

2020

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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



*Food plot waiting for migrating waterfowl at Frenchman Regulated Access Area
Photo by Chattan McPherson, Natural Resource Specialist 2*

DISTRICT 5 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Grant and Adams counties

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DISTRICT 5 GENERAL OVERVIEW

There are abundant hunting opportunities throughout District 5, but this district is most recognized for waterfowl, upland bird, and mule deer hunting. Ring-necked pheasants and California quail are the most abundant and popular upland game birds in District 5. Additionally, Grant County is one of the top-producing counties for both species year after year. There are other opportunities within the district to hunt bobcat, cougar, chukars, gray partridge, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and both general season and permit opportunities for mule deer. Hunters harvest elk in Game Management Units (GMUs) 278 and 284, but elk populations are small.

WDFW manages the [Columbia Basin Wildlife Area](#) that boasts approximately 190,000 acres that is open to the public (Figure 5). There are additional open public lands that are managed by [WA Dept. of Natural Resources](#), [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#), Bureau of Reclamation, and Bureau of Land Management. Habitat in District 5 consists primarily of crop fields, shrub-steppe and wetlands in Grant County, and dryland crop fields, rangelands, and shrub-steppe in Adams County. Most habitat would be characterized as shrubsteppe with the dominant native upland vegetation including big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), great basin wildrye (*Leymus cinereus*), needle-and-thread (*Hesperostipa comata*), and Indian ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*). Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is the most common non-native species and is problematic for wildlife due to its ability to promote wildfire and dominate arid landscapes.

Riparian areas and wetlands are abundant in Grant County and are mostly associated with the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project (CBIP). Coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), and Woods' rose (*Rosa woodsii*) are the dominant native shrubs associated with riparian habitats. Non-native riparian species include Russian olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*), which is found throughout CBIP. There are many important crops for wildlife within the CBIP, including corn, wheat, other grains, alfalfa, and orchards. Within the CBIP, hunters can expect to find abundant waterfowl, as well as good numbers of pheasants, quail, and mourning doves.

Lands surrounding the CBIP tend to consist of highly fragmented shrubsteppe, dryland wheat, coulees, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. In these areas, hunters can expect to find gray partridge, mule deer, and chukar in the steepest portions of the district (Sun Lakes, Quincy Lakes, and Banks Lake units). For more information, see the [WDFW website](#).

PUBLIC LANDS IN DISTRICT 5 GMUS

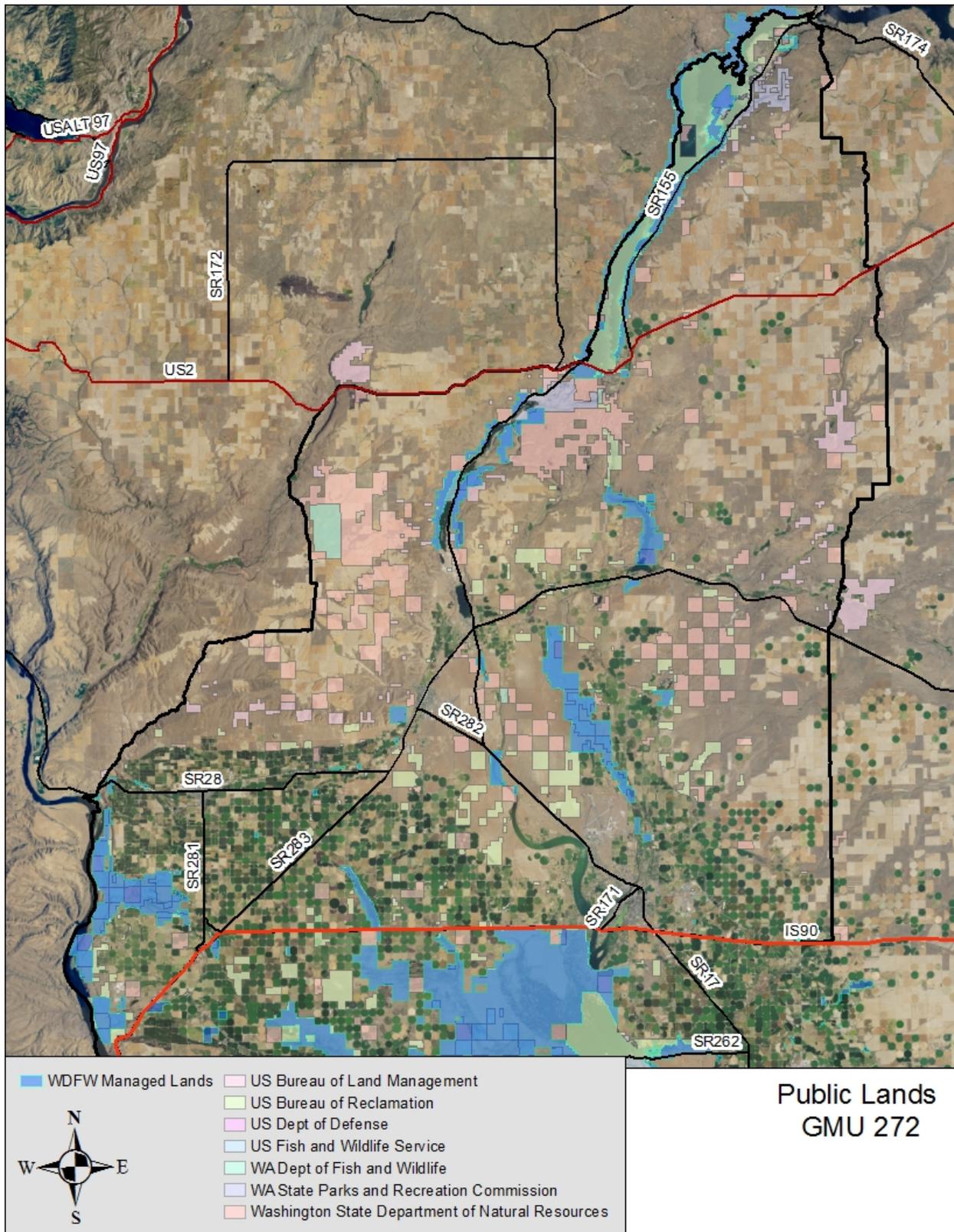


Figure 1. Public Lands in GMU 272.

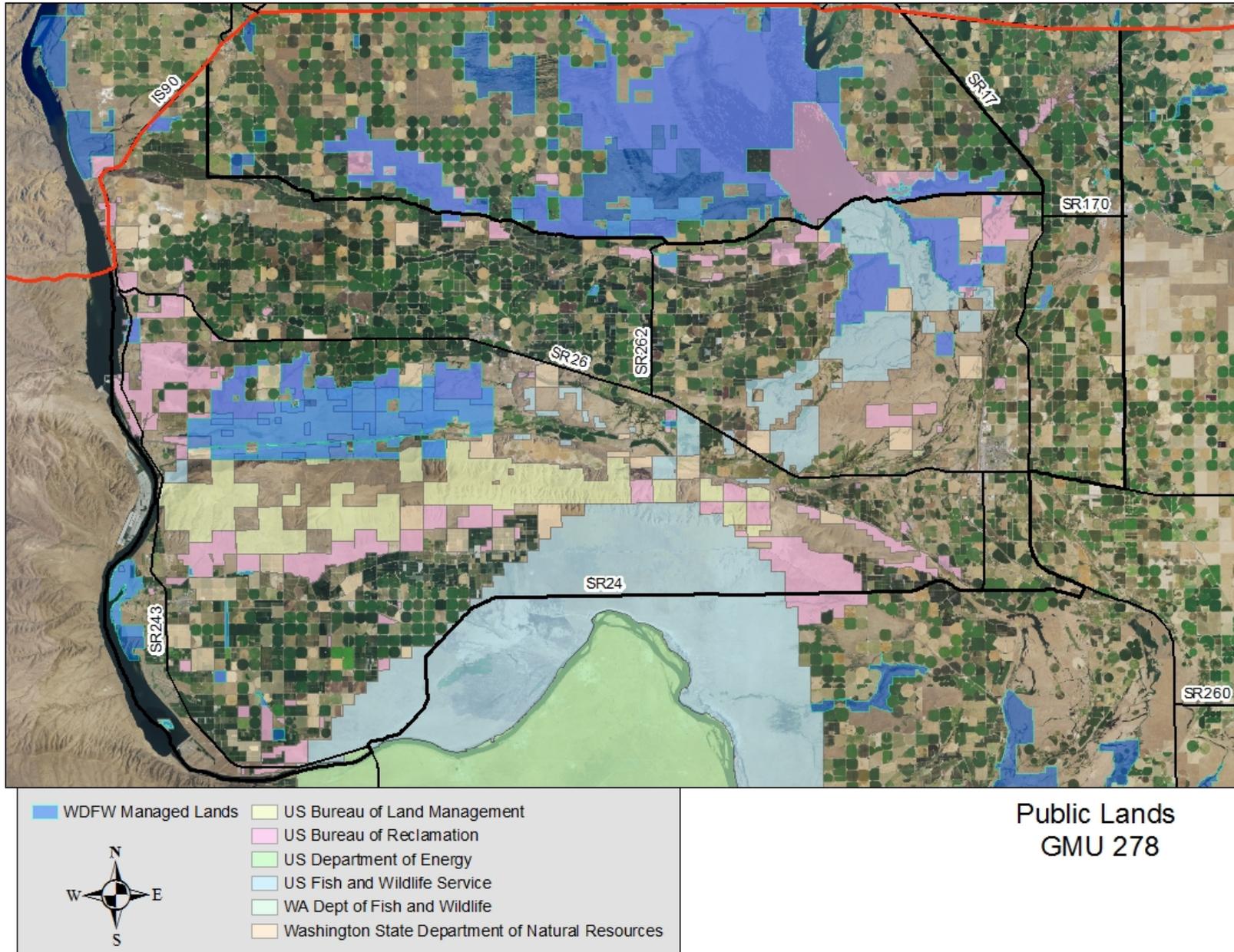


Figure 2. Public Lands in GMU 278.

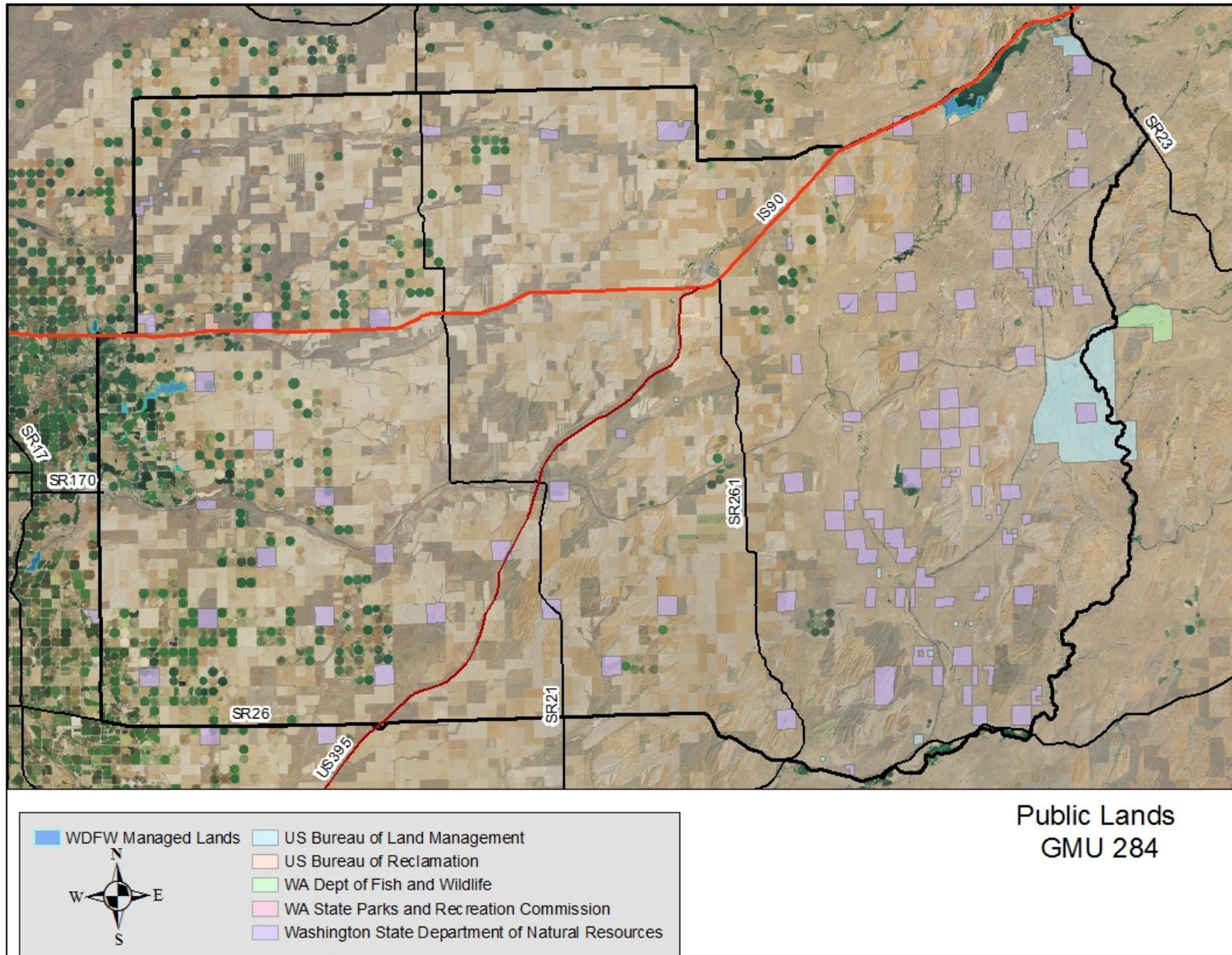


Figure 3. Public Lands in GMU 284.

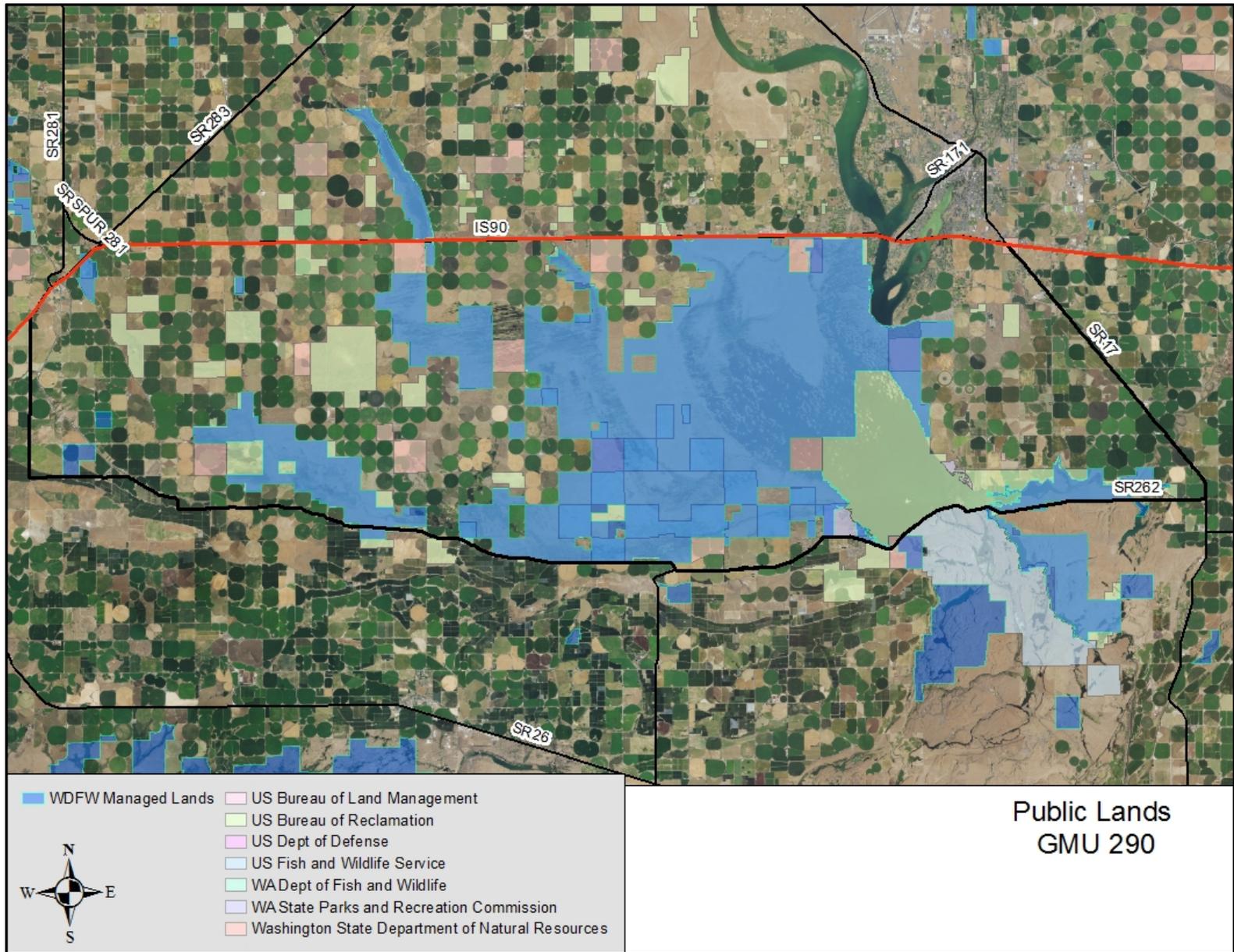


Figure 4. Public Lands in GMU 290.



Figure 5. WDFW Columbia Basin Wildlife Area units available for hunting highlighted green.

	Species/ Habitats	Banks Lake	Sun Lakes	Gloyd Seeps	Quincy Lakes	Winchester Lake	The Desert	Potholes Reservoir	Seep Lakes	Goose Lakes	Lower Crab Creek	Priest Rapids	Billy Clapp	Sprague Lake	<i>Chance of Locating Species of Interest</i>	
Hunting Opportunities by Wildlife Area Unit	Mule Deer	G	F	L	VL	N	VG*	VG*	L	L	F	L	N	N	Very Good	VG
	Bear	VL	VL	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Good	G
	Elk	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	VL	N	N	N	Fair	F
	Cougar	VL	VL	N	VL	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Limited	L
	Coyote	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	F	L	F	Very Limited	VL
	Bobcat	L	L	VL	VL	N	N	N	N	N	N	VL	N	N	None	N
	Rabbit	L	L	F	F	L	VL	VL	L	L	F	L	L	L		
	Chukar	G	F	N	L	N	N	N	N	N	F	L	F	N		
	Gray Partridge	F	L	VL	VL	VL	VL	VL	VL	VL	N	N	VL	L		
	Pheasant (Wild)	L	VL	G	L	F	G	G	VL	VL	G	VL	VL	L		
	Pheasant (Released)	G	N	VG**	N	N	N	N	N	N	G	G	N	N		
	California Quail	G	G	G	F	F	VG	VG	F	F	VG	L	F	L		
	Ducks	G	F	F	F	VG	VG	VG	F	F	G	F	N	N		
	Geese	F	F	L	L	L	F	F	F	F	F	L	N	N		
	Mourning Dove	F	L	G	F	F	G	G	F	F	F	L	L	L		
Bullfrogs	L	VL	F	L	F	VG	VG	F	F	F	L	VL	L			

Figure 6. Generalized Hunting Opportunity for Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Units.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

WDFW continues working to enhance wetlands, manage wetland succession, plant food plots, and enhance shrubsteppe habitat. It can take decades for vegetation to return to functional habitat. Funding for projects comes from a variety of sources and is supported by numerous partners.

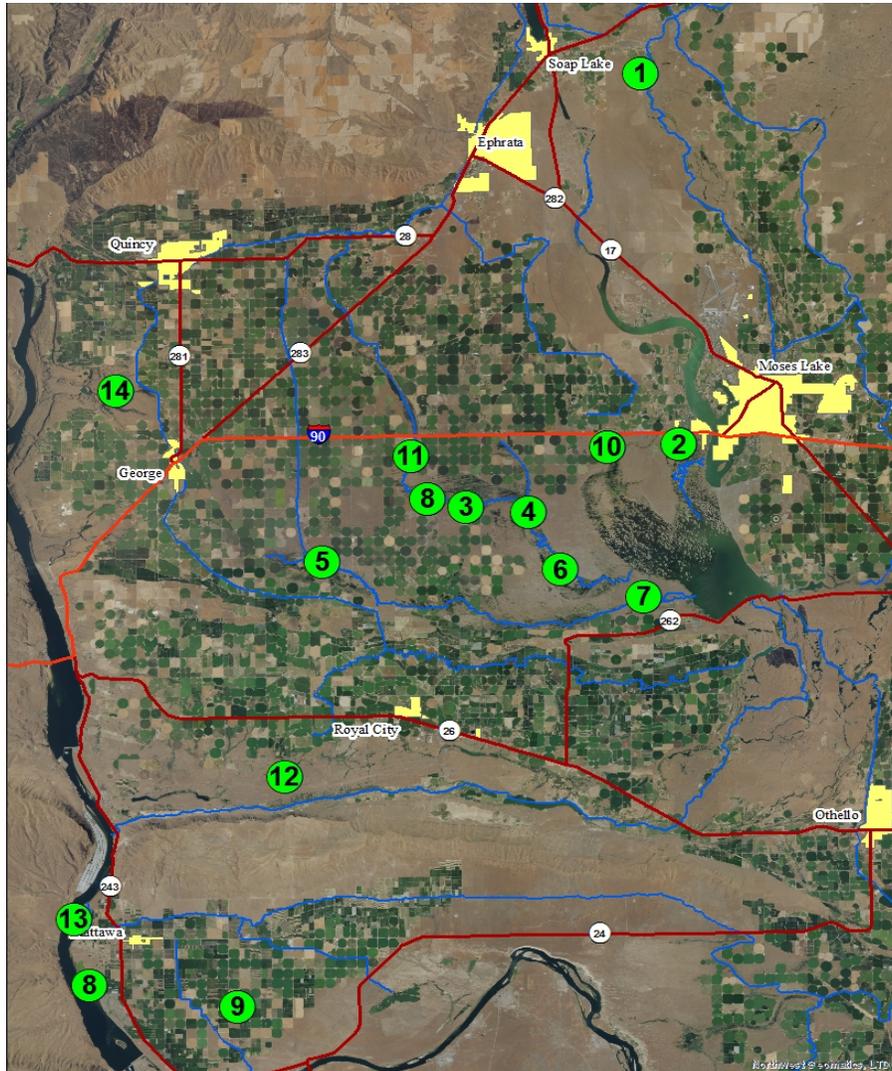


Figure 7. Distribution of wildlife habitat projects in Ephrata District. Green circles represent project areas.

1. Gloyd Road 20 Sharecropping: This site is share-cropped to provide food and habitat for pheasant, quail, and doves. During most years, alfalfa is grown with requirements for delayed harvest to allow for upland game bird production, but years, when wheat has grown this area, can be very productive for bird hunting.

2. West Potholes Reservoir Vegetation Control: Northern Leopard Frog Management Area (NLFMA): This project consists mostly of vegetation management aimed at improving northern leopard frog habitat but has the added benefit of improving waterfowl habitat by reducing tall emergent vegetation and creating more open water. Prescribed burning is tentatively scheduled for 2021. These efforts will improve wetland habitat for many species.

3. Winchester Regulated Access Area Management: There continues to be an emphasis on mowing vegetation to improve hunting access. Water flow was restored in 2019 with the creation of a new delivery ditch into the project area. The restored water flow has dramatically improved the hunting at this site.

4. Common Reed Control: Many acres of common reed are controlled along Winchester Wasteway (Dodson to Potholes Reservoir) and throughout North Potholes. WDFW has received considerable positive feedback regarding the opening of previously closed wetlands. In the future, WDFW hopes to use fire in addition to herbicide to remove residual debris and increase nutrient cycling.

5. 239 Drain Project Recovery: Herbicide treatments for common reed continue to maintain open wetland basins.

6. Harris Ponds Maintenance: There has been regular maintenance to maintain open water within shallow excavated wetlands.

7. Frenchman Regulated Access Area Management: Beneficial waterfowl plants are frequently planted, and mowing takes place to enhance hunting during autumn. Two Americans with Disabilities Act blinds were constructed at this project area (Figure 8) through Duck Stamp funding and volunteer labor. These are available for use by contacting the Ephrata Regional Office at 509-754-4624 for a reservation and access permission. This regulated access area is open seven days a week during waterfowl hunting seasons.



Figure 8. Frenchman Regulated Access Area ADA blind #1 just after installation at the Frenchman Regulated Access Area. Photo by Conner Webster.



Figure 9. Harrowing cell #4 of Frenchman Regulated Access Area for wild millet planting. Photo by Chattan Mcpherson.



Figure 10. Harrowing and breaking up dead tall emergent vegetation at Winchester Regulated Access Area. Photo by Chattan Mcpherson.



Figure 11. Contouring in Cell #5 of regulated access area. Photo by Chattan McPherson.

8. Buckshot Goose Field: The crops within these fields look great and should provide ample forage for geese. There is a pit blind on site that can accommodate disabled hunters, but it is not fully ADA-compliant. Disabled hunters, with assistance from another hunter, have been successful using the blind. Disabled hunters are required to contact the Ephrata Regional Office at 509- 754-4624 to access the blind. Additionally, those hunters are required to fill out a “Hunting/Viewing Blind Special Use Permit” before each use of the blind.

9. Block 26 Fields: These fields are located southeast of Mattawa and planted with mostly corn, so overall waterfowl should be attracted to the area.

10. North Potholes Regulated Access Area (RAA): This RAA is open seven days a week throughout the waterfowl season. During the early part of the season, hunters should be wary of mud and be careful of footing.

11. North Winchester Excavations: Numerous ponds north of the Winchester Game Reserve were excavated in 2019 and 2020 due to encroachment by non-native invasive common reed. Vegetation seeding and management are taking place along the banks to improve waterfowl habitat, hunting, and production.

12. Lower Crab Creek Fire: In June 2019, the “243 Fire” burned much of the Lower Crab Creek Unit. Approximately 17,000 acres of the nearly 25,000 total acres were burned. Vegetation is recovering and will provide hunting opportunities through the 2020-2021 hunting season.

13. 2018 Buckshot fire update: The vegetation is mostly recovered at the Buckshot Unit but hunting opportunities will still be limited. **Pheasant releases will resume during the 2020 hunting season.**

14. 2018 Quincy Lakes Fire update: The effects of the fire that occurred in summer 2018 are still quite prevalent throughout much of the unit, but the vegetation is recovering nicely. Pheasant releases will continue at this site.

GAME RESERVES

Game reserves are areas where hunting, trapping, and wildlife disturbance are not allowed. These areas intend to provide undisturbed areas during hunting season that helps to retain waterfowl in the area and helps to improve hunting opportunities. These areas also provide nesting and foraging areas for waterfowl and other wildlife. RAAs are located adjacent to reserves and provide additional hunter opportunities.

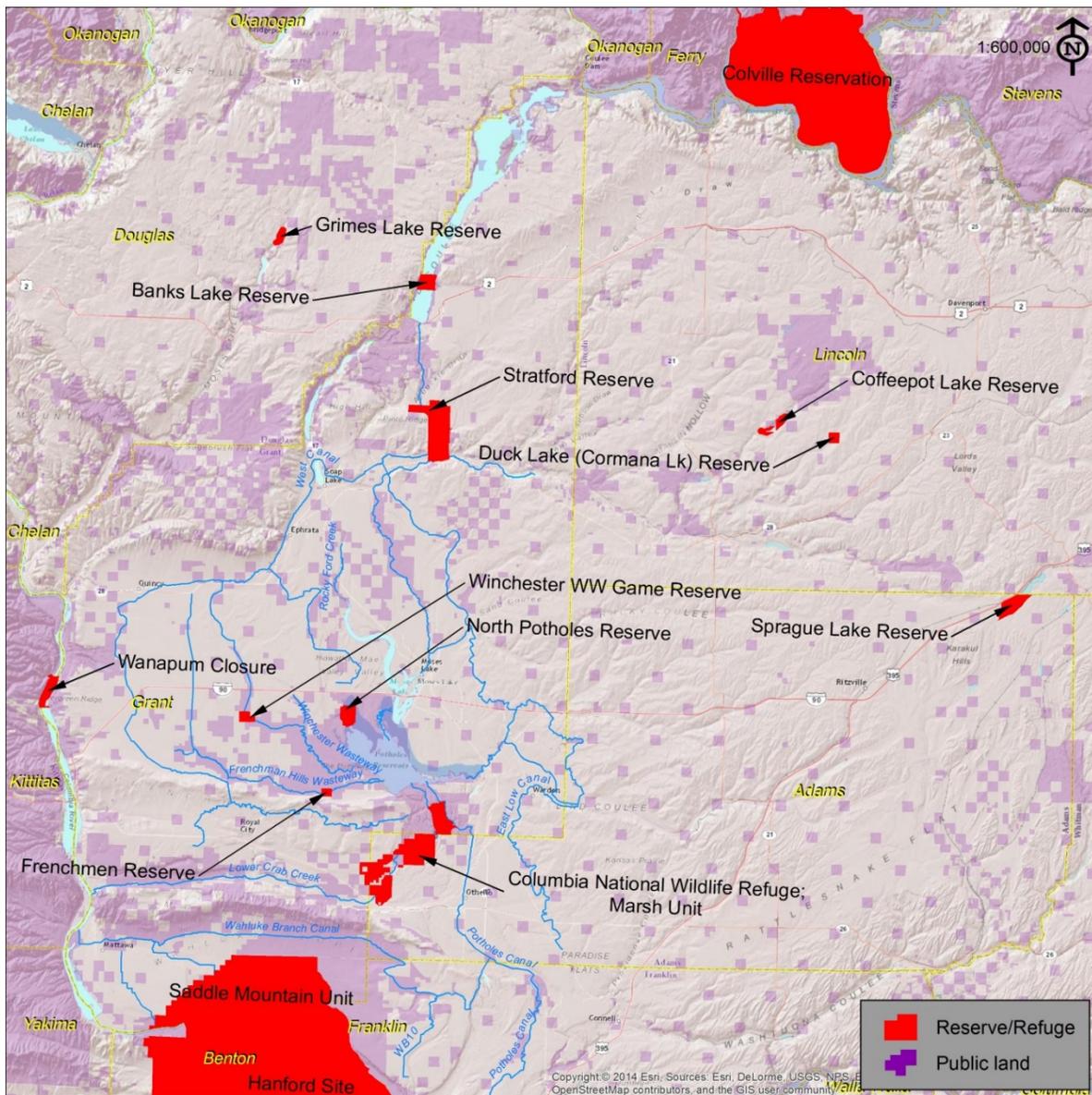
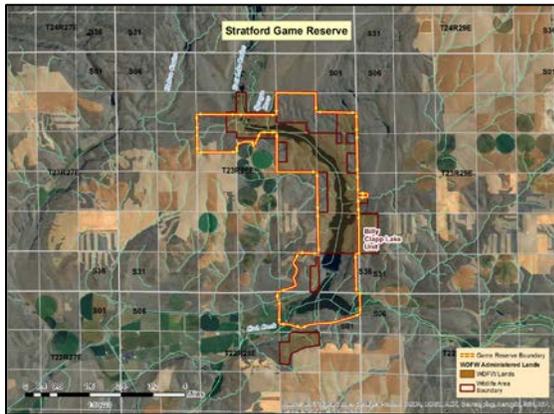


Figure 12. Location of Game Reserves and closed federal refuge units (in red) throughout and adjacent to District 5.

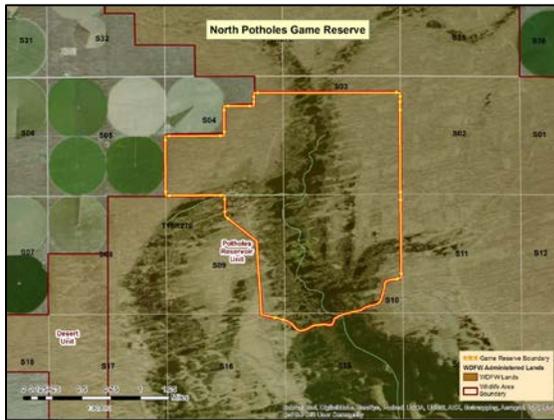
Stratford Game Reserve (Billy Clapp Lake Unit)



Banks Lake Game Reserve (Banks Lake Unit)



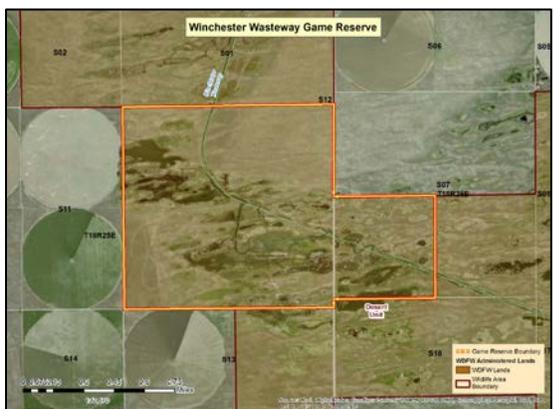
North Potholes Game Reserve (Potholes Reservoir Unit)



Frenchman Game Reserve (Desert Unit)



Winchester Game Reserve (Desert Unit)



Sprague Game Reserve (Sprague Lake Unit)

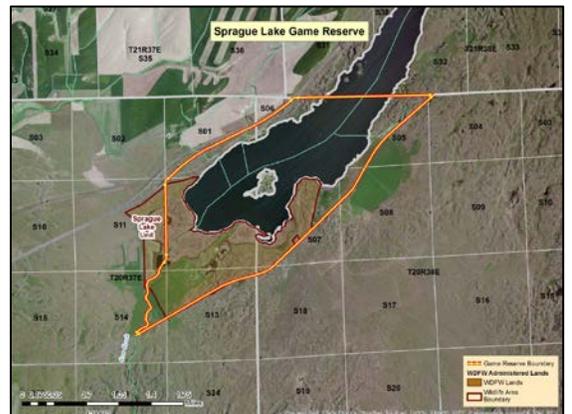


Figure 13. Game Reserve boundaries with Township, Range, and Section numbers in District 5.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Elk are rare and, therefore, are not a management priority in District 5. Resident elk herds do **not** exist in GMU 272, GMU 278, or GMU 290. Due to the potential for significant crop depredation issues, WDFW does not encourage the establishment of elk herds in District 5. WDFW provides *Any Elk* hunting opportunities during the general archery, modern firearm, and late muzzleloader seasons.

GMU 284 is near the Hangman Creek sub-herd of the Selkirk herd. This herd is composed of approximately 300 individuals and occurs approximately 16 miles northeast at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (GMU 130). These elk enter GMU 284, where hunters harvest them. Twelve bull elk in GMU 284 were harvested during 2020, six were harvested using muzzleloaders, and six were harvested with modern firearms. No other elk harvests were reported in any other GMUs.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

If hunters wish to hunt elk in District 5 during the 2020 season, they should seek access on private lands in the eastern portions of GMU 284. Without access to private lands, public land opportunities are very limited.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



Figure 14. Bachelor group of mule deer bucks. Photo by Eric Braaten.

GMU 272 includes approximately 53,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (Gloyd Seeps, Banks Lake, Sun Lakes, Billy Clapp, and Quincy Lakes units), most of which is open to hunting. The number of deer hunters hunting general seasons (includes multi-weapon permits) within GMU 272 (since 2001) ranges from about 1,100 to 1,700. The reported antlerless permit success rates for disabled hunters was 80%. In 2018, district biologists changed the youth permit from *Antlerless* to *Any Deer* to improve the opportunities for youth hunters. The success rates for these permits in the 2020 season was 70%. This year, to further improve the hunting opportunity for those youth hunters, we've extended the season for those permits to include the weekend following the close of the modern firearm season. This means that permit holders will be able to hunt without the crowds of the general season. The Lakeview Unit second deer antlerless permits typically see variable success rates (27-91%), with 67 % occurring last year.

GMU 278 includes approximately 36,000 acres of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (Lower Crab Creek Unit), which is predominantly shrubsteppe habitat with some interspersed wetlands

along Crab Creek. Numerous parcels within DNR and federal ownership also exist in this GMU. Harvest in this unit generally is between 20 and 90 deer. The number of general season deer hunters within GMU 278, including multi-weapon permits, ranges from about 150 to 310. WDFW does not perform formal game species surveys in GMU 278, but anecdotal information indicates a stable deer population.

GMU 284 is predominately private property, so hunters should plan to seek permission to access private lands and/or plan on hunting lands enrolled in the WDFW Access Program. There are some public lands scattered throughout this GMU, but they tend to be scattered and small (<640 acres). The number of deer general season hunters within GMU 284 ranges from about 650-1,100. The reported Benge Deer Area and Washtucna antlerless permit success rate for youth hunters was 59% and 60%, respectively.

GMU 290 is a special-permit Quality Deer Hunt Unit, with restrictions allowing that reduce hunter density and encourage older-aged deer. The Unit is open for various upland hunting as well and contains 3 Regulated Access Areas for waterfowl. Post-hunt ratios buck-doe ratios have remained consistent at approximately 50 bucks:100 does, with the majority of bucks being classified as greater than 2.5 years old during aerial surveys. Harvest success for bucks varies greatly by hunt choice. Hunts listed in order from highest to lowest success rates are as follows: late modern, early modern, muzzleloader, late archery, and early archery. This GMU contains very few access roads, and scouting is **strongly recommended** to increase success. Forty-one percent of the land in GMU 290 is part of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area and managed by WDFW, thus public opportunity is widely available. Public land in this unit consists of riparian and wetland areas associated with the Winchester and Frenchman waste ways and is surrounded by sandy dunes with varying densities of shrub cover. The majority of the private agricultural land in this unit occurs throughout the western half. Hunters with permits will experience much greater success by hiking further away from access roads and scouting the area. Additionally, during nearly all of the permit hunts, other types of hunting are also occurring. Waterfowl and upland birds are the two most popular.

Table 1. Mule deer harvest summary for District 5 GMUs by weapon type.

GMU	Weapon	Antlerless	Antlered	Total Harvest	Number of Hunters	% Success
272	Archery	32	19	51	282	18%
	Modern Firearm	0	215	215	1020	21%
	Multi-Season	7	57	57	177	32%
	Muzzleloader	0	20	20	90	22%
	Totals	39	304	343	1569	n/a
278	Archery	6	11	17	72	24%
	Modern Firearm	0	49	49	189	26%
	Multi-Season	4	12	16	50	32%
	Muzzleloader	0	5	5	26	19%
	Totals	10	77	87	337	n/a
284	Archery	14	13	27	88	31%
	Modern Firearm	0	264	264	695	38%
	Multi-Season	0	37	37	75	49%
	Muzzleloader	0	16	16	55	29%
	Totals	14	330	344	913	n/a
290*	Modern-Early	n/a	9	9	12	75%
	Modern-Late	n/a	4	4	4	100%
	Archery-Early	n/a	0	0	5	0%
	Archery-Late	n/a	1	1	4	25%
	Muzzleloader	n/a	1	1	1	100%
	Second Deer	11	n/a	11	15	73%
	Youth	1	n/a	1	2	50%

*Please note that GMU 290 data are based only on hunter reports; not all hunters reported effort or harvest.

For additional information, please see the [Adams and Grant counties Deer Harvest Statistics](#).

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

Most deer harvest occurs in GMUs 272 (Beezley) and 284 (Ritzville). Post-hunt buck:doe ratios from ground surveys in 2020 were 17:100 and 22:100, respectively. Fawn:doe ratios were good during the 2020 ground survey efforts, with 63:100 in GMU 272 and 70:100 in GMU 284. Hunters should expect an average year for mule deer hunting throughout the district.



Figure 15. Mule deer doe in ripening wheat. Photo by Eric Braaten.

DEER AREAS

There are localized deer concentration areas in District 5 where, during harsh or prolonged winters, deer have the potential to cause crop damage. To address this issue, WDFW provides limited, permit-only opportunities to harvest antlerless deer that occur close to these areas. This is intended to reduce crop damage by deterring mule deer from congregating. WDFW defines such areas as Deer Areas and in District 5 they include Deer Area 2010 (Lakeview) in GMU 272, and Deer Area 2011 (Benge) in GMU 284. See the most recent [Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet](#) for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions.

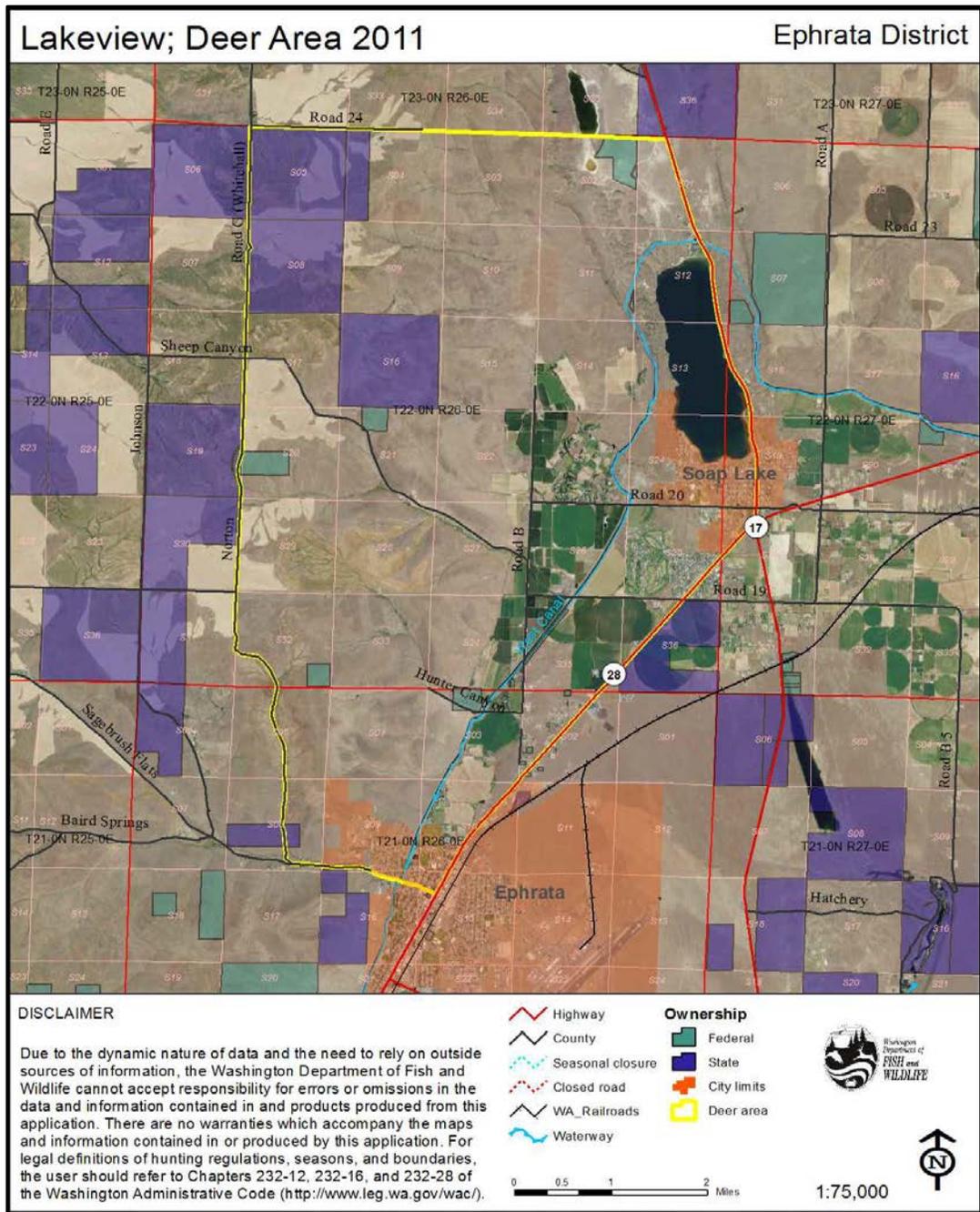
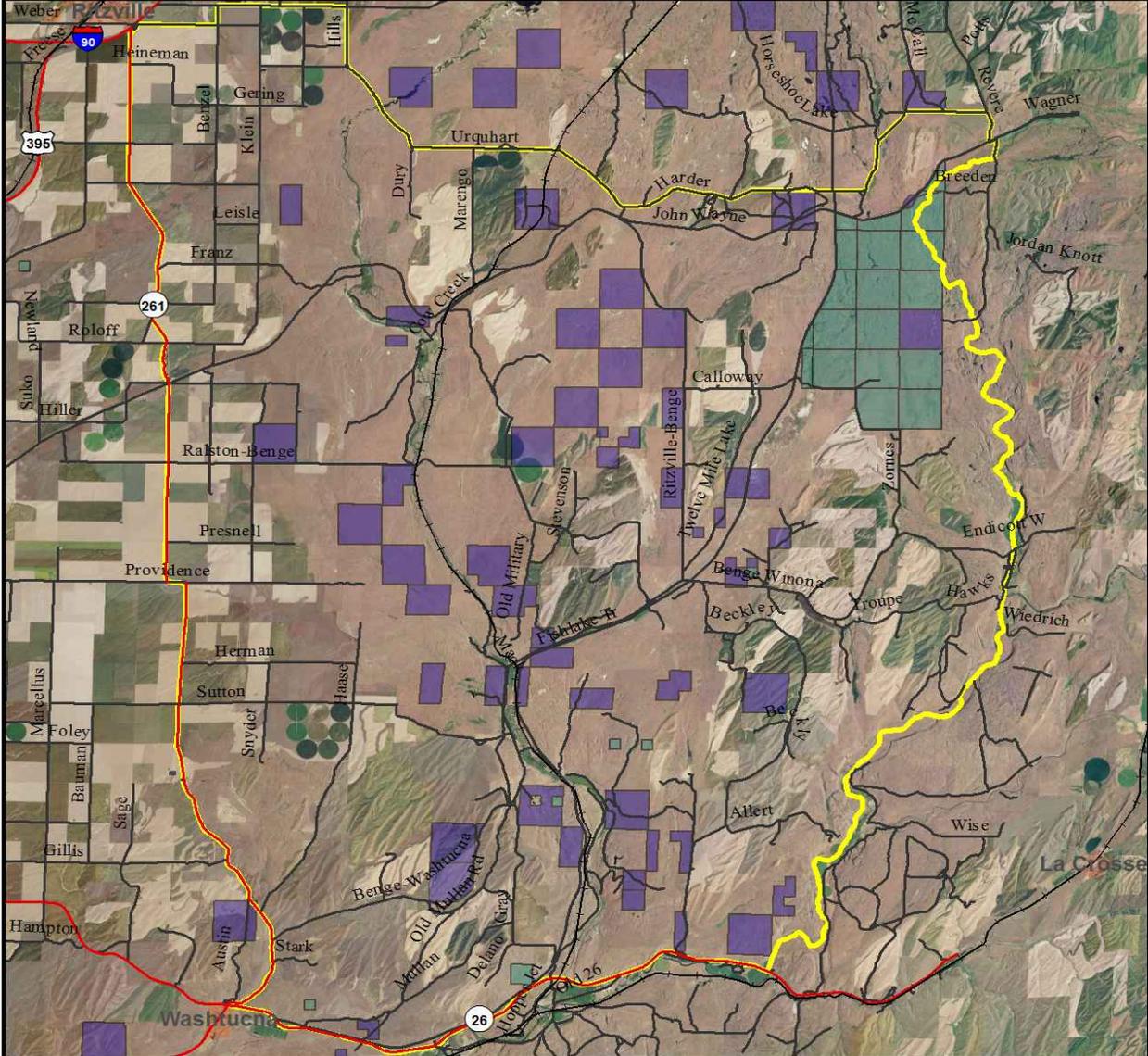


Figure 16. Lakeview Deer Area (boundary highlighted in yellow)

Benge; Deer Area 2010

Ephrata District



DISCLAIMER

Due to the dynamic nature of data and the need to rely on outside sources of information, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions in the data and information contained in and products produced from this application. There are no warranties which accompany the maps and information contained in or produced by this application. For legal definitions of hunting regulations, seasons, and boundaries, the user should refer to Chapters 232-12, 232-16, and 232-28 of the Washington Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

	WA_Railroads		City limits	
	Highway		Deer area	
	County	Ownership		
	Seasonal closure		Federal	
	Closed road		State	0 1.5 3 6 Miles 1:200,000

Figure 17. Benge Deer Area (boundary highlighted in yellow)

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 5 does not have a resident population of black bears. The establishment of a black bear population in this district is not expected in the near future.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

District 5 is not an optimal area to target black bears. Occasionally, bears may disperse through this district, and the most likely places to encounter those individuals are the Beezley Hills and areas surrounding Banks Lake.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

There is a small population of adult cougars in District 5, and the annual harvest is very low (typically fewer than 10/year). Cougar harvest comes mostly from GMU 272 (Beezley Hills). Populations are expected to remain stable in this area for the foreseeable future.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

District 5 is not an optimal area to target cougars. However, the most likely places to encounter cougars are Beezley Hills, Moses Coulee, and along the Crab Creek drainage upstream from the town of Stratford. Hunters often harvest cougars incidentally when they are hunting other carnivores.

PHEASANT

Grant County has been Washington's top pheasant-harvest county since 2006. At the time of this publication, harvest data was not available for the 2020 hunting season. However, hunters harvested 9,767 birds in Grant County and 2,624 in Adams County for a total harvest of 12,391 pheasants in District 5 in 2018. See [Adams and Grant counties Pheasant Harvest Statistics](#) for additional information and to see the most recent harvest information.

The largest concentrations of wild pheasants on WDFW lands in District 5 are likely to be found within GMU 290 (Desert Unit) between Potholes Reservoir and the town of George, although private lands can host good populations. Mixed bags of wild and released birds can be found in the Lower Crab Creek and Gloyd Seeps units, whereas hunters will likely only find released birds in the Dry Falls, Steamboat Rock, Quincy, and Buckshot sites. Directions to pheasant release sites can be found in the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) pamphlet. Nontoxic shot is required at all pheasant release sites. Please note that the release dates are not made public, to reduce overcrowding at release sites and ensure the safety of WDFW staff during releases, however, hunters can count on pheasants being released before the youth upland season (Sept. 19-20), before the general season opening day (Oct. 24), and two additional releases before the end of November.

Hunters looking for wild birds should focus their efforts on areas of dense cover. Thickets of Russian olive, cattail, roses, weedy areas associated with irrigation ditches, canals, and ponds are most likely to hold pheasants. Hunters should be prepared to do some walking when pursuing wild pheasants as they tend to flush, well in advance of hunters, and are just about as likely to run as flush. Hunters can increase their odds with a dog to both find and retrieve the birds in the dense cover. Be aware porcupines are often seen in many of these areas.

A mild winter and early spring, combined with less human disturbance during early spring present an optimistic picture for the 2020-2021 hunting season. Hunters can anticipate seeing good numbers of pheasants. Most hunters who invest effort and cover a lot of ground will find wild birds. Hunters can increase their chances for a productive hunt by selecting nontoxic shot and diversifying the game bag with waterfowl.

Pheasants are an excellent species for beginning hunters to learn to hunt, with numerous opportunities available for success and mentorship. In past years, WDFW partnered with Pheasants Forever to co-host pheasant youth and mentored hunts, however due to concerns with COVID-19 hunts for this year will not be held.

QUAIL

Grant County is typically one of the best producers for quail, but at the time of this publication harvest data was not available. However, in 2018 Grant County had a harvest of 19,868 birds, while Adams County had a harvest of 4,211 birds. See [Adams and Grant counties Quail Harvest Statistics](#) for additional information.

In Grant County, there are many opportunities to hunt quail on public lands (see Figure 6 for more details). Hunters focusing on Adams County should seek permission on private lands to improve the chances of finding birds. Private lands access can be granted through the WDFW Private Lands Access Program or by simply knocking on a few doors. Hunters will improve their odds with a trained dog to find and retrieve birds.

Large coveys, or flocks of birds, are difficult to find by mid-season on public lands, and successful hunters will benefit by identifying multiple coveys to pursue throughout the season. Riparian areas will offer the best hunting, and hunters can increase their chances by securing access to private lands where pressure can be much lower. If pressure is high, some coveys can be found in shrub cover away from the heavily hunted areas. Hunters willing to do more hiking will likely find more birds.

Quail hunting is expected to be good again this year with reports from the field painting an optimistic picture. As mentioned previously, hunters can increase the chances of a successful hunting trip by using nontoxic shot and targeting multiple species.

CHUKAR AND PARTRIDGE

At the time of this publication harvest data was not available. However, in 2018 hunters harvested 977 chukars in District 5, 879 in Grant County, and 98 in Adams County. Hunters

harvested 598 gray partridges in 2018, with 347 taken in Grant County and 251 in Adams County. The harvest success rates for both species in both Grant and Adams counties fluctuate quite dramatically from year to year, but hunters should not be overly concerned with these fluctuations because the populations of both species are widely dispersed, See [Adams and Grant counties Chukar Harvest Statistics](#) for additional information.

District 5 is not a popular destination for chukar or gray partridge hunters due to relatively small populations, but hunters can still find birds throughout much of the district. Most chukar hunting in the district occurs in the Coulee



Corridor areas around Banks and Lenore lakes and along the Columbia River breaks north of Vantage. Gray partridges occur in low densities throughout the Columbia Basin but hunters rarely target them. They are instead taken incidentally while hunting chukars, quail, or pheasants. Most gray partridges occur in private agricultural fields, particularly in the dryland wheat portions of Adams County and, to a lesser degree, Grant County. Reports from the field paint a very good picture for both chukars and gray partridge.

Figure 18. Chukar brood. Photo by Eric Braaten

DOVE

At the time of this publication harvest data was not available. However, Grant County is consistently one of the Washington’s top mourning dove producing counties, with hunters

harvesting 15,672 birds in 2018. Hunters harvested 3,151 doves in Adams County, making 2018 the combined total 18,823 doves.

This upcoming hunting season continues with the hunting season extension through Oct. 30, and dove hunting is expected to be like last year. If conditions are stable, the birds found during scouting trips should be around during the hunt, but unstable conditions often redistribute birds. Hunters may improve their success by securing access to wheat fields for morning hunts. Evening hunts can be productive in wheat fields or traditional roosting areas. Look for large stands of trees (ideally with dead limbs) near water and surrounded by agriculture for the best roost hunt results. Hunters can find roost site hunting along the north and west sides of Potholes Reservoir, east side of Winchester Lake, and throughout the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area.

Hunters should be aware that Eurasian collared doves occur with mourning doves, and the Eurasian collared doves **do not** count towards daily bag limits. Eurasian collared doves are classified as a *Deleterious Species* in Washington and have few regulations governing harvest, so be sure to take a few when the opportunity arises.



Figure 19. Banded mourning dove. Photo by Sean Dougherty

UPLAND BIRD MANAGEMENT

Upland bird management in District 5 consists primarily of sharecropping, strategic use of bird feeders to increase over-winter survival, and actively working to improve nesting cover on private and public lands.

See Figure 6 for more detailed information on huntable species within the wildlife area units.

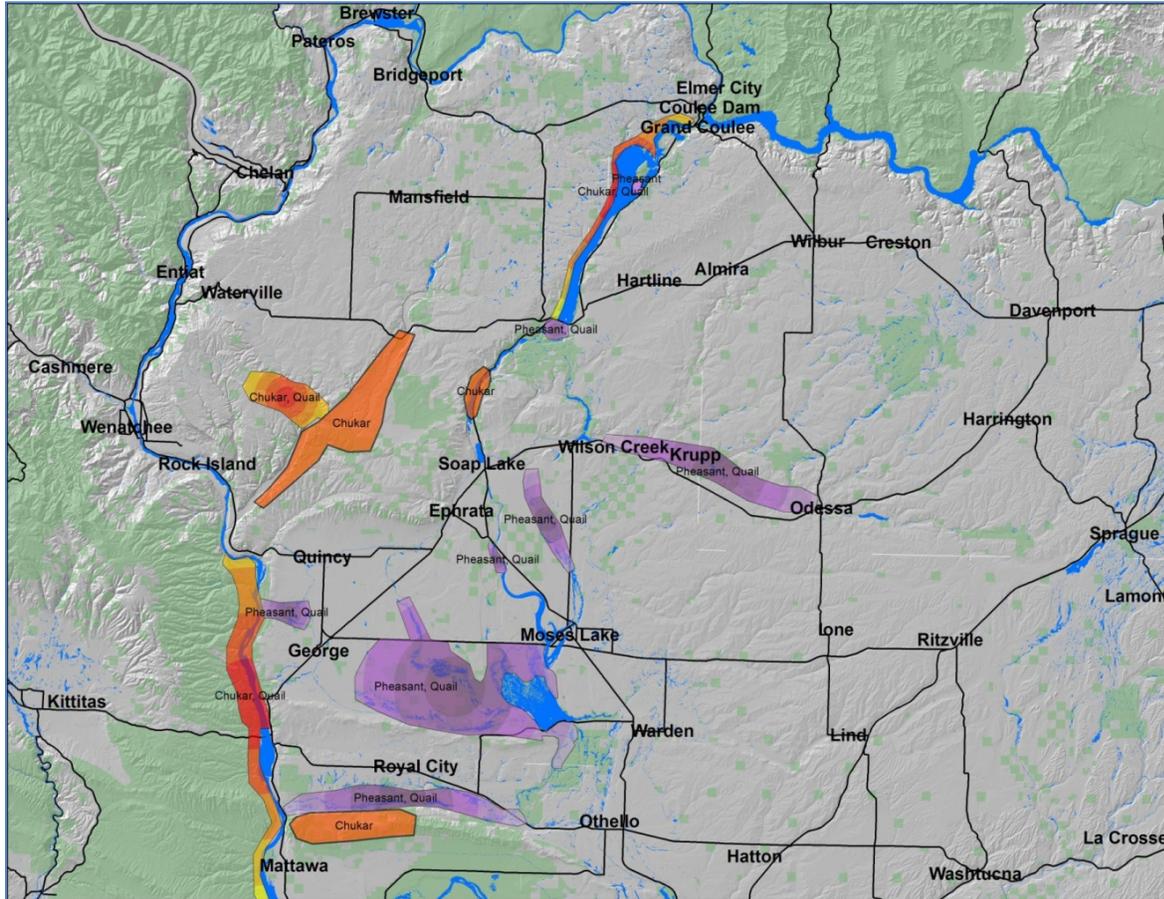


Figure 20. Generalized upland bird concentrations (pheasant, quail, and chukar) throughout the Ephrata District.

WATERFOWL

Grant County is consistently Washington's top duck and goose producing county, however at the time of this publication harvest data was not available. In 2018, hunters harvested 68,092 ducks in Grant County. Adams County hunters added another 15,853 ducks for a district total of 83,945. Additional information can be found at [WDFW's game harvest statistics webpage](#).

In 2018, Hunters harvested 15,851 geese in Grant County, and Adams County hunters added 3,384 for a district total of 19,235. Additional information can be found at [WDFW's game harvest statistics webpage](#).



Figure 21. Drake cinnamon teal. Photo by Eric Braaten

WATERFOWL POPULATION STATUS

The Washington Breeding Population Survey (BPOP) has been occurring since 2009, however, due to the impacts of COVID-19 these surveys were not conducted.

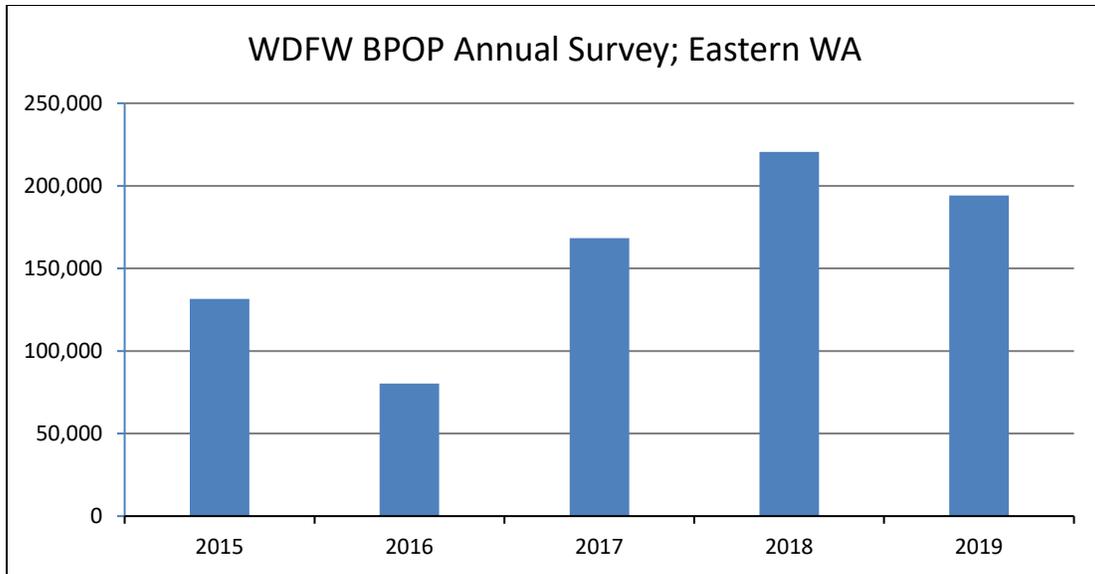


Figure 22. WDFW BPOP survey results for eastern Washington 2015-2020

During the opening weekend hunters can encounter mallard, gadwall, American wigeon, and American green-winged teal. As shown in Figure 22, 2018 was the best spring breeding season in the last five years and 2019 was a close second. Reports from the field suggest that waterfowl productivity was like last year, so hunters can expect an average year. However, be sure to scout ahead of the season to increase your chances of success.

Table 2. Washington Breeding Population Survey Estimates for 2019 and 2018

<i>Species</i>	2019	2018
Mallard	89,675	91,473
Gadwall	22,142	27,362
American Wigeon	7,459	8,140
Am. Green-winged Teal	9,405	8,049

In addition to the BPOP survey, WDFW also conducts regular brood routes throughout eastern Washington. Routes in the Ephrata District include the East Low Canal, West Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake. The total numbers are presented in Figure 23 for 2008-2020. Surveys have continued to document a decline in local duck production.

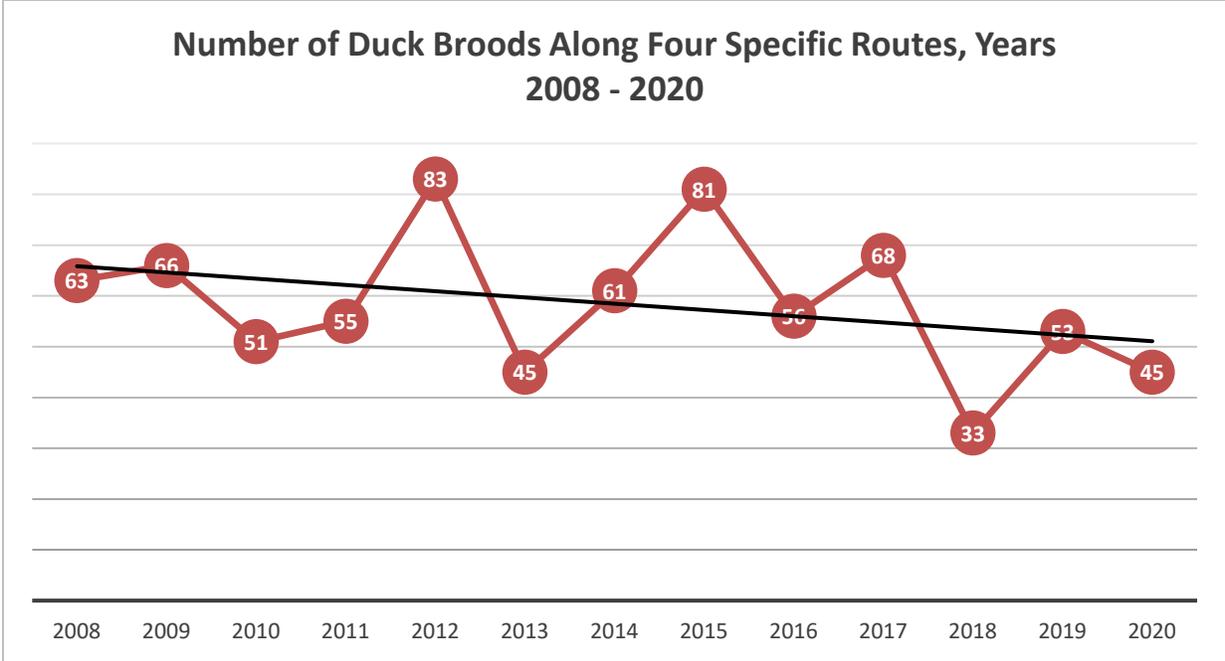


Figure 23. Duck brood count totals for Ephrata District strata, including West Canal, East Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake.

WATERFOWL MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

Migration (peaks in mid to late-November) will bring the best waterfowl hunting to the Columbia Basin. Large numbers of mallards, gadwalls, redheads, canvasbacks, wigeon, teal, and scaup arrive from northern breeding grounds. Until then, hunters mostly rely on locally produced birds and early season migrants, such as American wigeon and green-winged teal. December typically provides the peak of mallards, ringnecks, and canvasbacks, while other dabbling and diving species continue south. Goose hunting will typically improve in November, when early season migrant Canada geese (lesser and Taverner’s) begin to scatter from their initial staging area at Stratford Lake to alfalfa or grain fields within feeding distance of Moses Lake and the Columbia River. In average years, the best hunting occurs in December and January during warming periods after extended freeze-ups.

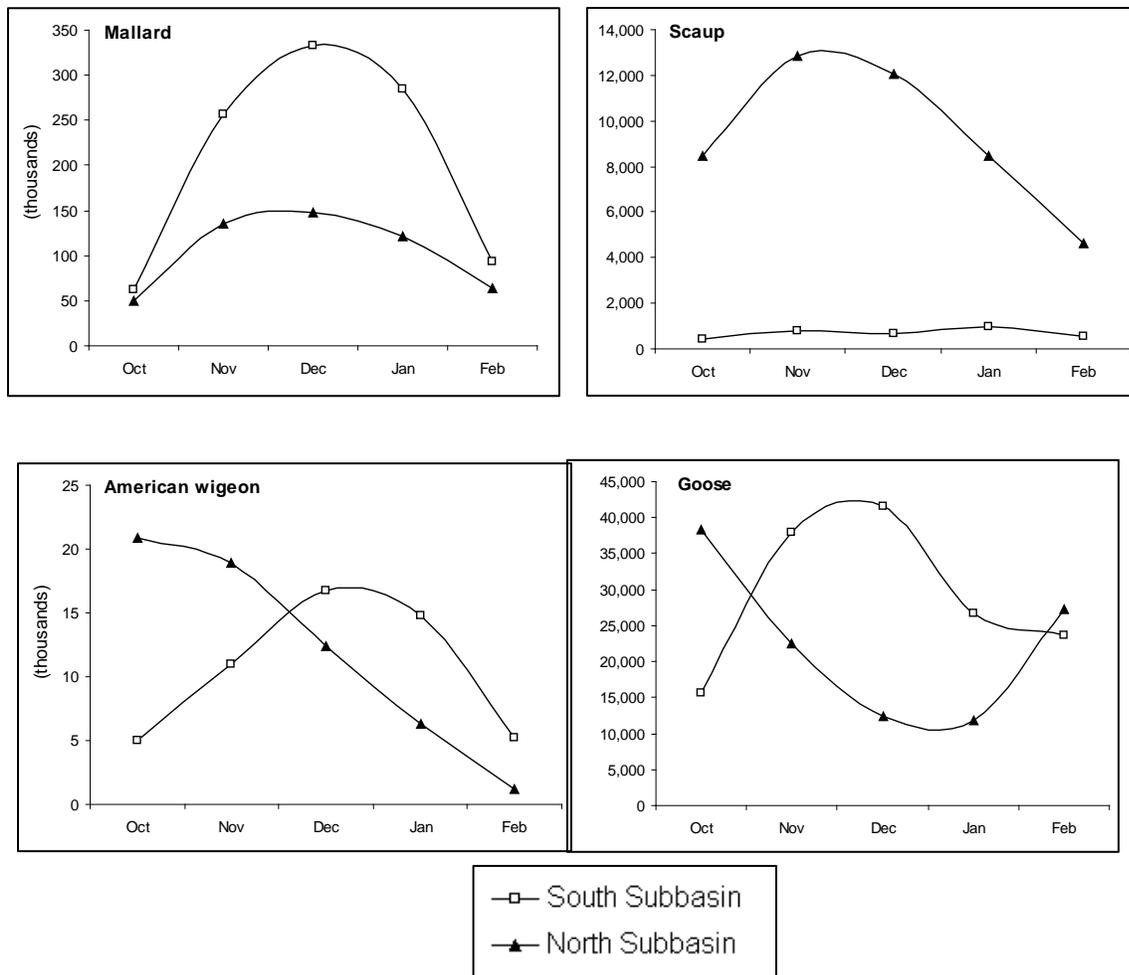


Figure 24. Migration curves for several species that winter in large numbers on the Columbia Plateau.

HUNTING TIPS

Scouting

Scouting is the key to success when waterfowl hunting. Many opportunities exist for public waterfowl hunts, but hunters should first identify the general flight paths to determine feeding and roosting locations. Feeding flights for ducks typically occur early in the morning and near dusk, typically outside legal shooting hours. Select areas to hunt based on the species you want to target. Dabbling ducks are more commonly targeted on the Columbia Plateau, where grain corn and wheat fields attract mallards and pintails and shallow wetlands attract teal, American wigeon, and gadwall. Canada geese feed primarily in wheat and alfalfa fields, so requesting permission from private landowners is often necessary to secure field goose hunting. Diving ducks are typically hunted along the Columbia River, particularly at Wells Pool, Wanapum Pool, and Priest Rapids Pool. They forage over beds of submerged aquatic vegetation such as pondweeds and milfoil. Knowing when and where ducks are feeding will help hunters determine the best locations to intercept the duck traffic with decoy spreads. Setting up a decoy spread on waters between the feeding and roosting sites will generally yield good hunting opportunities, particularly during periods of wind, snow, or fog. Typically, the larger roosting sites will be the

Wanapum Closure (Columbia River), Winchester Reserve, Potholes Reserve, and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Marsh units.

Hunters should be mindful that water (and muck) depths are highly variable and it takes a lot of trial and error to learn where you can and cannot set decoys. For some areas, boat access may be the only or best option. Winchester and Frenchman waste ways (the two major drainages entering the west side of Potholes Reservoir) are crossable in some areas with chest waders, but use caution, as deep holes do exist and patches of muck can be difficult to exit, particularly when packing decoys.

Early and Late Season Goose Hunting

Hunters should continue to be excited about the goose bag limits being separated by species. This change will provide hunters to have the potential to put more birds in the bag. The changes will not affect where to go, but goose hunters in mid-October could increase their focus on white-fronted geese around Moses Lake, Winchester Lake, and along the Winchester Wasteway. There are no guarantees for those birds to be around during hunting season, but in typical years, there are 200-500 white-fronted geese for the first few weeks of the waterfowl season.

During the later parts of the waterfowl season, there have been increasing numbers of snow geese observed around Potholes Reservoir and even Moses Lake. Hunters pursuing those birds should focus efforts on the grain fields surrounding those reservoirs south of Interstate 90. In 2017 and 2018, approximately 1,500-2,500 snow geese spent the winter on Columbia National Wildlife Refuge. Those birds were frequently observed flying north towards agricultural fields surrounding Potholes Reservoir.

Where to Hunt

RAAs

Dogs are often a necessity for retrieving throughout most of District 5, but RAAs have some shallow ponds that can be effectively hunted with only chest waders. Hunters can find time restrictions and the number of vehicles allowed for the RAA in the hunting pamphlet and Table 3 (below). These sites are Register to Hunt, so be sure to register at the box provided in the parking areas. We collect hunter information from these sites to inform management decisions and justify further habitat improvements. Below each RAA is discussed in more detail.

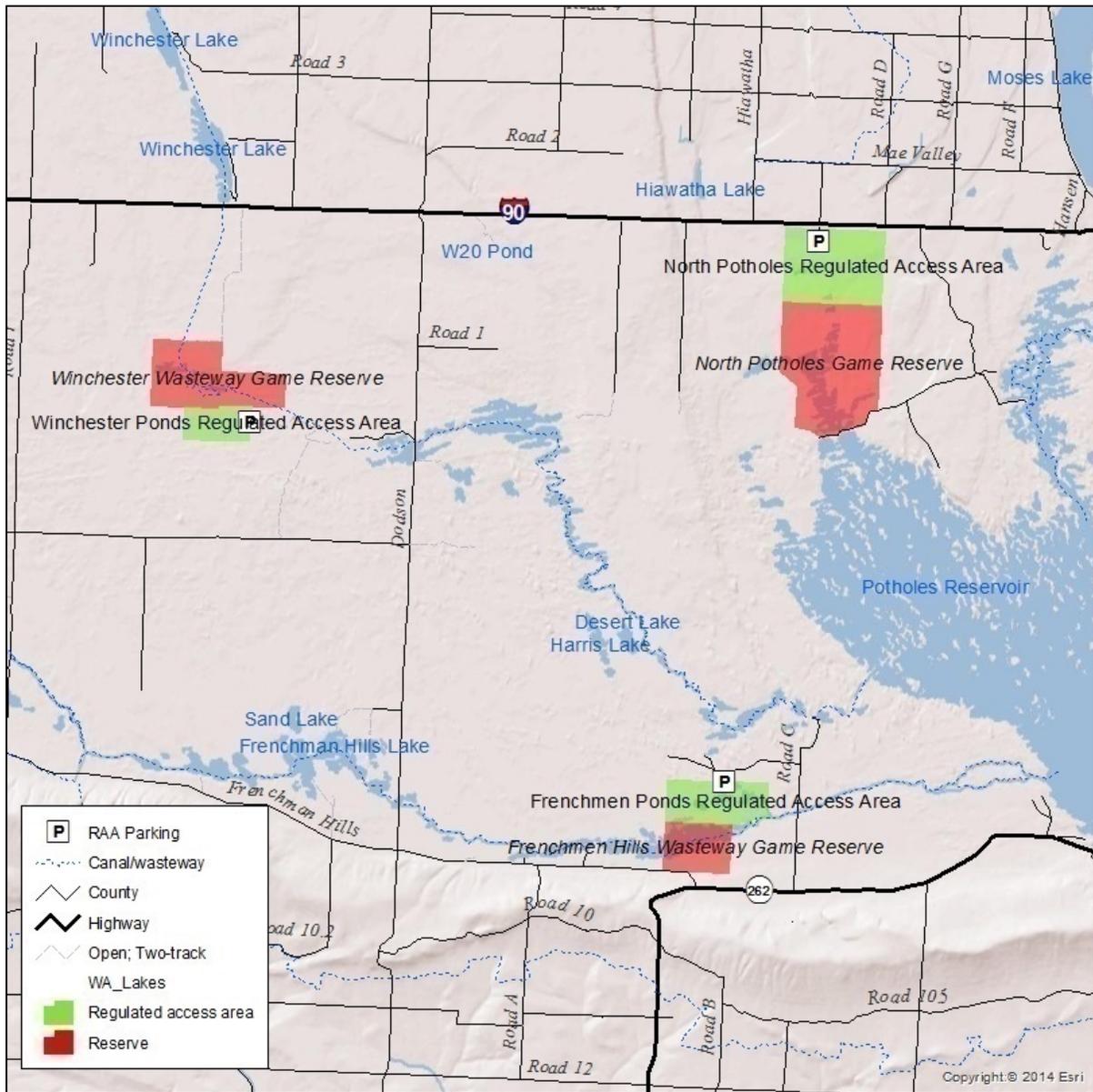


Figure 25. Regulated Access Area locations adjacent to game reserves closed to hunting.

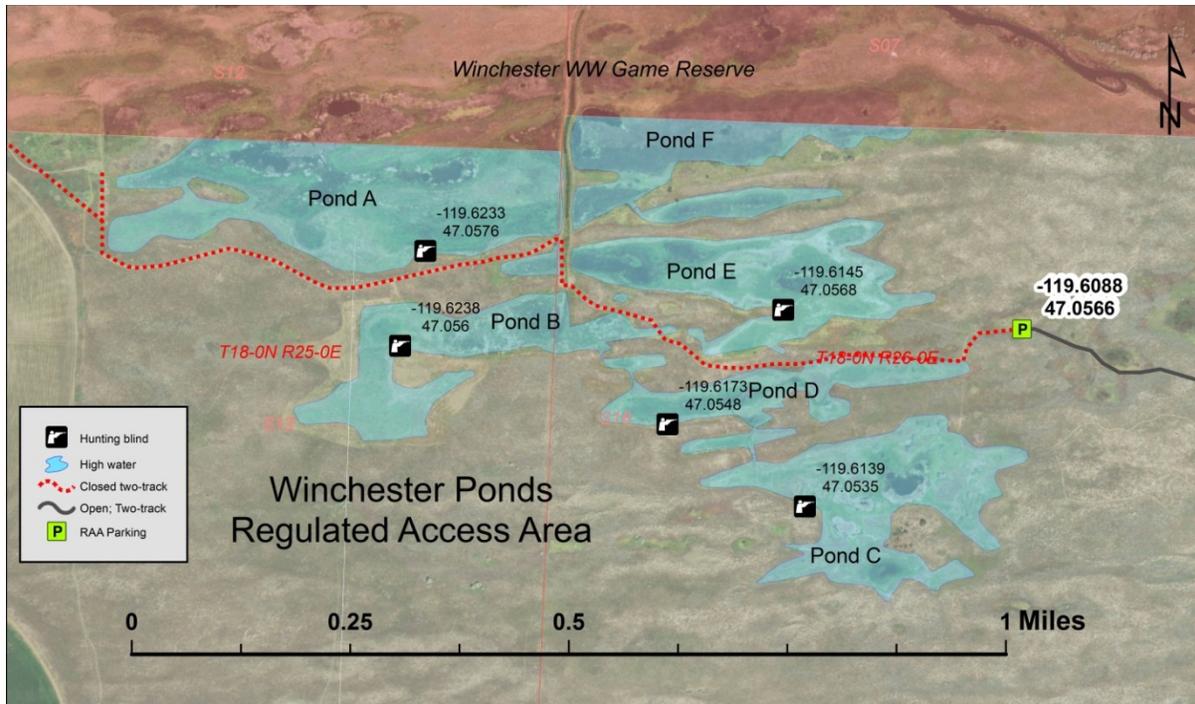


Figure 26. Winchester Ponds Regulated Access Area.

Winchester Ponds RAA

Winchester Ponds is the most popular RAA in the district and consistently has birds. Five blinds are distributed throughout the access area and are available on a first-come basis. Hunters are not required to hunt from blinds, as the area is open to free-roam. Typically all five parking spots are filled once access opens at 4 a.m. This RAA is only open during Goose Management Area 4 Goose Days.

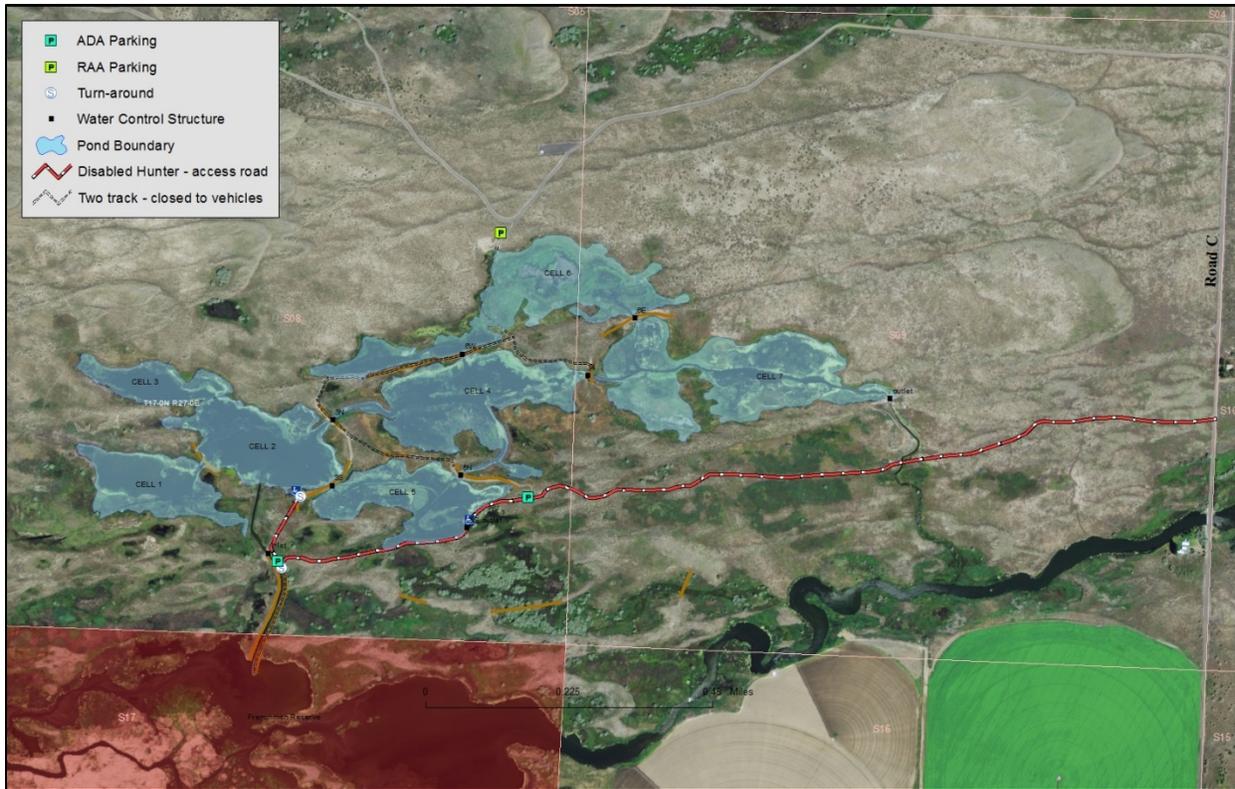


Figure 27. Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area.

Frenchman Ponds RAA

Frenchman Ponds had extensive restoration work performed in the past few years and will hold good numbers of waterfowl throughout the hunting season. The area is open to free-roam and allows for both upland and waterfowl hunting. Two wheel-chair accessible hunting blinds are open to all hunters but must be forfeited by non-disabled hunters if a disabled hunter requests the site. Disabled hunters will be able to drive to the blinds and park relatively close, but those hunters will need to contact the Regional Office at 509-754-4624 for details.

This area is open seven days/week throughout all hunting seasons.

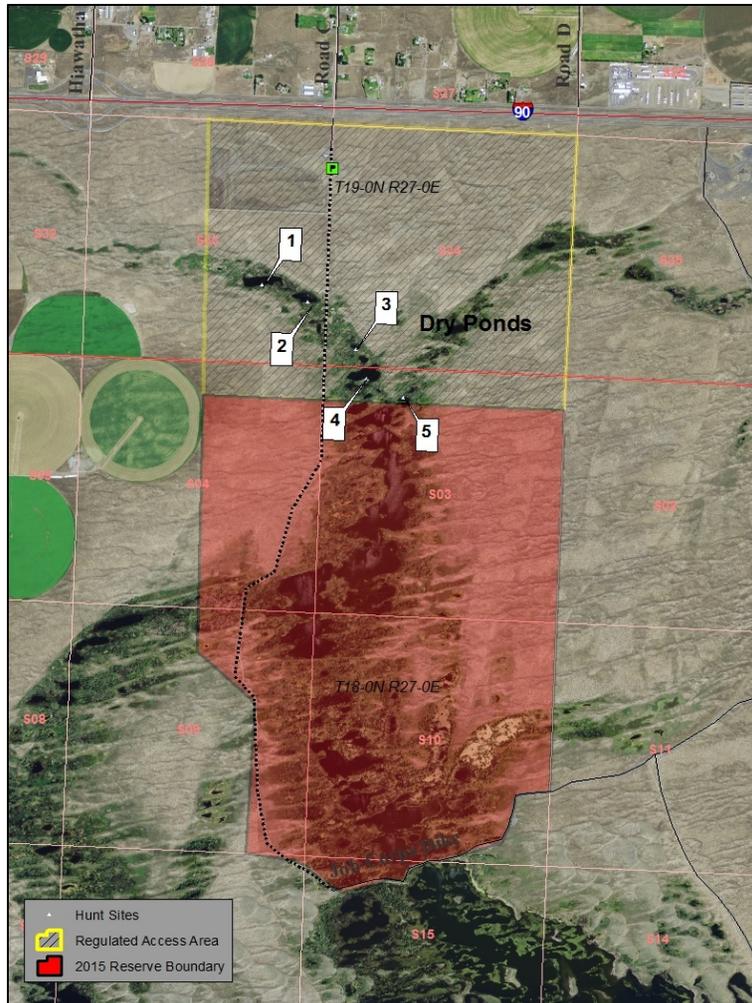


Figure 28. North Potholes Regulated Access Area.

North Potholes RAA

North Potholes RAA has unique hunting conditions because the Potholes Reservoir determines water levels within these ponds. Some identified hunt sites, like Ponds 3 and 5, could be dry, particularly from October through November during the hunting season. The lowest water levels probably occur during the first half of November. Because the deepest portions of these ponds do not dry out, extremely mucky conditions exist for early season hunting. Parking spots correspond to specific hunt sites. Hunters will be required to hunt within eyesight of identified sites in the field. Hunters must not hunt waterfowl away from their designated hunt site but may pursue other game, such as upland birds, mule deer, coyote, and cottontail rabbits, on a free-roam basis. Hunters pursuing species other than waterfowl are strongly encouraged to stay at least 400 meters (1/4 mile) from designated waterfowl hunt sites.

This area is open seven days/week throughout all hunting seasons.

HUNTER COLLECTED DATA FROM RAA

Table 3. Data collected from Hunters at each RAA in District 5.

Regulated Access Area	Parking Spots	Register to Hunt	Hunt Days	Other
Winchester	5	Register on site	Wed, Sat, Sun; Mgmt Area 4 goose hunting days	No vehicles before 4 a.m.
Frenchman	5 + 2 ADA	Register on site	All huntable days	No vehicles before 4 a.m.
North Potholes	5	Register on site	All huntable days	No vehicles before 4 a.m.

Winchester Ponds	Harvest		Frenchman Ponds	Harvest		North Potholes	Harvest	
	Duck	Goose		Duck	Goose		Duck	Goose
2011-12	299	11	2011-12	142	4			
2012-13	738	19	2012-13	300	10			
2013-14	507	26	2013-14	149	3			
2014-15	1067	34	2014-15	281	4			
2015-16	597	12	2015-16	461	9	2015-16	110	11
2016-17	249	27	2016-17	368	7	2016-17	268	35
2017-18	165	5	2017-18	394	25	2017-18	297	25
2018-19	454	17	2018-19	336	7	2018-19	108	9
2019-20	890	33	2019-20	382	9	2019-20	94	14
Avg.	552	20	Avg.	313	9	Avg.	175	19

Other public lands

Common opinion amongst some hunters is that the RAAs discussed previously are the **best** option for public waterfowl hunting. While this opinion may hold true under the right circumstances, it is not always the case. When migrant waterfowl are in the area, just about any suitable site can be productive. Many places throughout the Columbia Basin provide excellent hunting opportunities.

One of the more popular waterfowl hunting areas is Potholes Reservoir. The abundance of small dune islands, where hunters find cover, makes this an attractive area. Most hunters use the northern portion of the reservoir, where they find shallow water and numerous islands. New hunters should be aware that potholes reservoir water levels do increase dramatically through the hunting season. Hunters looking for less hunting pressure should choose weekdays.



Figure 29. Aerial imagery showing difference between high water (June) and low water (September) levels on Potholes Reservoir.

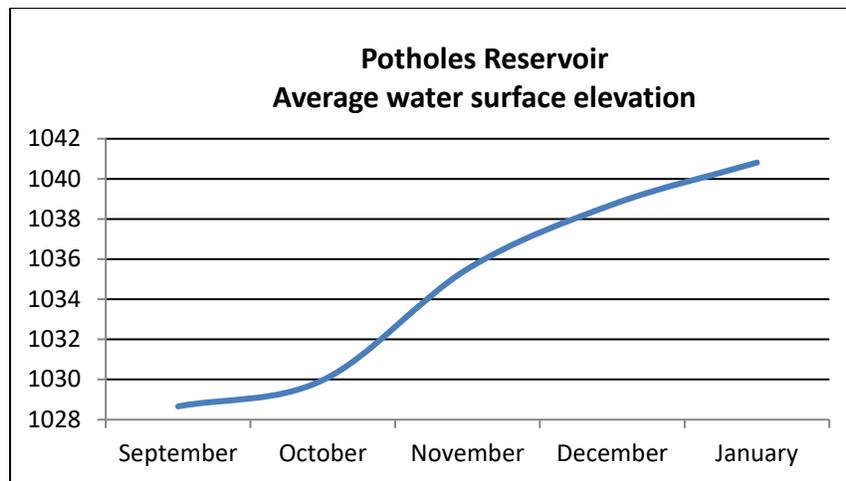


Figure 30. Potholes Reservoir water surface elevation (in feet) during waterfowl season. Note that water surface elevation is measured at the O’Sullivan dam and some lag in flooding will occur in the upper portions of the reservoir.

Winchester Lake is another location where hunters can expect to see good numbers of ducks but hunting pressure can be relatively high there too. Winchester Lake sits in a prime location, getting traffic from mallards that feed on grain corn in the surrounding area. Ducks typically come from Winchester Game Reserve, Potholes Game Reserve, Moses Lake, and/or the Wanapum Closure to feed in fields, and they occasionally attempt to shorten their commute to the roost by stopping at Winchester Lake.

Realistically, there are very few “*secret spots*” within the Columbia Basin. There are just places that are hunted less frequently. Hunters willing to put some time into exploring new areas will likely discover a few gems. Walk-in areas that hold waterfowl include the following: Desert Unit, Lower Crab Creek, and Royal Lakes. All of these areas are predominantly public.

SMALL GAME

DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION STATUS

Small game in District 5 consists primarily of bobcats, raccoons, foxes, crows, coyotes, and cottontail rabbits. There are no sizeable populations of forest grouse, but there is a small population of turkeys in the northern portions of GMU 272. We do not conduct formal surveys to assess the population status of small game species. Bobcats occur in small numbers, and harvest is relatively low. Raccoons occur in fair numbers in association with wetlands and residential developments when adequate habitat exists. Fox farms occurred adjacent to the Columbia Plateau during the early 1900s but declines in fur prices during the 1950s resulted in foxes being released into the wild. A few descendants of these individuals occur and can still be found. However, these introduced foxes are still considered relatively uncommon, with most reports coming from areas north of Moses Lake. Crows are typically hunted in areas where damage occurs but hunting opportunities for crows locally are limited. Coyotes are a common and widespread small game species within the district. Hunters interested in pursuing coyotes should be sure to spend time refining their tactics and be patient when making calling sets. There are many online resources available to interested hunters, and many landowners are willing to allow access for hunters who ask permission.

Cottontail rabbits are widespread and common throughout District 5, in areas of optimal habitat. In native landscapes, hunters should look for rock outcrops, greasewood patches, or other brushy thickets where suitable escape cover occurs. These rabbits are often found along habitat edges. Therefore, focusing efforts in areas where two or more of their preferred habitats occur will produce the best results, particularly if green forage is nearby. On private lands, cottontails can be found within and around equipment storage areas or rock piles. To be successful hunting rabbits, hunters should cover lots of ground while “*kicking*” brush. Stopping periodically will cause nearby rabbits to become nervous and they will oftentimes flee when you resume walking, providing a brief shooting window. Another popular way to hunt rabbits is using trained beagles. Hunters targeting cottontails must be able to differentiate between cottontails and pygmy rabbits, which are a federally endangered species. Pygmy rabbits look like cottontails but have a brown tail. Pygmy rabbits are found in small pockets of shrubsteppe and CRP habitat. Hunters would likely only encounter pygmy rabbits north and northwest of Ephrata.

PUBLIC LANDS

WDFW-MANAGED LAND

The Columbia Basin Wildlife Area contains about 190,000 acres and provides essential or critical habitat for hundreds of species. These lands exist to allow for sustainable wildlife populations while providing compatible recreational opportunities. For more information on this wildlife area, please visit the WDFW Lands [website](#). Visitors to the wildlife area need to be aware that a Discover Pass or Vehicle Access Pass is required to access all WDFW lands.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Washington Department of Natural Resources maintains lands that are open to the public for compatible recreational purposes. Visitors to DNR land should be aware that a Discover Pass is required for access. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on DNR land can be found [here](#).

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The US Fish and Wildlife Service manages land to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Columbia and Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuges, Hanford Reach National Monument, and lands owned by the Department of Energy are managed by the USFWS in District 5. They have strict hunting regulations, which can be found here: <https://www.fws.gov/hunting/>

NATIONAL FOREST

There is no national forest in District 5.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The Bureau of Land Management manages land to sustain its health, diversity, and productivity for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. Some BLM land is found in District 5 and is open to public hunting and other compatible uses. For more information regarding BLM property, please visit the [BLM website](#).

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) manages, develops, and protects water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public. Their land is open to public use for compatible recreational purposes. Much, but not all, of the BOR property in District 5 is managed by WDFW. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on BOR lands can be found [here](#).

PRIVATE LANDS

LAND OWNERSHIP

Whether hunting, hiking, or wildlife viewing, it is important to respect private property rights and always ask permission before entering private lands. Fortunately, technology has made the process of ownership determination easy. Simply log on to the [Adams County parcel map](#) or the [Grant County parcel map](#) and use the interactive map program to zoom into your area of interest. Clicking on the parcels will reveal landowner information. The disadvantage of these resources is the lack of portability and difficulty scanning a large area for the availability of public land. However, these are by far the best available resources for identifying ownership of specific locations. The best resource available for identifying where public land occurs is the [Department of Natural Resources public lands quadrangles](#) (1:100k), available for a fee at the DNR website. Other mobile applications are now readily available and can be purchased through various sources; with a little sleuthing hunters, can find lots of information.

PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners statewide to provide public access through negotiated agreements. Landowners participating in a WDFW cooperative agreement retain liability protection provided under RCW 4.24.210. Landowners receive technical services, materials for posting (signs and posts), and in some cases monetary compensation. These lands under the agreement are well-known by WDFW Enforcement.

Currently, the private lands access program includes four basic access agreement types: Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt, Hunt by Written Permission, and Hunt by Reservation. For more information, see [WDFW’s private lands webpage](#). Currently, there are approximately 179,000 acres of private property in District 5 that are accessible to hunters through these agreements. When accessing these lands, hunters should obey all the rules posted and should also be respectful of the private property that is open to public access. Most complaints received from hunting access cooperators concern hunters not following rules and being disrespectful. Many hunters are not aware of the tremendous opportunities that are available on these private properties. With a little scouting and planning, hunters could improve their odds of success. Find more information on where these enrolled lands occur at [WDFW’s private lands search](#) or use the [Mobile Hunting Regulations](#) mapping feature.

Table 4. Approximate acreage of access available by access type.

Private Lands Access Program	Grant County	Adams County
Feel Free To Hunt	8,866	6,637
Hunt By Written Permission	48,011	115,454
Hunt By Reservation (Online)	17,374	0
TOTAL	74,251	122,091

ADA ACCESS

The Ephrata District maintains a few sites to help people with disabilities. These sites occur at Rocky Ford Creek (Drumheller Pond), Buckshot Ranch, and the Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area. Hunters must have a Disabled Hunter Permit to access hunting areas behind locked

gates. For additional information, please call or write to Dolores Noyes, WDFW, 360-902-2349, Fax: 360-902-2392, or Email: Dolores.Noyes@dfw.wa.gov.

Rocky Ford Creek Directions: Travel south from Ephrata on SR 282 for 7.2 miles. Turn right onto Neppel Road (Old Moses Lake Highway). Go 0.1 miles and turn right at the public fishing sign. Continue 0.5 miles to the access site. The access duck blind is on a small pond off the creek. A vehicle can be used to drop off a disabled hunter next to the blind. The ground around the blind is rough and access into the water is best with a small hand launch boat or raft. An accessible vault toilet is in the parking lot located nearby for the walk-in anglers. The use of the blind is by reservation only. Hunters can obtain a key from the Ephrata Regional Office by calling 509-754-4624.

Buckshot Ranch: Drive south on SR 243 along the Columbia River from Vantage toward Mattawa. Turn right (west) onto Road 26 SW and go about one mile to the Priest Rapids/Buckshot Wildlife Area. Follow the gravel road into a parking area and turn right between two fence posts. Follow the dirt road north 0.25 miles to a locked gate on the left. A ground-level roll-in goose pit blind is available with seasonal success dependent on weather. Call the Ephrata Regional Office at 509-754-4624 to reserve the blind and obtain a key.

Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area: From Moses Lake, travel south on Highway 17 to Road M SE and turn right (south). Continue on Road M for about six miles and turn right (west) onto Highway 262 (O'Sullivan Dam Road). Continue on Highway 262 across O'Sullivan Dam and past Potholes State Park and turn right (north) onto Road C SE. Proceed north on Road C SE for 1.4 miles and look for the disabled access gate on the left-hand side of the road. For further detail, see the map in the Regulated Access Area section of this document. Call the Ephrata Regional Office at 509-754-4624 to reserve the blind and obtain a combination to the lock.

Additional opportunities may be available to those seeking accommodations. Please contact WDFW's Title VI Compliance Coordinator at 360-902-2349.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

YOUTH HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

Waterfowl

New for 2020, there is a youth hunt scheduled for October 3, 2020, as well as February 6, 2021. Both dates will provide tremendous opportunities to get kids out hunting. Additionally, the Feb. 1 hunt day has the potential to be an awesome opportunity. That date is **after** the general waterfowl season, which is great for hunters because at that time there are typically more ducks in the area. Additionally, those ducks will be widely distributed and will have become habituated with no hunting pressure.

Pheasants

WDFW and the Columbia Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever have been collaborating in recent years to host a day of pheasant hunting during the youth season. At the time of this publication, the status of the event is uncertain due to constraints associated with COVID-19. The event typically takes place on the first Saturday of the Upland Youth Hunt weekend. If the event does proceed, it will be held at the [Gloyd Seeps Unit Road 10 parking lot \(View a map\)](#). WDFW Hunter Education instructors will be onsite and will help with shooting instruction and offer “loaner” shotguns, and volunteers will be providing dogs to assist youth hunters. Additionally, Pheasants Forever will provide food for all hunters and parents and will also give away a shotgun to one youth hunting participant. No purchase will be required. For more information, check the [Columbia Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever - Facebook Page](#) or call the WDFW Ephrata Regional Office at 509-754-4624 for more information.

Deer

District 5 staff members have increased youth hunting permits throughout most GMUs and have also changed most permits from Antlerless to Any Deer. Interested hunters should check the [2020 Big Game Regulations Pamphlet](#) for additional information.

BIRD DOG TRAINING

District 5 does not currently have any areas designated for bird-dog training, although work is underway to develop a dog training area. Any training on WDFW land must be within the established bird-dog training season, which runs from Aug. 1-March 31. Please see the website and regulations booklet for more details.

TARGET SHOOTING

Per WAC 332-52-145, target shooting is allowed in developed recreational facilities or areas with an unobstructed, earthen backstop capable of stopping all projectiles and debris safely. Targets are defined as items that are commercially manufactured for the specific purpose of target shooting. Because of extensive misuse of WDFW managed lands (primarily fire, litter and human safety issues), some areas have been closed to target shooting, particularly in the Lind Coulee, Potholes, and Seep Lakes units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. Many large wildfires have been caused by target shooting on WDFW and other publicly owned lands in the last few decades and have led to extensive habitat and wildlife loss, as well as land restoration costs.

Table 5. Information for shooting range facilities.

County	Name	Contact
Adams	Lind Golf & Gun Club	509-671-3314
Adams	Othello Gun Club	509-488-3768
Adams	Ritzville Gun Club	Gun Club Road, Ritzville
Adams	Washtucna Gun Club	509-646-3263
Grant	Boyd Mordhorst Memorial Range	509-345-2550
Grant	Coulee City Sportsmen	509-632-5137
Grant	Marlin Trap Club	509-982-2445
Grant	Moses Lake Gun Club	509-765-1382

TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY

Numerous resources exist to assist hunters in finding hunting opportunities and improving their experiences. WDFW has created numerous mapping tools that identify public and private lands and their associated regulations. WDFW also provides the public with access to our Status and Trends Reports, Management Plans for species, and harvest statistics. These can all be found on the WDFW website <https://wdfw.wa.gov>.

Handheld GPS units can help identify your locations in remote places, but even smartphones can work in areas with and without cellular reception. Numerous resources are available through retailers to assist in mapping and comfort, but scouting, shooting proficiency, and learning wildlife habits will provide the best chances of improving your hunting success.

BE A WILDLIFE STEWARD - GET INVOLVED

WDFW and other agencies are always looking for good volunteer assistance in improving habitat for wildlife. Find time to help with wildlife-related projects and encourage kids to learn about nature and our wildlife heritage through our [WDFW Volunteer Program](#).

HUNTER TUTORIALS AND RESOURCES

If pages won't open on your browser, try a different browser (e.g. Google Chrome rather than Internet Explorer)

Share the land and clean-up after yourself: Large expanses of healthy connected public lands are necessary to ensure the persistence of wildlife species with healthy and sustainable populations. Respect and share the land, which means cleaning up after yourself and eliminating impacts. Pick up your shells, carry out your garbage, and tread lightly.

Hunting Ethics and Fair Chase:

<https://pope-young.org/fairchase/default.asp>

https://www.boone-crockett.org/huntingEthics/ethics_overview.asp?area=huntingEthics

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/ethics-safety/conduct>

“How to Hunt”

Hunter Education: Many links to resources about specific topics

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements>

Hunting Clinics and publications: Thorough explanations about the basics of hunting, from wildlife behavior to hunting tips and tactics.

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/hunting-clinics>

How to prepare for the Season:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/preparing-to-hunt>

First Hunt Foundation (mentored hunt): <https://firsthuntfoundation.org/>

Many additional Resources: WDFW’s website has many documents and plans that give details on the history of wildlife, management harvest statistics, and other items of interest. They can be found here:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting>

“Where to Hunt”

WDFW maintains a web map tool that allows you to zoom into different areas and indicate the hunt-type of interest. You can see different land ownerships and regulations on different parcels:

<https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>

WDFW Public Lands: Be aware there are some closed areas and Game Reserves where hunting and trapping are prohibited. Read the Regulations Pamphlet and read and obey signs.

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations>

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/wdfw-lands>

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/pheasant-enhancement>

Other Government Lands: Washington Department of Natural Resources and federal public’s lands are generally available for hunting. Read the agency’s regulations, read and obey signs, and do not cross fences without permission.

DNR: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/go#hunting-and-fishing>

Bureau of Reclamation: <https://www.usbr.gov/assetmanagement/>

USFWS Refuges: <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/hunting/>

Private Lands: Many private landowners allow hunting on their property, although permission requirements vary. Some allow anyone to enter without permission and some require written permission. Each landowner's parcel indicates the permission type required, species that can be found there, and specifics about the parcel.

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/private-lands>

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Desert Unit (GMU 290) photos



DESERT UNIT (GMU 290) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Where should I start looking for a mature buck?

A: The highest density of mule deer typically occurs between Dodson Road and Potholes Reservoir, bounded on the north by Interstate 90 and on the south by Frenchman Hills Road. We recommend that hunters explore all access points around this area when getting to know the unit, then branch out from there.

Q: What is the area like?

A: The unit sits within the heart of the Bureau of Reclamation Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, which delivers water to over 600,000 acres of farmland in the area. As a result, many small ponds and streams have been incidentally created in this area. Hunters should be familiar with the orientation of Frenchman and Winchester waste ways, as they pose a significant barrier and can only be crossed by boat or with chest waders in places. There are many small ponds associated with these waste ways that are used by waterfowl hunters. The Desert Unit provides a rich source of natural vegetation, so although mule deer utilize agricultural fields such as alfalfa, the crops may not be the best place to seek out your deer. Bitterbrush, which is common within the Desert Unit, is an important mule deer food item during winter. Be familiar with the distribution of bitterbrush patches, particularly during the later seasons if snowfall has occurred. The soils are deep, sandy and have been wind-blown, resulting in long east-west running dunes which characterize the landscape (and provide great vantage points to scan for deer). These dunes and sandy soils can make walking difficult at times and will certainly make packing out an animal a lot of work.

Q: What size bucks am I likely to encounter?

A: The typical buck harvested from the Desert Unit is a 4x4 with a 24" spread. Many hunters report having seen larger bucks than the one they harvested.

Q: Are there any areas that I cannot hunt?

A: Hunters need to be aware of the locations and boundaries of Winchester Reserve, Frenchman Reserve, and North Potholes Reserve. Private lands within the Desert Unit are only open to hunting if the hunter first obtains landowner permission.

Q: Where should I stay?

A: Moses Lake is the nearest location, with many amenities (motels, restaurants, etc.). Camping is allowed on WDFW lands and most people camp within the parking areas. Expect crowds during the opening weekend of duck and pheasant hunting and lots of hunting activity thereafter. Hunters should check local restrictions before traveling to ensure adherence to COVID-19 related regulations.

Q: Is there any other hunting going on in the area?

A: The entire unit is open to hunting. Expect to see waterfowl and upland bird hunters throughout the area. However, these hunters are typically associated with the waste ways and associated ponds. Once you get far enough into the shrub-dominated uplands, you will find far fewer people.