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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# **DISTRICT 15 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Mason, Kitsap, and East Jefferson counties

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## DISTRICT 15 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Spanning Mason, Kitsap, and East Jefferson counties, District 15 is one of four districts (11, 15, 16, and 17) that make up Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Region 6. District 15 consists of all or portions of six game management units (GMUs): 621 (Olympic), 624 (Coyle), 627 (Kitsap), 633 (Mason), 636 (Skokomish), and 651 (Satsop). A portion of GMUs 621 and 624 fall within District 16. A portion of GMUs 636 and 651 fall within District 17.

The most hunted landscape in District 15 is industrial forestland, commonly characterized by multi-aged forests of Douglas fir and red alder. Other District 15 habitats include alpine in designated Wilderness areas in the Olympic Mountains and marine near Hood Canal and Puget Sound.

Hunters can enjoy a range of hunting opportunities in District 15, including elk, deer, bear, cougar, waterfowl (including sea ducks), and grouse. The District also features a variety of small game species, including rabbit, quail, coyote, and bobcat. Table 1 presents harvest estimates for most District 15 game species during the 2019 hunting season and compares those estimates to the 2018 season and the five-year average. Find specific information on harvest trends in the appropriate species section of this document.

**Table 1.** Estimates of the 2018, 2019\*, and 5-year average annual harvest for most game species hunted in District 15 are shown. Waterfowl and small-game harvest totals were tabulated from all of Mason, Kitsap, and Jefferson counties. For cougar, only general hunting season harvest is shown. \*2019 harvest data was not available for some species at time of printing this report

Species	Harvest		
	5-year avg.	2018	2019
Elk	40	45	41
Deer	1,835	1,813	1,612
Bear	70	60	117
Cougar	11	18	8
Ducks	5,154	3,512	n/a
Canada Goose	288	216	n/a
Snipe	17	44	n/a
Grouse	2,711	2,475	n/a
Mourning Dove	27	18	n/a
Quail	146	149	n/a
Snowshoe Hare	5	13	n/a
Cottontail Rabbit	54	14	n/a

## ELK

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

All District 15 elk are Roosevelt elk. District 15 contains portions of the Olympic elk herd present in GMUs 621, 624, 633, 636 and 651. WDFW doesn't know of any elk herds currently in GMUs 627 or 633, but we occasionally receive reports of elk sightings in these units. Elk hunting opportunities are



fair in District 15. Wildlife managers design District 15 elk hunting seasons to promote stable or increasing elk numbers, while also minimizing negative elk-human interactions most often related to agricultural crops or pastureland damage.

GMU 621 is open to hunting by permit only. Elk in the District 15 portion of GMU 621 use the main river valleys that flow into Hood Canal, including the Dosewallips, Duckabush, Hamma Hamma, and North Fork Skokomish rivers and Lilliwaup Swamp. Elk in the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers remain in the lower river valleys and on nearby valley ridges year-round or migrate to summer range in Olympic National Park. Recently, elk from the Duckabush herd have been moving southward to new areas. The Hamma Hamma and Lilliwaup herds are generally non-migratory. The North Fork Skokomish herd primarily uses the upper North Fork Skokomish River valley in Olympic National Park above Lake Cushman, often wintering near the northern end of the lake before migrating to summer range in the Mount Skokomish Wilderness. Count data suggests there are at least 250 elk in this GMU.

GMU 636 is open to hunting by permit only. Elk in GMU 636 reside in the upper Wynoochee River valley, the Skokomish River valley, and near the town of Matlock. Most elk herds in this GMU are non-migratory, but at least two elk herds in the upper Wynoochee migrate into Olympic National Park, occasionally wintering in the North or South Fork Skokomish River valleys. Count data suggests there are at least 200 elk in this GMU.

GMU 651 provides the only general season elk hunting opportunity in the district. Distributed across the GMU in roughly 13 non-migratory elk herds, recent surveys estimate there are at least

300 elk in GMU 651. This estimate is below management objectives overall, but in some cases individual herds that primarily reside in private agricultural lands are likely at or above thresholds for elk damage/conflict.

For more detailed information on the status of Washington's elk herds, hunters can read the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report, which is available for download on the department's website.

## **WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?**

GMU 651 has the only decent general season elk hunting opportunity in District 15; however, hunters will likely need a private timber company access permit to get into where most elk reside. GMU 651 is open to general season hunting for all weapon types, including a 3-point minimum or antlerless season in Elk Area 6061 for archery hunters.

Elk hunting in GMUs 621 and 636 is limited to special permit hunting only; while GMU 624 is open during the general season. Many of the elk herds in GMUs 621, 624, and 636 spend a lot of time on small private land parcels often associated with pastures, so access may be limited in these units. The exception to this is that hunters are likely to find elk can be found in the upper South Fork Skokomish and upper Wynoochee River Valley on U.S. Forest Service and private timberlands. Although DFW gets occasional sightings of elk elsewhere, elk are most present in GMU 624 near Sequim and are usually on private land. For hunters looking for areas with the least amount of pressure and little to no private land access issues, WDFW recommends applying for an elk permit in GMU 636 and hunting the upper Wynoochee Valley area.

Although both GMUs 627 and 633 are open for general season elk hunting, hunters should avoid these GMUs, as WDFW hasn't recorded any recent elk observations in these units.

Tribal hunting occurs in District 15; often accounting for 50 percent or more of the total elk harvest in District 15 (see Figure 1 below). Hunting pressure in these units is likely greater than WDFW hunting season statistics and permit levels might suggest.

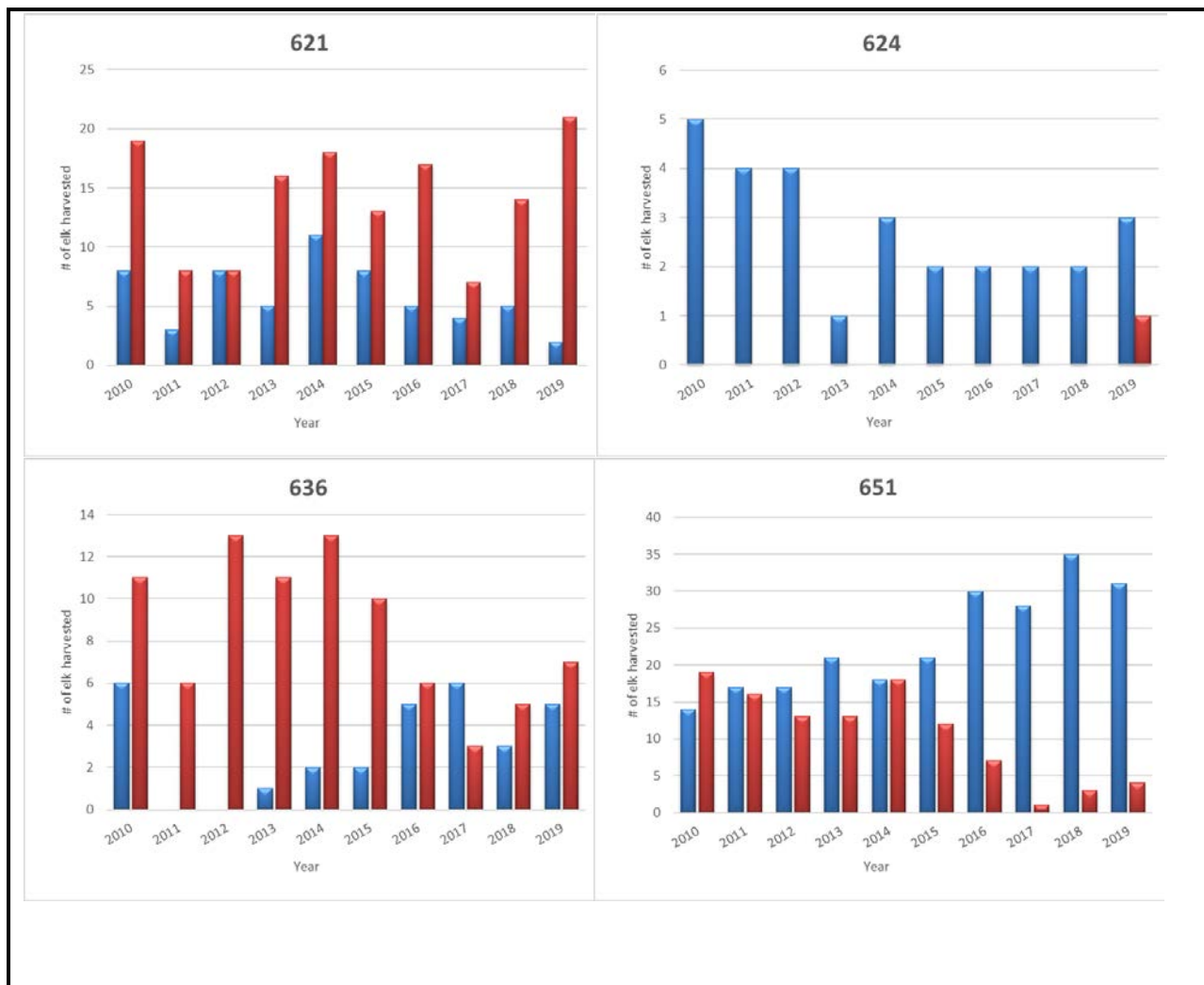
## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON**

Elk and hunter numbers are not likely to fluctuate dramatically between years. There are eight hunting permits in GMU 621 for the 2020 (one archery, two muzzleloader, and five modern firearm) and hunt dates include additional days for each weapon type. Average hunter success in this unit can be a little misleading because of the small number of permits, but five-year averages by weapon type are 50 percent for archery, 45 percent for muzzleloaders, and 58 percent for modern firearm hunters. Actual success has been as low as 0 percent in some years.

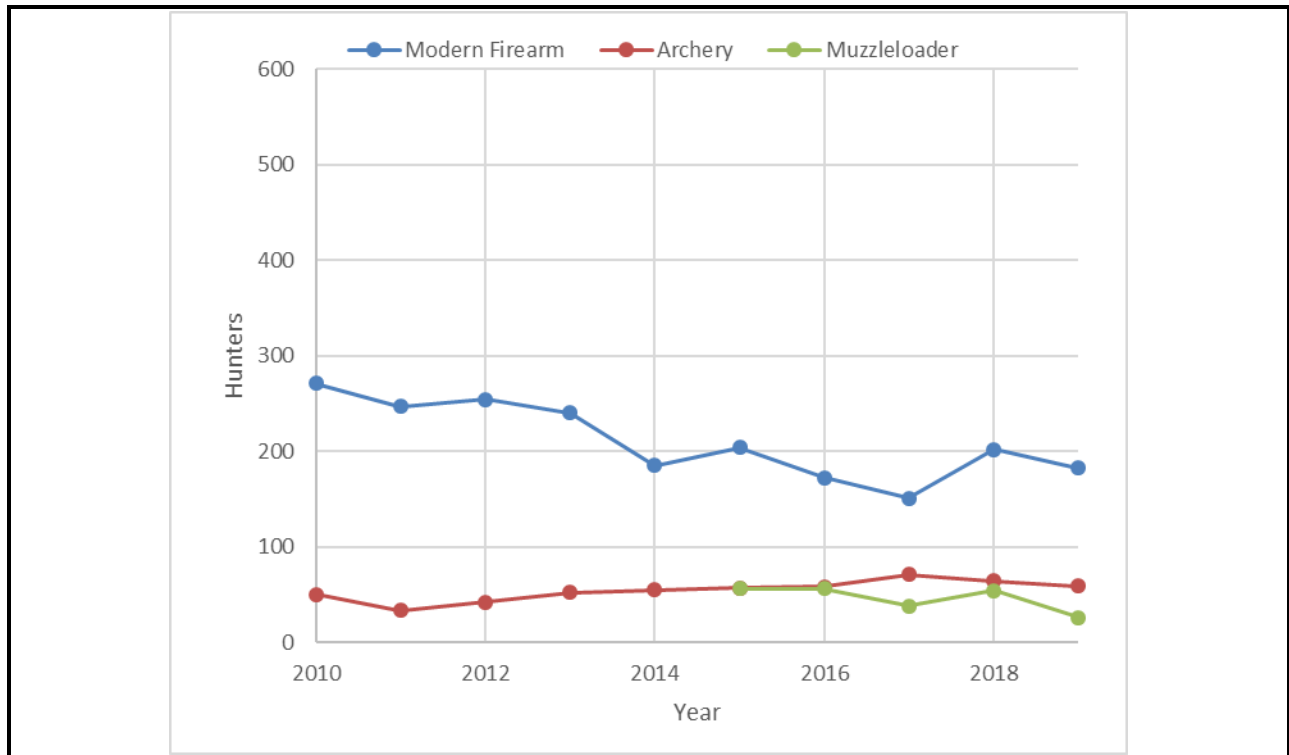
There are four permits available for GMU 636 elk hunters (one archery, one muzzleloader, and two modern firearm) and the hunt dates include additional days for each weapon type. Hunter success in this unit can be quite low, often at 0 percent. Muzzleloader hunters report the highest success in this GMU at 80 percent, followed by rifle hunters at 57 percent, and archery hunters at 48 percent.

GMU 651 is open for general season hunting during the early archery, modern firearm, and late-muzzleloader seasons. Legal elk is 3-point minimum bull except antlerless elk are legal in Elk Area 6061 for archery hunters.

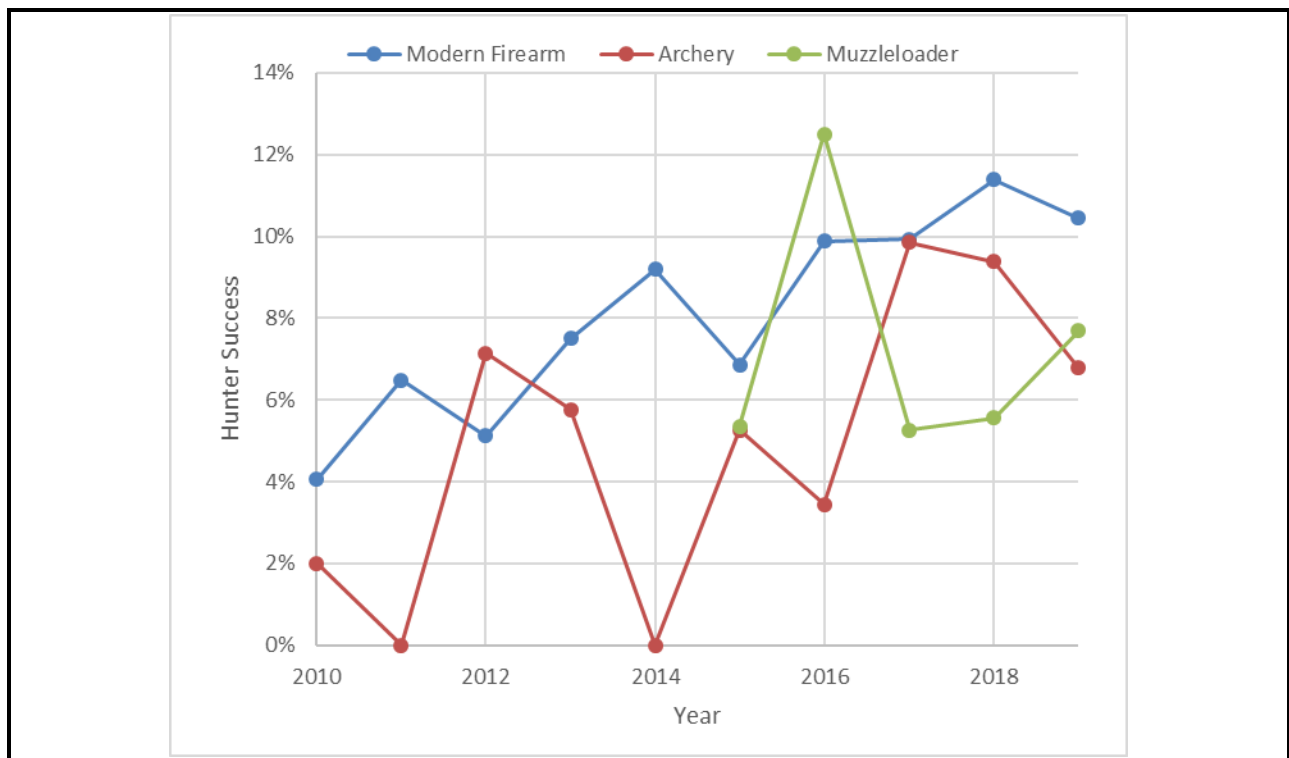
Figure 1 shows elk harvested in GMUs 621, 624, 636, and 651, while Figures 2 and 3 present general season trend data for hunter numbers and success in GMU 651. Cow harvest totals include master hunter permit harvests to reduce elk damage to agricultural crops, but not other removals to reduce damage.



**Figure 1.** Total state (blue) and tribal (red) elk harvest in GMUs 621, 624, 636, and 651 during 2010–2019.



**Figure 2.** Elk hunter numbers during the general hunting seasons in GMU 651, 2010–2019.



**Figure 3.** Elk hunter success rates during general hunting seasons in GMU 651, 2010–2019.

## **ELK AREAS**

District 15 features two elk areas: Elk Area 6061 (Twin Satsop) and Elk Area 6071 (Dungeness). Wildlife managers established Elk Area 6061 to help address chronic elk damage issues, while WDFW established Elk Area 6071 to limit elk hunting for safety reasons.

Hunting regulations allow the harvest of 3-point minimum bull or antlerless elk during the general early archery season in Elk Area 6061. The Master Hunter program provides elk hunting in Elk Area 6071 on a limited basis.

## **ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)**

Since 2008, WDFW has received dramatic increases of reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range. While elk have long suffered from “hoof rot,” a relatively common livestock disease, the rapid spread and severity of this new affliction was something completely different. WDFW has confirmed instances of treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) in District 15.

WDFW-commissioned scientific tests commissioned in 2013 found these abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause digital dermatitis in cattle, sheep, and goats. Although this disease has plagued the dairy industry for decades, the treponeme bacteria had never been documented in elk or any other wildlife species until 2013.

Since then, WDFW has continued to work with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, and others to develop management strategies for TAHD-infected elk. For more information on TAHD and elk in Washington, visit the [WDFW TAHD website](#).

## **NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

Season dates and permits available in 2019 will be similar to 2018.



## DEER

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black-tailed deer is the only species of deer in District 15. The department's objective for deer in District 15 is to maintain productive populations while providing for multiple uses, including recreational, educational, and aesthetic (WDFW Game Management Plan 2008). Buck harvest is any antlered buck, while antlerless harvest is limited to certain weapon types and/or by permit.

WDFW doesn't use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 15. Instead, wildlife managers use harvest trends, hunter success, and harvest per unit effort to estimate population size. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and the agency is currently evaluating new approaches to monitoring black-tailed deer populations independent of harvest data.

For more detailed information related to the status of black-tailed deer in Washington, hunters can read the most recent version of the [Game Status and Trend Report](#), which is available for download on the department's website.

### WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

There are ample general season deer hunting opportunities for hunters in District 15. All GMUs in this district have general and permit season hunting opportunities, starting in September with the early archery season and the Olympic Wilderness high buck hunt, which is open to modern firearm and muzzleloader hunters.

Field observations and recent harvest trends suggest good deer hunting potential exists in GMUs 621, 627, and 633. GMU 651 remains a popular hunting unit, but portions of this GMU owned by Green Diamond Resources will require an access permit. Good deer hunting can be found in lower elevation habitats in GMU 636, but deer density in this unit appears to decline at higher elevations.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

It is uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 15, where severe winter weather rarely results in large die-offs. Hunter numbers also typically do not change dramatically from one year to the next, unless there is a dramatic shift in hunting regulations or access. Consequently, the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent harvest trends, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Figures 4 through 6 provide trend data for each of these statistics.

### DEER AREAS

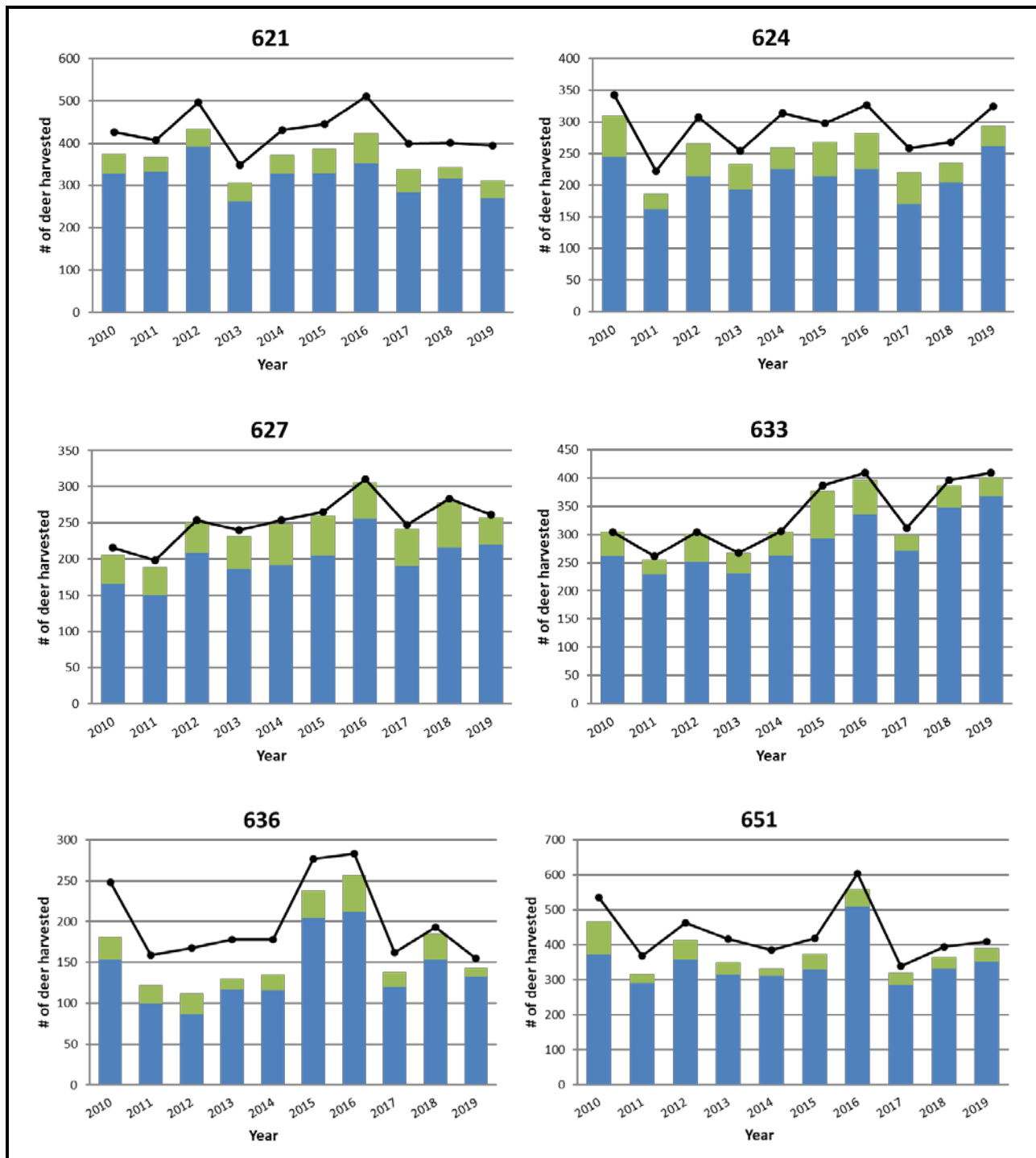
Wildlife managers established Deer Area 6020 in GMU 624 primarily to aid in addressing chronic damage issues. This GMU is open to general season any deer harvest for all three

weapon-type user groups. Additionally, 40 second deer permits are available for archery hunters in this area.

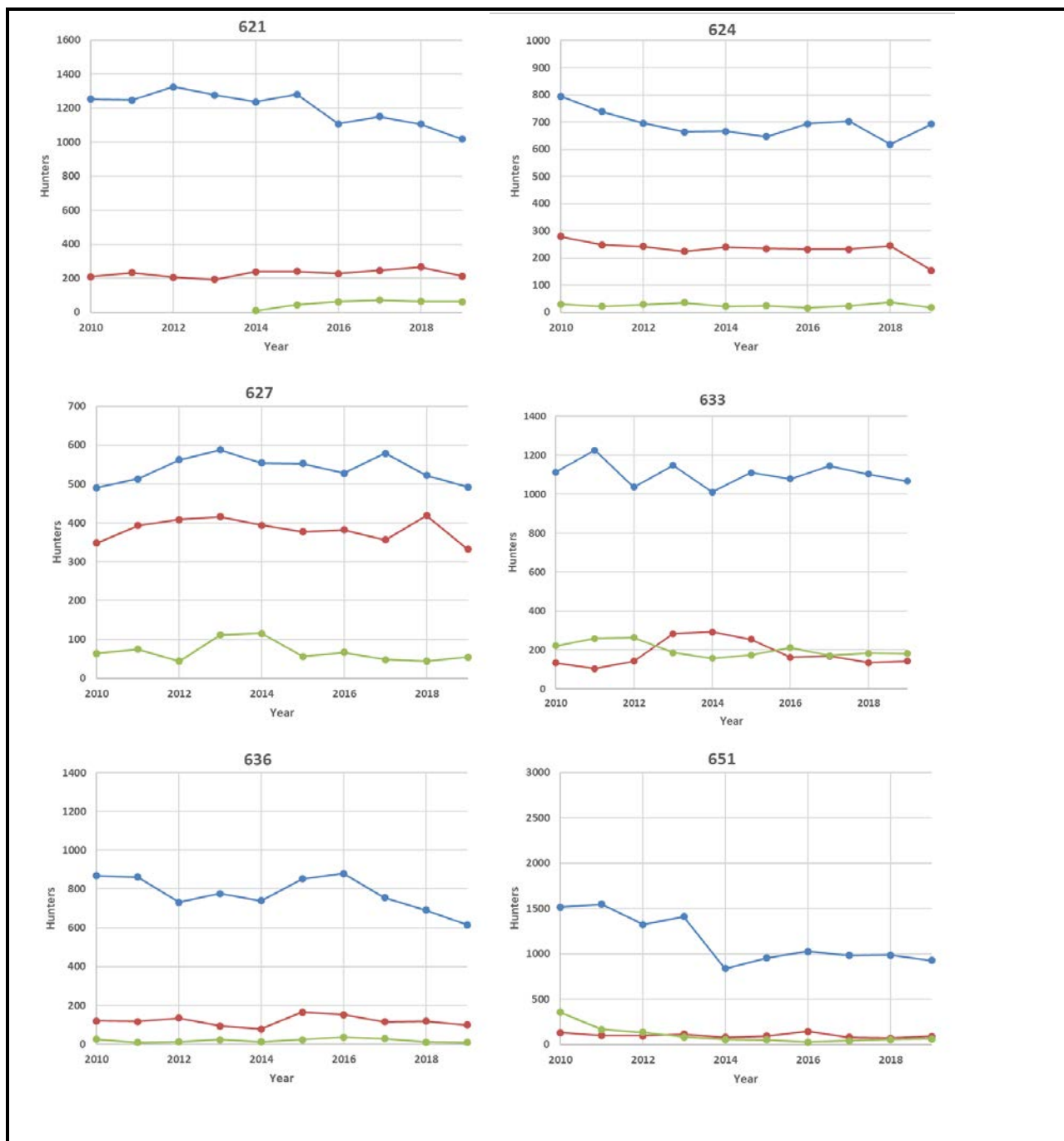
### **NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

Hunters should anticipate very few changes for deer hunting in District 15, although WDFW did adjust permit levels for some hunts.

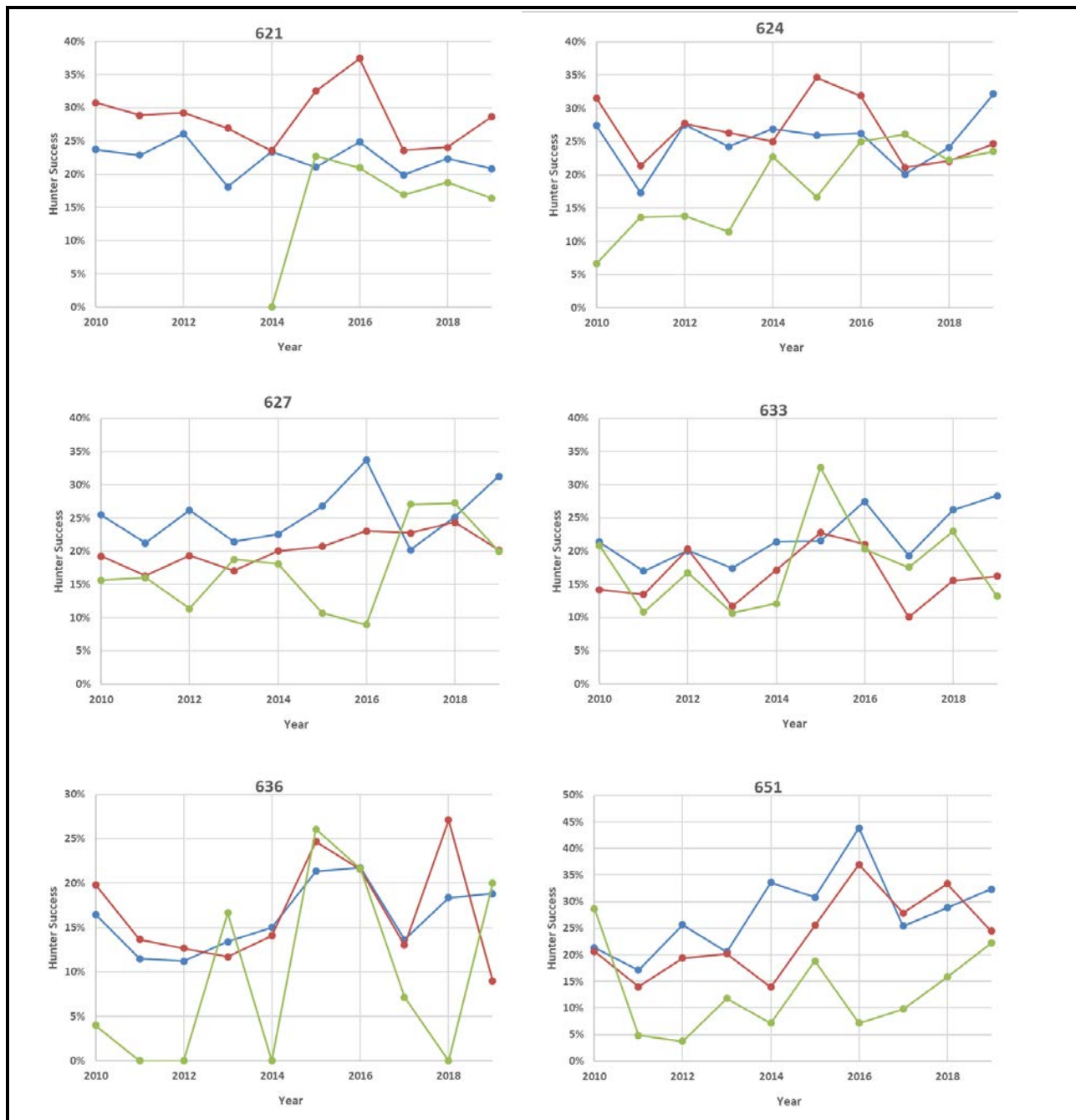




**Figure 4.** Trends in the total number of buck (blue) and antlerless (green) deer harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2010–2019. Total deer harvest (black line) includes harvest from state general and permit seasons plus tribal harvest.



**Figure 5.** Trends in hunter numbers during general modern firearm (blue), archery (red), and muzzleloader (green) deer seasons in District 15, 2010–2019.



**Figure 6.** Trends in hunter success rates during general modern firearm (blue), archery (red), and muzzleloader (green) deer seasons in District 15, 2010–2019.

## BEAR

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears are present throughout District 15, but population densities vary among GMUs. Hunters are likely to find the best opportunities to harvest a black bear in GMUs 621, 633, and 636.

District 15 contains part of the Coastal Black Bear Management Unit (BBMU) (GMUs 621, 636, and 651) and part of the Puget Sound BBMU (GMUs 624, 627, and 633). WDFW designs black bear hunting season guidelines for these BBMUs to maintain black bear populations at their current level. The fall black bear hunting season for all District 15 units is August 1 to November 15. Hunters can buy up to two bear tags during each license year.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

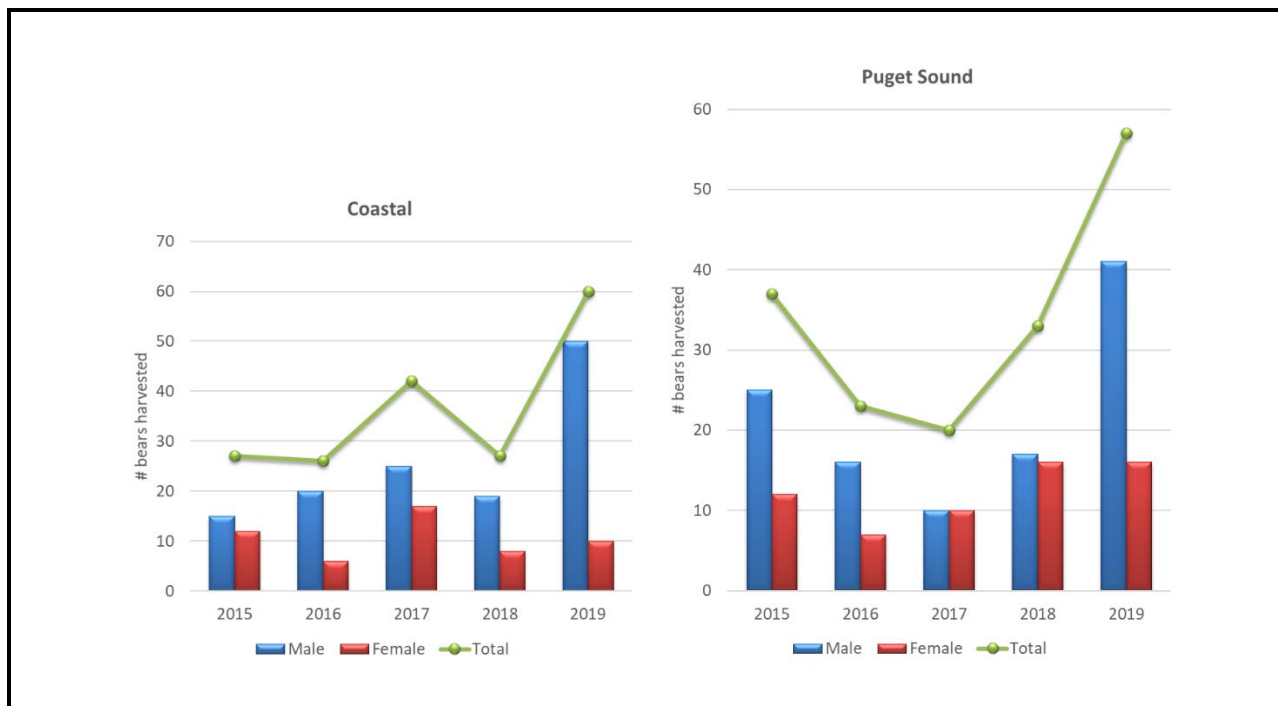
The majority of bear harvest in District 15 comes from hunters killing a bear opportunistically while hunting other species like deer and elk, although some hunters do specifically hunt bears. Hunter success in District 15 has averaged 5 percent in the Coastal BBMU and 6 percent in the Puget Sound BBMU during the last five years. However, hunter success is likely higher for hunters who specifically hunt bears versus those who buy a bear tag just in case they see one while they are deer or elk hunting.

Bear harvest in District 15 increased in 2019 (Figure 7). At the GMU level, bear harvest is usually highest in GMU 621 (Figure 8). Since 2017, GMUs 627 and 633 has had two spring bear permit hunts. Wildlife managers added these hunts in an attempt to reduce bear-human conflicts in two units with expanding urban development. Hunter participation and success is low during these permit hunts. Since 2017, WDFW has issued 30 permits, 15 hunters hunted with the permit, and hunters harvested three bears.

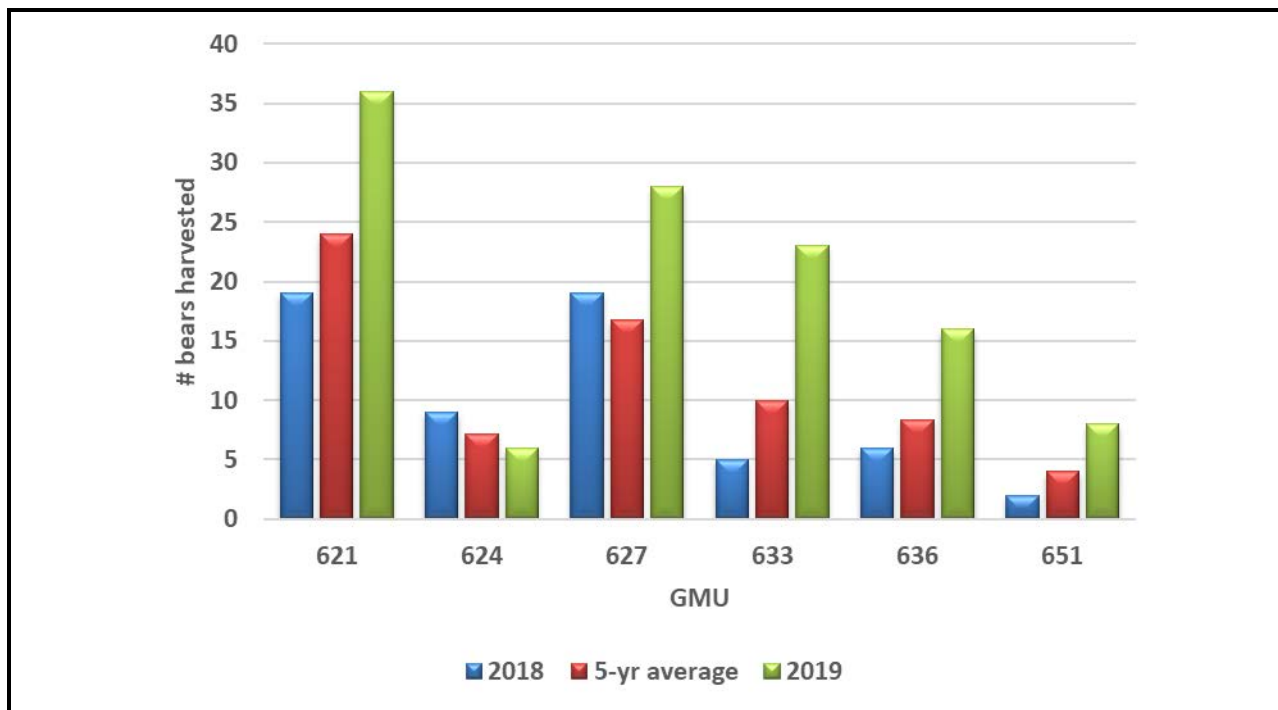
GMUs 621 and 636 offer the most accessible public land in the District. Hunting the higher-elevation huckleberry patches could be a good strategy.

### NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

There are no notable changes expected for the 2020 bear hunting season in District 15.



**Figure 7.** Trends in the number of male and female black bears and total number of bears harvested during the general bear season in District 15, 2015–2019. Bears removed for other reasons are not included.



**Figure 8.** The number of bears harvested in each GMU during the 2018 and 2019 seasons in District 15. The five-year average for total number of bears harvested in each GMU is also included.

## COUGAR

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars are present throughout District 15. Wildlife managers establish hunting seasons with the primary objective of maintaining a stable cougar population. Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed to a standardized approach for establishing harvest guidelines based on habitat availability and a standard general season. The intent was to have a longer season, without any weapon restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline.

WDFW established a series of hunt areas with standard early season dates of Sept. 1 through Dec. 31 and late season dates from Jan. 1 to April 30. The late season is dependent upon whether harvest is above or below the harvest guideline. After Jan. 1, WDFW may close any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline for that unit. Anyone planning to hunt cougar after Jan. 1 should confirm the cougar season is open in the desired hunting area. Hunters can find harvest guidelines can in the Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet. Hunters harvested eight cougars during 2019's general season (Table 2).



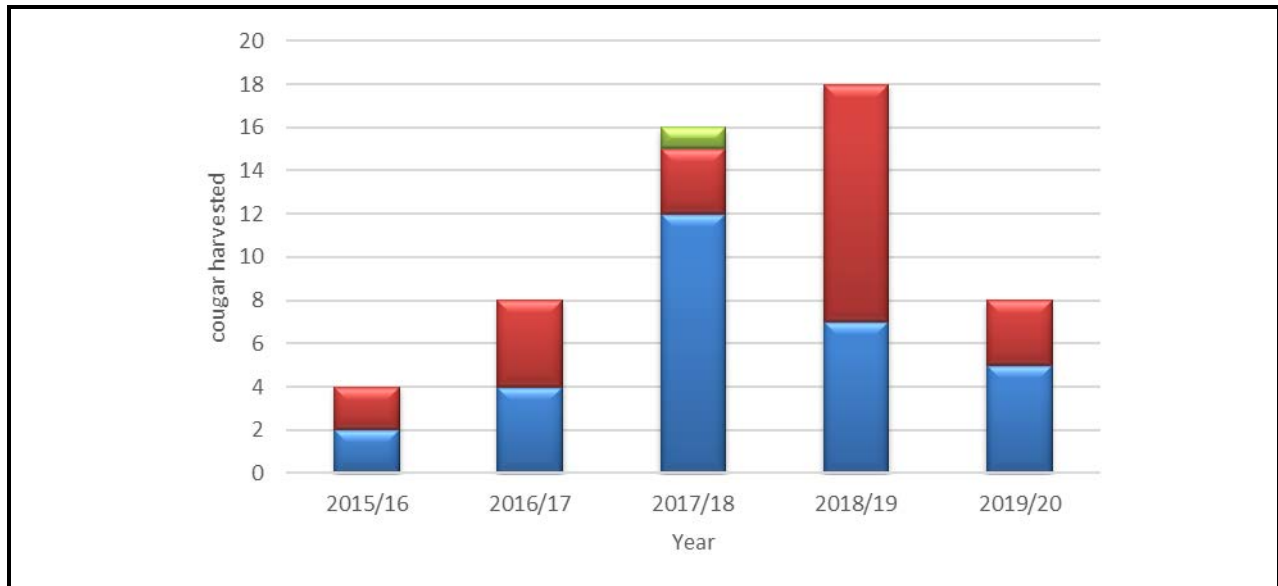
For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit [WDFW's website](#).

**Table 2.** Harvest guidelines and the reported 2019-20 harvest for the three cougar hunt areas located in District 15.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline 2019	2019-2020 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	0
642, 648, 651	6-8	4
621, 624, 627, 633	None	4

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

Most cougar harvest comes from encounters while hunters are pursuing deer, elk, or other activities. Total cougar harvest in District 15 can vary from year to year (Figure 9). Since 2015-16, the number of cougars harvested during hunting seasons has averaged eleven.



**Figure 9.** The estimated number of male (blue), female (red), and undetermined sex (green) cougars harvested by hunters annually in District 15 (all GMUs combined), 2015/16 –2019/20.

## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Hunting season and harvest guidelines are similar to 2019.

## DUCKS

### COMMON SPECIES

Several duck species use District 15. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, and common goldeneye, are also present on fresh and saltwater. Nesting wood ducks are present throughout the district early in the season and can provide a unique hunting opportunity. Sea ducks, including scoters, Barrow's goldeneye, long-tailed ducks, canvasbacks, and harlequin ducks inhabit Hood Canal and other saltwater areas.



### POPULATION STATUS

Pacific Flyway waterfowl populations have remained strong for several years, allowing liberal seasons for many species. However, in Washington, total wintering duck populations have declined and were 43 percent below 10-year averages in 2018; however, the lower count did account for reduced survey effort (WDFW 2019 Status and Trend Report).

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2020 PROSPECTS

District 15 hunters can expect similar hunting opportunities during the 2020 season. As in recent years, hunter success is often dependent on rainfall and storm events during the waterfowl season. A lack of flooded farm fields can sharply reduce hunting opportunities in District 15. Alternatively, the marine waters of Hood Canal can offer some good waterfowl hunting opportunities.

### PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Public hunting access exists at the mouths of the Duckabush, Quilcene, and Union rivers. Many of the undeveloped lakes and marshes on Tahuya Peninsula's Washington State Department of Natural Resources managed land offer an untapped and remote walk-in hunting opportunity for mallards, ringnecks, and scaup.

Due to extensive residential development on the shorelines, saltwater hunting opportunities are limited, especially in Kitsap County. Always check with the sheriff's department for county shooting closures before hunting.

Also, be sure to check the [2020 Migratory Waterfowl Regulation pamphlet](#) for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin, and goldeneye) in western Washington.

## GEESE

### COMMON SPECIES

Canada geese subspecies most likely to be found in District 15 include western, lesser, Taverner's, and cackler. Hunters can also encounter white-fronted and snow geese occasionally.

### POPULATION STATUS

Like ducks, weather largely drives goose numbers in the district. The more severe the weather, the more likely hunters are to see northern subspecies in the area. Anecdotal observations suggest that local westerns are stable or slightly increasing.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2020 PROSPECTS

Wildlife managers expect goose hunting opportunities in District 15 to be like trends observed during the last few seasons. Hunters are likely to harvest most geese on private farm fields and securing permission is essential. When funding exists, WDFW attempts to lease fields that regularly attract waterfowl.

### PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Same as those listed under ducks.

## FOREST GROUSE

### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

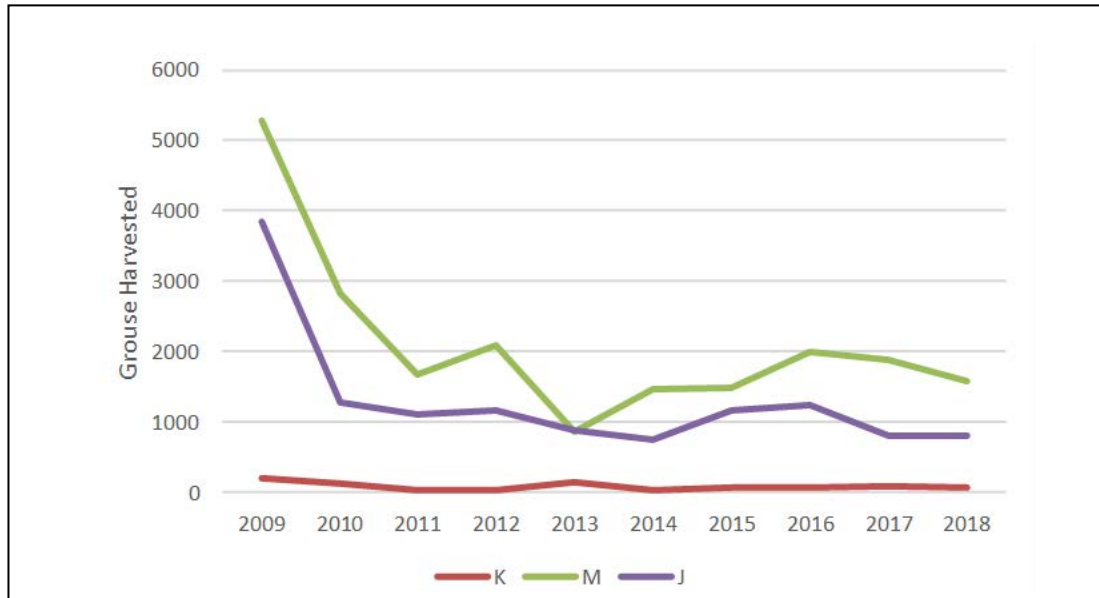
Although grouse occur throughout the district, Mason County offers the most opportunity for the hunter. The Olympic National Forest and Skokomish GMU are two of the more popular grouse hunting areas. Blue (sooty) grouse tend to occur in the coniferous forests at higher elevations, while ruffed grouse can occur throughout the district in coniferous and mixed forests. In the fall, either species can be found feeding on berries like salal, Oregon grape, and huckleberry.

### POPULATION STATUS

WDFW doesn't do any standardized or formal surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 15.

## HARVEST TRENDS AND 2020 PROSPECTS

The number of grouse harvested in District 15 has been consistently low in Kitsap County and, although lower than some previous years, has been trending upward in Mason County recently (Figure 10). Grouse harvest in Jefferson County includes areas in District 16.



**Figure 10.** The number of grouse harvested in Jefferson, Kitsap, and Mason counties during 2009 – 2018. 2019 grouse harvest data was not available at the time this report was completed.

## PHEASANTS

District 15 doesn't have any viable populations of wild pheasants in District 15. All pheasant hunting opportunities are associated with the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, which aims to provide an upland bird hunting opportunity and encourage participation from young and older-aged hunters. Each year, WDFW releases 30,000 to 40,000 pheasants at 25 sites, and three of those sites (Hunter Farms, Belfair, and the Sgt. Mak site) are in District 15. Hunters can view release site locations on the WDFW [website](#) or websites associated with the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, or at the Peninsula Birdhunters Association.

## QUAIL

Although frustratingly unpredictable, quail in District 15 are most likely to be found in two to six-year-old clear cuts, under power lines, and in tall stands of scotch broom throughout Mason and Kitsap counties. Their tendency to run rather than fly or hold for a pointing dog makes them an especially challenging upland game bird. Hunters should consider trying DNR parcels on the Tahuya Peninsula northwest of Belfair and the industrial timberlands between Shelton, Matlock, and McCleary. Walk-in opportunities are also numerous on timber company clearcuts around Mason Lake. The best time for scouting is in spring and early summer when the males are quite vocal.

## TURKEYS

District 15 lacks sizable turkey populations. Hunters are likely to find eastern wild turkeys in District 15. About 400 eastern wild turkeys were introduced into southwest Washington from 1987-2000. Introduction programs have been discontinued because populations did not appear to expand, and habitat suitability models indicated southwest Washington habitats were not likely to support viable turkey populations. Occasionally, single birds are spotted, but this district cannot be recommended as a place to bag a turkey.

## BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Band-tailed pigeons are the largest species of pigeon in North America. They inhabit mountainous forests in the western United States, with large coastal populations occurring from British Columbia south to northern California. During the breeding season (April to September), band-tailed pigeons are found below 1,000 feet in elevation. In autumn, they feed mainly on berries, nuts, grains, acorns, and fruits.

### POPULATION STATUS

WDFW monitors band-tailed pigeon populations using a standardized population index survey at 15 mineral sites where band-tailed pigeons gather. Since WDFW initiated the standardized mineral site survey, the population index indicates band-tailed pigeon populations have fluctuated through the years but have never declined to levels that would warrant more limited harvest opportunities.

### HARVEST TRENDS

Band-tailed pigeon harvest statewide has been trending downward, largely because of a similar declining trend in hunters. In District 15, harvest is highest in Mason County at an average 37 birds per year since 2000, followed by Jefferson County (includes east and west Jefferson County) at 10, and Kitsap County at zero.

### WHERE AND HOW TO HUNT BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Often, band-tailed pigeons congregate in areas with red elderberry, which are typically most abundant in five to 10-year-old clear cuts. Hunting can be exceptionally good in these areas. The key to harvesting band-tailed pigeons is scouting because it is hard to predict which clear cuts they will be using during the hunting season. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites and then sit patiently and wait for shooting opportunities as they occur.

As indicated by surveys, band-tailed pigeons often congregate at seeps and mineral sites. In addition, they show strong site preference to these locations and often return year after year. However, many of these sites are difficult to find because they are not abundant and occur in obscure areas. If hunters are lucky enough to locate a mineral site where band-tailed pigeons are congregating, they will likely have success hunting these locations for years to come.

## SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Hunters need a small game license, state migratory bird permit, and migratory bird authorization with band-tailed pigeon harvest record card to hunt. Hunters will have a nine-day season from Sept. 15-23.

Hunters should review the [2020 Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons](#) pamphlet to confirm season dates, harvest reporting, and any other regulation changes.

## OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species and furbearers that inhabit District 15 but were not covered in detail include eastern cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hares, coyotes, beaver, bobcat, raccoons, river otter, marten, mink, muskrat, and weasels. Additional migratory birds include snipe and coot. Crows are also abundant in District 15.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU

Although District 15 is not well known for large amounts of public land opportunities, they do exist on lands administered by the DNR and USFS in all District 15 GMUs. The vast majority of hunting opportunities, especially for big game and upland birds, in District 15 occur on private industrial forestlands owned by several timber companies, which allow access for hunting under a range of restrictions. See below for GMU-specific information on land access and ownership. WDFW encourages hunters to check ahead of time to determine if any landowner restrictions apply to the area they plan to hunt.

Access rules change through the seasons and vary by year. Hunters should visit the specific landowner's website if they have questions related to recreational access. Although other companies own land in District 15, the two primary private timberland companies with land in District 15 are Green Diamond Resources and Rayonier. Rayonier acquired lands in District 15 formerly owned by Pope Resources Company in 2020.

### GMU 621 (Olympic)

Access in GMU 621 is good for deer hunters and challenging for elk hunters, as most elk are found on lower-elevation private lands along the major river valleys. This GMU is a mixture of private timberlands, private lands, DNR, and USFS. Access to USFS land is generally allowed year-round. DNR-managed land is accessible to motorized vehicles or walk-in only in some areas. Most private timberlands are non-motorized access. All private agricultural lands require owner permission to hunt.

### GMU 624 (Coyle)

Other than the resident elk herd in the Sequim area, the Coyle Unit is usually considered a deer area. Although there are scattered timberlands publicly owned by DNR, most are privately owned. The largest property manager is Rayonier, which acquired land from Olympic Resource Management, a division of Pope Resources Company, in 2020. Although some DNR and private

mainlines may be open to motor vehicles, most hunting access is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicle.

### **GMU 627 (Kitsap)**

The Kitsap Unit is a highly developed area with private property throughout. However, hunters are likely to find ample hunting opportunity on forestlands. DNR manages a considerable amount of land in the western part of the unit. Rayonier and Green Diamond Resource Company also have holdings here. Whether state or private, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles, except that DNR allows ATV use on designated trails on some of its land in this unit.

### **GMU 633 (Mason)**

The Mason Unit is best known as an area for deer. DNR has land throughout, with extensive holdings on the Tahuya Peninsula. In the Mason Unit, most of the deer hunting occurs on private land controlled by the Green Diamond Resource Company and Manke Lumber Company. Whether state or private, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles, except that DNR allows ATV use on designated trails on some of its land in this unit.

### **GMU 636 (Skokomish)**

This GMU is a mixture of private timberlands, private lands, and USFS. Green Diamond Resource Company is the largest private timberland owner in this unit and it generally opens most areas to motorized use from September through December. However, exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings. For areas behind closed gates, access is by non-motorized means throughout the year.

Upper elevations and those portions of this GMU in the upper Wynoochee River and Skokomish river valleys are primarily USFS, with most areas open year-round for vehicle access. The USFS prohibits motorized access during the winter in some areas to minimize elk disturbances.

### **GMU 651 (Satsop)**

Green Diamond Resource Company is the largest private timberland owner in this unit, and it requires hunters to buy an access permit to hunt a large section of this GMU. Some of its land may be open to motorized access without a permit from September through December; while other portions may allow walk-in hunting without an access permit. Exceptions for fire danger and active logging operations may delay gate openings.

## **PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES**

### **WA Department of Natural Resources – Olympic Region**

[olympic.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:olympic.region@dnr.wa.gov)

360-374-2800

411 Tillicum Lane, Forks, WA 98331-9271

Website: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/about/dnr-regions-and-districts>

## **WA Department of Natural Resources – South Puget Sound Region**

[southpuget.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:southpuget.region@dnr.wa.gov)

360-825-1631

950 Farman Ave. N., Enumclaw, WA 98022-9282

Website: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/about/dnr-regions-and-districts>

## **US Forest Service – Hood Canal Ranger District – Quilcene**

360-765-2200

295142 Highway 101 S., P.O. Box 280, Quilcene, WA 98376

Website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/olympic/>

## **PRIVATE TIMBERLANDS**

### **Green Diamond Resources**

Recreation Website: <https://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/washington-lands/>

Recreation Email: [recreation@greendiamond.com](mailto:recreation@greendiamond.com)

### **Rayonier**

Recreation Phone Number: 1-855-729-4868

Recreation Website: <https://www.rayonierhunting.com/hunting-land/washington/>

Recreation Email: [Hunting@Rayonier.com](mailto:Hunting@Rayonier.com)

## **PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM**

Hunters are encouraged to call the Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628) or periodically check for updated information on [WDFW's Hunter Access website](#) for the most current information about private lands access in District 15.

## **ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS**

Most District 15 GMUs are a checkerboard of ownerships. Some online tools and resources can provide valuable land ownership information.

Hunters can also find parcel ownership information on the county assessor's webpage and by viewing the parcel maps. Alternatively, private companies found online also offer other map products.

### **WDFWs Hunting Regulations Web Map**

WDFW's Hunting Regulations web map provides hunters with a great interactive tool for identifying hunting seasons and locating tracts of public land within each GMU. Access from WDFW's hunting website or by [clicking here](#).

### **Department of Natural Resources Public Lands Quadrangle (PLQ) Maps**

The best source for identifying the specific location of public lands are DNR PLQ maps, which hunters can buy for less than \$10 on DNR's website [here](#).

### **US Forest Service**

Mapping tools and information: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/olympic/maps-pubs>