres purple loosestrife. Cut flower heads off scattered yellow-flag iris. Monitored weeds on 2,000 acres.	Coordinate with WDFW weed crew to control purple loosestrife and Japanese knotweed. Increase reed canary grass mowing to 60 acres to improve hunting/ recreation and reduce reed canary grass vigor.
Repair and improve Tennant Lake boardwalk using WWRP grant Funds.	Completed. Tennant Lake boardwalk was repaired and improved in 2014.	Coordinate with Whatcom County Parks on co-managing boardwalk maintenance.
Work to increase summer flows in Terrell Creek without negatively impacting Lake Terrell.	Completed in 2014.	Continue summer flow enhancement in Terrell Creek
Renovate managers residence at Lake Terrell for energy efficiency.	Completed in 2014.	Perform annual maintenance as necessary.
Monitor success of Lake Terrell Island plantings	All islands planted with native vegetation in 2014.	Plantings will be monitored in 2015.
Maintain one mile of fence line on Lake Terrell Unit to protect reserve from trespass	Completed.	Continue annual maintenance as necessary.
Pursue opportunities to create an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) hunting site at the Nooksack unit lagoon.	WDFW staff worked on blind plans for this site.	Staff will start special access to handicapped hunters to adjacent blinds.
Coordinate local Washington Waterfowl Association's (WWA) construction/ maintenance of 42 hunting/ viewing blinds.	WWA conducted work parties and maintained 42 blinds. Wildlife area manager attended WWA	Continue cooperative efforts with WWA.

	meetings and assisted as necessary.	
Monitor water control structures on Lake Terrell and Intalco units.	All water controls checked and maintained.	Continue monitoring of water controls.
Monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack units.	Completed.	Continue to monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack units.
Mow the Port of Bellingham's Phase 2 area north and east of parking area to control Reed canary grass.	Completed.	Continue to mow Phase 2 area until it is developed.
Monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald. Update interpretive materials at site.	Completed.	Continue to monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald. Update interpretive materials at site when needed.
Coordinate with BP to maintain hunting and recreation areas.	Ongoing. Coordinated with farmers planting barley, and mowing fields for hay.	Will continue coordinating with BP and the farmers on hunting and recreation.
Coordinate with local sportsman's club to maintain archery range.	Assisted Custer Sportsmen in maintaining Intalco range.	Improve course safety and design. Continue cooperative maintenance.
Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed.	Ongoing.	Continue to apply for new grants when available.
Coordinate 30 volunteers releasing 4,000 pheasants during hunting season.	Utilized approximately 25 volunteers in 2014 pheasant release.	Continue to utilize volunteers.
Coordinate with other agencies.	Ongoing. Worked with Port of Bellingham on mitigation, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation on land use, and Whatcom County PUD on easement clearing.	Continue cooperative work as issues arise.

2015 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2016 Related Activity/ Comments
Plant 167 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl (100 acres corn, 65 acres barley).	Completed. 100 acres of corn was planted at Slater Rd., 45 acres of barley were planted at Lake Terrell, and British Petroleum (BP) planted 20 acres of barley.	2016 corn planting is expected to be 65 acres, Lake Terrell barley will be 60 acres and 5 acres alfalfa. BP is expected to plant 20 acres of barley.
Monitor and/or control weeds on 1,000 acres.	Completed. Mowed 20 acres reed canary grass, 2 acres alders. Sprayed 20 acres Scotch broom, and 25 acres purple loosestrife. Cut flower heads off scattered yellow-flag iris. Monitored weeds on 2,000 acres.	Coordinate with WDFW weed crew to control purple loosestrife and Japanese knotweed. Increase reed canary grass mowing to 60 acres to improve hunting/ recreation and reduce reed canary grass vigor.
Maintain Tennant Lake boardwalk.	Completed.	Coordinate with Whatcom County Parks on co-managing boardwalk maintenance.
Monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald. Update interpretive materials at site.	Completed.	Continue to monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald. Remove vegetation to improve view at overlook bald.
Work to increase summer flows in Terrell Creek without negatively impacting Lake Terrell.	Completed. Used water control valve to maintain creek flows through the summer.	Continue summer flow enhancement in Terrell Creek.
Monitor success of Lake Terrell Island plantings.	Some islands planted with native vegetation in 2015.	Plantings will be monitored in 2016.
Maintain one mile of fence line on Lake Terrell Unit to protect reserve from trespass.	Completed.	Continue annual maintenance as necessary.
Pursue opportunities to create an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) hunting site at the Nooksack unit lagoon.	WDFW staff worked on blind plans for this site.	Staff will continue special access to handicapped hunters to adjacent blinds.
Coordinate local Washington Waterfowl Association's (WWA) construction/	WWA conducted work parties and maintained 42 blinds and built a new ADA Accessible Blind at Lake Terrell. Wildlife	Continue cooperative efforts with WWA.

maintenance of 42 hunting/viewing blinds.	Area manager attended WWA meetings and assisted as necessary.	
Monitor water control structures on Lake Terrell and Intalco units.	The Intalco Pond and Rainbow Pond water controls were replaced using Duck Stamp funds.	Continue monitoring of new water controls at the Intalco Pond and Rainbow Pond. Maintain grass seed plantings around new controls.
Monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack units.	Completed.	Continue to monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack units.
Mow area north and east of parking area for off-lease dog use while Port of Bellingham enhancement project is being constructed.	Completed. Off-lease dog area was mowed, including the 23 acre phase 2 site.	Continue to mow off-leash dog use area while construction continues.
Coordinate with BP to maintain hunting and recreation areas.	Ongoing. Coordinated with farmers planting barley and mowing fields for hay.	Will continue coordinating with BP and the farmers on hunting and recreation.
Coordinate with local sportsman's club to maintain archery range.	Assisted Custer Sportsmen in maintaining Intalco Range.	Improve course safety and design. Continue cooperative maintenance.
Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed.	Ongoing.	Continue to apply for new grants when available.
Coordinate 30 volunteers releasing 4,000 pheasants during hunting season.	Utilized approximately 25 volunteers in 2015 pheasant release.	Continue to utilize volunteers.
Coordinate with other agencies.	Ongoing - worked with Port of Bellingham on mitigation, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation on land use, and Whatcom County PUD on easement clearing.	Continue cooperative work as issues arise.

2016 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2017 Related Activity/ Comments
Plant 165 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl (100 acres corn, 65 acres barley).	Completed. 87 acres of corn and 33 acres of potatoes were planted at Slater Rd., 45 acres of barley were planted at Lake Terrell, and British Petroleum (BP) planted 20 acres of barley.	2017 corn planting is expected to be 87 acres, 33 acres of potatoes as a cover crop, Lake Terrell barley will be 60 acres, and 5 acres alfalfa. BP is expected to plant 20 acres of barley.
Monitor and/or control weeds on 1,000 acres.	Completed. Mowed 20 acres reed canary grass, 2 acres	Coordinate with WDFW weed crew to control purple

	alders. Sprayed 20 acres Scotch broom, and 25 acres purple loosestrife. Cut flower heads off scattered yellow-flag iris. Monitored weeds on 2,000 acres.	loosestrife, Japanese knotweed and Eurasian milfoil. Increase reed canary grass mowing to 60 acres to improve hunting/ recreation and reduce reed canary grass vigor.
Maintain Tennant Lake boardwalk.	Completed.	Coordinate with Whatcom County Parks on co-managing boardwalk maintenance.
Monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald. Remove vegetation to improve view at trail overlook.	Completed. Removed vegetation to improve view of San Juan Islands from trail overlook.	Continue to monitor public use and fence compliance on Lummi Island bald trail overlook.
Work to increase summer flows in Terrell Creek without negatively impacting Lake Terrell.	Completed. Used water control valve to maintain creek flows through the summer.	Continue summer flow enhancement in Terrell Creek.
Monitor success of Lake Terrell island plantings.	Completed.	Plantings will be monitored and pruned in 2017.
Maintain one mile of fence line on Lake Terrell Unit to protect reserve from trespass.	Completed.	Continue annual maintenance as necessary.
Pursue opportunities to create an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) hunting site at the Nooksack unit lagoon.	WDFW staff worked on blind plans for this site.	Staff will continue special access to handicapped hunters to adjacent blinds.
Coordinate local Washington Waterfowl Association's (WWA) construction/ maintenance of 42 hunting/ viewing blinds.	WWA conducted work parties and maintained 42 blinds, and built a new ADA Accessible Blind at Lake Terrell. Wildlife area manager attended WWA meetings and assisted as necessary.	Continue cooperative efforts with WWA.
Monitor water control structures on Lake Terrell and Intalco units.	All water controls checked and maintained.	Continue monitoring of water controls.
Monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack units.	Completed.	Continue to monitor dog use on Tennant Lake and Nooksack units.
Mow area north and east of parking area for off-lease dog use while Port of Bellingham	Completed. Off-lease dog area was mowed, including the 23-acre phase 2 site.	Continue to mow off-leash dog use area and control reed canary grass.

enhancement project is being maintained.		
Coordinate with BP to maintain hunting and recreation areas.	Ongoing, coordinated with farmers planting barley, and mowing fields for hay.	Will continue coordinating with BP and the farmers on hunting and recreation.
Coordinate with local sportsman's club to maintain archery range.	Assisted Custer Sportsmen in maintaining Intalco Range.	Continue cooperative maintenance.
Apply for grants to meet various strategies as needed.	Ongoing.	Continue to apply for new grants when available.
Coordinate 30 volunteers releasing 4,000 pheasants during hunting season.	Utilized approximately 25 volunteers in 2016 pheasant release.	Continue to utilize volunteers.
Coordinate with other agencies.	Ongoing - worked with Port of Bellingham on mitigation, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation on land use, and Whatcom County PUD on easement clearing.	Continue cooperative work as issues arise.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies strategies or activities that address the agency's goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species presence, and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added in response 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.

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: Build new waterfowl hunting blinds on the Nooksack Unit.

Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: state operating funds

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

1. Market the Whatcom Wildlife Area to a broader audience

A. Strategy: Fund naturalist program and a full-time naturalist position at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center.

Timeframe: 2017-18. Estimated cost: \$60,000, annually

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

1. Maintain facilities, structures, and physical improvements

A. Strategy: Repair flood damage to riverfront dike on the Nooksack Unit.

Timeframe: 2017 Estimated cost \$150,000 Funding source: Cost share with Whatcom County River & Flood, State funds.

- B. Strategy: Improve boardwalk at Pine/Cedar Lakes Unit.
Timeline: 2017-18. Estimated cost \$25,000.

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

- 1. **Maintain and improve fish populations**
 - A. Strategy: Start initial control efforts to address the Eurasian milfoil infestation in Lake Terrell.
Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: Department of Ecology noxious aquatic weed control grant funds.
 - B. Strategy: Manage water levels in Lake Terrell to provide water into Terrell Creek during summer dry periods.
Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: state operating funds.
- 2. **Protect, restore and enhance wetland and riparian habitats**
 - A. Strategy: Assist the Port of Bellingham in implementation of the Slater Road wetland mitigation project.
Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: Port of Bellingham.
 - B. Strategy: Pursue purchase of last 3-acre parcel of privately owned lakebed at Lake Terrell.
Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: grant funds, state operating funds.
 - C. Strategy: Provide co-op funding to county or city to buy out properties in Marietta and allow levee breaching on the Nooksack Unit.
Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: grant 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. Strategy: Maintain and improve walking trails around all units of the wildlife area.
Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: state operating funds.
 - B. Strategy: Mow the area north and east of the parking area at the north of Slater Rd Unit to provide an alternate area for dog walkers.
Timeframe: 2017. Funding source: state operating funds.

2017 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 160 acres of cereal grains for wintering waterfowl use.
- 2) Monitor and/or control weeds on 1,000 acres.
- 3) Continue photo point monitoring on 20 locations when GPS/mapping software is updated.
- 4) Pursue grant opportunities to create an ADA hunting site on the Nooksack Unit lagoon.
- 5) Release 4,000 pheasants with the assistance of 25 volunteers.
- 6) Coordinate with Port of Bellingham on north of Slater wetland enhancement project.
- 7) Coordinate with WWA to maintain 42 hunting blinds and 4 boat launches at Lake

- Terrell, Tennant Lake, Nooksack and Intalco units.
- 8) Coordinate use and maintenance of Intalco Archery Range with Custer Sportsmen's Club.
 - 9) Coordinate with British Petroleum on crops to plant for wildlife.
 - 10) Coordinate with Whatcom Conservation District on the Lake Terrell dam summer water releases.
 - 11) Coordinate with other land managing agencies.
 - 12) Coordinate with Whatcom County River & Flood division on dike repairs on the Nooksack unit.

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Input

The Whatcom Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) meeting was held May 11, 2017 to review management progress, address any new issues, and gather input on existing issues. No input was received from the WAAC.

Attendance included:

1. Colton Gully – Trout Unlimited
2. Greg McHenry – Port of Bellingham
3. Scott O'Day – Whatcom Chapter of Washington Waterfowl Association
4. Pam Borso – Audubon Society
5. Paul Sadler – Pheasant hunter
6. Steve Gordon – Pheasant hunter

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

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