



WENAS WILDLIFE AREA 2007-10 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is the most recent update to the 2006 Wenas Wildlife Area Management Plan http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/

This plan provides management direction for the Wenas Wildlife Area located in Yakima and Kittitas Counties, Washington. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Mission of “*Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife*” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions.



Plans are updated 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 2007-2010 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies, and performance measures for 2011.

Updates/Changes

The 113,642 acre Wenas Wildlife Area, located in Yakima and Kittitas Counties, was created in 1997 by combining the Wenas and Cleman Mountain Units from the Oak Creek Wildlife Area (WA) with the South L.T. Murray Unit, formerly part of the L.T. Murray WA. In 2000, the Wenas WA was consolidated with the L.T. Murray WA as one complex in an attempt to maximize efficiency. Management complexity since then necessitated change and in 2009 the Wenas Wildlife Area was separated from the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area. Units comprising the Manastash Ridge (3,059 acres) and Mellergaard (2,768 acres) parcels were transferred from the L.T. Murray to the Wenas, so that all lands south of Manastash Creek were included in the Wenas, simplifying management

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and boundary descriptions. A new manager, Shana Winegeart, was hired for the L.T. Murray and the former complex manager, Cindi Confer, now oversees management of the Wenas Wildlife Area.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife owns 77,003 acres; leases 16,479 acres of the 33,057 acres owned by the Department of Natural Resources; and manages 3,583 acres for the Bureau of Land Management. For the purposes of this planning document, the Wenas Wildlife Area is divided into six management units (Unit); the 33,146 acre North Cleman Mountain Unit, the 35,435 acre South Umtanum Ridge Unit, the 12,957 acre Roza Creek Unit, the 26,278 acre Umtanum Creek Unit, the 3,059 acre Manastash Ridge Unit, and the 2,768 acre Mellergaard Unit.

PERPETUAL TIMBER RIGHTS ACQUISITION

During the historical acquisition phase (1942 and 1951) of Wildlife Areas, WDFW (formerly known as Game Department) negotiated with Boise Cascade Timber Company (BCC) in transferring sections of land to State ownership in exchange for perpetual timber rights. This gave the State control over access for recreation and allowed protection of low elevation deer and elk winter range while allowing timber management to be controlled by Boise Cascade. Western Pacific Timber, LLC (WPT) purchased these rights when BCC liquidated their holdings in this region. WDFW has long been interested in reacquiring these timber rights for fish and wildlife management emphasis. In June 2008, WDFW acquired these rights from WPT through a timber sale on Sherman Creek WA in Ferry County. The Wenas WA portion of PTR's comprised 8,793 acres of timber that are now owned and managed by WDFW.



Woodcamp Ridge timber

WDNR/WDFW LAND EXCHANGE

For over 35 years, WDFW has leased approximately 125,000 acres of shrub-steppe and partially forested lands from the Department of Natural Resources. These lands are common school trust lands that are managed by DNR to generate revenue for school construction. The lands are intermixed with Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) ownerships in Eastern Washington primarily on the Oak Creek, Wenas, L.T, Murray, Whiskey Dick, Quilomene and Colockum Wildlife Areas.

During the 2003-05 biennium, the Fish and Wildlife Commission was directed by the Legislature to reduce funding for those leases by \$270,000/biennium as part of a much larger general fund reduction for the department. That action significantly increased the risk to those lands of conversion, sale, exchange or lease for purposes potentially incompatible with fish and wildlife.

To address this issue, the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Legislature approved a plan to exchange land between the two agencies. The legislature approved funding for WDFW to begin the appraisal and review process in the 2006 legislature and it has been ongoing since then. The land exchange was divided into three phases, all of which include the Wenas WA. Phase 1 includes the Dry Creek parcels, which will be transferred from WDFW ownership to DNR ownership. This phase has been approved by both agencies and is awaiting real estate transactions to be completed (expected by January 31, 2011). Phase 2, involving four DNR parcels on the Wenas WA being transferred to WDFW ownership, has a completed SEPA analysis and is awaiting agency approval prior to entering the real estate realm (completion expected by June 30, 2011). Phase 3, comprising the bulk of land transfers is currently on hold due to conflicts with funding sources originally used to acquire the WDFW lands.



Table 1. Phased Wenas Land Transfers

Phase 1	Township	Range	section	County
Transfer to DNR	17N	16E	18, 19,20,29,31,33	Yakima
Transfer to DNR	16N	16E	4	Yakima
Phase 2	Township	Range	section	County
Transfer to DFW	16N	17E	10,30,32	Yakima
Transfer to DFW	16N	18E	6	Kittitas

FUNDING

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) provides all funding, as part of its fish and wildlife mitigation program, for the South Umtanum Ridge, Roza, and Umtanum Creek Units, including leasing of grazing rights on the interspersed DNR parcels. The 2010 funding level is approximately \$350,456. This equates to \$4.69/acre. A proposal has been submitted to BPA for funding for fiscal years 2011 through 2018 which will determine future funding levels. See BPA Information at the end of this document for more detail.

The North Cleman Mountain, Manastash Ridge and Mellergaard Units are managed through State Wildlife funds. The annual state funds for the Wenas Wildlife Area is \$20,000, providing \$0.51/acre for management of these lands.

GRANTS

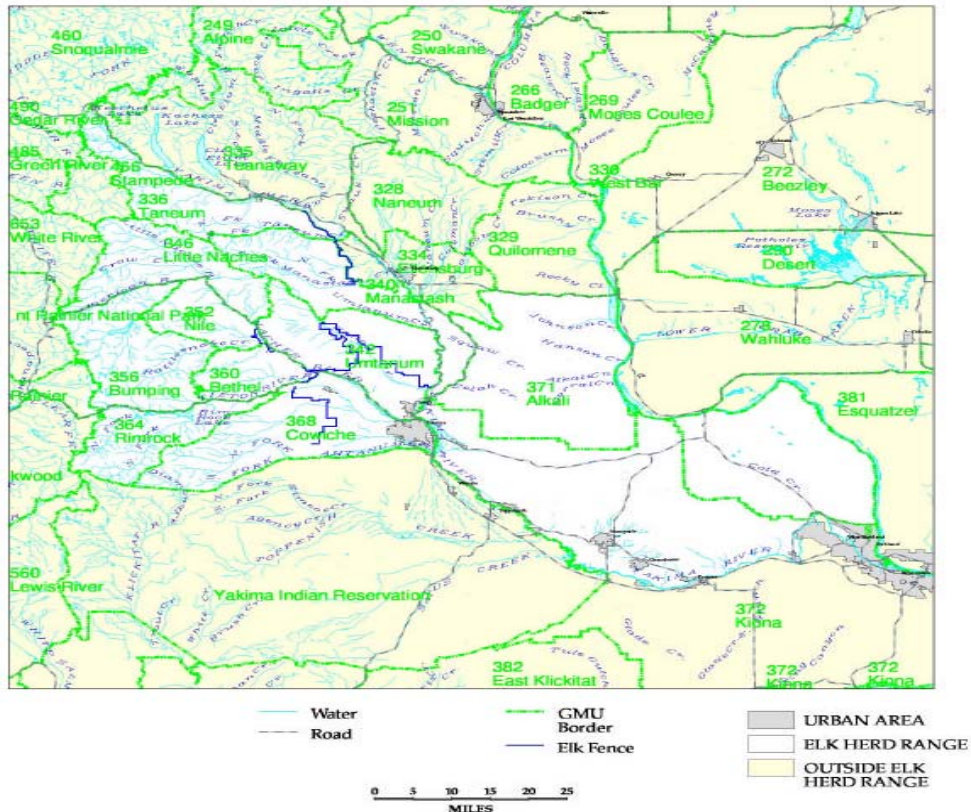
The L.T. Murray/Wenas Wildlife Area Multi-site Rehab was funded in 2007. This was funded by the Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) in the State Lands Restoration Grant category. RCO funding was for \$119,539, with a WDFW match of \$18,258. Funding was for work in the Mtn Vale and Mellergaard Units of the Wenas, and the Quilomene and Skookumchuck Units of

the Murray. All sites are being treated to improve/restore the native grass seed component in these shrub-steppe habitat areas, some of which were formerly used for agriculture.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Rocky Mountain Elk

A recent research project, conducted during 2003-2007, generated more than 80,000 relocation points for radio collared elk from the Yakima herd. This project was a collaborative effort of the WDFW and U.S. Forest Service (USFS); WDFW data collection focused on elk movements, reproductive success, and body condition dynamics of cow elk, whereas USFS data collection focused on estimating forage species composition and forage production across major habitat types used by the Yakima elk herd. Final analyses of these data are now underway, including analyses designed to identify important elk habitats, and the seasonal distribution and movement patterns of Yakima herd elk. Elk habitat use is affected seasonally by a number of factors, but forage availability, water availability, and disturbance are consistently important determinants of elk distribution and selection patterns. When disturbance is low or modest, elk typically select the best foraging areas available. However, when disturbance is extensive or frequent, or elk are particularly vulnerable (e.g., when cows have very young, immobile calves), they may actually select suboptimal foraging areas in exchange for increased security. Bull elk and cow elk may also use different habitats seasonally, because their reproductive success is driven by different factors. This information will be used to identify key habitat features and associated management on the Wenas WA.



Rocky Mountain Mule Deer

Mule deer populations in Western Yakima County have declined by nearly 50% since 2004. A major implication of the decline is the presence of two different exotic louse populations causing what is termed as “Hair Loss Syndrome” in the deer population (2008 Deer Status and Trend Report: Region 3). Captive animals can be treated successfully, however there are no current methods known to treat wild populations. Land management functions for mule deer will not likely change on the Wenas WA and will still emphasize mule deer management.

ROAD MANAGEMENT

Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP): In fall 2010, WDFW improved/maintained approximately 4.3 miles of road, abandoned 2.7 miles, replaced two undersized or problem culverts and removed the Hardy Canyon Bridge. The road maintenance included rocking, installing water bars, improving drainage, and addressing sediment delivery issues on the Woodcamp Ridge road, and portions of the Newland and Hardy Canyon roads. In addition, the stream-adjacent portion of the Hardy Canyon road was abandoned to Forest Practice standards. In 2011, WDFW intends to complete work on the Newland Road, remove or replace fish passage barrier culverts on Evans, Middle Fork and Jones Canyon Roads, and install a pedestrian bridge at the Hardy Canyon crossing of North Wenas Creek.

Green Dot Road Management: Regional staff held three public meetings in 2009 (Ellensburg, Selah, and Wenatchee) to gather public input regarding updates to the Green Dot system. Three roads on the Wenas WA were discussed for changes. The stream-adjacent portion of the Hardy Canyon road was proposed for abandonment to meet state law under Forest Practices. The proposal included opening the Woodcamp Ridge road to public access to maintain vehicular access to the top of Cleman ridge on the east end of the mountain. The other proposal was to close the Buffalo/Skyline Trailhead Road at the elk fence. This was requested by US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to address vandalism occurring to the Roza Canal. All proposals were supported and the Hardy Canyon and Woodcamp Ridge Road changes have been implemented. Issues between DNR and BOR must be resolved before the Buffalo Road change can occur.



Hardy Canyon Bridge Removal

Road Name / Proposal	Criteria/Issues	WDFW DT Comments	CAG Comments	BGMR Comments	Public Comments	
WENAS					Agree	Disagree
Hardy Canyon - close	RMAP - stream adjacent	agree	agree	agree	23	20
Woodcamp - open	Recently improved by DNR. Added to offset Hardy loss	agree	agree	agree	23	20
Buffalo Access - close	Vandalism to BOR canal	agree	agree	agree	27	12

New Issues

California Bighorn Sheep

The Umtanum bighorn sheep herd (which partially resides on the Wenas WA) was one of the first herds re-established with the release of eight animals, at the mouth of Umtanum Creek, transplanted from the Colockum bighorn sheep herd in 1972 (Wash. State Mgmt. Plan for Bighorn Sheep 1995). The population has fluctuated between 170 and 250 animals since 1989, with an upward trend. The herd objective is 250-300 animals (2009-2015 Game Management Plan & 2004 Bighorn Sheep Status and Trend Report), and nearly 300 were counted in the summer of 2008, making them one of the largest bands in the state. Forage management and disturbance minimization are the most notable management activities pursued in relation to herd land management.

In November 2009, sick and dying sheep from this herd were noted and subsequently surveys were conducted to determine extent of concern. A total of 50 animals were removed from the Umtanum herd and sent to Washington State University (WSU) for testing. All of the animals were found to have *Pasturella* and *Mycoplasma* markers. Subsequent surveys and observations indicate that although no lambs survived this season, no additional adults have succumbed to the disease.

RECREATION

We received numerous calls from the public regarding conflicts and safety issues associated with target shooting on the wildlife area. Two draft proposals were developed by WDFW to address these concerns. Both included requiring an access permit to use the parking areas on the wildlife area. This has been implemented and appears to have helped with some of the conflicts. Additional coordination with DNR will be required before moving forward with either draft proposal.

Status Report of 2006 through 2010 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 2011.

2006-10 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2011 Related Activity/ Comments
Complete CAG selection for Wenas WA.	Completed. Combined CAG for Oak Creek, Wenas, L.T. Murray, and Colockum WA's established in 2005. Olympia determined that each WA needed to establish an individual CAG.	In Process.
Maintain 46.5 miles of elk fence.	Completed	Yearly maintenance preformed to prevent crop depredation.
Maintain 7 miles of stock fence.	Completed. Prevention of livestock trespass.	
Maintain 8.6 miles of fire breaks.	Completed	Annual prevention.
Remove 5 miles of old interior stock fence on the wildlife area.	Completed 2006. Removed 10 miles of old stock fence.	
Plant 20 acres of degraded shrub-steppe habitat with native species.	Completed 2006. Seeded 20 acres on sites treated with herbicides.	
Restore 50 acres of habitat, inter-seeded with native shrub- steppe species to increase habitat diversity.	Completed. 2006 – additionally inter-seed 60 acres at Sheep Company Road project area	
Reseed 50 acres of degraded shrub-steppe with native shrub-steppe species.	Completed. 2007 - Seed 25 acres on sites treated with herbicides. Inter-seed 75 acres on 1998-99 rehab sites. 2009 - Plant seed on 20 acres treated with herbicides. Plant seed on 150 acres that burned in 2008.	
Plant 0.5 miles of riparian habitat.	Completed. 2006 – Planted OK Corral riparian habitat. 2007 - Plant hydrophytic	

	stock at OK Corral riparian site.	
Fertilize 200 acres of restoration seeding.	Completed. 2006 & 2007 - Fertilized 160 acres of native seeding.	
Treat weeds on 180 acres of the restoration seeding.	Completed. 2006 - Wick/wipe 100 acres of native seeding to treat cereal rye planned but due to weather conditions, we were unable to wipe the rye; mowed instead. 2007-08 Weeds treated on 80 acres native seeding project in (Roza/Cottonwood). 2009 - Treatment of weeds on 80 acres of native seeding in Sheep Company.	
Treat weeds on 145 acre Sheep Company fire.	Completed. 2006-07 Weeds treated on 145 acre fire rehab to control Cheatgrass, bulbous, Bluegrass, knapweed and Russian thistle. 2008 - Fall treatment of weeds on 150 acres that burned in 2008 (Roza/Cottonwood). 2009 - Spring treatment of weeds on 150 acres burned in 2008.	
Treat weeds on 400 acres across the wildlife area.	Completed. 2006 – Planned to treat 300 acres for weeds but completed 324 acres of fall spraying. 2007 - Completed 70 ac of aerial spraying; ran out of funding. Out-sourced aerial weed treatment on 380 acres to enhance growth and seed productivity of native seeding on Roza flat, Cottonwood fields and Sheep Company. Wick/wipe 100 acres of native seeding to treat cereal rye to enhance growth and seed productivity of native seeding	

	on McCade fields (weather conditions prevented 2006 application). Mow 100 acres of native seeding to treat cereal rye to enhance growth and seed productivity of native seedings on McCade fields. 2008 – 300 acres planned but treated 650+ acres. 2009 - Treat weeds on 220 acres.	
Treat weeds on at least 50 miles of roadside on the wildlife area.	Completed	Completed yearly as annual maintenance.
Modify William’s Pipeline crossing of Umtanum Creek to remove fish passage barrier.	Completed. William’s Pipeline completed channel realignment and restoration activities in fall 2006.	
Complete design for installing a bridge or bottomless arch culvert at the Durr road crossing of Umtanum Creek	Incomplete	Project has been put on hold until funding is available.
Maintain 1.5 miles of the Ridge road (700 feet relocated).	Completed	Completed yearly as annual maintenance.
Maintain 5.5 miles of Kelley Hollow road (0.85 miles relocated)	Completed	Completed yearly as annual maintenance.
Develop Fire contracts for wildlife area protection.	Completed	Completed yearly as annual maintenance.
Pay DNR annual lease payment.	Completed	Completed yearly as annual maintenance.
Pay annual PILT and weed assessment to Yakima and Kittitas counties.	Completed	Completed yearly as annual maintenance.
Submit annual contract to BPA.	Completed	Completed yearly as annual maintenance.
Submit annual BPA-required statement of work, budget, and quarterly and annual reports for the BPA-funded portion of the wildlife area.	Completed	Completed on a quarterly and yearly basis.
Complete wildlife area plan, weed plan, fire plan, and annual RMAP report.	WA Plan in progress; final draft submitted to Olympia. Fire Plan completed. RMAP	RMAP implementation complete by 2015.

	plan completed, implementation ongoing.	
Maintain contact with CAG (at least twice per year).	Incomplete; Need to form a New Wenas-only CAG.	Last meeting held November 2006 with combined CAG. Next meeting scheduled for January 2011 with new Wenas-only CAG.
Have staff attend annual pesticide recertification workshops.	Completed	Annual compliance required.
Have staff complete Red Card or Blue Card training.	Completed	Annual compliance required.
Have staff attend first aid training.	Completed	Annual compliance required.

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. Although underlined strategies have no current funding source, identifying these needs is the first step to securing additional funds.

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

1. Protect and restore forest habitats

The agency has prioritized mature forest habitat management and protection. Mature forests support high wildlife populations and species diversity, and are important as wildlife breeding and seasonal use habitats. Many forest stands on the Wildlife Area are unhealthy due to overstocking, over-harvest, insects and diseases. Restoration is needed to move these stands towards a more mature, diverse, healthy condition.

A. Strategy: Acquire the perpetual timber rights (PTRs) on the Cleman Mtn. unit.
Justification: Acquisition of timber rights will enable agency to better manage habitat for fish and wildlife species. Timeframe: 2006- 2008.

B. Strategy: Assess need for understory thinning and prescribed burns in the Cleman Mt. Unit to reduce risk of catastrophic fire, insect and disease potential, and create forest conditions that more closely replicate the Historic Range of Variability (HRV) suitable for a diversity of historic wildlife species.

Justification: If needed, thinning would reduce fuel load and stimulate fire dependant forage species preferred by ungulates and other early successional wildlife species as well as enhancing the growth of the remaining timber, providing future habitat for large diameter pine dependant wildlife species.

2011 Performance Measures

Performance measures for the Wenas Wildlife Area are listed below. BPA funding follows the federal fiscal cycle of October 1 through September 30, so performance measures for the BPA-funded portion of the wildlife area are estimated and may change or not be accomplished depending on what the annual contract with BPA requires. Accomplishments and desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually. Plan updates will address these performance measures:

- 46.5 miles of elk fence maintained.
- 7 miles of stock fence maintained.
- 8.6 miles of fire breaks maintained.
- 5 acres of habitat restoration: inter-seeded with native forbs to increase habitat diversity.
- 25 acres of degraded shrub-steppe seeded to native shrub steppe species (McCade).
- Weeds treated on 395 acres of the restoration project.
- Weeds treated on 295 acres where fires have occurred.
- Weeds treated on 220 acres across the wildlife area.
- Weeds treated on at least 40 miles of roadside on the wildlife area.
- Fire contracts maintained for wildlife area protection.
- DNR annual lease payment paid.
- Annual PILT and weed assessment paid to Yakima and Kittitas counties.
- Annual contract submitted to BPA.
- Annual BPA-required statement of work, budget, and quarterly and annual reports submitted for the BPA-funded portion of the wildlife area.
- Plans completed including wildlife area plan, weed plan, fire plan, and annual RMAP report.
- Contact with CAG maintained (contact at least twice per year).
- Staff attended annual pesticide recertification workshops.
- Red card or blue card training completed by wildlife area staff.
- First aid training provided to staff

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to –
http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/

Information on BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has received mitigation credit for funding habitat enhancement, and ongoing management of habitats on the majority of the Wenas Wildlife Area (South Umtanum Ridge, Umtanum Creek, and Roza Creek units). The Wenas Wildlife Area was approved as a wildlife mitigation project in 1997 and BPA-funded habitat enhancement efforts to meet mitigation objectives have been underway since that time. The project provides an estimated 19,254 habitat units (HUs) toward their overall Wildlife Mitigation Debt for the Columbia River hydroelectric system. The HUs are related to mitigation for wildlife losses resulting from the construction of Grand Coulee, McNary and John Day hydroelectric dams. The number of habitat units achieved is based on the sampling of a number of habitat characteristics that are components of mathematical models for individual species that generate a numeric value for habitat quality from zero to one, known as a Habitat Suitability Index. The suitability index is then multiplied by the number of acres being evaluated to generate the number of HUs. This process is commonly referred to as a Habitat Evaluation Procedure or HEP. Species models being applied to mitigation activities on the Wenas Wildlife Area include: Sage-grouse, mule deer, western meadowlark, black-capped chickadee, yellow warbler, and mink.

Most of the management strategies relating to habitat management identified in the Wenas Wildlife Area Management Plan are funded through BPA's mitigation program. A summary of these activities can be found in our most recent project review and funding proposal to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council who provides oversight of BPA's mitigation programs. The Wenas Wildlife Area Proposal (Project #200600400) is located at: <http://www.nwcouncil.org/Fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1011>. This document includes a summary of activities (work elements), a link to the project narrative, an itemized budget request for 2010-2012, and estimated budgets through 2018. The majority of the activities relate to protection and enhancement of shrub-steppe habitat, along with measures designed to monitor the effectiveness of the activities, including habitat/plant community monitoring, wildlife population response, and periodic HEP surveys to track progress toward mitigation goals.

Separate funding is used for management of the Cleman Mtn unit. In addition, cost share for the BPA-funding portion is provided by WDFW through game surveys, science division expertise, engineering and construction shop help and advice, RMAP compliance, and periodic capital projects.