

2020

Michelle Tirhi, District Biologist
Emily Butler, Assistant District Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 11 HUNTING PROSPECTS

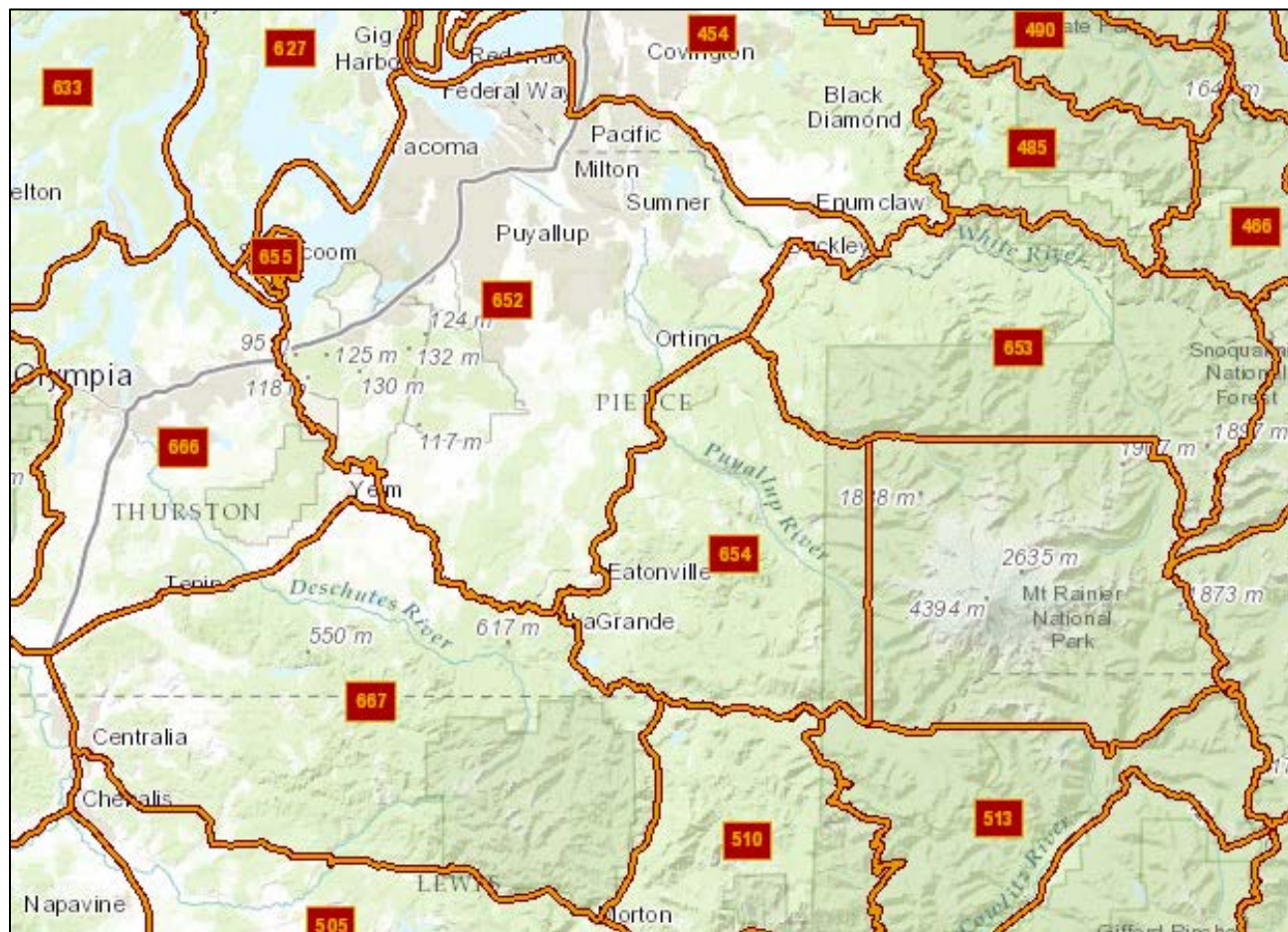
Thurston and Pierce counties and GMU 667 of Lewis County

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DISTRICT 11 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Game Management Units (GMUs) that comprise District 11 are Puyallup (GMU 652), Anderson Island (GMU 655), White River (GMU 653), Mashel (GMU 654), Deschutes (GMU 666), and Skookumchuck (GMU 667). Land ownership in the district includes private residential and agricultural (e.g. GMUs 652 and 666), and both private and public industrial timberlands (e.g. GMUs 653, 654, and 667). The eastern portion of GMU 653 contains higher-elevation alpine conditions bordering Mount Rainier National Park.



Map depicting the six District 11 Game Management Units and surrounding units in neighboring districts (400s for Region 4 and 500s for Region 5).

District 11 offers varied hunting opportunities, from waterfowl hunting on Puget Sound waterways to deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on commercial forest land. WDFW's Scatter Creek (GMU 666), Skookumchuck, and West Rocky Prairie wildlife areas (GMU 667), and Washington State Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Capitol State Forest (GMU 663),

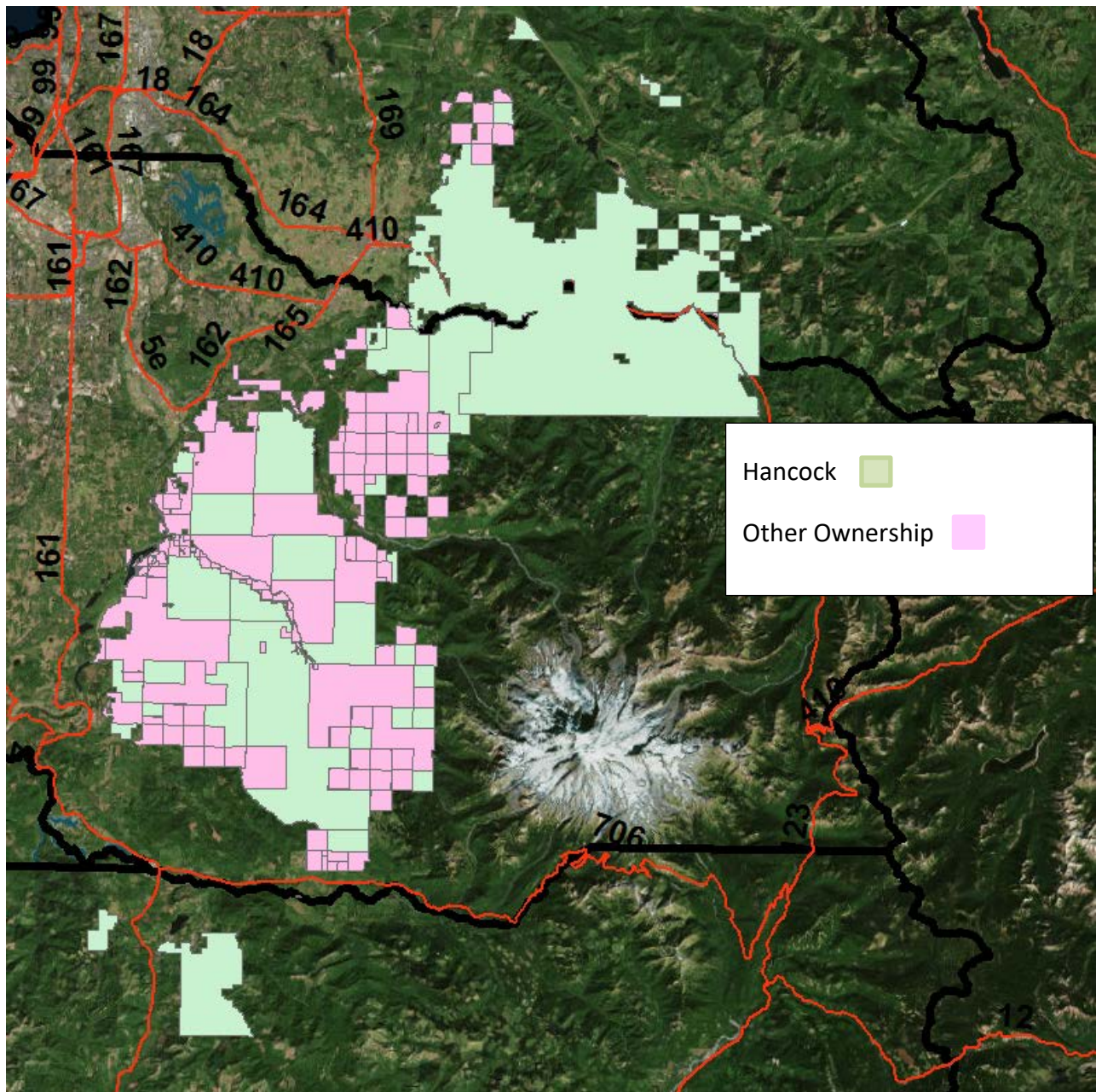
Elbe Hills State Forest (GMU 654), Tahoma State Forest (GMU 654/667), and additional patchwork ownership in the district provide ample opportunity for small and big game hunting on public land accessed free of charge. U.S. Forest Service land (federal) surrounding Mount Rainier National Park in the eastern portion of the district is also accessible.

Hunters and anglers can find maps and land ownership information at the following:

- Pierce County: matterhornwab.co.pierce.wa.us/publicgis
- Thurston County: map.co.thurston.wa.us/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=Parcels.Main
- Lewis County: maps.lewiscountywa.gov/topic/assessor-parcel-maps/
- WDFW statewide: wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations
- WDFW hunt planner: geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/

Various private commercial timber companies, each with their own access regulations, including some with fee access programs, own or manage timberlands throughout the district. Hancock Natural Resource Group (Hancock) has sold significant land to various other companies and tribal governments in Pierce County (see Figure 1 below). Although most of those new owners still run their public access through Hancock's Fee Access Program, this is likely to change in the coming years with each company controlling its own access program. Most of these commercial timberlands provide excellent small and large game hunting opportunities.

**** Notice: Hancock Natural Resource Group's White River recreation program will be closed for the 2020-2021 recreation season due to uncertainty around timelines pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes both motorized and non-motorized access. Hancock is refunding fees for anyone who has already purchased a 2020-21 season permit. Hancock's Kapowsin and Eatonville recreation programs will remain in effect. ****



Hancock Natural Resource Group and neighboring commercial private timberland ownership, Eastern King, Pierce, Lewis counties, 2018.

In eastern Pierce County (GMUs 653 and 654), hunters can find the following ownership and contact information:

- Hampton Lumber/Mid Valley Resources (access managed under Hancock Access Program): hamptonlumber.com/our-company/.

- Hancock Natural Resource Group: hancockrecreationnw.com/
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (access managed by Hancock Access Program): muckleshoot.nsn.us/services/culture--wildlife/wildlife-program.aspx
- Rayonier (formerly Pope Resources and subsidiary Olympic Resource Management; access managed under Hancock Access Program): rayonier.com/our-businesses/land-resources/hunting-and-recreation/
- Weyerhaeuser: weyerhaeuser.com/timberlands/recreational-access/

In Thurston County (GMUs 666 and 667):

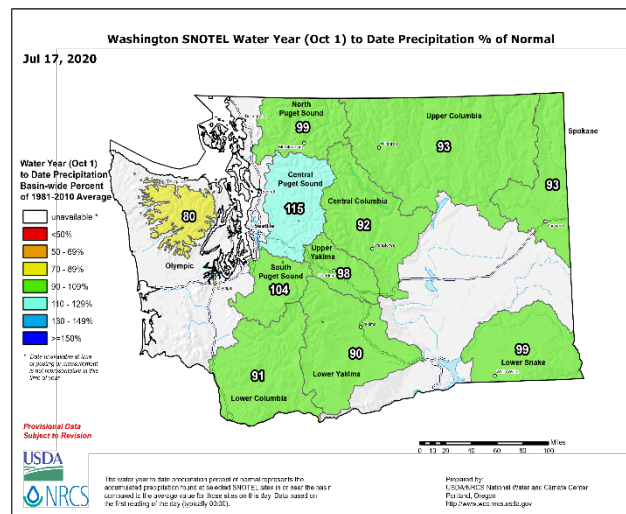
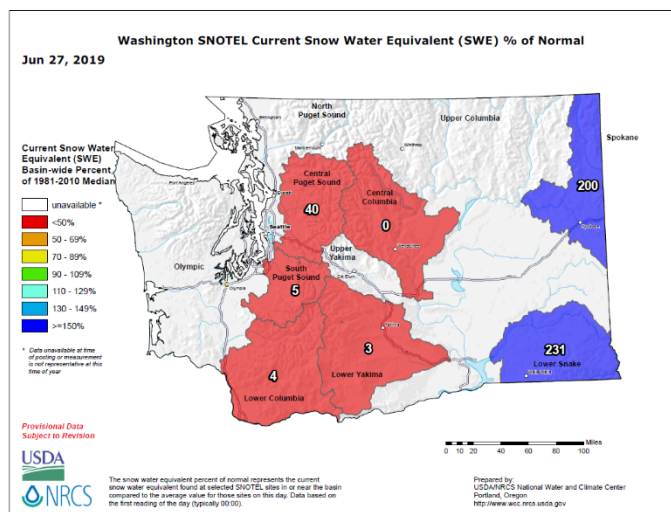
- Manke Lumber Company: mankelumber.com/contact.html
- Port Blakely: portblakely.com/us-forestry/public-access
- Weyerhaeuser: weyerhaeuser.com/timberlands/recreational-access/

District 11 partially contains both the North Rainier and South Rainier elk herds, providing an opportunity to harvest elk as they migrate out of Mount Rainer high country and follow river drainages to low elevations during the hunting season. Waterfowl hunting on Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, off Anderson Island (GMU 655), and inland lakes in the district are some of the best opportunities in the South Puget Sound Region.

Hunters should be aware of [firearm restrictions](#) in certain parts of Pierce and Thurston counties. Hunters can find Pierce County firearm regulations and maps of firearm restriction areas on Pierce County's [Public GIS tool](#) found here. Maps of no-shooting and controlled shooting zones in Thurston County can be [seen here](#). Note that fire season can result in both public (U.S. Forest Service; USFS) and private industrial timberlands closing for all access. Hunters may check with the local ranger station on closures before setting out. The Incident Information System is also a great place to check fire status: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>. Anderson Island is mostly private property with some public property and so much of the island would be 'Hunt by Permission'.

Moisture contained in the snowpack is the most reliable indicator of moisture levels that contribute to forage persistence for both large and small game through hunting seasons. This moisture level also affects the rate and intensity of the wildfire season, which has an additional impact to forage persistence. Snowpack moisture as percent normal for 2020 was not available at the time of this publication; total precipitation for year-to-date is provided instead. The South Cascades of Washington, including District 11, are currently at roughly 100 percent of the previous 20-year average precipitation levels, which should translate to a healthy forage level

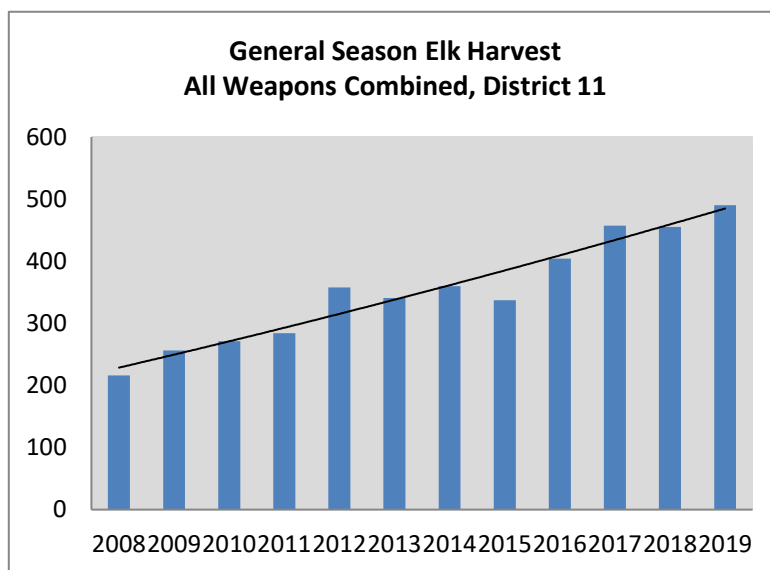
going into the 2020 hunting season with game species benefitting accordingly. Berry production has occurred early for the 2020 season. District 11 had two notable wildfires in 2017: the Norse Peak and American fires. These fires burned 56,241 acres in eastern Pierce and Yakima counties according to the USFS. Wildfires opened tree canopy and added nitrogen to the soil, benefiting game through increased browse.



Snowpack moisture as percent of normal for 2020 was not available at time of publication; total precipitation October 1, 2019-July 17, 2020 provided instead. Snowpack moisture for June 2019 provided for comparison (NRCS 2020).

ELK

Both the North Rainier and South Rainier Elk Herds are partially contained in District 11, providing ample opportunity to harvest elk. Elk harvest has continued to increase in District 11 and the availability of elk should continue to increase in all GMUs as both the North and South Rainier Elk Herds continue to recover, having met recovery goals during the past 20 years. Antlerless restrictions, winter elk habitat closures, and permit hunt restrictions in GMU 653 continue to benefit herd recovery in the North Rainier herd. Hunters report a quality hunting experience and quality bulls for those fortunate enough to be drawn for the GMU 653



bull only permit hunt.

The larger portion of each elk herd migrates down from high alpine meadows in Mount Rainier National Park to lowland winter range. Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Wildlife managers encourage hunters to scout for elk leaving the Mount Rainier National Park and following the Carbon River northwards into the Clearwater Wilderness Area, the White River into the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, and the Nisqually River to the southern part of the district.

USFS-forested areas off Highway 410 including roads 71, 73, and 74, and Bullion and Big Crow Basins east of Crystal Mountain Ski Resort (outside ski boundaries once ski season officially opens) offer good opportunity for high-elevation, rugged elk hunting with plenty of robust elk. USFS, which permits the ski resort, wants to remind hunters that Crystal Mountain Ski Resort's service roads are not open to the public, but hunters may ask for permission from the ski resort to haul out a harvested animal.

The Elbe Hills and Tahoma state forests and University of Washington Charles Lathrop Pack Experimental and Demonstration Forest (Pack Forest) in GMU 654 are good prospects for deer or elk and can be accessed by boot, bike, or horse during the general deer or elk season. Pack Forest managers caution hunters to be aware of students researching in the forest at any time of the year. The Elbe Hills State Forest has limited vehicle access during the elk season as follows: entire 5 Road is closed, 8 Road is open from Ashford to Scott Turner Road, and the 6 Road is closed except for hunters with a disabled access permit (see Disabled Hunting on the WDFW website for more information). Much of the Tahoma State Forest is also closed to vehicle access due to the ski hut management program and various road and bridge washouts. Call the DNR office in Enumclaw if you have a question about a specific road (360-802-7055). Maps of Elbe Hills and Tahoma state forests, as well as other Washington State Department of Natural Resource public lands in the South Puget Sound, can be [found here](#). Hunters can legally walk, bike or horseback ride behind locked gates for hunting unless otherwise posted.

Subherds of the South Rainier elk herd continue to increase and expand on and around the Centralia Coal Mine and Skookumchuk Wildlife Area (GMU 667). Wildlife managers encourage hunters to scout the area from the [Skookumchuk Wildlife Area](#) south to the northern boundary of the Centralia Coal Mine (GMU 667). Hunting on the coal mine is only allowed under specialized permits that require a mining escort. For many years, TransAlta allowed two senior and two disabled permit hunts on the mine but in 2020 will only be allowing one of each for a total of 10 permits over two weekends. Some elk can occasionally be found and hunted on WDFW's West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area in south Thurston County (GMU 666) and Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) military property in Pierce County (GMU 652). Hunters must register to hunt

on JBLM through NW Adventure Center (253-967-8282 or 253-967-7744) or through the [JBLM website](#). Hunters may also find elk in District 11 off Delphi Road SW and neighboring power



North Rainier elk wintering in the Crystal River Ranch area, District 11.

lines in western Thurston County (GMU 666). Elk cannot be hunted on property owned by USFWS near 123rd Ave SW in the Black River refuge of GMU 666 (e.g. former Weeks Dairy).

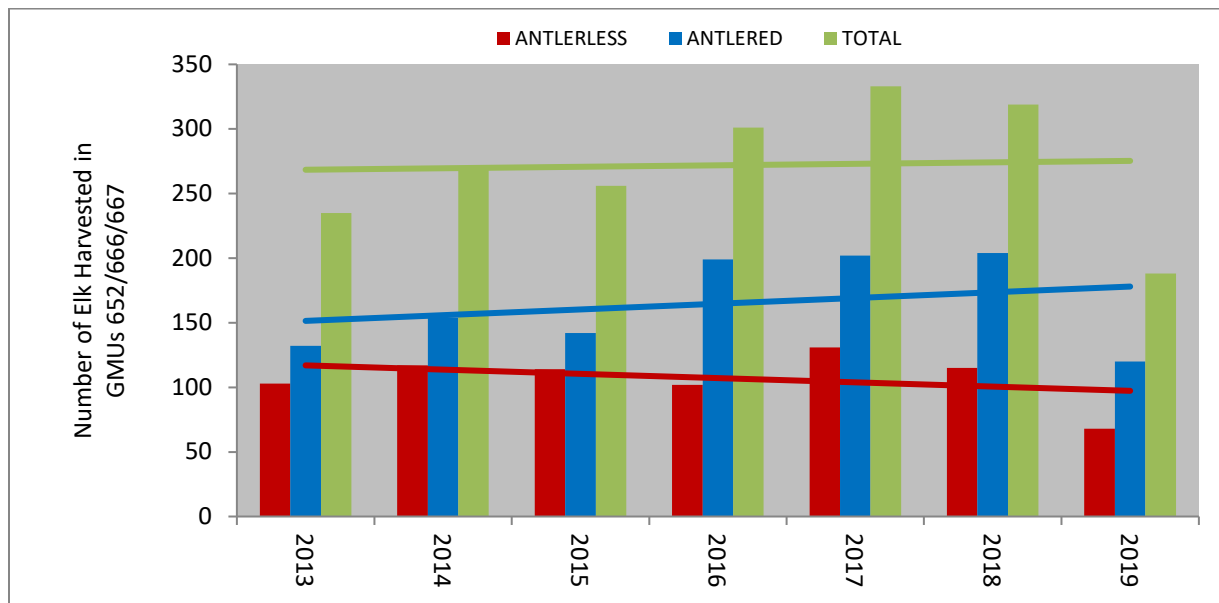
Elk continue to increase on private farmlands and properties in GMUs 652 (around Graham, Buckley, and Enumclaw), GMU 667 (Yelm and Hanaford area), and GMU 666 (foothills of Capitol State Forest to Delphi Road SW and Waddell Creek Road SW). Overall, elk are plentiful in these damage areas, with access to private property being the primary limitation. Hunters must request permission to access private lands and should obtain landowner permission weeks in advance of the season (e.g. visit the property and ask for permission). Elk Area 6013 in GMU 652 has been reduced in size to encompass primarily the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation. Wildlife managers

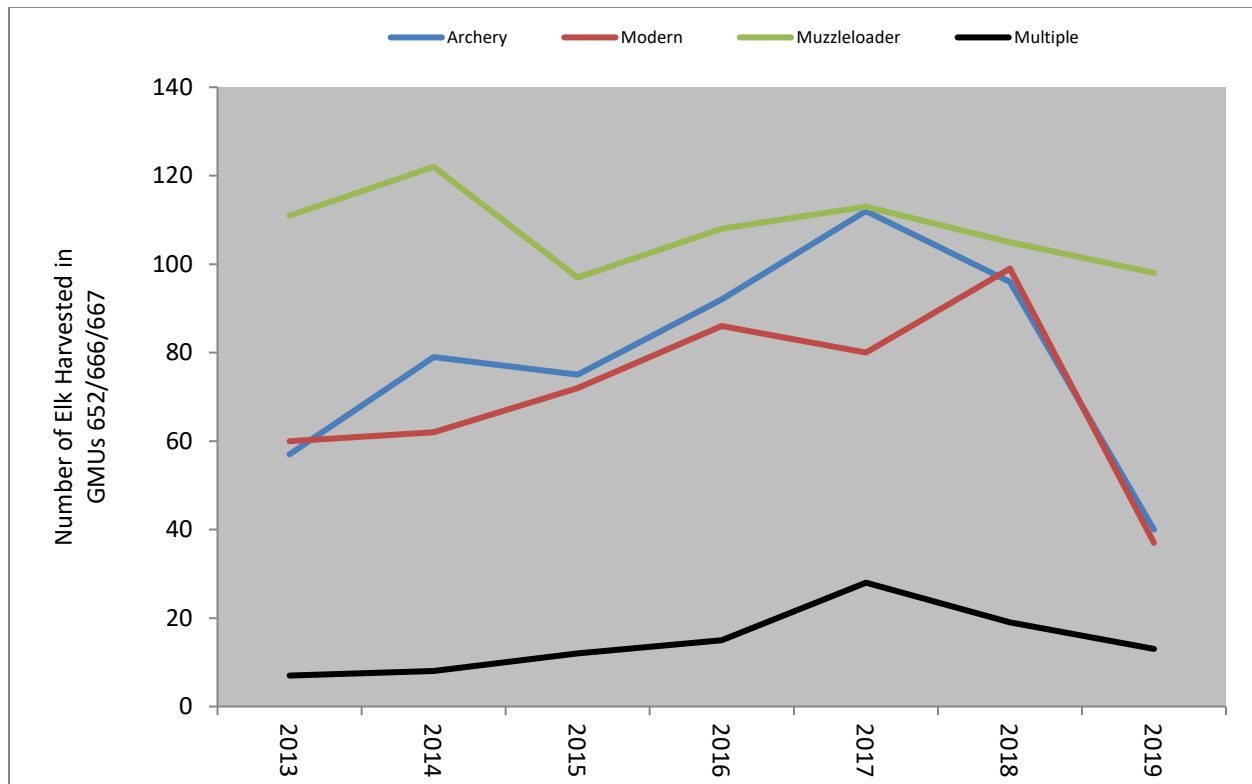
implemented several new hunting restrictions in 2015 to support conserving elk for tribal purposes on the reservation. In response to increasing elk and elk-associated damage off-reservation in Buckley and Enumclaw, Elk Area 6014 was expanded and provides a 3-point minimum or antlerless general modern firearm season; both early and late archery and muzzleloader seasons; and three separate winter antlerless hunts allowing up to ten elk per hunt. Elk Area 6014 includes agricultural lands, hobby farms, and ranch homes, and supports about 150-200 total elk. Hunters should obtain access to these properties prior to applying for these permits. WDFW conflict specialist Matt Blankenship (360-986-6209; Matthew.Blankenship@dfw.wa.gov) may be able to assist with suggesting access sites.

The Hanaford Elk Area 6069 of GMU 667 also provides one antlerless elk permit hunt (five permits) and two senior permit elk hunts (ten permits) for controlling private property damage. .

Finally, general Region 6 Master Hunter elk permits are also available. Those drawn, will often have opportunities to hunt damage properties in both the Buckley/Enumclaw and Hanaford area, as needed, and elsewhere in the region but must be available on a 24-hour notice.

General season elk harvest has been stable during the past 7 years for all weapons within GMUs 652, 666, and 667 (combined these make up Elk Population Management Unit 62). This makes for good prospects for harvesting an elk in those GMUs in 2020. Muzzleloaders typically have the highest harvest over those years with modern firearm and archery harvest close behind, except for 2019 when all harvest declined noticeably.

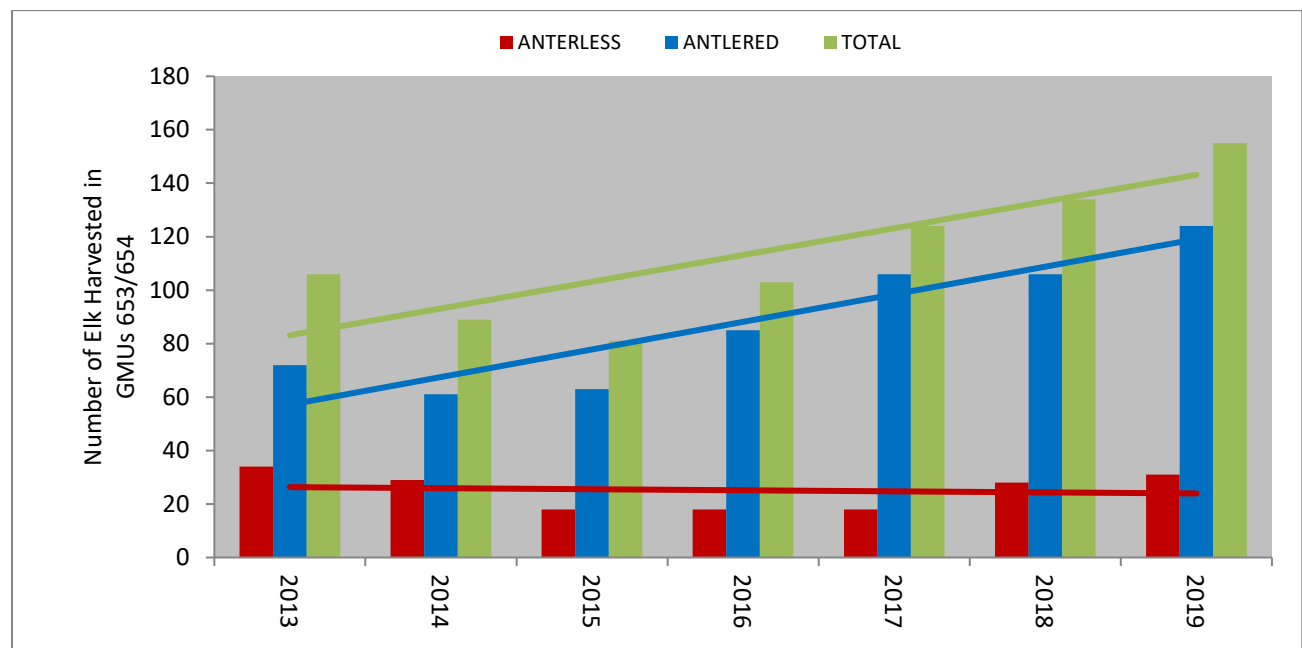


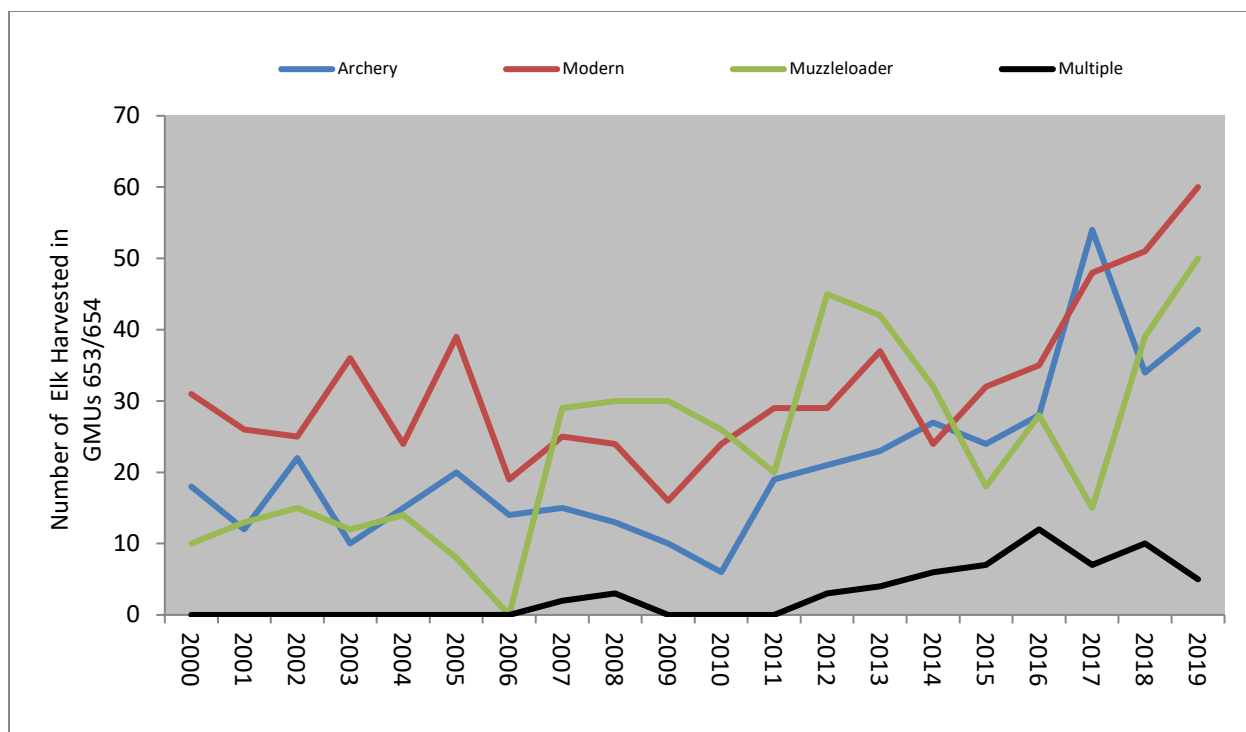


Harvest trends have also gradually increased in GMUs 653 and 654 during the past 7 years (combined these make up Elk Population Management Unit 67). Interestingly, PMU 62 experienced a noticeable decline in elk harvest for all weapon types in 2019 whereas PMU 67 saw an increase across all weapon types—keeping in mind that the former normally provides twice the harvest as the latter. Antlerless harvest in GMU 654 declined despite increasing property damage caused by an increasing elk sub-herd. In response, District 11 changed the boundaries of Elk Damage Hunt Area 6054 in 2019 to focus the hunt on those properties experiencing damage.

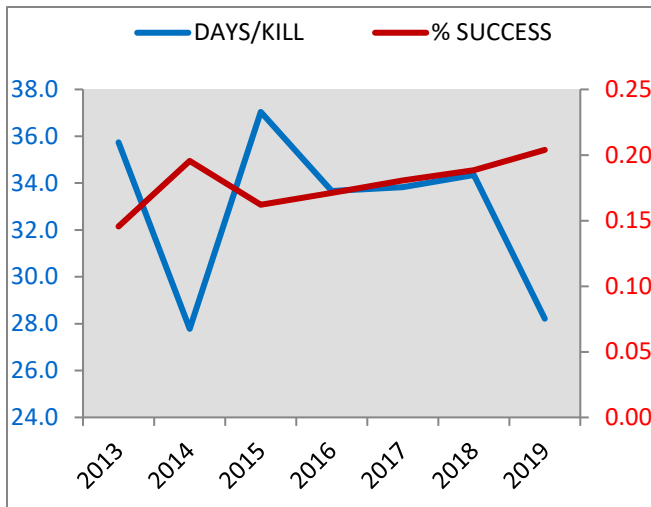
Weyerhaeuser’s Vail Tree Farm in GMU 667 and Hancock Natural Resource Group’s managed forestland (Kapowsin Tree Farm in GMU 654, Eatonville, and Buckley Blocks in GMU 653) all support elk but require a vehicle access permit obtained by contacting the company directly (see more information under Deer). Wildlife managers draw 11 recreational access permit holders to hunt elk on the Kapowsin Timberlands and one recreational access permit holder to hunt elk on the Eatonville Timberlands during the elk seasons. The Buckley block doesn’t allow any recreation access during any bull elk season. Each Hancock recreational access permit purchased for Kapowsin Timberlands from mid-March thru mid-May (see dates on Hancock website each

year) automatically enters a drawing to hunt elk during any bull elk season for GMU 654. Each Hancock recreational access permit purchased for Eatonville Timberlands for that period also automatically enters a drawing to hunt elk during any bull elk season for GMU 653 Eatonville Block. At the time of purchase, you must select which weapon you would be using if drawn, and Hancock randomly selects three archery, three muzzleloader, and five modern firearm permits. The drawing occurs in early May and once winners have been notified, names are posted on the Hancock recreational website. Only drawn hunters can hunt elk on any Hancock properties during elk seasons. The White River Tree Farm is closed to state recreational hunters during the elk season and closed to all hunters during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic (see note at the beginning). Please send questions about Hancock recreational access program to recadmin@hnr.org.

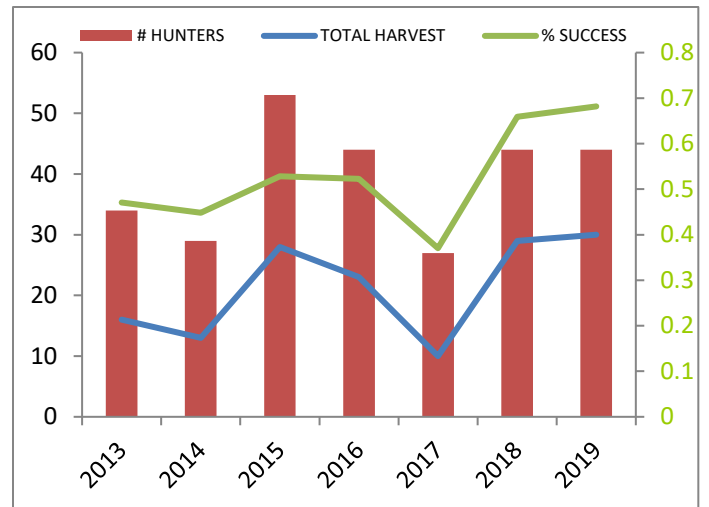




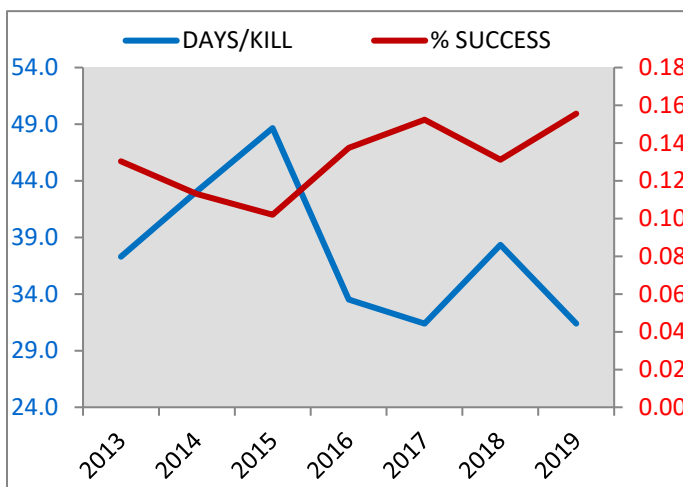
Hunter success represents both the percentage of hunters that reported successfully harvesting an elk and the number of days it took to harvest an animal in the following graphs for the five GMUs in District 11 (GMU 655, Anderson Island, has no elk). Success has been generally increasing in most GMUs over the past seven years, tracking elk population recovery in both the North Rainier and South Rainier elk herds. The exception is the Deschutes GMU 666, where access to hunting grounds is difficult due to the higher percentage of privately-owned land. Regardless, success for hunters who have gained private land access in that GMU has remained stable and thus prospects are good for those hunters obtaining access in 2016-17. Elk hunters are also less successful in GMU 667, which in general supports fewer elk than the northern GMUs. The bull only permit hunt in GMU 653 has the district's highest success rate, averaging 40 percent since it began in 2006. This is a rugged, high alpine hunt, but worth the effort for those lucky enough to draw a permit.



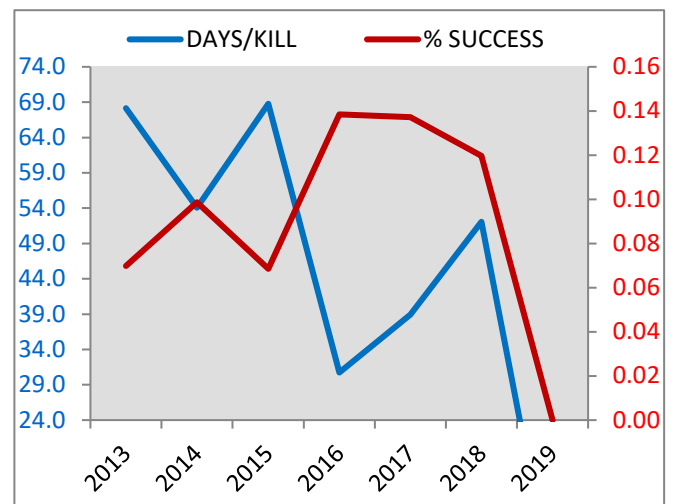
GMU 652 general season (all weapons combined)



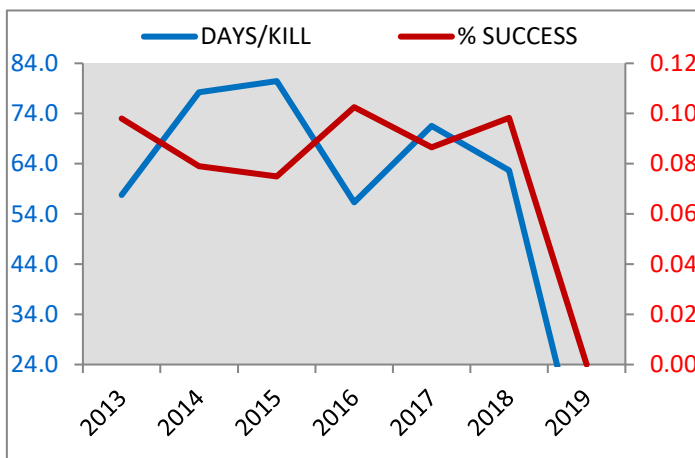
GMU 653 bull only permit hunt (all weapons)



GMU 654 general season (all weapons combined)



GMU 666 general season (all weapons)



GMU 667 (all weapons combined)

DEER

Black-tailed deer population surveys in District 11 are limited. Surveys are not done annually, and when they are done, they have consisted of one survey done in the highest quality location (Vail Tree Farm). Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best opportunity for deer hunting. Wildlife managers encourage hunters to scout regenerating clear cuts. In particular, timberlands worthy of scouting for both deer and elk include Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm and DNR's Crawford and Bloody Run blocks in GMU 667; Hancock Timber Resources Group managed properties (Kapowsin Tree Farm/Hampton/Rayonier properties in GMU 653 and 654); Hancock and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe's White River Tree Farm in GMU 653 (elk season only open to tribal hunters); DNR's Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forests (GMUs 654) and DNR and USFS managed lands (scattered across District 11).



District Biologist with successful deer hunter at Vail Tree Farm deer check station in the Skookumchuck Unit 667.

Vail Tree Farm has a limited access recreation program in effect. Weyerhaeuser requires hunters to buy an access permit to access Vail Tree Farm. Motorized and non-motorized permits go on sale in May, allow access for one year (August through following July), and typically sell out well in advance of the hunting season. All forestry operations continue during the permit season. To see or purchase permits and additional information, go to [Weyerhaeuser website](#) or call 866-636-6531.

Hancock Natural Resource Group also requires an access permit for motorized access into the Kapowsin and Eatonville Tree Farm (lands owned by Hancock/Hampton/Rayonier). The Group also allows access into Kapowsin and Eatonville by horseback, walking, or biking, but only if you have a motorized access permit, as these areas currently lack a non-motorized access program. Non-motorized access is normally allowed through the non-motorized access program into the White River Forest. Permits normally allow access April 1, 2019 – March 30, 2020, with no access from July 3-7 or during the elk bull season. **However, the White River Tree Farm has closed all access for the 2020-2021 season due to the Coronavirus pandemic.** To see or buy permits and additional information, go to the Hancock [website](#) or call 800-782-1493. Hancock initiated a 2-point minimum buck harvest restriction in 2018 on the Kapowsin and Eatonville timberlands that remains in effect. In 2019, it also eliminated the doe harvest in both of these areas. Hancock’s reasoning is “an effort to increase deer populations over time and ultimately provide a better hunting experience, long term.” White River Tree Farm doesn’t have any additional deer hunting restrictions, except the winter motorized access restriction. Hunters can send questions regarding Hancock recreational access program to recadmin@hnrp.com

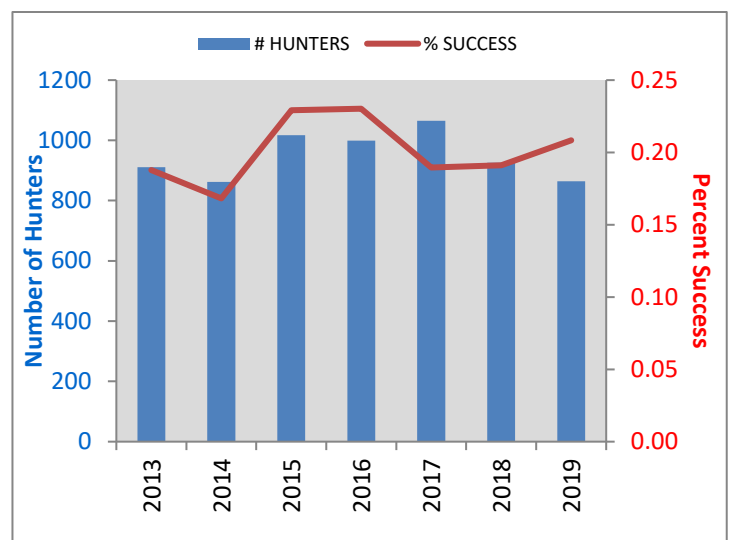
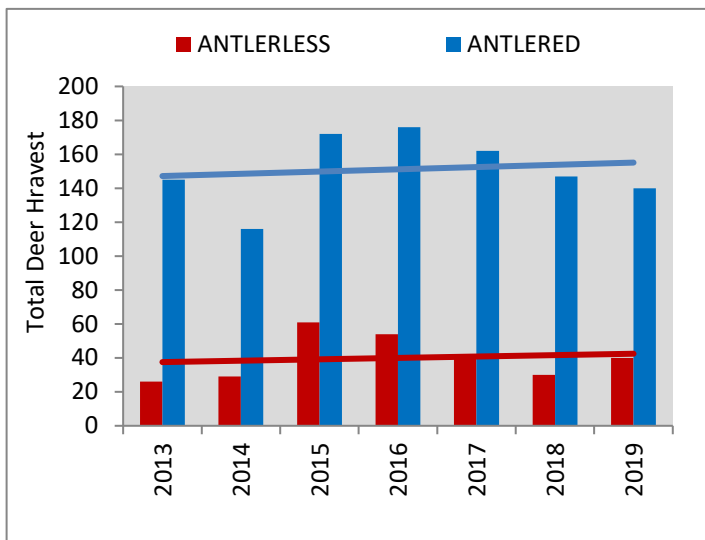
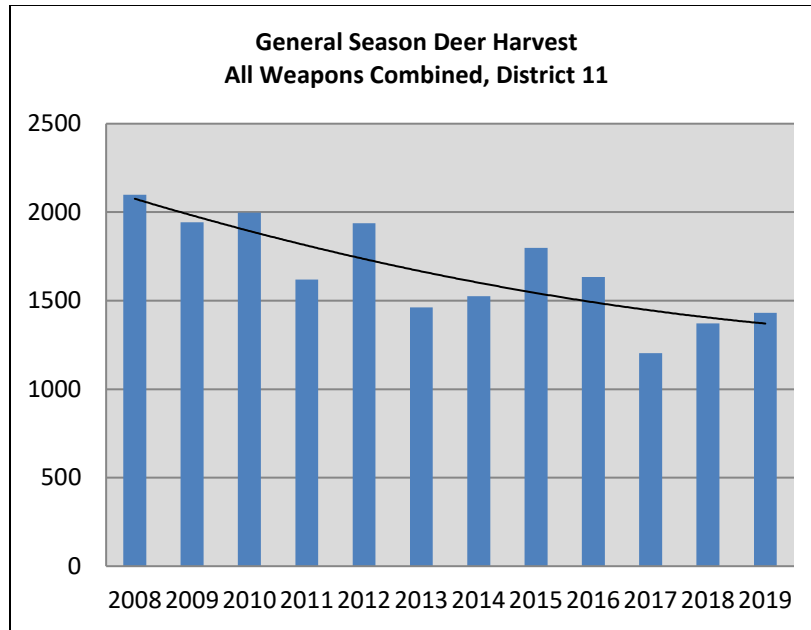


K. Hailstone with her first spike (2017)

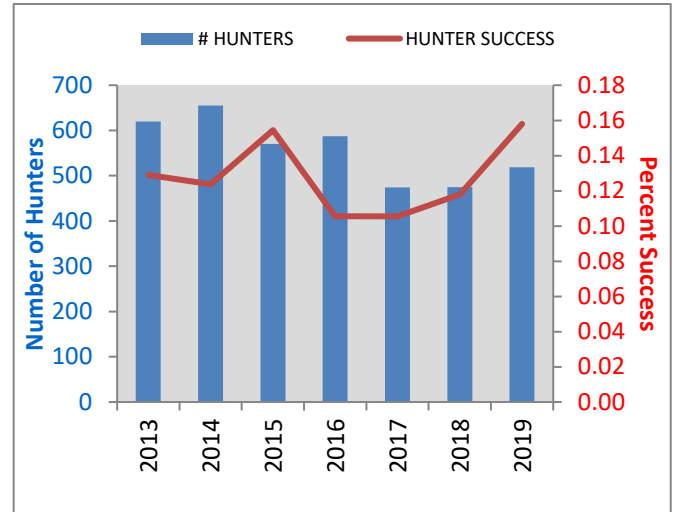
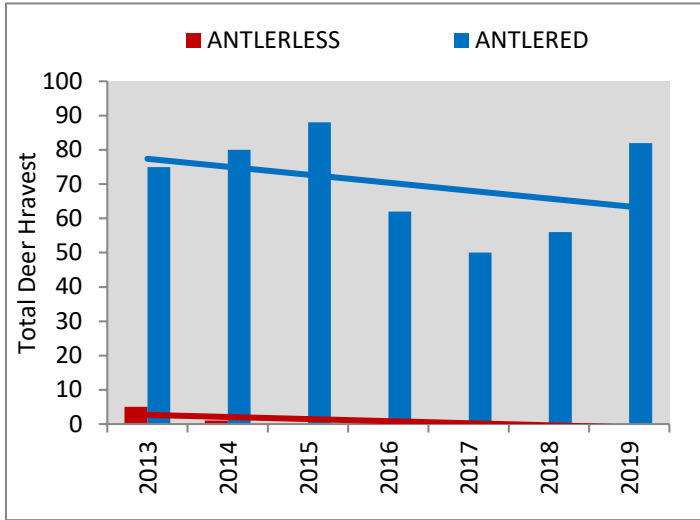
Hunters can find High-elevation trophy black-tail hunting experiences in the eastern portions of GMUs 653 and 654 by way of USFS road and trail systems that lead to high-mountain hunting areas, including portions of the Norse Peak, Clearwater, and Glacier View wilderness areas and Crystal Mountain Resort (see description under Elk).

Deer harvest combined in District 11 has declined, driven primarily by declines in harvest from 2017-2019 in GMUs 653 and 654. Harvest regulations have altered somewhat in District 11 GMUs over the years, which play a role in harvest trends. However, notable declines occurred in GMU 653, 654, and 667, all units in which private timberland access permits were initiated. Limited access combined with antler and doe restrictions may increase deer numbers over time especially in GMUs 653/654 where

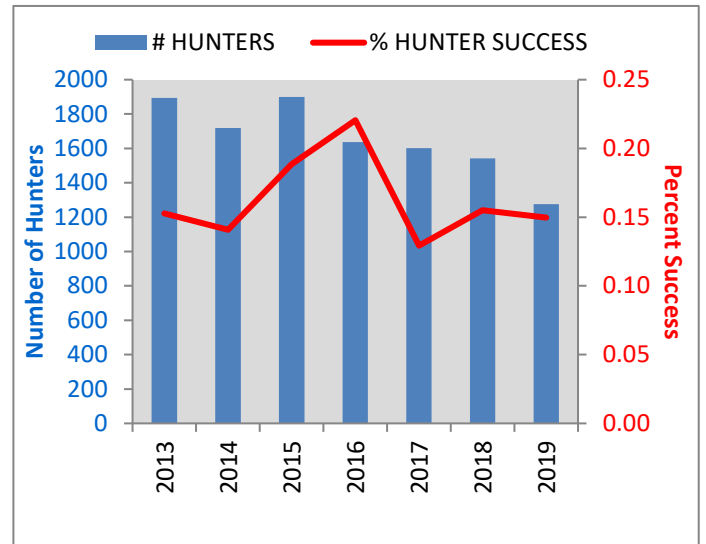
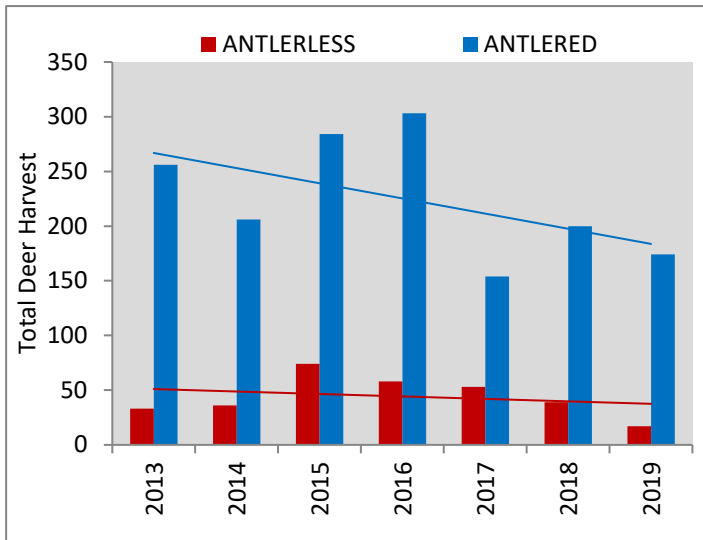
success in only 14 percent on average (compared to 25 percent in GMUs 652/655/666/667 combined). Harvest in GMUs 652 and 666 are stable while in GMU 655 it increased. Anderson Island (GMU 655) was previously Deer Area 6014 and had antlerless permit hunts only. The entire island became GMU 655 in 2013 and has since provided both general seasons (both sex) and antlerless permit hunts. Thus, the increase in harvest is not surprising, keeping in mind that the island still has the lowest harvest of all GMUs in the district. Ferry logistics and property access reduce the actual harvest despite plentiful deer on the island. GMU 655 followed by GMU 667 continues to have the highest deer hunter success rates, while GMU 653 and 654 have the lowest of any District 11 GMU.



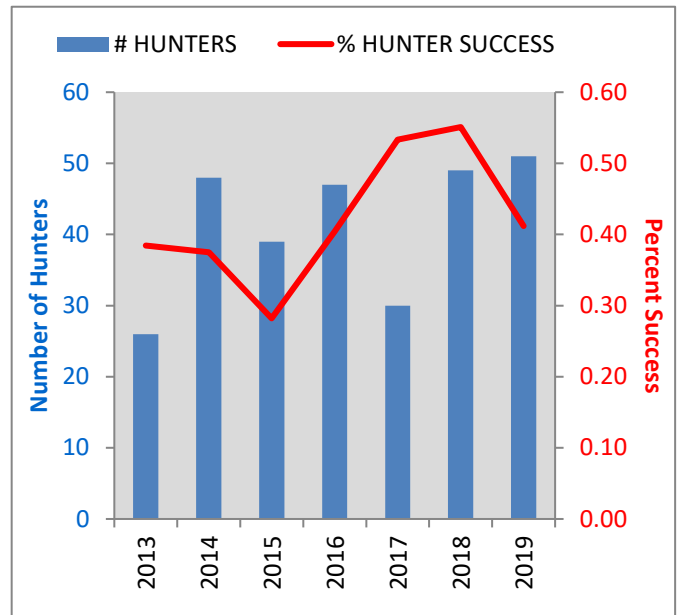
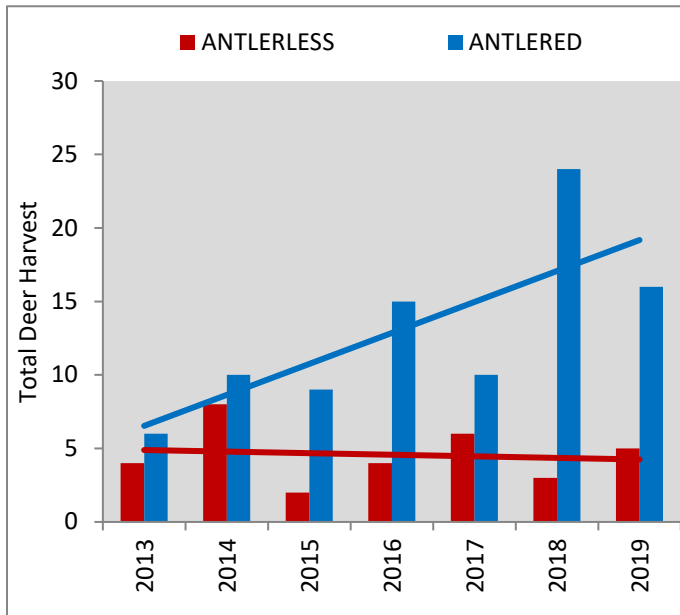
GMU 652 (Puyallup) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



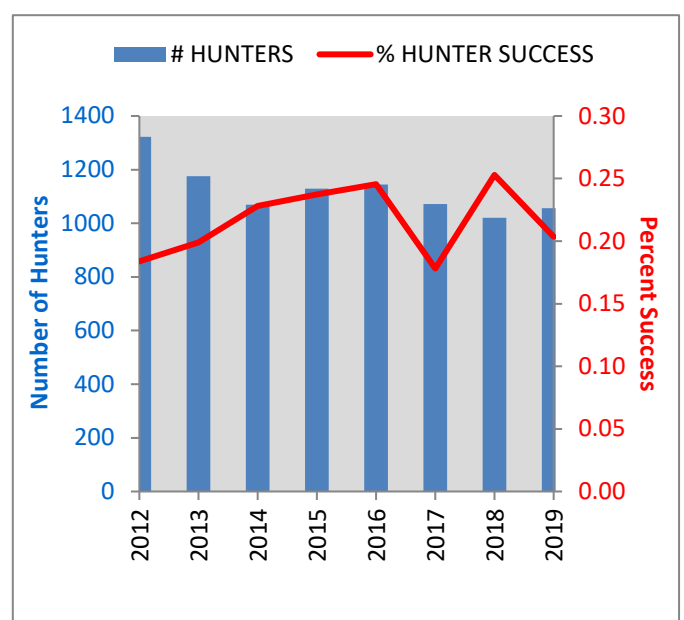
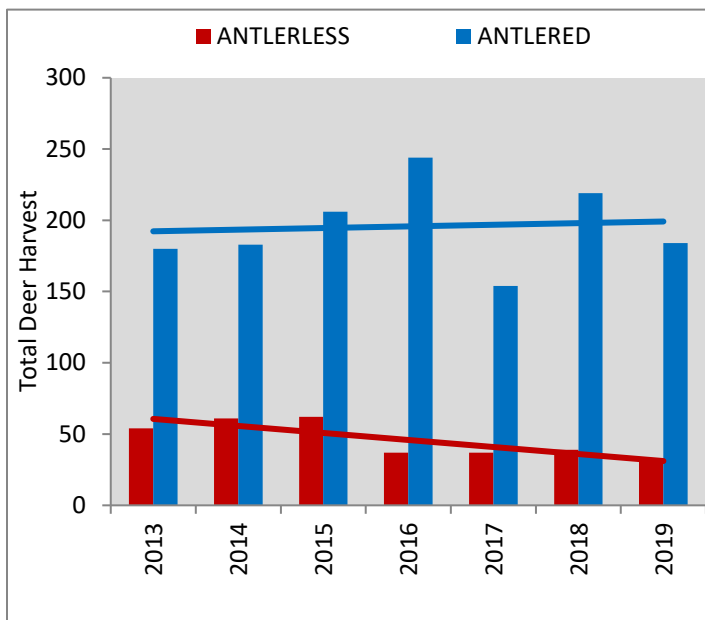
GMU 653 (White River) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



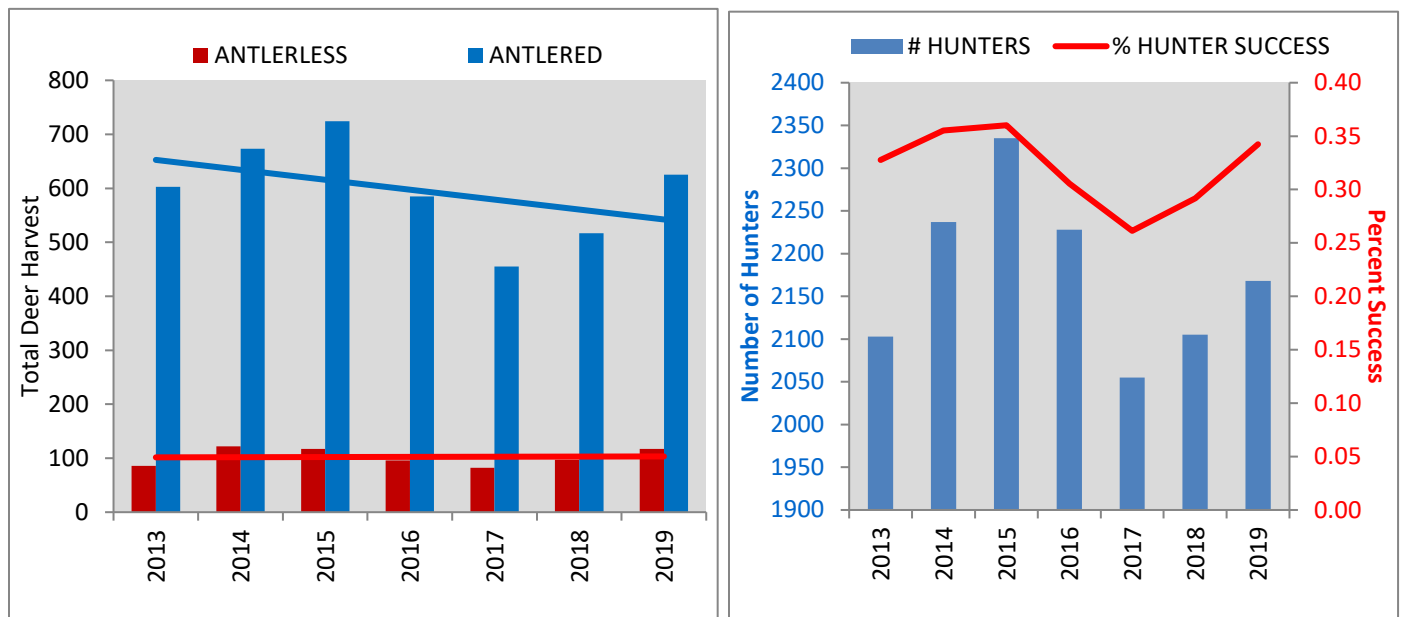
GMU 654 (Mashel) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



GMU 655 (Anderson Island) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



GMU 666 (Deschutes) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



GMU 667 (Skookumchuck) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapon)

BEAR

District 11 includes GMUs in two Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs): South Cascades (GMU 653 and 654) and Puget Sound (GMU 652, 666, and 667). Each of these BBMUs also contains additional GMUs outside the District 11 boundaries. GMU 655 doesn't have a bear season. District 11 provides an opportunity to hunt bear both in the fall general and spring special permit hunting seasons.

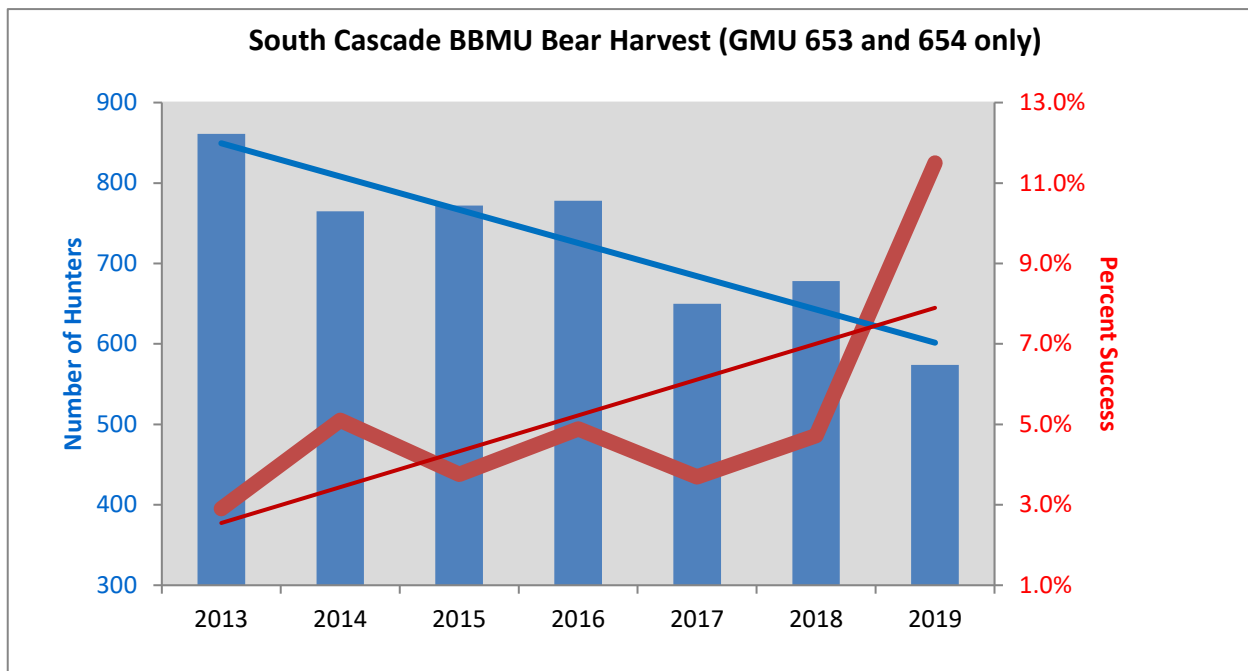
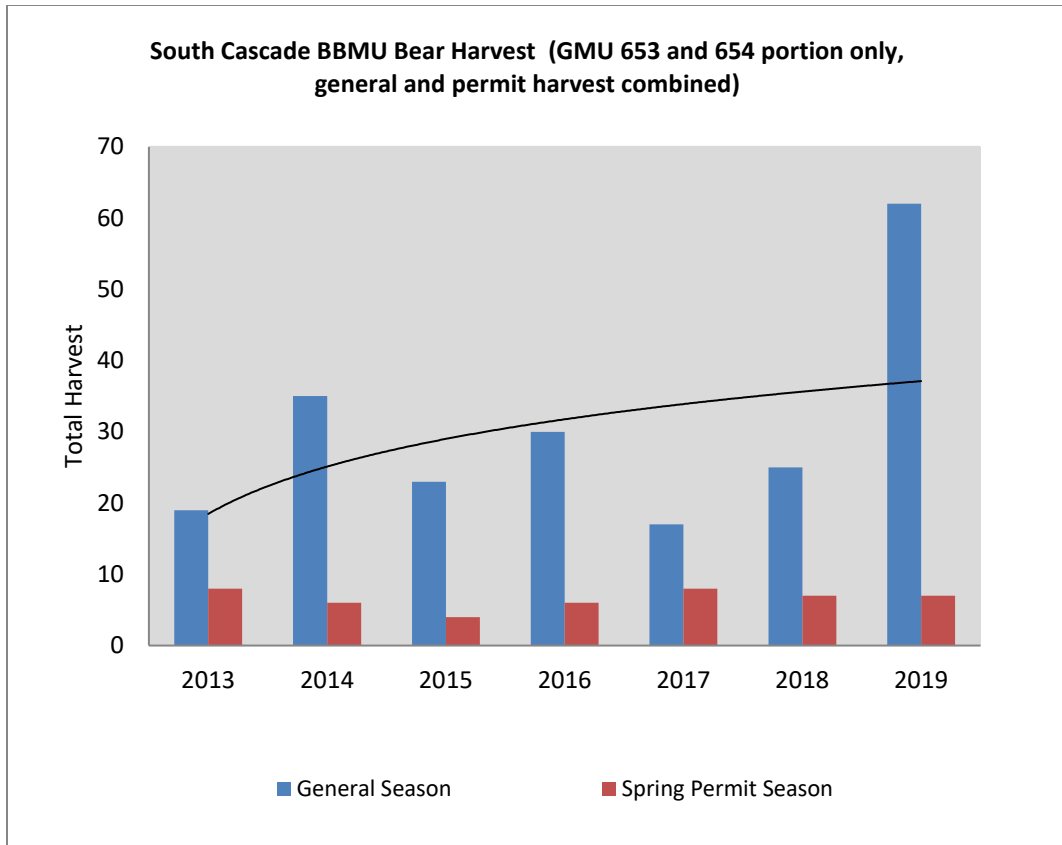
Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best availability for bear hunting. Wildlife managers encourage hunters to scout signs (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), Hancock Natural Resource Group-managed lands (Kapowsin, Eatonville and Buckley Tree Farms in GMU 653 and 654; White River Tree Farms in GMU 653), Capitol State Forest (GMU 663), Elbe Hills and Tahoma state forests (GMU 654), and Joint Base Lewis McChord offer the best prospects for bear hunters in the district. (See comments earlier regarding access permit requirements for Weyerhaeuser and Hancock properties and **removal of access for the White River Tree Farm for the 2020-21 season**).



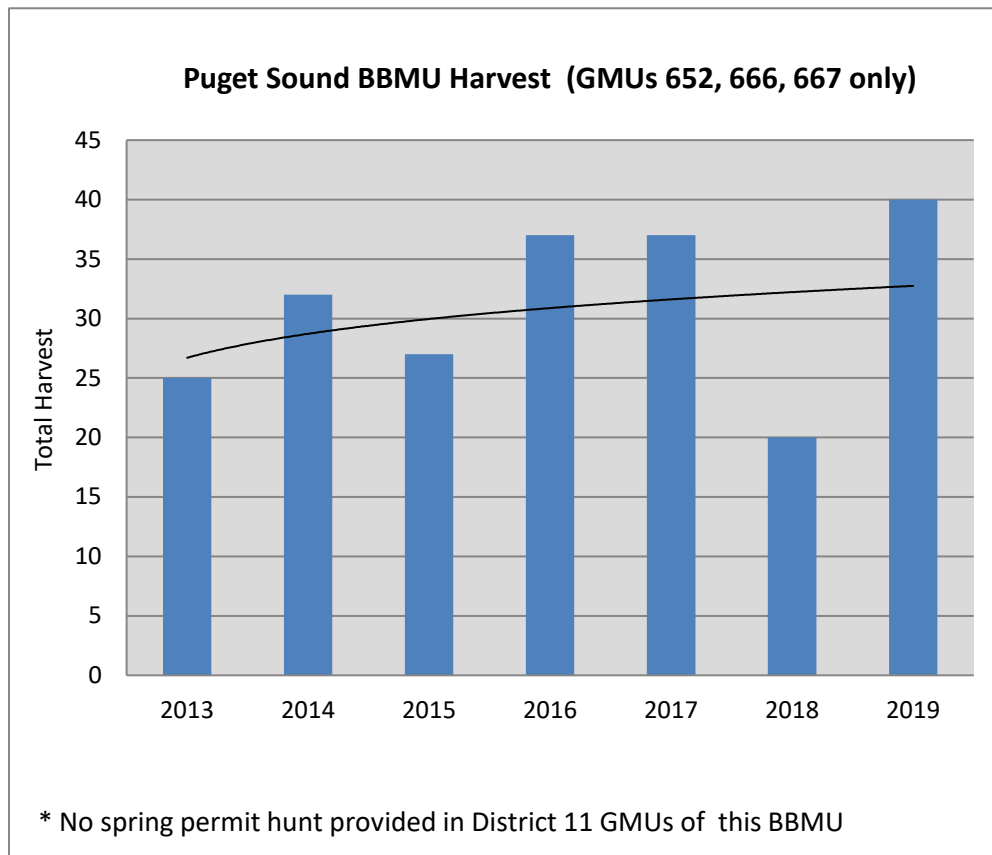
First big game harvest (S. Holznagel 2014).

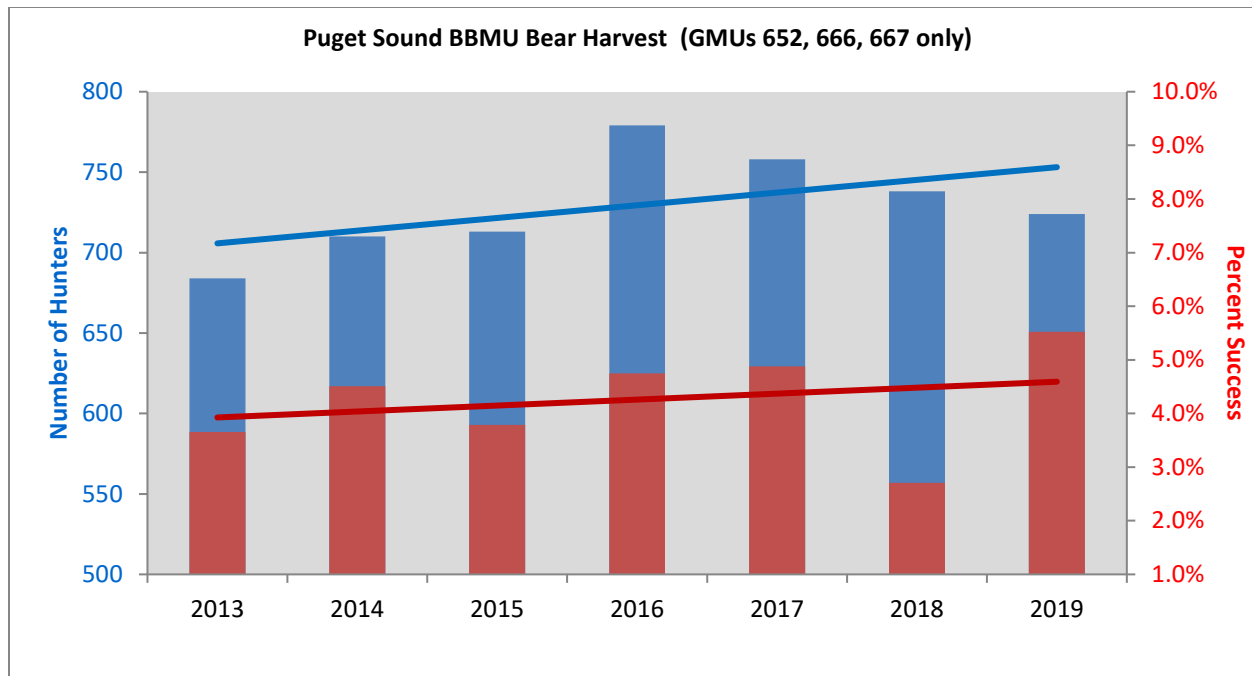
The spring black bear special permit season, which normally provides 150 permits for the April 15 to June 15 season on Hancock managed lands (owned by Hancock/Hampton/Rayonier) is not provided for the 2020-21 season due to the pending black bear lawsuit. Those who receive a drawing for a hunting permit must also buy a Hancock vehicle access permit. In 2019, Hancock offered a \$100 spring-bear-season only vehicle access permit for all drawn permittees to hunt only the permit area (see additional information regarding Hancock under Elk and Deer sections).

General season bear harvest trends in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BBMU (e.g. GMUs 653 and 654) remained stable from 2013-2018 and then increased threefold in 2019 in response to an earlier start date (August 1) and a new two-bear bag limit statewide. In response to the new regulations, hunter success rates doubled in 2019 compared to the previous six years despite a decline in the number of hunters. The spring bear harvest has remained stable over the last 7 years, averaging six bears harvested per year.



Bear harvest in the GMUs of the Puget Sound BBMU that are within District 11 (GMUs 652, 666, 667) increased slightly during the past 7 years with only a slight increase over the six-year average in response to the new state bear regulations in 2019. The number of hunters hunting this BBMU and their success rate has also increased slightly since 2013 with success just over 4 percent (which was half the success rate in GMUs 653/654 in 2019). Bear harvest prospects in 2020-21 should remain high given the adequate precipitation levels and thus good berry and mast production this year combined with generous new bear harvest regulations.

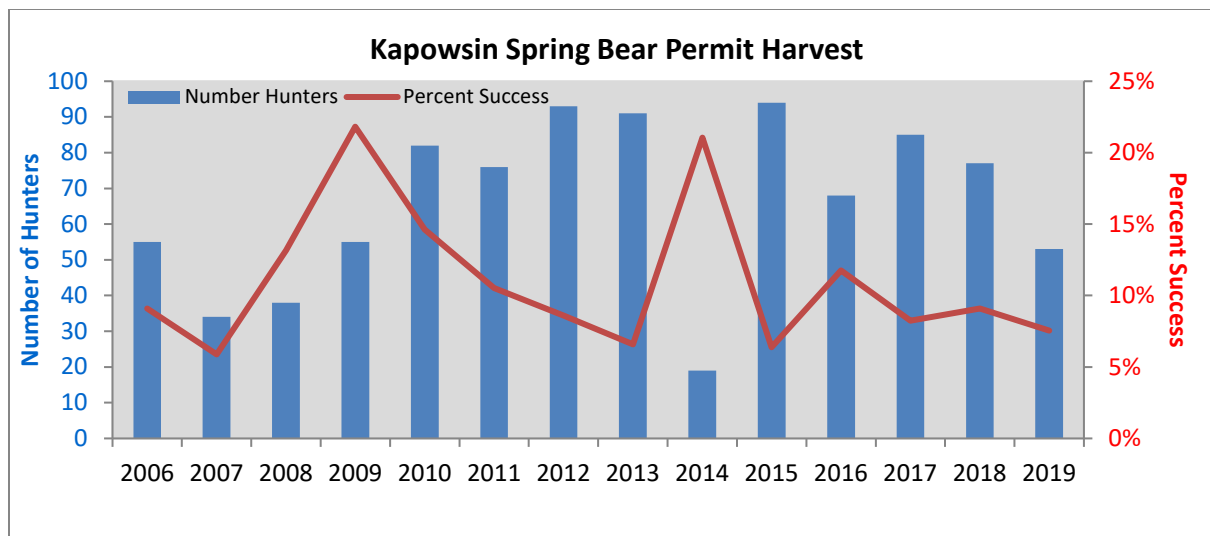




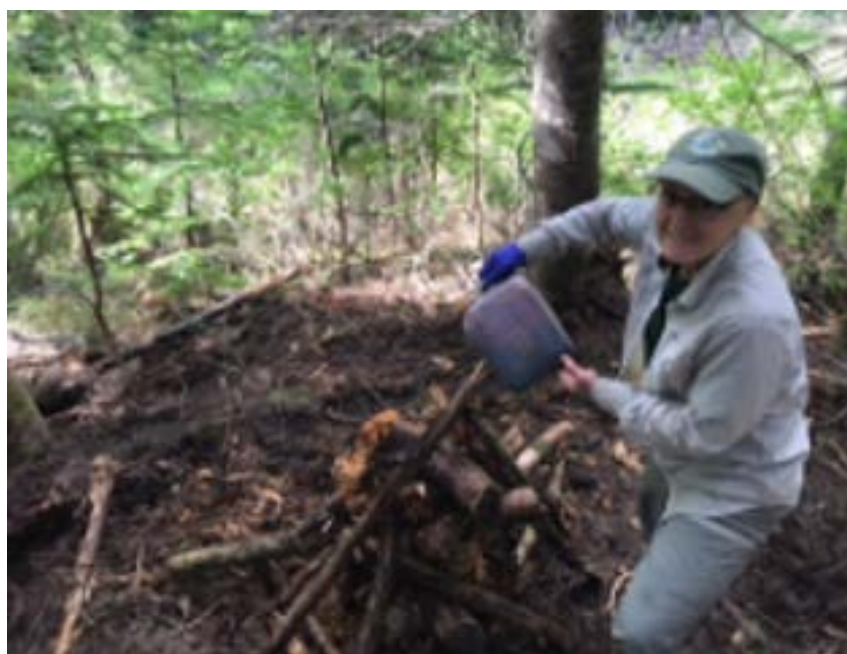
Comparing success rates of each GMU in District 11 from 2001-2019, GMU 653 and 652 have the highest success and thus the best chance of harvesting black bear in the district:

GMU	Male Killed	Female Killed	Total Killed	Number Hunters	Hunter Success	Hunter Days	Days/Kills
652	108	48	168	3140	5.4%	24645	147
653	244	105	362	5461	6.6%	42163	116
654	281	158	443	8972	4.9%	78421	177
666	31	21	56	2644	2.1%	19406	347
667	199	123	338	9442	3.6%	74860	221
Spring Permit	60	34	94	920	10.2%	NR	NR

One hundred and four hunters (out of the 150 who received a permit) participated in the 2019 Kapowsin spring permit hunt and harvested four black bears for a hunter success rate of 7.5 percent. This is down slightly from the 9 percent success rate in 2018 but much lower than the cumulative statewide spring bear success rate of 31 percent in 2019 (or 15 percent average for western Washington only). The only spring bear hunt provided in District 11 is the Kapowsin hunt in GMU 654, which has been suspended for the 2020-21 season.



District 11 initiated a black bear hair-snare monitoring project in GMU 654 in 2020 to learn more about the current black bear population. This monitoring will inform the district's bear management and allow biologists to better gauge the bear population density in comparison to the district's harvest levels.



Biologist Tirhi pouring scent lure on black bear monitoring station as part of the 2020 District 11 bear density monitoring project.

COUGAR

Cougars are widespread in District 11's forest lands. Areas supporting high numbers of deer and elk also provide great opportunity for cougar. District 11 comprises three cougar population management units (CPMUs) made up of GMUs containing similar habitats and having similar cougar population objectives: 1) GMUs 652/666, 2) GMUs 653/654, and 3) GMU 667 (note: cougar hunting is not provided in GMU 655).

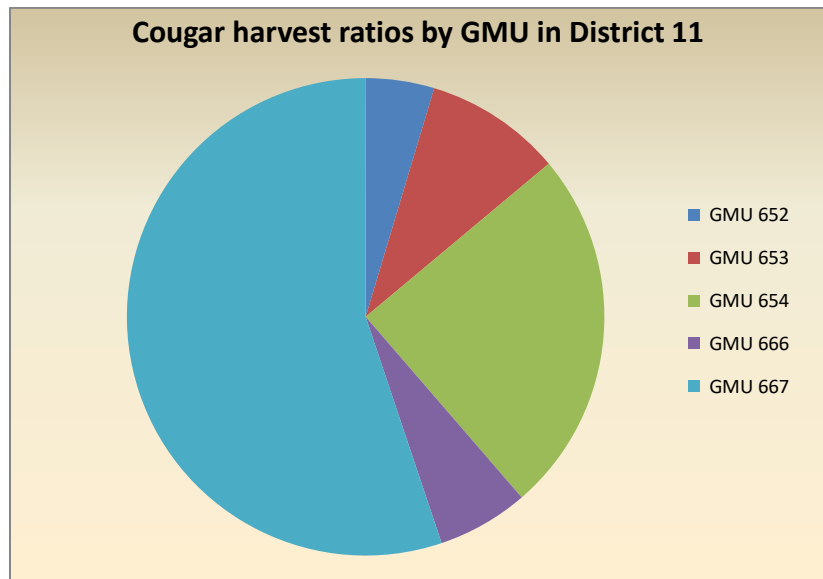
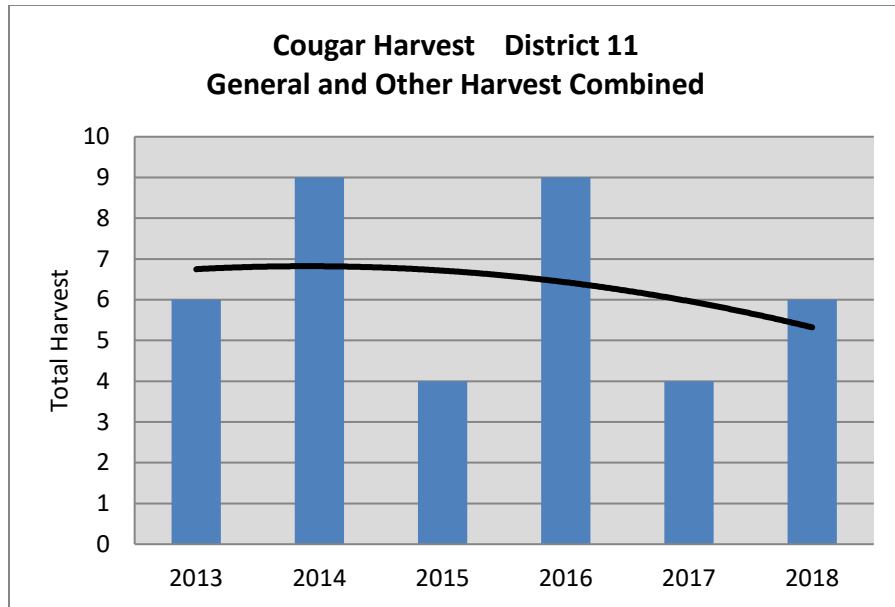
WDFW changed cougar hunting season design in 2012 with a liberalized season coupled with harvest guidelines (see wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar). Two general cougar seasons are offered:

- Early: Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2019
- Late: Jan. 1 - Apr. 30, 2020 OR when the harvest guideline is reached, whichever occurs first.

A WDFW staff subcommittee provided a variety of options to the WDFW Wildlife Commission for consideration for cougar management (https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/draft_alternatives_for_cougar_management_final_draft.pdf). The Commission eliminated the previous cougar hunting quota system set to harvest 12-16 percent of the population in the 19 GMUs in the state with the highest number of cougars. Within these GMUs, wildlife managers expanded the upper limits of the quota. This change does not affect District 11 GMUs, which remain at the same quota level as previous.

Be aware that hunters must have a 2021 cougar license/tag to hunt cougar in April 2021. GMUs 652 and 666 have no cougar harvest quota limit, GMUs 653 and 654 have a quota of four to five cougars (combined), and GMU 667 has a quota of six to seven cougars. When the lower level of each quota is reached, the District 11 biologist determines if other non-hunting forms of mortality have occurred and whether to close the GMU.

Cougar harvest for 2019 was not available at the time of this publication and therefore the last six years data is provided. District 11 harvest has fluctuated annually but remained stable over the past six years averaging six cougars harvested in the district per year. A total of six cougars were reported harvested in the district in 2018 (not including tribal). The Skookumchuck (GMU 667) annually provides the highest cougar harvest in the district. Prospects for hunting cougar in the district remain fair.



WATERFOWL

The majority of [Pacific Flyway](#) waterfowl are born on the prairies of the United States and Canada, primarily Alaska, northwestern Canada, and other western states. According to the USFWS Waterfowl Population Status report for 2019, the western North American survey area habitat conditions in 2018 were similar or declined, with a few exceptions, relative to 2017.

Much of the Canadian prairies experienced below-average precipitation from fall 2018 through spring 2019. Fall and winter temperatures were mainly below average. The U.S. prairies experienced average to above-average precipitation over most of the region. Conditions for waterfowl production were good to excellent in the south and poorer farther north. Overall habitat quality remained fair to good over a large portion of the traditional survey area and should lead to average waterfowl production this year, however dry areas, particularly in the Canadian prairies, have expanded since 2018.

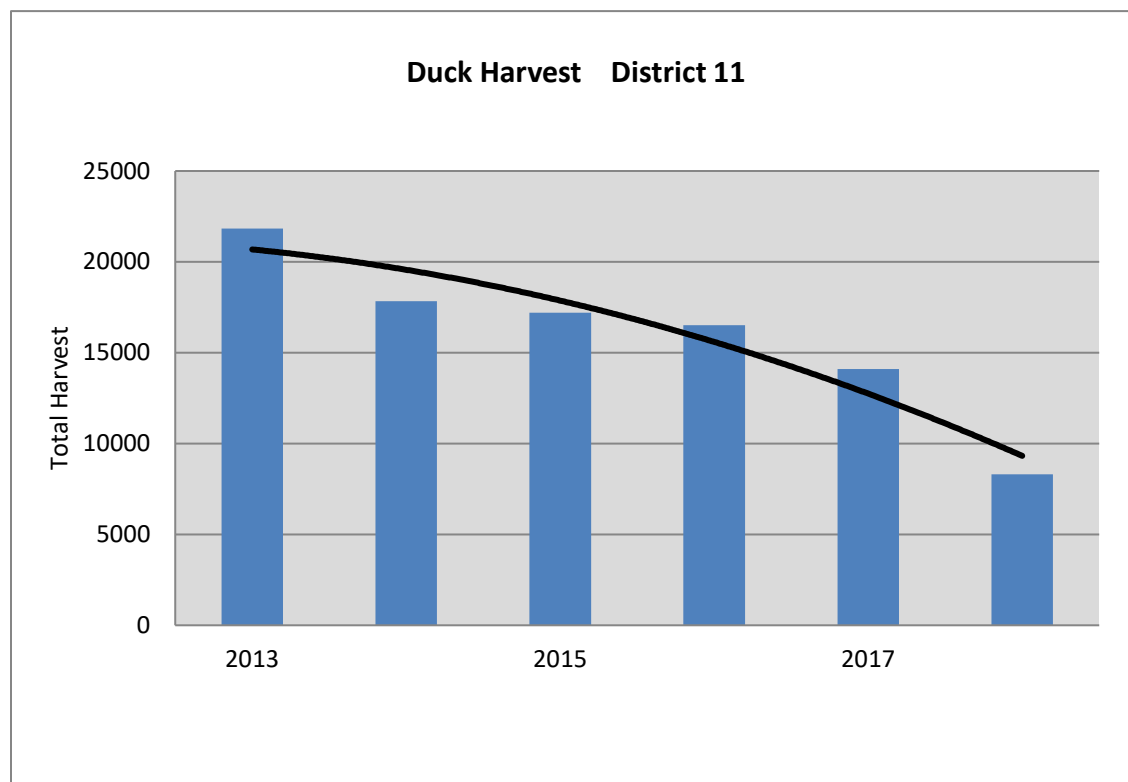
In the traditional survey area, the total duck population was 38.9 ± 0.7 million birds. This estimate was 6 percent lower than the 2018 estimate of 41.2 ± 0.7 million and 10 percent higher than the long-term average (1955–2018). The Pacific goose and tundra swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) population count also increased again 4 percent over 2018 counts (similar as from 2017-18) estimates making for good goose and swan harvest. Total duck breeding population estimates were down 12 percent in Washington in 2019 compared to 2018. In Washington, the total duck estimate was unchanged from the 2018 estimate and 32 percent above the long-term average (2010–2018). Prospects for waterfowl hunting in District 11 remain good.

Hunters can find information on the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Surveys and the Mid-winter Waterfowl Inventory at <https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/population-surveys.php>. District 11 duck population trends include:

Species	Breeding Population Estimate Trend North America
Mallard	Estimated abundance was 9.4 ± 0.3 million, which was similar to the 2018 estimate of 9.3 ± 0.3 million but 19 percent above the long-term average of 7.9 ± 0.04 million
Green-winged teal	The estimated abundance of green-winged teal was 3.2 ± 0.2 million, which was similar to the 2018 estimate of 3.0 ± 0.2 million and 47 percent above the long-term average 2.2 ± 0.02 million.
Gadwall	Estimated abundance of (3.3 ± 0.2 million) was similar to the 2018 estimate and 61 percent above the long-term average.
American widgeon	Abundance estimates for American widgeon (2.8 ± 0.2 million) were similar to their 2018 estimates and their long-term averages of 2.6 ± 0.02 million.
Northern shoveler	The 2019 northern shoveler estimate was 13 percent below last year and 39 percent above the long-term average of 2.6 ± 0.02 million.
Northern pintails	Northern pintail abundance (2.3 ± 0.1 million) was similar to the 2018 estimate and 42 percent below the long-term average of 3.9 ± 0.03 million.
Scaup (combined)	The combined estimate of lesser and greater scaup (3.6 ± 0.2 million) was similar to the 2018 estimate and 28 percent below the long-term average of 5.0 ± 0.04 million.

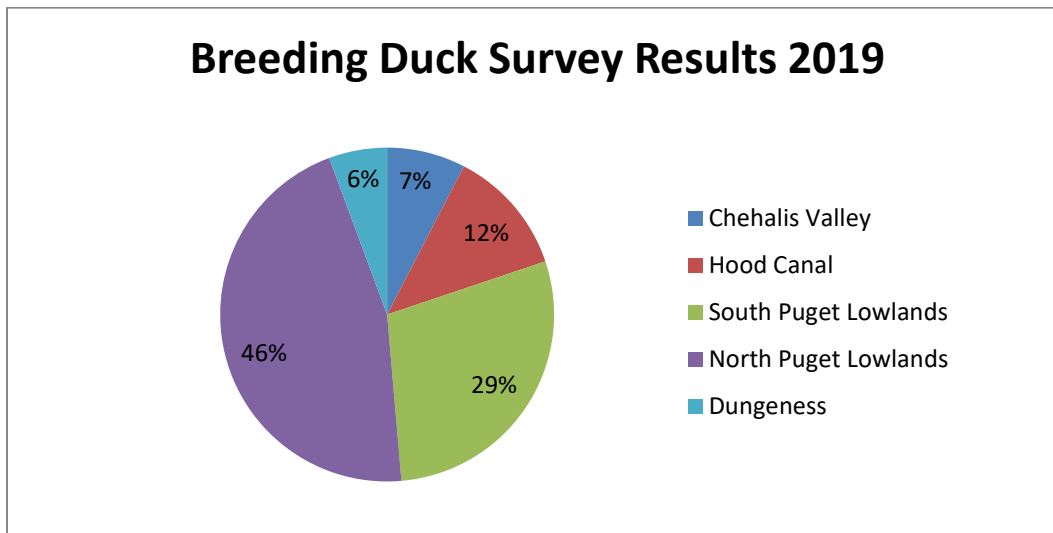
Canvasbacks	Abundance estimates for canvasbacks (0.7 ± 0.05 million) were similar to their 2018 estimates and their long-term averages of 0.6 ± 0.05 million.
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Duck harvest data for 2019 was not available at the time of this publication so 2018 information is provided here for reference. Duck harvest in District 11 declined gradually from 2013-2017 followed by a precipitous decline in 2018. A decline in hunter participation may partially explain this decline considering breeding duck surveys show an increase in breeding ducks in the district over the past seven years. Thurston County supports more waterfowl than Pierce County, primarily as a result of Nisqually Wildlife Refuge and other Puget Sound inlets. Hunting prospects for waterfowl hunters remain good in the District in 2020 with the best prospects being in Thurston County.

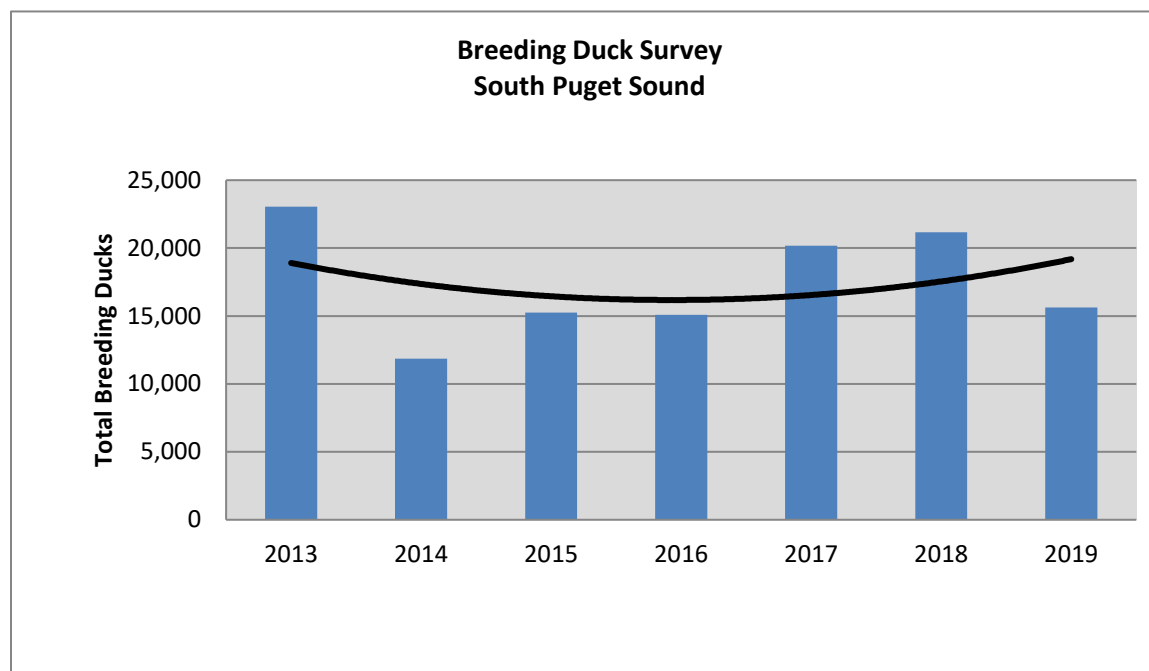


The South Puget Sound lowlands compete with the North Puget Sound lowlands on an annual basis as the area having the highest percent of breeding ducks in western Washington according to WDFW's annual breeding duck surveys. In 2019, breeding season duck estimates increased in

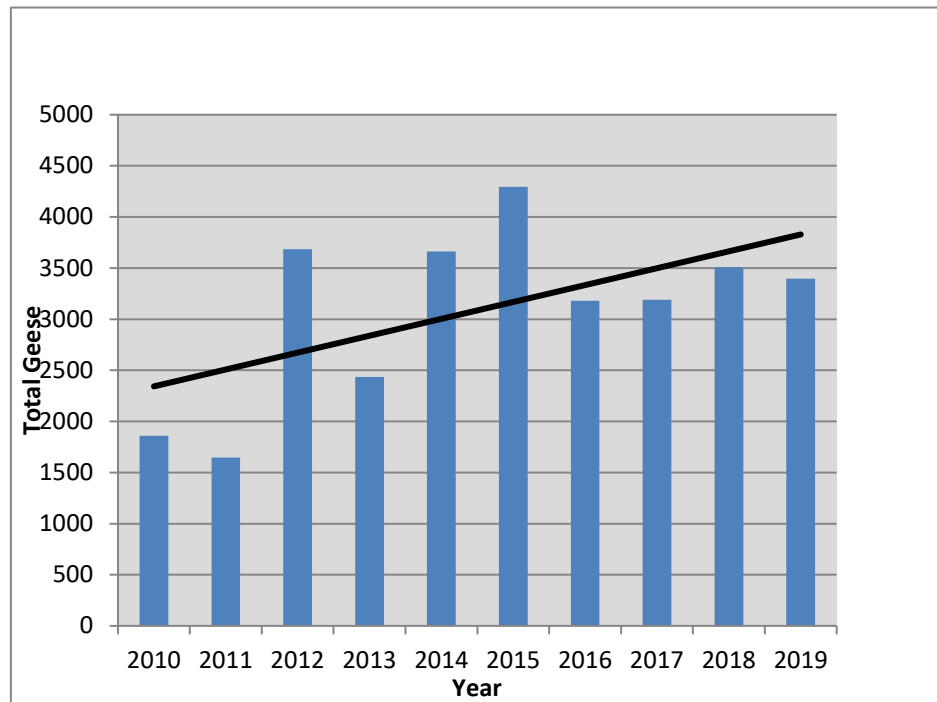
Hood Canal and the Dungeness area of western Washington compared to 2018 but decreased in the Chehalis Valley, South Puget Lowlands, and North Puget Lowlands.



Breeding duck surveys in the South Puget Sound, which encompasses District 11, show an increasing trend since 2014 with a slight decline in 2019 (duck surveys not conducted in spring 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic and restrictions on flights).



Goose breeding survey trends have generally increased across South Puget Sound which includes District 11 over the last 10 years but remained constant since 2016. Prospects for goose hunting in District 11 remain good.



Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies surrounded by housing in the district. Wildlife managers urge hunters to obey all hunting regulations at such sites to avoid potential future closures. All bodies of water are open for hunting unless located within a county firearm restriction area (see introduction). Rapjohn Lake in Pierce County has a Register to Hunt program and requires hunters to hunt from two established blinds. Registration for the blinds is on a first-come basis and is established by parking in one of the two mandatory parking lots at the WDFW Rapjohn Lake Access Site.

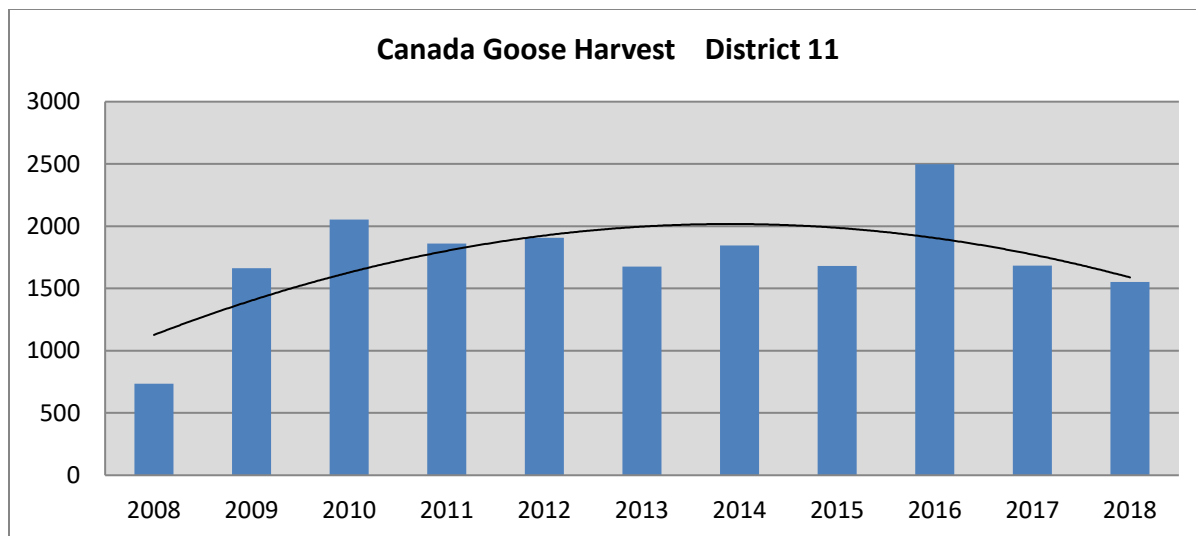
The goose harvest in the district has remained relatively stable since 2009 (harvest data not summarized for 2019 at the time of this publication). The best waterfowl hunting areas in District 11 include [Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge](#); Puget Sound marine inlets

Young hunter with her collections in the blind
(Photo by T. Frank, West Richland, WA)



associated with western islands of Pierce County and Henderson, Budd, and Eld Inlets of Thurston County; and Centralia Mine in Lewis County. Flooded agricultural fields in the western half of the district can be good prospects for waterfowl hunting, but hunters must seek landowner access permission before hunting these sites. Note that a majority of the water bodies on the Key Peninsula, Pierce County, are within a firearm restriction zone, thus prohibiting waterfowl hunting. For information on hunting Nisqually Wildlife Refuge, call (360) 753-9467 or go to

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Billy_Frank_Jr_Nisqually/visit/visitor_activities/hunting.html



The Centralia Coal Mine has a limited, high-quality waterfowl hunt. Hunters must sign up for this hunt directly at the Mine's security gate at the main entrance to the power plant. Signups begin mid-September and are open to TransAlta employees (owners of the Centralia Mine) only for the first week after which the general public can sign up. The mine limits hunting to one site in a hayfield immediately east of the mine facilities. This area is open for waterfowl hunting only; no big game hunting is allowed. Mine employees account for about half of the available slots on average. This is primarily a goose hunt but does provide some mixed waterfowl when fields flood. A maximum of three hunters per day are authorized to hunt and you can only hunt on the days you have successfully signed up. Hunters should contact TransAlta directly with questions about how to participate: (360-736-9901).

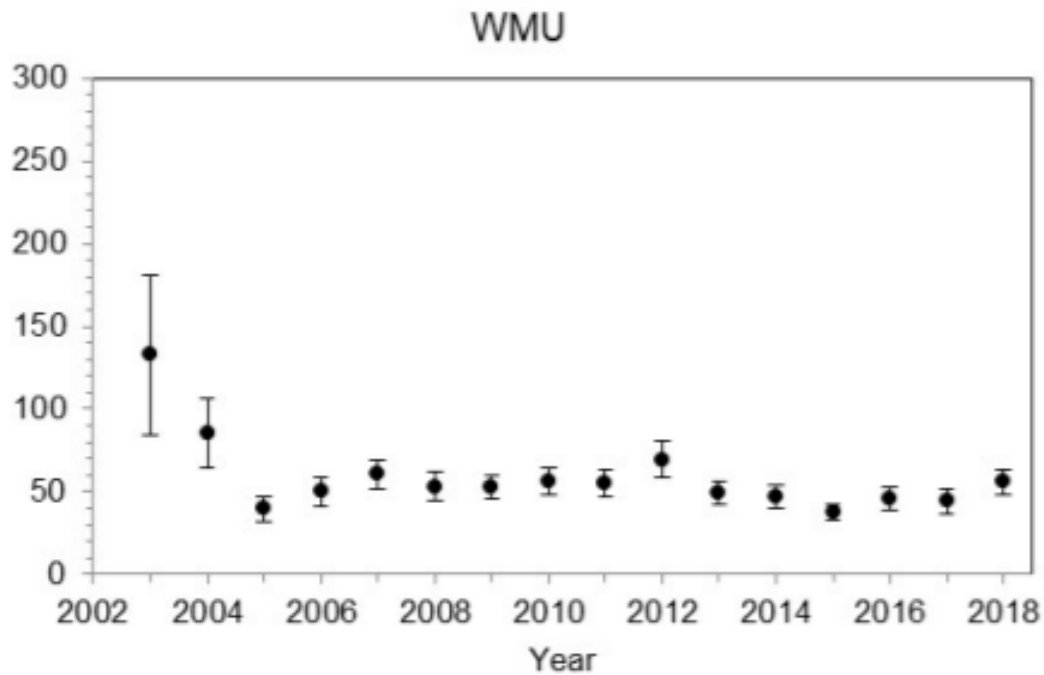
MOURNING DOVE

For additional information regarding upland bird hunting in general, please visit:

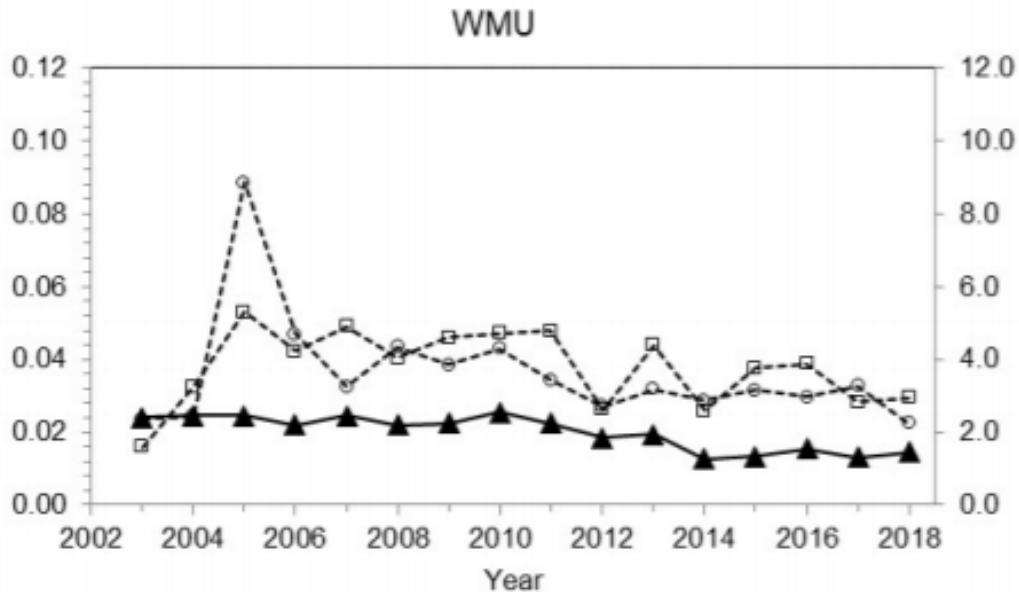
wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds and
wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01805 and
wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/upland-bird

The department uses the annual USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status Report to analyze trends in mourning dove populations. The report summarizes trends in the number of doves heard and seen per route from the all-bird Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), and provides absolute abundance estimates based on band recovery and harvest data. The department uses Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP) to estimate harvest and hunter participation. BBS data

suggested that the abundance of mourning doves over the last 53 years decreased in the western management units, which is composed of the seven western states, including Washington. Estimates of absolute increased in the western management unit in 2018 compared to 2017 (note, reports are always two years out).



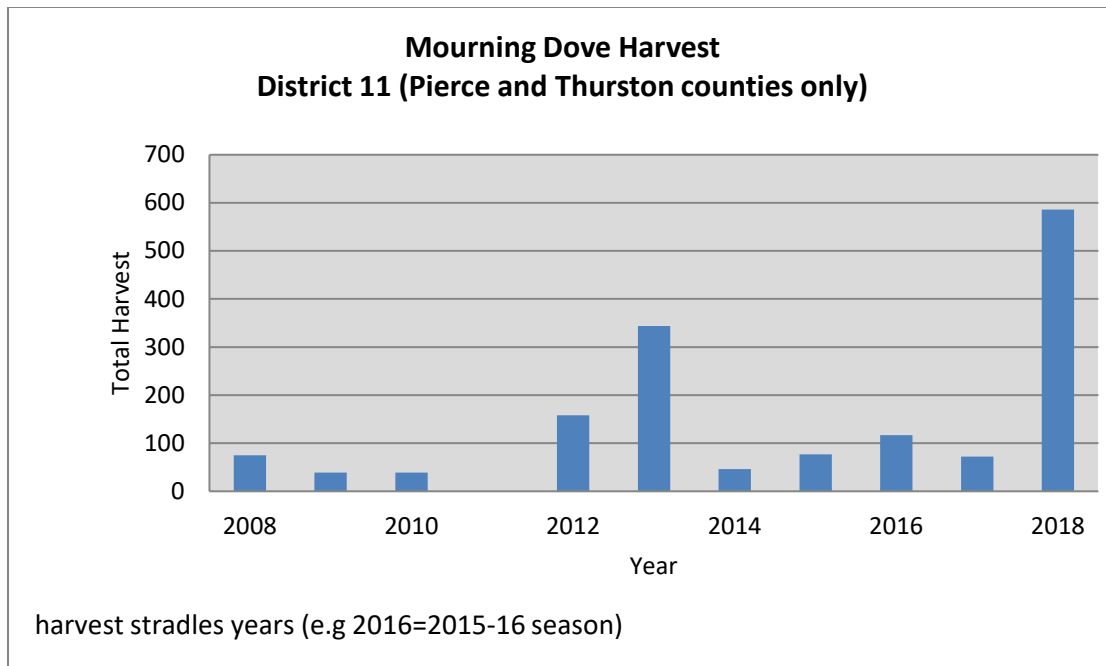
Estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals of mourning dove absolute abundance in the western management units combined, 2002–2018. Estimates based on band recovery and harvest data.



Estimated harvest (▲) and harvest rates of mourning dove in the western management units combined, 2002–2018. Harvest rates presented separately for hatch-year (□) and after-hatch-year (○; USFWS 2016).

Approximately $5,800 \pm 12$ percent active hunters harvested $63,700 \pm 16$ percent mourning doves in the 2018-19 season in Washington, for an average of 11.1 ± 20 percent doves per hunter (note, data always two years out). This is an increase over the 2017-18 estimates. Hunters can find more information on mourning dove and other migratory bird harvest and data collection at <https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php>

Dove harvest data for 2019 was not available at the time of this publication. District 11 is not a prime dove hunting area in Washington and normally averages approximately 100 doves harvested per year. Mourning dove harvest exponentially increased in 2018 with no obvious explanation. Lewis County traditionally provides higher harvest numbers in the district, with Thurston and Pierce counties providing far less. However, this depends on hunter participation, which fluctuates year to year. In 2018, the harvest was 270, 542, and 46 for Lewis, Thurston, and Pierce counties, which is a 46 percent increase in Lewis, 993 percent increase in Thurston, and 44 percent decline in Pierce County over the 5-year average (2013-17). Thurston County had a 192 percent increase in hunters over this period while Lewis and Pierce had increase and decline comparable to their harvest change. WDFW's small game hunter survey may also underestimate harvest when participation is low, as it was in 2017.



FOREST GROUSE

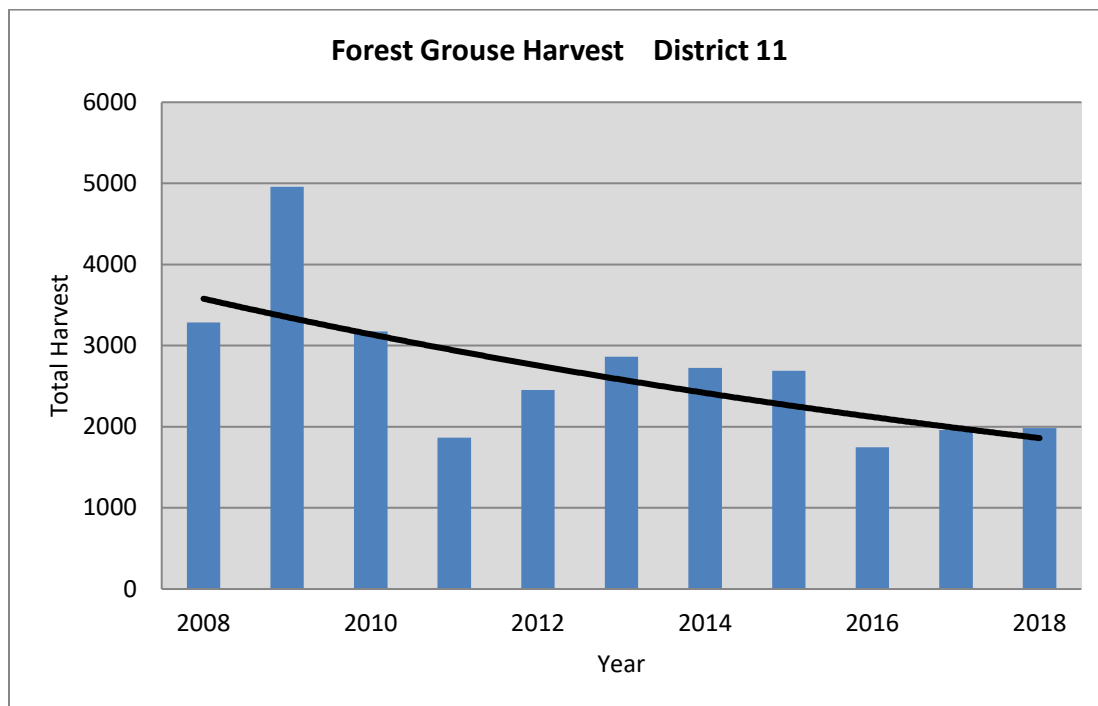
For additional information regarding upland bird hunting in general, please visit:

wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds and
wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01805 and
wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/upland-bird

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forest lands in District 11. The prospects for harvesting sooty grouse go up with increasing elevation. Hunters can expect the greatest success along logging roads, trails, and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands. The best hunting will be near fruiting shrublands such as huckleberry, grouse whortleberry, elderberry, and other species. Logging roads are particularly good locations since they provide the sand that grouse need to eat for digestion and the dust grouse seek to discourage mites and other biting infestations. In particular, look for inaccessible or closed roads and walk behind gates (with permission by the owner) to get the best chance of finding grouse.

Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500 feet, particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Prime forest grouse hunting may be found on JBLM (GMU 652), Elbe Hills, and Tahoma

state forests (GMU 654), Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), and Capitol State Forest (GMU 663). Forest grouse harvest has trended downward in District 11 over the past 10 years. Removing the 2009 spike in harvest, an average of 2,500 grouse are harvested annually in the district. The best prospects for hunting grouse in District 11 are in Lewis County, followed by Pierce and Thurston counties.



A hunter must buy either a big game license or a small game license to hunt grouse. Grouse hunting is included in the purchase of any big game license purchase. Forest grouse season in District 11 runs Sept. 1 through Dec. 31, with a daily bag limit of four of any species (to include not more than three of each species) and a possession limit of 12 (to include not more than nine of any one species).

WDFW collects wings and tails of hunter-harvested forest grouse (spruce, ruffed, dusky and sooty species) during the Sept. 1 - Dec. 31 hunting season to build an estimated population trend dataset for each species to evaluate harvest changes. Grouse hunters can help by depositing one wing and the tail of each grouse harvested into wing collection barrels placed around the state or by bringing them to the closest WDFW District or Regional office. More information on wing and tail collections locations and instructions is available at wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/grouse-wing-tail-collection

PHEASANT

Western Washington does not support self-sustaining populations of pheasants primarily due to the wet climate and lack of grain farming. Hunting pheasant on the west side of the state is dependent upon releases of pheasants in the fall. District 11 is fortunate to contain three of the 24 pheasant release sites in western Washington. For that reason, pheasant hunters continue to have great prospects for harvesting pheasant in this district. Also, WDFW often releases



pheasants into District 11 via the network of collaborators used across the state. The shorter distance means less travel time, stress, and fatigue for the birds before release. According to our pheasant production manager, this equates to more consistency and stronger birds at release, which should improve hunting opportunity for District 11 hunters.

WDFW will release the game farm produced pheasants this fall on sites described and mapped on the [Hunting Regulations](#), the [Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#), and the [Upland Bird Hunting](#) websites. The release program uses state (Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck) and federal (JBLM) managed lands in District 11. NOTE THAT [NONTOXIC SHOT](#) IS REQUIRED ON ALL PHEASANT RELEASE SITES STATEWIDE. The following outlines the pheasant season in western Washington:

Youth season:	Sept. 19 and 20
65 or over and disabled:	September 21-25
General Season:	Sept. 26 to 30 (last pheasants released on Thanksgiving morning).
Extended Season:	Dec. 1-15 includes both Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck wildlife areas (no pheasants released)

Western Washington pheasant hunters must choose to hunt only on odd-numbered or even-numbered weekend days from 8 - 10 a.m. at all units of Skookumchuck and Scatter Creek Wildlife Areas with a daily bag limit of two (either sex) and a possession limit of 15 (either sex). Hunters must indicate their choice of odd-numbered or even-numbered weekend days on the Western Washington Pheasant Permit by choosing "odd" or "even." Hunters who select the

three-day option, hunters possessing a valid disabled hunter permit, hunters 65 years of age or older, and youth hunters may hunt in the morning on both odd-numbered and even-numbered weekend days. Youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older, and the adult must have an appropriately marked pheasant permit if hunting. An extended pheasant season is also provided in District 11 at the Skookumchuck and Scatter Creek wildlife areas and JBLM release sites from Dec. 1-15 under the same hours and daily/possession limits as the general season. Pheasants are **not** released as part of the extended season. Hunters need a western Washington pheasant license to hunt pheasants. Additional information on hunting pheasants can be found on the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program website noted above.

Pheasant release in western Washington will be similar to last year, with an estimated 38,000 pheasants to be released at 24 pheasant release areas in 2020. Be aware that total production could still be affected by seasonal temperature fluctuations and other mortalities in 2020 and these are estimates only. Approximately 2,000 pheasants (5 percent of total production) will be released at the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area this season, with 50-75 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays beginning Sept. 26 through Thanksgiving Day morning. Approximately 3,900 pheasants (10 percent of total production) will be released at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, with 120-135 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays. Some areas of Scatter Creek are off-limits to hunters due to endangered species recovery work so please *OBEY ALL POSTED SIGNS*.

Approximately 4,000 pheasants (10 percent of total production compared) will be released on JBLM training areas as those areas become available. Military training and listed species management dictates which fields will be open in any given week for both release and hunting access on JBLM. There were 4800 pheasants release on JBLM during the 2019 season. We anticipate the same number to be released in 2020 but it will depend on military, recreation, and environmental scheduling. There are special access processes in place for JBLM including:

Hunters must register each year at the Skeet and Trap Range ([3969 2nd Division Range Rd.](#)) at Lewis Main or the [Northwest Adventure Center](#) (8050 NCO Beach Road at Lewis North). Call 253-967-7056 for details. [Training Area Maps](#) are available online.

Service fees are:

- \$2.50 per type of hunting or \$15 for everything for ages 16 years & younger.
- \$5 per type of hunting or \$25 for everything for active duty/retirees/DOD civilians.
- \$10 per type of hunting or \$50 for everything for all other patrons.
- \$3 for duplicate replacement permit.

Signing in and Out:

- [DPTAMS Range Allocation website](#): Hunter can [check the range allocation](#) to see which areas are open for hunting, fishing and which are closed. It also has the [JBLM digital map to download](#) and the procedures for area access permits for recreational use.
- The hunt area check-in and out site is: webtrac.mwr.army.mil/webtrac103/wbwsc/lewisrectrac.wsc/wbsplash.html?wbsi=b6a0c428-e4ea-32a3-5914-121fb8d638ea&cocode=H0
[Click here for the step-by-step how to.](#)
- Hunters must sign in and out of the hunting area.
- On the same day of hunting when finished, sign out of an area no later than 9 p.m. Otherwise, you will be suspended and not be allowed to sign into another area.

If you fail to sign out (through no fault of the system), your hunting privileges will be suspended.

Upland Birds

Pheasant release site hunting will consist of a morning hunt (8–11 a.m.) and an afternoon hunt (1–4 p.m.). Wednesday, a federal holiday, Thanksgiving Day through the following weekend, areas are a single release all-day hunt. Reservations for pheasant hunts will start in the morning on the day before the hunt on a first-come, first-served basis. Pheasant hunters are reminded to wear a minimum of 400 sq. inches of blaze orange visible front and back.

Parking – All individuals **MUST** park by the designated sign-in board. Parking in any other area is prohibited. On residual non-release days, you may park anywhere, but ensure that parking doesn't impede safety or conflict with other hunters.

Pheasant release sites with GPS board locations are listed on the Northwest Adventure webpage under HUNTING.

Special Pheasant Hunt

Youth Hunt (Under 16 years old); Senior Hunt (65 years & older): Check Washington state regulations for September dates for junior and senior hunts. A state hunting license will be required, and successful completion of the Washington Hunters Education Program is required. Youth must be accompanied by an adult (at least 18 years or older). Volunteers will be assigned to assist all youth and hunting dogs will be available. Normal sign-up/reservations are required as well as a JBLM Lewis registration permit. A special pheasant area will be set aside for senior hunters, 65 years and older, in accordance with state regulations. This senior area will be made available only if enough sites are available to the general public.

Youth pheasant hunt dates will be identified in accordance with state regulation. All youth who qualify must also register as all other hunters with Outdoor Recreation. Youth hunters may sign up for the hunt 14 days before the scheduled event. Youth hunters will not use the hunt track

phone system but may sign up in person or call the NAC. A special folder will be available for this special event at the registration desk.

Pheasant hunters must sign in next to their name and out when finished at the release site board. If your name does not appear on the sign-in sheets, **do not hunt**. Contact the Skeet and Trap Range immediately if you feel this is an error. Pheasant hunters are not allowed to enter their hunting area before one hour before the start time of a.m. or p.m. hunt. Pheasant hunters must sign in and out by the posted official time.

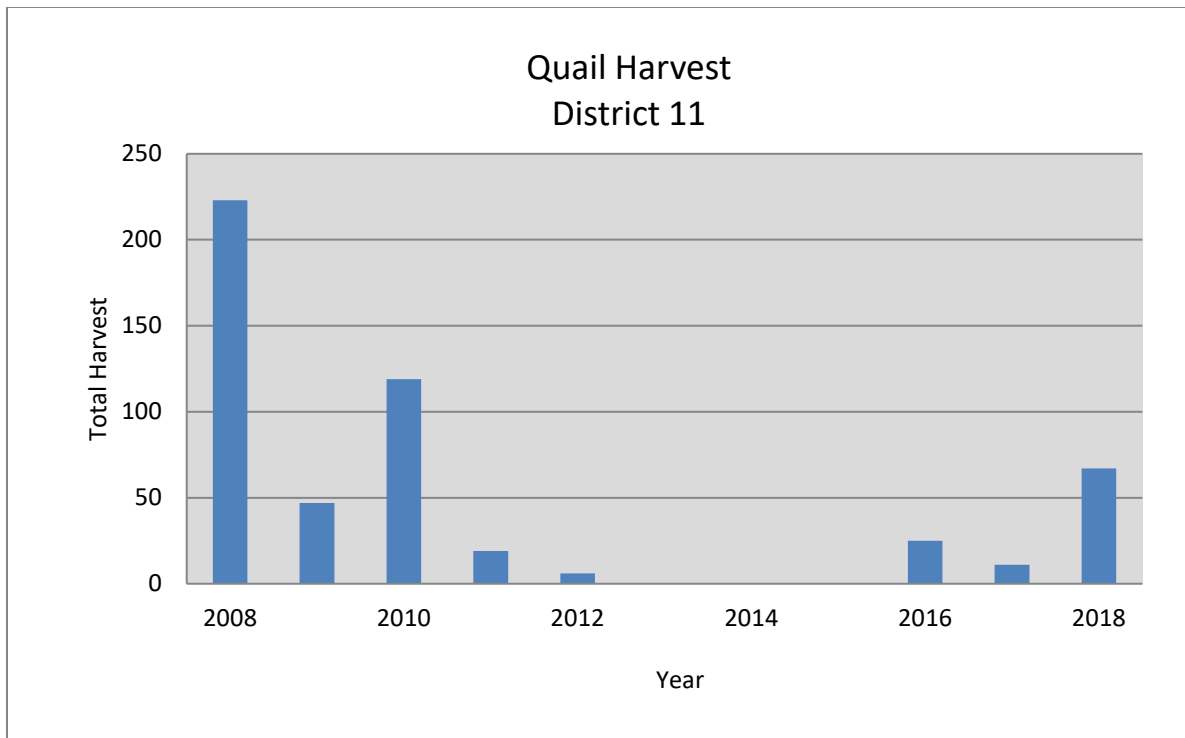
For additional information on hunting on JBLM, visit their website at jblm.armymwr.com/programs/hunting-fishing

QUAIL

For information on hunting quail in general, please visit: wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/quail

For additional information regarding upland bird hunting in general, please visit: wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds and wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01805 and wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/upland-bird

Quail are as limited in District 11 as they are throughout western Washington. Quail harvest in District 11 fluctuates annually depending on the number of hunters participating. For example, only eight hunters hunted quail in the district in 2017. Regardless, quail harvest in the district is not significantly lower than the other ten western Washington counties where hunters hunt quail. Hunters may find California quail in scattered locations throughout District 11, with the greatest opportunity in grasslands and woodlands of south and east Thurston County and northern Lewis County. Mountain quail are more prevalent in the brushy areas of the Key Peninsula, Pierce County, and southeast portions of Thurston County. Where private property access is limited, seek out state (DNR), and county forestland. The western Washington California (valley) quail season runs through the end of September through the end of November, with a daily mixed bag limit of 10 and a possession mixed bag limit of 30. The mountain quail season runs the same season with a daily bag limit of two and possession limit of four.

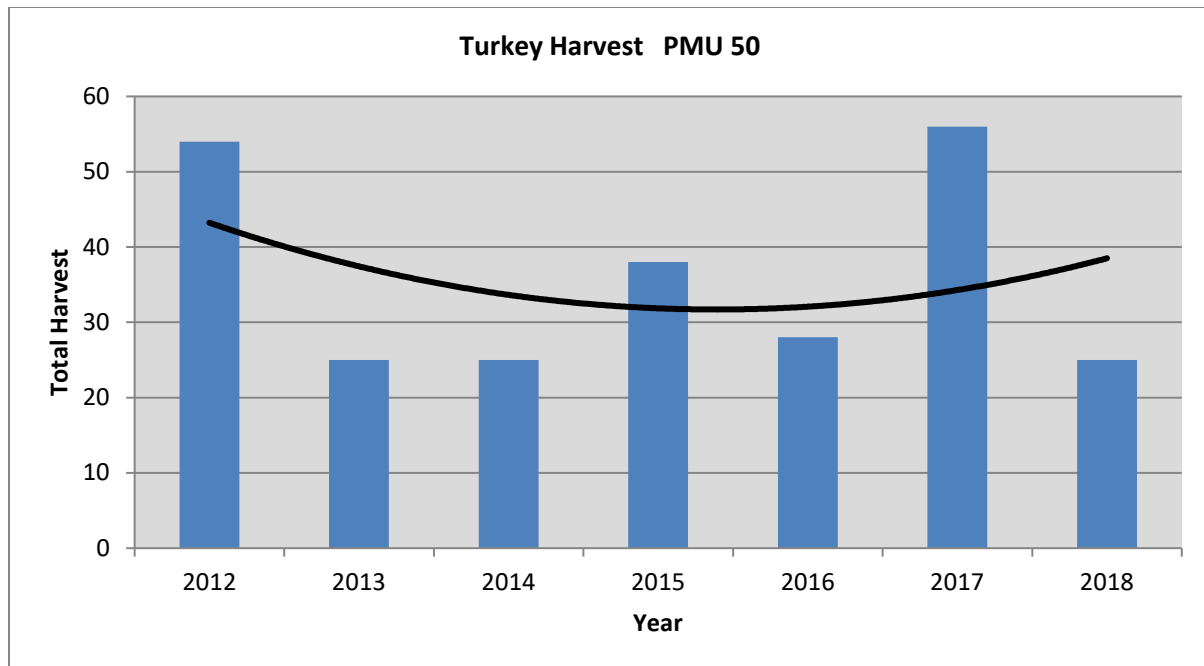


TURKEY

Information on hunting turkey, in general, can be found here: wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01803 and wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/summary-of-seasons/spring-turkey

District 11 is not managed for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare. Regardless, the district has huntable populations of the eastern subspecies of wild turkey and harvest reflects hunter participation year to year. Turkey harvest for Turkey Population Unit 50, where District 11 lies, has remained stable since 2012 except for spikes in 2012 and 2017. Those spikes may reflect higher hunter participation in those years.

WDFW receives occasional reports of individual or small groups of turkeys in Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula, Pierce County; Rochester, Grand Mound, and Tenino, Thurston County; and along the Johnson Creek Corridor, Lewis County. However, the overall scarcity of turkeys in District 11 equates to extremely poor prospects for harvest. Annually, the majority of turkey harvest occurs in the Skookumchuck Unit (GMU 667), followed by a few in Deschutes (GMU 666) and Puyallup (GMU 652). The statewide spring turkey season runs April 15 through May 31 in any given year, with a youth-only hunt the first weekend of April. Only male turkeys and turkeys with visible beards are legal in western Washington, with a season limit of one turkey (except a two-turkey limit in Klickitat County).



BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

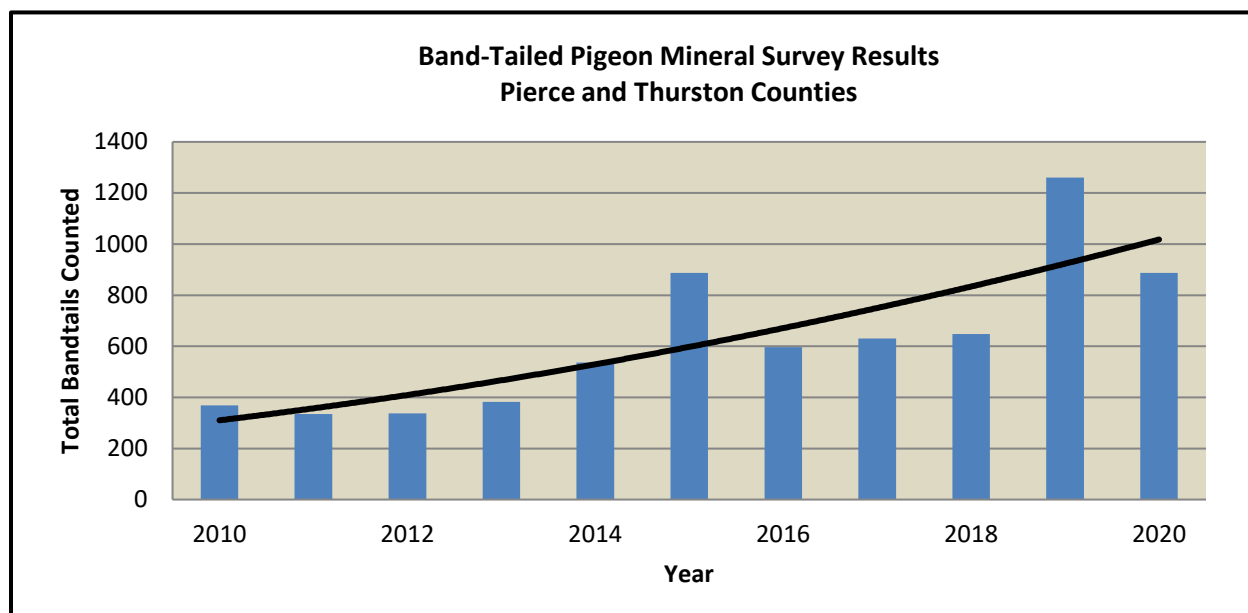
For additional information regarding upland bird hunting in general, please visit:

wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds and

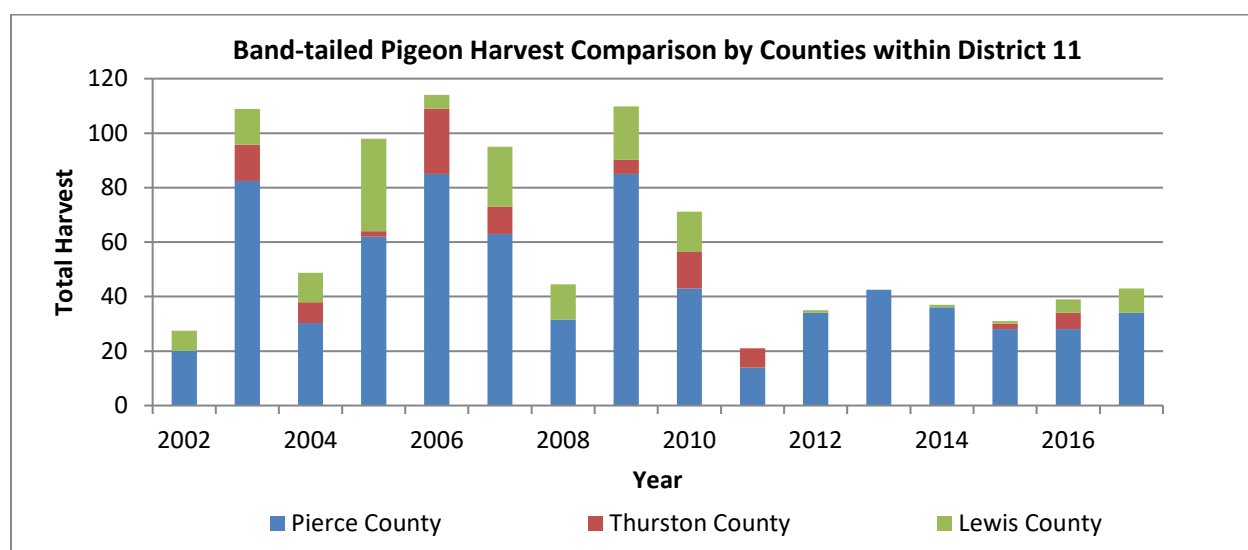
wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01805 and

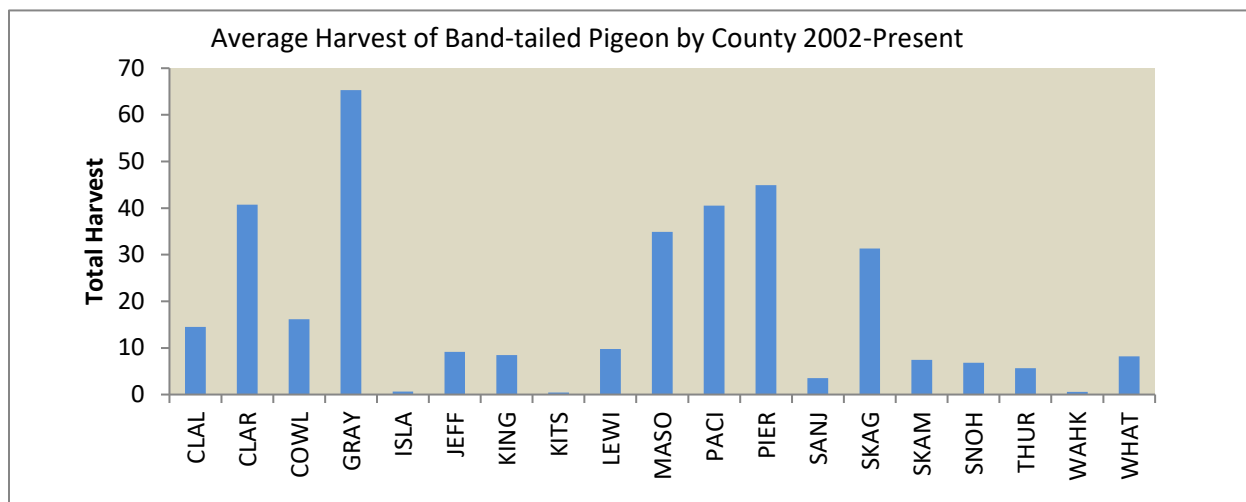
wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/upland-bird

Band-tailed pigeon estimates based on mineral site surveys have been trending upwards in the district since 2010. Hunting prospects for band tail hunters is very good this season.



Pierce County in District 11 has the second-highest average harvest in Washington (average harvest of 45 per year) and thus prospects for hunting band-tailed pigeons in the district are good. For comparison, the average harvest in Lewis County is ten band tails per year and in Thurston County, the average is six. The best hunting locations for band-tailed pigeons in District 11 are Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and the Luhr Beach area (Pierce/Thurston county boundary), Mud Bay (Thurston County), Totten Inlet/Oyster Bay (Thurston County), and along marine shorelines of District 11.



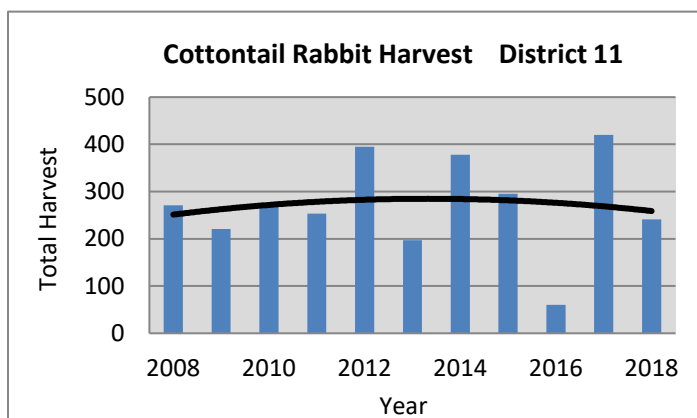


COTTONTAIL RABBIT



Falconer J. Knudson with his newly banded peregrine falcon, Pierce County

District 11 provides some of the best cottontail rabbit hunting opportunities in western Washington. Rabbits are prolific in the shrub and grassland habitats found throughout Pierce and Thurston counties. Cottontail rabbit harvest in the district fluctuates depending on annual hunter participation. The average harvest since 2008 has been 300 annually (2016 low removed; Pierce and Thurston counties only). Pierce County has often had one of the highest harvests of all western Washington counties. Thus, prospects for cottontail hunting in District 11, and Pierce County specifically, are good.





District 11 hunter proudly displaying his harvested mountain goat (with his future hunting buddies in tow)



Pierce County hunter R. Frick with his 2019 mountain goat harvested in GMU 356, Bumping River.

Pierce County hunter with his 2019 bobcat harvested in GMU 666, Deschutes.

