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Bighorn Sheep at Chelan Butte, Justin Haug WDFW

DISTRICT 7 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Chelan and Douglas Counties

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DISTRICT 7 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Split in two by the Columbia River and comprised of Chelan and Douglas Counties, the Wenatchee District is at the heart of Washington state. From the crest of the Cascade Range to the shrubsteppe of the Columbia Basin, District 7 offers an incredibly diverse array of habitats and hunting opportunities. Hunters in District 7 have access to a variety of small and big game species, with hunting opportunities ranging from agricultural fields and sagebrush to alpine basins tucked away deep in the wilderness.

Douglas County, the eastern half of the district, is a plateau of shrubsteppe, farmlands, and deep basalt coulees. Ownership is mostly private, yet Douglas County offers excellent opportunities to hunt a variety of species. Hunters seeking pheasant, quail, doves, gray partridge, chukar, and mule deer will find extensive areas to hunt across the county. The Game Management Units (GMUs) in Douglas County are 248 (Big Bend), 254 (Saint Andrews), 260 (Foster Creek), 262 (Withrow), 266 (Badger), and 269 (Moses Coulee).

Chelan County descends from a high point of 9,500-feet atop the Cascade Crest at its western boundary down to a low elevation of 800-feet along its eastern border, the Columbia River. Extending approximately 40 miles from the Cascade Crest to the Columbia River, Chelan County encompasses five mountain ranges (Sawtooth, Chelan, Entiat, Chiwaukum, and Wenatchee) providing virtually unlimited terrain.

Home to some of the best mule deer and bighorn sheep hunting in the state, Chelan County is a destination for many hunters. With its large public land base, the county offers almost unlimited opportunities to find a place of your own. Four of the state's six high deer hunt wilderness areas are in Chelan County, as well as three bighorn sheep herds and an increasing mountain goat population. GMUs in Chelan County are 243 (Manson), 244 (Clark), 245 (Chiwawa), 246 (Slide Ridge), 247 (Entiat), 249 (Alpine), 250 (Swakane), and 251 (Mission).

CURRENT SPECIES STATUS

Big game: Almost all the deer harvested in District 7 are mule deer, with very few white-tailed deer. A lesser-known fact is that black-tailed deer also occur in Chelan County along the Cascade crest, and that mule deer here share more black-tailed genes than hunters realize. Elk are present primarily along the southern edge and central portions of Chelan County. These elk represent the northern extension of the Colockum elk herd, centered to the south in Kittitas County. Black bears roam across almost all habitats in Chelan County. Their densities are higher in the wetter timbered habitats in western Chelan County and near the crest of the Cascades, and at somewhat lower densities in drier habitats farther east. Hunters harvest few black bears in Douglas County, but they do occur in small numbers in brush-filled riparian draws along the Columbia River and other drainages. Cougars occupy all habitats where deer and elk are located. While most cougar harvests take place during deer and elk seasons, the cougar harvest typically

does not meet the harvest guidelines in most years. Winter conditions and fresh snow determine the ease or difficulty of a dedicated cougar hunt. There are three California bighorn sheep herds in the district, the Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson herds. The world's record California bighorn sheep came out of the Swakane herd in Chelan County in 2010, and the Chelan Butte herd has become known for producing trophy-class California bighorn rams. Mountain goats occupy most of the high elevation habitat in Chelan County and hunting opportunities for mountain goats exist in two areas bordering Lake Chelan.

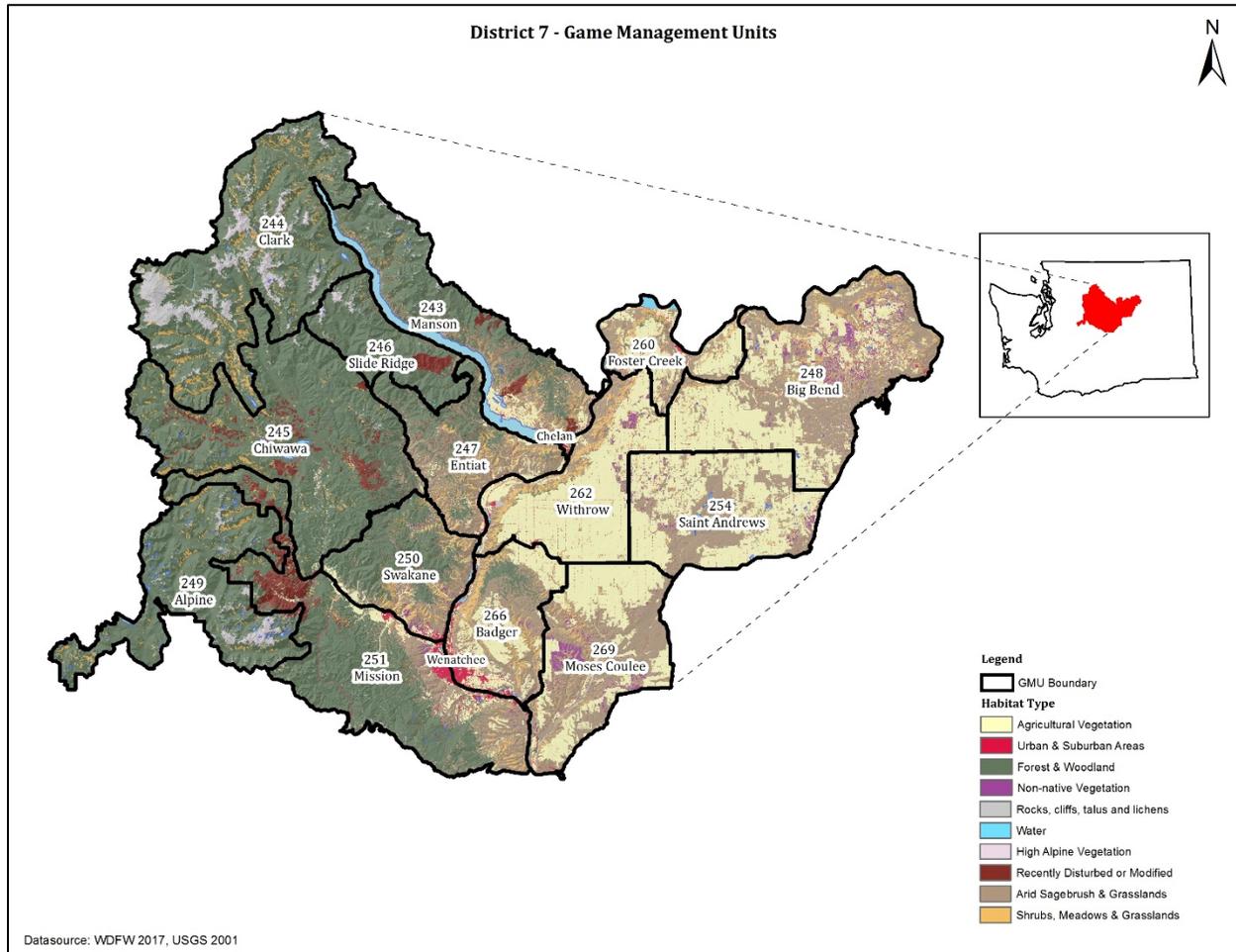
Upland birds: Upland bird hunting is available across the district. Turkey hunting occurs mainly in Chelan County, but numbers are growing in northern Douglas County, and some newly acquired wildlife areas are expanding opportunities. Huntable grouse species are in forested environments in both counties. Hunters can pursue sooty, dusky, spruce, and ruffed grouse in different parts of the district. The three other grouse species present in the district- greater sage-grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and white-tailed ptarmigan- are protected species in Washington. Chukar partridge require hunters to climb steep ridgelines and traverse rocky slopes to bag their quarry. Valley quail, as their name suggests, prefer gentler terrain and usually stay in greater numbers near agricultural areas. Gray partridge, or Huns, are found primarily in Douglas County. Doves are hunted in both counties, but most of the success is from Douglas County. There are two ring-necked pheasant release sites in Chelan County (Swakane and Chelan Butte Wildlife Areas).

Small Game: Coyotes are the most widely adaptable species in the state, and as such, occur virtually everywhere. Bobcats are another widely distributed species hunted across a wide range of habitats from high mountains to dry shrubsteppe. Raccoons are almost everywhere, except for the highest peaks and the driest desert. Crows are another small game species available, and likely little pursued. Rabbits and hares offer hunting opportunity throughout the district, with snowshoe hares at higher elevations (mainly in Chelan County) and cottontail rabbits in a variety of habitats in both Douglas and Chelan Counties.

Waterfowl: Ducks and geese offer opportunities in different portions of the district. The bulk of the waterfowl hunting is along the Columbia River, with ducks being the primary focus. Goose hunts are mainly in Douglas County, but opportunities are also available along the Columbia River.

GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS

The 14 GMUs in District 7 run from the crest of the Cascade Range to Moses Coulee and Banks Lake. Units in the west and central Chelan County are high, rugged, and timbered. Eastern Chelan County grades into low elevation dry habitat that winters its mule deer herd. The eastern half of the district lies above the Columbia River and is comprised of six GMUs in Douglas County. Shrubsteppe and grasslands comprise native habitat in Douglas County and agricultural lands offer some of the best upland bird opportunities in the district.



Each GMU is unique in character and offers a different experience for hunters. GMUs 244 and 249, for example, are legally designated Wilderness Areas administered by the US Forest Service (USFS). There are no roads within these Wilderness Areas and no mechanized vehicles, including bicycles, are allowed for any type of recreation. In turn, these two GMUs offer exceptional hunting experiences for those willing to go on foot or horse. By contrast, GMU 262 is the heart of Douglas County’s wheat production, and while not wilderness, provides great upland bird hunting and open country mule deer hunting where access is granted. GMU 269 offers the most dramatic coulee habitat in the district with stunning landscapes and a variety of

hunting opportunities. GMU 260 is in the center of the district's rangeland and features big ranches and big views.

Once you have a GMU in mind, refine your scouting efforts by using the websites below to identify specific hunt areas, WDFW Wildlife Areas, and private lands offering hunting.

- Printable maps of each GMU with its respective land ownership composition and roads can be found on WDFW's website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/gmu>
- Links to WDFW Wildlife Areas: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/wdfw-lands>
- The Public Lands website offers multiple ways to search for and identify public lands in Washington: <http://publiclands.org/?plicstate=WA>
- WDFW Hunting Regulations Web map tells you which seasons are open and when: <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>
- The WA Dept. of Natural Resources even offers LIDAR images if you need detailed topographic information: <http://lidarportal.dnr.wa.gov/#47.60443:-120.14992:12>

WILDFIRE

This report was written before the full extent of this year's wildfires in north central and northeast Washington was known. Watch for fire condition updates in the monthly Weekender hunting reports, WDFW news releases, or WDFW social media posts.

While the department currently has no plans to close any hunting seasons due to wildfires, access restrictions may be in place on many public and private lands in these areas. Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check fire conditions, access restrictions, and other emergency rules before you head out. Multiple websites are available to provide regional and statewide wildfire updates.

Resources Management Agency Web Sites

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/>

Washington State Department of Natural Resources
<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/>

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/okawen/>

Bureau of Land Management
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/index.php>

Chelan County
<http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/>

Douglas County

<http://www.douglascountywa.net/>

Fire monitoring resources

Visit these sites to see where wildfires are active near your favorite hunting spots.

Inciweb: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>

National Fire Map: <https://maps.nwcg.gov/sa/>

WA Smoke Blog: <https://wasmoke.blogspot.com/> ([Map of air quality stations and smoke plumes](#))

Fire is a natural part of the vegetation communities in eastern Washington and a common occurrence in the Wenatchee District, affecting both forested and shrubsteppe habitats each year. Summer and fall are our primary fire seasons and this reoccurring pattern fire on dry landscapes has shaped the tree, shrub, and grass species that provide habitat for the game we hunt. A range of species as diverse as mountain goats to quail can either benefit or suffer from a fire within a habitat. Species are also impacted by excluding fire from landscapes where it normally plays a dominant role in maintaining habitat quality.

In 2018, the Cougar Mountain fire burned approximately 42,000 acres within the USFS Entiat Ranger District. While burn severity was mixed, some areas experienced high severity burns, especially in the Upper Mad River drainage. These burned areas have begun to attract mule deer, which thrive in early successional stages of vegetation where fire or other disturbances result in a mosaic of grasses, forbs, and young shrubs that had previously been limited or excluded by overstory. The South Navarre Campground and surrounding trails on the north side of Lake Chelan have been reopened, but these areas sustained significant damage in the 2017 Uno Peak fire. Hunters need to note that the Safety Harbor dock and campground are closed due to safety hazards.

At the time of this writing, the 2020 wildfire season has been comparatively slow. Despite being in drought following below-average snowpack accumulation in the Cascades, cooler than average late spring and summer temperatures and above-average precipitation stabilized the wildfire outlook into June, but at the time of writing conditions have dried out and more typical summer temperatures have increased fire danger. August and September are predicted to have higher fire risk as fuels dry and temperatures rise. This will be especially true at low elevations.

The dangers of active fires and post-fire conditions make land management and public safety a difficult issue for responsible agencies. Following a fire, many areas have restricted access due to safety and resource concerns, and because fire season precedes and/or overlaps hunting seasons, hunter's plans may be impacted. Even when fires have been contained, or the fire is officially out, the impacts of fire and firefighting can and will restrict access in some areas. Transport of heavy equipment, gear, and firefighters during operations degrade roads despite best efforts, and

in many instances, these roads are unrepaired before hunting seasons open. Hunters should expect access restrictions in areas of wildfire activity and plan accordingly.

It is always smart to start making plans early and to monitor conditions and access by contacting the agencies that manage the area you plan to hunt. Cities, counties, companies, and resource management agencies all can place unexpected access restrictions on roads and hunting lands. Make plans, but also have an alternate plan in your back pocket in case conditions change and your new or favorite hunting area is closed. WDFW sets hunting seasons across the entire state. However, local laws, ordinances, and policies set by landowners and jurisdictions could restrict access to public lands even though WDFW hunting seasons are open.

The good news is that many areas that were closed to access following severe wildfires in recent years are open again, such as the Upper Entiat River and Chiwawa Basin.

ELK



Photo credit: Pete Lopushinsky.

Most elk harvested in the Wenatchee District come from southern Chelan County where part of the Colockum herd reaches its northern range extension. In 2009, WDFW implemented “true

spike” restrictions for most general season harvest opportunities. Branched antler bull opportunities are primarily limited entry hunts.

A few elk harvests are scattered across Douglas County each season, but that harvest is not consistent from year to year. Liberal harvest seasons are in place in Douglas County to keep elk from establishing herds in the agriculture dominated landscape where their presence is unwelcome. Under the 2006 Colockum Elk Management Plan the population objectives for this herd are to manage for approximately 4,500 elk. Winter elk surveys in early 2020 estimated the herd at 3,700 animals. However, elk in Chelan County are not incorporated into these survey efforts, so composition and seasonal distribution of elk is only understood through incidental observations and landowner reports. Calf to cow ratios for the Colockum herd remained low this year, which will affect general season opportunity in 2020.

Hunters harvest roughly 45-55 elk under general seasons in Chelan County each year, and in 2019, 50 were taken. Antlerless harvest varies year to year, with the amount of harvest focus placed on local elk to combat damage in the Malaga Elk Area. In 2019, 169 antlerless permit opportunities resulted in 44 antlerless elk harvested. Success rates between weapon types and overall success varies from year to year. In 2019, muzzleloader hunters had a 5% success rate, while archers had a 10% success rate and modern firearms hunters were at 5% . Most of the elk harvested come out of GMU 251, with the remaining few harvested in GMUs 244, 245, and 249, and very small numbers coming inconsistently out of other GMUs. This trend was displayed again in 2019, with few elk harvested outside of GMU 251.

Mature bulls use a portion of southern Chelan County as security and wintering habitat. Recent research has expanded understanding of the Colockum Herd, and there are plans to look deeper into the ecology of the adult bull portion of the population. Elk utilize a wide range of forage including grasses and forbs in the summer months, typically incorporating deciduous shrubby browse as these more palatable plants begin to dry out. Areas where timber harvest or wildfire has occurred, especially adjacent to creek drainages and intact timber stands, can be excellent places to look for elk, as this disturbance stimulates the growth of elk’s preferred forage. Cow elk are especially dependent on finding high-quality forage in the summer to prepare their bodies for pregnancy over the winter.

Elk in GMUs 245 through 250 occur at low densities and in small-dispersed bands. Local hunters who live and work the area are often the hunters that prove to be most successful in harvesting these elk. Elk hunting in GMU 249 consists of a large block of public land and is within the USFS Alpine Lakes Wilderness. While this GMU offers an opportunity for an over the counter archery tag for a branch-antlered bull, elk occur at very low densities here and occupy extremely rugged terrain that does not allow the use of motorized vehicles. Hunters participating in the GMU 249 archery season report surprise at the numbers of other hunters chasing elk.

GMU 251 offers elk opportunity throughout most of the unit. However, elk density is not very high and varies from place to place. General seasons fall under antler restrictions (true spike) that make harvesting elk more challenging. Harvest occurs across the GMU, with most of the elk hunting occurring between Blewett Pass to the west, the city of Wenatchee to the east, and the mountainous and timbered habitat south of State Highway 2. The Mission Unit does have a significant amount of private lands and hunters need to know property boundaries when hunting elk near private ownership.

Figures 2 and 3 (see Figures section) are maps of WDFW Elk Areas in Chelan County, 2032 (Malaga), and 2051 (Tronsen). These are the only elk areas in Chelan County, and represent permit opportunities and hunt restrictions for the 2020 season. The Malaga elk unit offers the greatest numbers of permits for antlerless elk, intending to reduce elk numbers within and along the boundary of the Stemilt Basin agricultural area.

Table 1. Ten-year general season average success and harvest of elk in the top producing GMUs in District 7.

GMU	Modern Firearm		Muzzleloader		Archery	
	Avg. Harvest	Avg. Success (%)	Avg. Harvest	Avg. Success (%)	Avg. Harvest	Avg. Success (%)
245	3	3	<1	4	0	0
249					6	9
251	24	5	10	7		

*table does not include multi-season tag holders. Not all GMUs open during all seasons

** success is harvest: hunter ratio (%)

DEER



Mule deer hunting is the bread and butter of the Wenatchee District. While the district does support a few white-tailed deer, mule deer dominate hunters' attention. Chelan County has become a destination hunt for many mule deer enthusiasts across Washington, with late season limited entry permits being highly prized. Within District 7, hunters can pursue deer across a range of habitats, including high alpine basins along the crest of the Cascades or expanses of sagebrush in Douglas County.

The management goal of a minimum of 25 bucks per 100 does postseason in the Chelan County portion of the district has been successful in providing hunters with opportunities for quality bucks over the last 10 years. Aerial post-hunt population surveys could not be performed for Chelan County mule deer in 2019 due to persistent inclement weather, but 2018 saw a post-hunt estimated buck:doe ratio of 23:100. This represented a significant increase over the previously estimated buck:doe ratio of 18:100. After a hard winter in 2016/17 mule deer populations in Chelan County have been rebuilding. Deer populations have the characteristic of responding quickly to favorable conditions, and because Chelan County has not suffered large-scale habitat alteration, buck numbers have been able to bounce back quickly.

Survey numbers in Douglas County are encouraging, with the population estimated at approximately 15,000 mule deer and buck to doe ratios at 23:100, which is above the management objective of 15:100. Without the diverse cover provided by mountains and forests, buck escapement is lower in the sagebrush, therefore a smaller portion of the bucks surviving are mature. Expect to see the Douglas County herd increase in size, providing excellent hunting opportunity during general and antlerless permit seasons in these sagebrush and agricultural habitats.

An estimated 2,002 deer were harvested from Chelan and Douglas Counties in 2019, with harvest composed of 1,708 bucks and 294 antlerless deer. The Entiat Unit (GMU 247) continues to be a popular and productive unit for deer hunting, with 325 deer harvested in the general season alone in 2019. In Douglas County, the Big Bend Unit (GMU 248) continues to attract hunters to the newly expanded Big Bend Wildlife Area and harvest in this unit remained high in 2019, with 220 deer harvested in the general season. Harvest of antlerless deer remains consistent between years, which is expected, as permit numbers regulate that component of the deer harvest each year.

Douglas County is a consistent producer of mule deer opportunity, and conditions should be similar in 2020. Unlike Chelan County, lands in Douglas County are mostly in private ownership, and as such, access controls the amount of impact a hunting season has on the population. Douglas County is composed of relatively open habitat with an extensive road network. These factors make deer more vulnerable here than in the rugged, closed canopy, mountainous terrain of the Cascades.

Winter conditions in Douglas County are more typical of the Columbia Basin than the Cascades. The core of the Douglas County population is stable, and the harvest of excess bucks does not change the direction of the population. Reductions in antlerless permits help to mitigate the effects of harsher winters, and buck permits are adjusted to maintain success rates and promote the quality aspects of late-season hunts.

District 7 also encompasses one Deer Area (2017, North Lake Chelan), a site of localized deer concentration where crop damage is a concern. See Figure 1 in the Figures section for a map of this Deer Area. WDFW provides limited, permit-only opportunities here to harvest antlerless deer to deter mule deer presence and reduce crop damage. See the [2020 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#) pamphlet for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions.

When we look at hunter numbers, hunter days, and success rates in District 7 over the past five years, we see that a similar number of hunters spent a similar number of days hunting each year. These measures indicate that deer were available to hunters in similar numbers to averages in 2016, but lower numbers than 2015. Following the high harvest in 2015, hunter success dropped in 2016 and again in 2017, further impacted by the harsh winter of 2016/2017. Success rates for

muzzleloader, modern firearms, and multi-season hunters all declined from 2015 through 2017, while archery success increased in 2017, held stable in 2018, and then increased in the 2019 season. Modern firearm and muzzleloader hunters increased success in both 2018 and 2019.

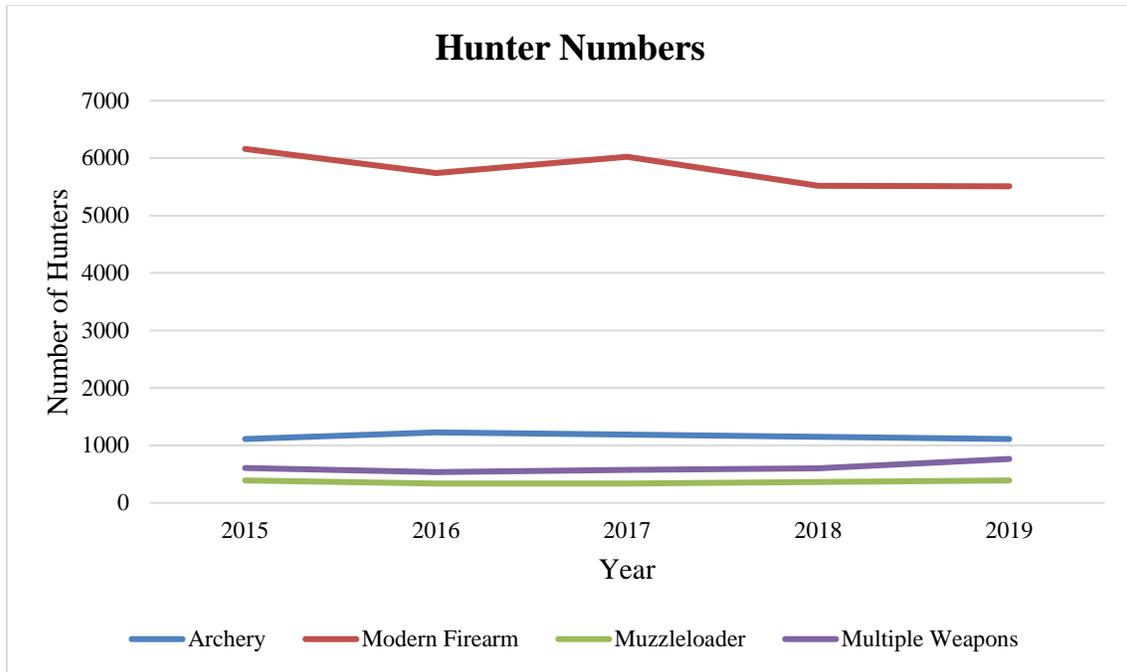


Figure District 7 general season deer hunter numbers from 2015 to 2019.

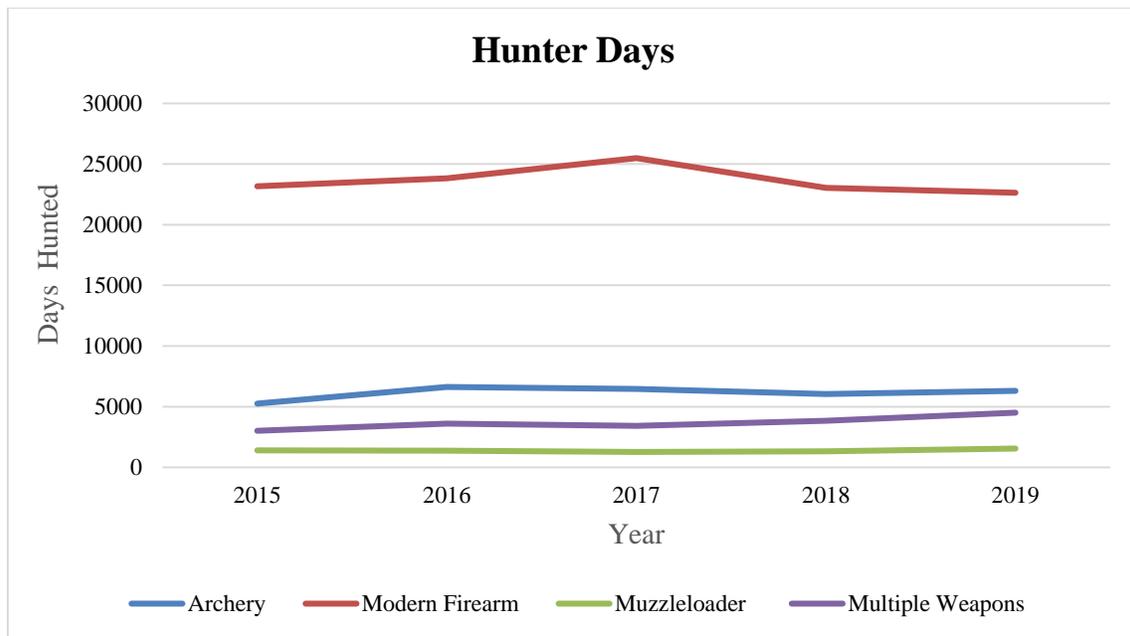
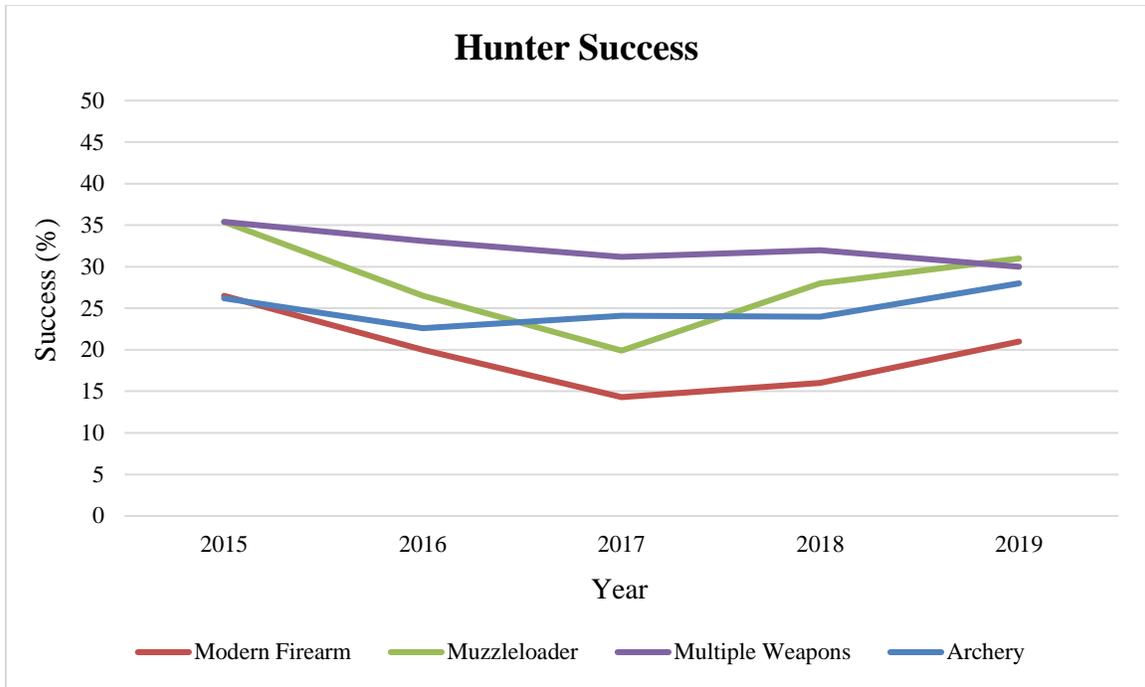
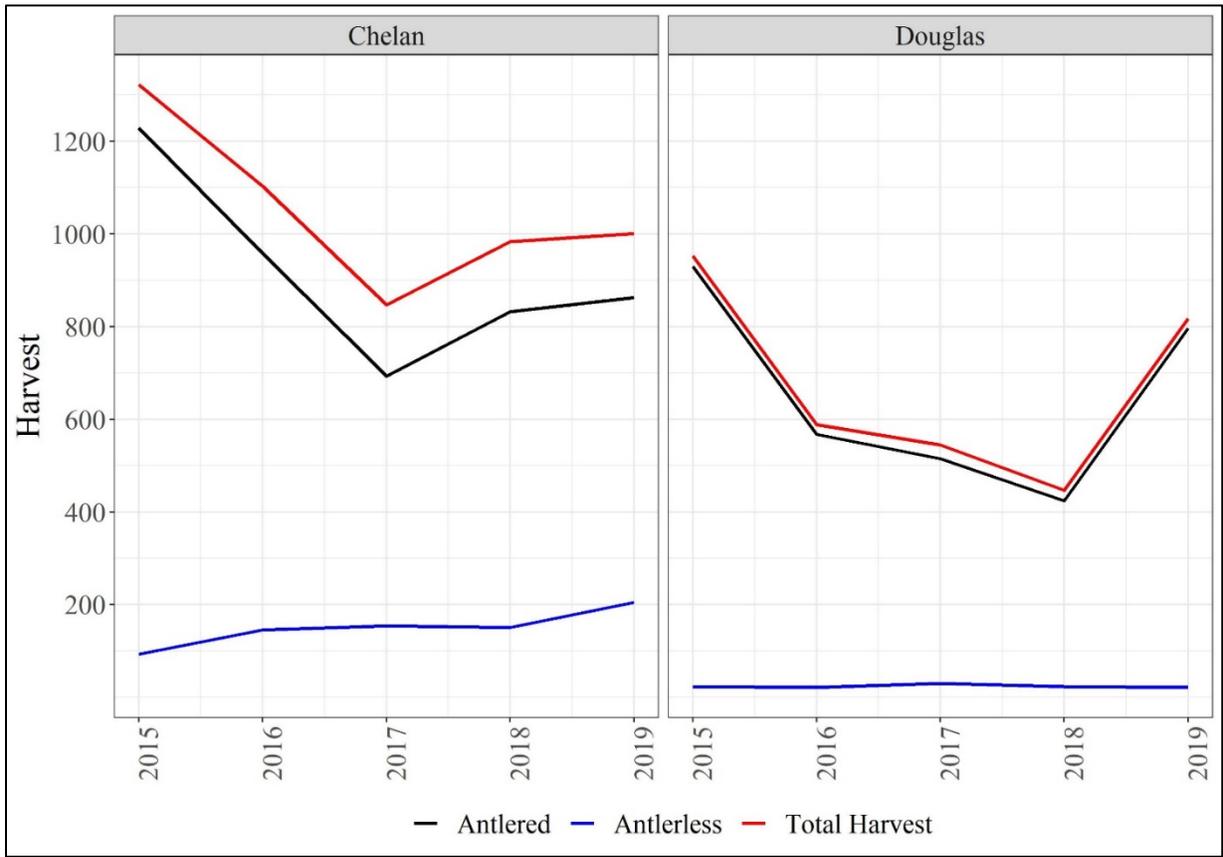


Figure District 7 general season deer hunter numbers from 2015 to 2019.



District 7 general season deer hunter success rates from 2015 to 2019.



District 7 general season deer harvest from 2015 to 2019.

The nature of general season hunts in Chelan County remains unchanged, with fall weather and deer movements ultimately determining harvest success. The 11-day season moves hunting opportunity later into the month, and over the past few years, this change in season dates has proven to benefit hunters as deer are more likely to have migrated out of summer range as the fall progresses. The 2020 modern deer season is five days later than 2019, which may help success this year, particularly if we get early cold weather.

The Chelan County mule deer herd is migratory, spending winters on the breaks along the Columbia River, but dispersing into the large expanse of the Cascades during summer. These movements are characteristic of a strategy used by mule deer to maximize forage quality during summer and minimize energy expenditure during winter. Some Chelan mule deer travel as far as 40 to 50 miles while transitioning between summer and winter range.

In 2019, WDFW received funding from the U.S. Department of the Interior, in association with Secretarial Order 3362 - Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors, to begin a four-year movement and migration study of mule deer in the East Slope Cascades Mule Deer Management Zone in northcentral Washington State, which includes Chelan County (see [WDFW 2016 Washington State Mule Deer Management Plan](#)). This management zone is home to Washington's largest migratory mule deer population, estimated at 47,000 animals.

The primary focus of this study is to model mule deer migration corridors. In January 2020, WDFW captured and collared 40 mule deer does within District 7. The information gleaned from tracking the movements of these deer will aid WDFW in its ongoing management of this prized deer herd.

As early as mid-September, deer start responding to changes in vegetation by moving downward in elevation and occupying north-facing slopes where conditions are cooler, and wetter and forage is of better quality. From mid-September through the onset of winter, deer respond to changes in the quality of the available forage and utilize those areas that best meet their needs. By mid-November, bucks are in condition and focused on breeding. However, before that time (during our October general season), they focus on food and security, not on breeding.

A typical hillside of mule deer habitat in the Cascades will transition through the seasons from bright green in the spring and summer to light green to yellow, to orange, to red, to brown, then to bare branches. While we see changes in color, mule deer are perceiving changes in forage quality. The summer forage that supports deer and allows them to produce young and grow antlers does not retain its high quality all year, so as it changes, so do the habitats that deer occupy.

While hunting on winter ranges may sound appealing, as hunters can see long distances, most deer will still be in areas of higher quality forage and greater security during the general seasons.

Most deer will be in thicker cover where the food is higher quality, and they have protection. These are usually the brushy north-facing slopes or at elevations much higher than typical open mule deer winter range.

Douglas County offers a different situation for deer hunters. Because private lands, hunters have less opportunity to pursue deer freely across habitats, as they must pay attention to ownership boundaries. The drier nature of shrubsteppe habitat dictates that deer use those areas where forage quality remains higher longer while balancing the need for security. Optimal hunting areas will include a mixture of sagebrush cover or steep broken rocky terrain and adjacent agricultural fields for forage (mostly winter wheat and canola fields). Large expanses of sagebrush, while not providing the best forage, can give deer the security they need as well. In the broken coulee county, the topography becomes security and riparian vegetation provides food resources. Deer in these areas often become experts at living in small, secure habitat pockets where they meet their needs and avoid hunters. While most of the county is private, over 95,500 acres are enrolled in WDFW's Feel Free to Hunt and Hunt by Written Permission hunter access programs. Start scouting now for deer herds on private lands and reach out to landowners before the rush of other hunters descend on them days before the season starts. Many farmers are partial to allowing youth hunters.

High buck hunts

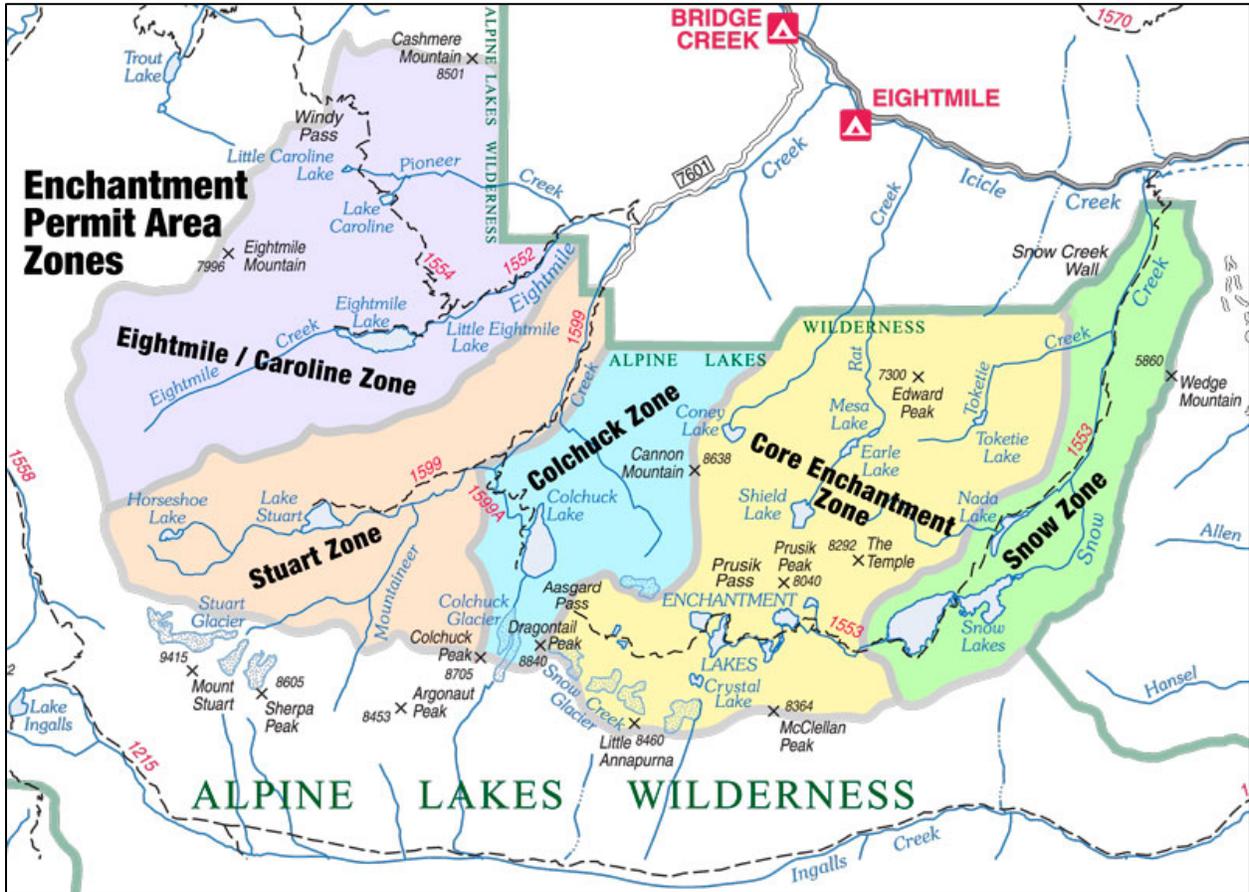
High buck hunts in the Cascade Range are one of the most popular opportunities provided in the district. Each year, hunters don backpacks and ride pack strings into the heart of wilderness areas to pursue mule deer bucks and black bears. Within District 7, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, Glacier Peak Wilderness, and the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area define open high buck hunt units. The administrative boundaries of these wildernesses and the recreation area are the hunt boundaries. One misconception that continues to persist surrounds the Sawtooth Wilderness along the north shore of Lake Chelan. **The Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness is closed to high buck hunt** opportunity Sept. 15-25 but opens for early archery where it overlaps GMU 243.

It is common to have active fires in wilderness areas during our September hunts. We encourage hunters to keep track of fire conditions and contact local USFS offices for updates.

High-quality topographic maps and publicly available aerial imagery can help hone in on spots to target for scouting. Because of the complex topography of Chelan County and the vast acreage of dissected terrain and escape cover available to deer during the high hunt, bucks can be difficult to encounter during these seasons. Hunters should scout early, when bucks are still in velvet and protecting their antlers, making them more likely to occupy less densely vegetated habitat and increasing their visibility. During the high hunt deer are still on their abundant summer range, and occur at low densities, making this hunt even more challenging. Hunters need to be aware of permit requirements in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and the Enchantment Permit Area Zones.

Any overnight trips into any of the five zones within the Enchantments require a permit from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Permits are distributed through a lottery drawing system and are highly sought after. Hunters who have hunted these zones in the past need to be aware that permitting dates have changed. Without a permit, they may not have access to previously hunted areas.

For more information on regulations surrounding the use of the Enchantment Permit Area Zones, visit the [Okanogan-Wenatchee web page](#) or contact the forest directly.



A map of the Enchantment permit area zones within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

BLACK BEAR



Two major changes to black bear hunting regulations went into effect in the 2019 season and will continue in 2020. Hunters are now able to take two bears on the east side of the Cascades, and the statewide season opening date is now Aug. 1. Currently, bear populations in the district are monitored based on harvest statistics and tooth data. However, recently developed passive monitoring methods are being employed across the state to better understand Washington's bear populations. The project will help develop better estimates of bear densities and provide information on the age class and sex structure of the population.

Research conducted in Chelan County indicates that fall forage availability influences reproduction and survivorship of cubs and yearlings. Black bears in Chelan County typically have a large amount of forage available to them and are most predictably found in areas suitable for berry crops, like huckleberries. GMU 245 has consistently produced most of the bears harvested from this district. It is a vast unit with multiple glacial valleys that provide excellent forage and cover value for wildlife.

Following the establishment of the new black bear hunting regulations, 2019 saw an increase in black bear harvest within the East Cascades Bear Management Unit (BMU 6). Hunters harvested 327 bears in 2019 up from 271 in 2018. From 2008 to 2018, the 10-year average harvest for BMU 6 was 227 bears.

The East Cascades BMU is comprised of 23 GMUs along the Central Cascades, and the Wenatchee District is normally responsible for a substantial amount of the unit's harvest. In 2019, Chelan County represented almost 40% of BMU 6's bear harvest. Total District 7 bear harvest for 2019 was 138 bears. Hunters harvested an additional 49 bears from GMUs 242 and 243, which are in the Okanogan Unit (BMU 5). While success relative to effort fluctuates from year to year, participation has been relatively stable, with approximately 4,000-4,600 hunters participating in the black bear season throughout BMU 6 each year.

Hunters can find bears sparsely distributed and in small numbers in Douglas County, particularly in brushy riparian draws along the Columbia River and other drainages. Douglas County is part of the Columbia Basin Bear Management Unit (BMU 9), and bear harvest here makes up a far smaller portion of District 7's total. In 2019, seven bears were harvested from Douglas County out of GMUs 254 and 266.

Most bears harvested in the district are taken during open deer and elk seasons. Dedicated bear hunters will often hunt early in the season when bears are foraging on predictable annual berry crops, and they can find them more easily. The incidental harvest that occurs during open deer and elk seasons is much more dependent on bear behavior and how widely they will have to travel for food.

There is a statewide mandatory requirement to submit a premolar tooth from all harvested black bears by Dec. 1. Please contact the district office if you need assistance with submitting a tooth. For more information, see the [2019 black bear harvest statistics](#).

COUGAR

Like black bears, the population monitoring for cougar management comes primarily from harvest data.. The opportunity to harvest a cougar in the Wenatchee District expanded under the new season structure in 2012 and remains in place for 2020. In District 7 cougar hunt areas are split into four different Population Management Units (PMU) in Chelan County and a Columbia Basin Population Management Unit, which includes Douglas County. Within each of these hunt areas, harvest guidelines are established based on ungulate habitat and cougar population biology. The 2012 harvest guidelines increased the number of cougars that can be harvested in the county and across the state while maintaining the integrity of the population.

A two-part season is in place, allowing harvest during big game seasons under an early cougar season which opens Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, and a later season, which starts Jan. 1, for a more focused pursuit of cougar when conditions make hunting easier. After Jan. 1, once the harvest guideline for a PMU is reached, a decision is made about whether to leave that hunting area open. In a typical year, one or more PMUs in Chelan County will remain open until the season closes on April 30. While many cougars are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons in Chelan County, dedicated cougar hunters will wait until snow accumulation allows for

tracking later in the winter. Cougars are primarily a predator of deer and so are most active during the periods when deer are most active, which is typically dawn and dusk.

Douglas County also offers good cougar hunting opportunities. Most hunters will focus on the breaks of the Columbia River, Moses Coulee, and Rufus Woods Reservoir. This rough country allows cougars access to deer herds while providing them stalking cover. Successful hunters often wait for snow and track cats on foot. Foster Creek (260), Badger (266), Moses Coulee (269), and Withrow (262) have consistent cougar harvest. There are no notable changes in cougar hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2020.

Table 2. Cougar Harvest in cougar hunt areas in District 7.

Hunt Area	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
GMUs 242, 243	2	3	2	7	5
GMUs 244, 246, 247	3	5	7	5	5
GMUs 245, 250	1	5	2	2	4
GMUs 249, 251	1	6	1	5	0
Douglas County*	7	7	4	5	**

*GMUs in Douglas County are included in a larger hunt area, which has no harvest guideline.

** 2019 harvest for GMUs in Douglas County not available at time of writing

BIGHORN SHEEP



Photo courtesy of Tana Thompson

Within Chelan County, WDFW manages three bighorn sheep herds: Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson. Each of these herds is the result of multiple translocation efforts, beginning in 1969.

Swakane:

The core range of this herd is within the Swakane Unit of the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area and the surrounding public lands adjacent to the Wildlife Area. Hunting pressure on this herd is low, with only two mature ram permits offered each year. This unit is famed for producing the world record California bighorn in 2010 as scored by Safari Club International. Over the past decade, this herd has increased from approximately 100 animals to a minimum count of 200 animals in 2019. Bands of sheep will be found along the cliffs and steep slopes along the breaks of the Columbia River. Successful permit winners can take advantage of the network of USFS roads to gain access to high points for glassing and scoping for groups of rams. Other opportunities for glassing this herd can be taken from the east side of the Columbia River at pullouts on Highway

97. In recent years, the Swakane herd has expanded its range, and sheep are regularly observed as far north as the Entiat River.

Chelan Butte:

This herd is central to Chelan Butte, between the Columbia River and the city of Chelan. The Chelan Butte herd typically produces large rams and provides some of the best access to all the sheep herds in Chelan County. A county road bisects the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area, providing access to state and federal lands open for hunting. Some of the best glassing is offered from the hand glide launch near the summit of Chelan Butte. For views of the cliffs along the Columbia River, try glassing by boat or from points along Highway 97, east of the Columbia River. Bighorns in this herd tend to stay on the river or east side of Chelan Butte and range north as far as Wells Dam. Hunters have also harvested rams from Deer Mountain, just north of Chelan. The minimum population estimate for the Chelan Butte herd was 150 animals in 2019.

Apart from mature ram hunting opportunities, WDFW offers both ewe and juvenile ram permit hunts for the Chelan Butte herd. In February 2019, WDFW deployed GPS telemetry collars on 10 ewes and two rams. Over time, data garnered from this study will provide insight into seasonal habitat use, causes of mortality, and movement patterns. **Hunters are requested to avoid harvesting a collared animal.** Both the Swakane and Chelan Butte herds tend to start rutting around mid-late October.

Manson:

The Manson herd occupies primarily USFS land on the north shore of Lake Chelan, concentrated between Antilon Creek north to Lone Fir Creek. The Manson herd occupies some of the most rugged and inaccessible terrains of all the Chelan County sheep herds. This herd is most readily accessible by boat on Lake Chelan. USFS maintains several public docks and campgrounds along the Lake Chelan shoreline. Be aware that a Federal Dock Permit is required to use any USFS dock between May 1-Oct. 31. **Note: The Safety Harbor dock and campground was closed in 2017 and will not be open in 2020.**

The Manson Unit hunt season occurs much later than the season for the Swakane and Chelan Butte herds and is timed to coincide with the rut when rams should be more concentrated at lower elevations along the lake. Most recent minimum counts estimate the herd at approximately 70-80 animals.

For all three of the Wenatchee District's sheep herds, overwinter survival for adult sheep remains high. Mortality of lambs for the year is characteristic of most sheep populations, where lambs suffer the highest rates of mortality during their first year of life, and the highest mortality of the year immediately after birth. With herds stable to increasing, permit numbers should increase in the future, tracking any increases in ram numbers.

Hunters selected under these drawings are encouraged to contact District 7 for additional information. All hunters harvesting a bighorn sheep ram in Washington State are required to have the horn sets measured and plugged by WDFW within 10 days. Hunters should call a WDFW Regional or District Office to schedule an appointment with a biologist.



Each harvested ram must be pinned with an aluminum pin with a unique ID number.

Table 3. Measurement records for harvested bighorn rams in District 7 (inches).

Sheep Herd	Number Sampled	Length Max	Base Max	Greatest Spread Max	Length Median	Base Median	Greatest Spread Median
Chelan Butte	32	39.39	15.52	23.40	34.77	14.10	20.92
Manson	15	37.44	15.21	22.62	30.50	14.35	19.11
Swakane	17	39.12	15.09	24.96	35.10	14.24	22.46

* measurements are represented here in inches but recorded in centimeters. WDFW does not measure rams for scoring purposes, and this data should be considered an index only.

**The median is reported to dampen influence of outliers.

MOUNTAIN GOATS



While mountain goats occur in many higher elevation areas in Chelan County, they are currently only hunted along Lake Chelan. Prior years' surveys for these two populations, one on the South Shore of Lake Chelan and one on the North Shore, recorded high enough herd numbers to sustain limited hunting.

Before 2019, the Chelan PUD conducted 12 boat-based surveys per year, but these were replaced with aerial surveys beginning in the summer of 2019. During the 2018-2019 boat surveys, there was an estimated minimum count of 70 mountain goats on both the north and south shores. Despite this relatively low estimated minimum count, kid:adult ratios had remained stable, hovering around 23 kids/100 adults each year. In general, during heavy snow years, goats concentrate in higher densities along the lake's edge to winter, providing a better opportunity to observe them.

Due to the available terrain, rugged topography and tree cover, mountain goats can be incredibly difficult to survey from a boat. The steepness and inaccessibility of the terrain also preclude any type of ground-based survey. For these reasons, WDFW initiated aerial mountain goat population surveys in the summer of 2019 and the winter of 2019-2020, both on the South Shore of Lake Chelan. Although survey coverage was extensive, only approximately 20 goats were observed during each effort. Goat permit levels remain the same in District 7 in 2020, and

WDFW is working to develop an effective solution for surveying the Lake Chelan herds. However, the unavailability of recent data indicating stable or increasing goat populations on either side of Lake Chelan may influence hunt opportunities in these goat units in the future.

Three mountain goat tags were issued for the Wenatchee District under limited entry drawings this year. In 2019, all three mountain goat permit holders were able to fill their tags. Since 2001, 28 drawing permits have been issued for the Chelan North permit hunt, and 20 goats have been harvested, five of which were nannies. A single permit has been offered each year for the Chelan South permit hunt since 2012, with the first goat being harvested in 2013. Five goats have been harvested from Chelan South since the establishment of the permit hunt, all of which have been billies. Every effort is made to provide hunters with information that will ensure harvest of male goats rather than female goats. A significant amount of research on mountain goats in the United States and Canada indicates that mountain goat populations are particularly vulnerable to declines caused by harvest of female goats. There are no notable changes in mountain goat hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2020.

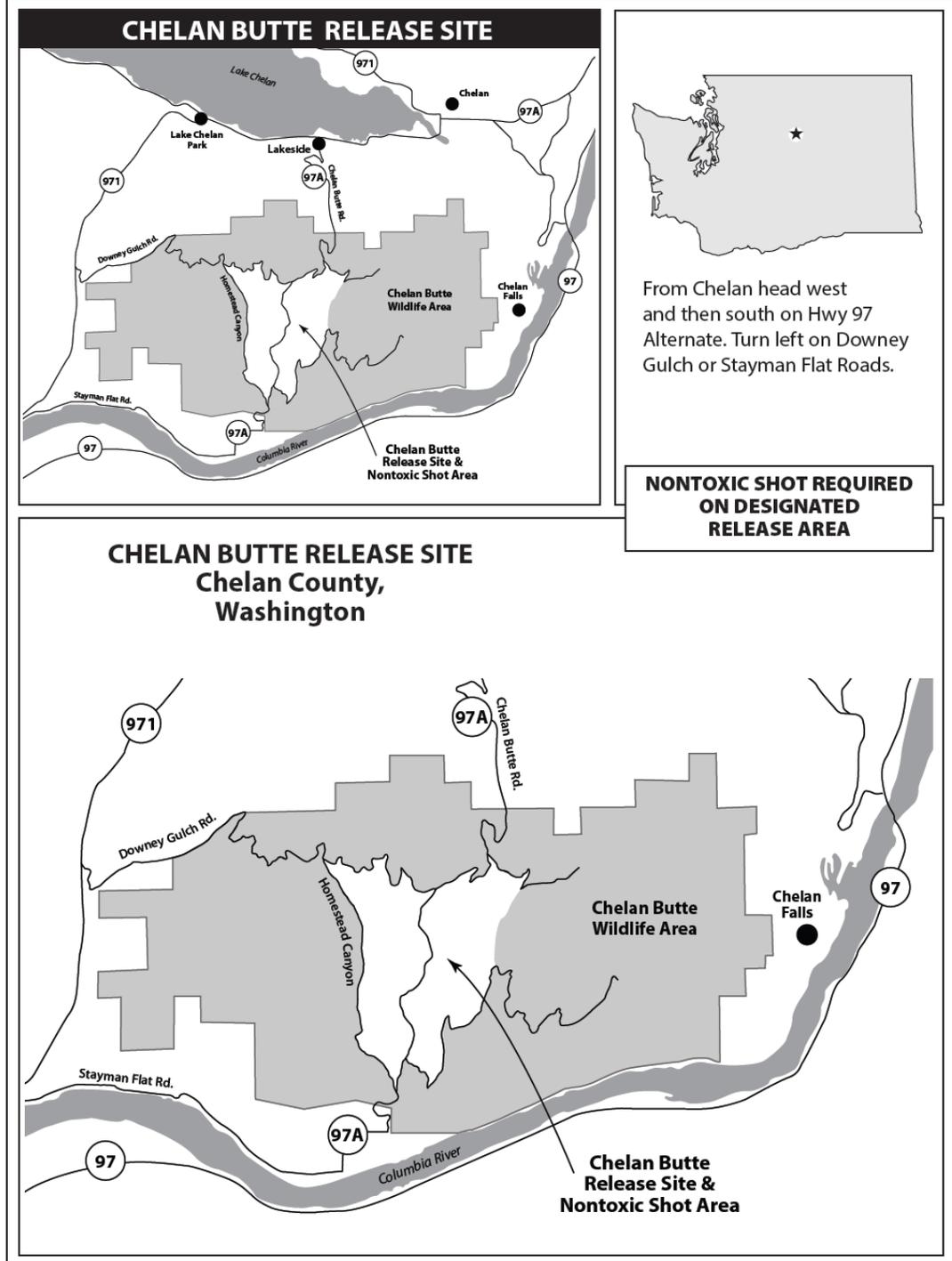
Hunters selected under these drawings are encouraged to contact District 7 for additional information. Hunters who kill a mountain goat in Washington must present the head with horns attached to a WDFW office within 10 days of harvest. Hunters must call ahead to make an appointment with a biologist for inspection of their goat.

PHEASANT

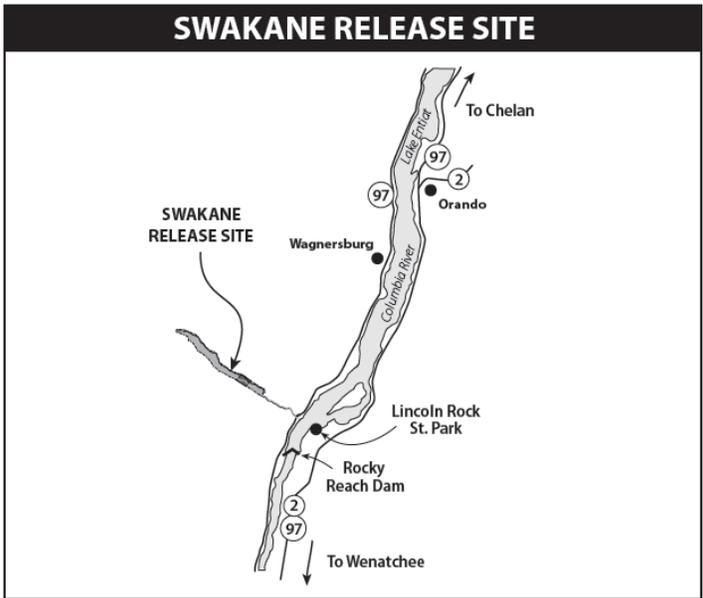
The Wenatchee District does not have the reputation as a destination pheasant hunting area in the state, but local hunters have harvested an annual average of approximately 1,000 pheasants over five years, from 2014 to 2018. Douglas and Chelan counties produce roughly similar pheasant harvests each year. Douglas County offers a couple of locations where wild populations of pheasants sustain themselves, both on public and private land. Hunters should focus on areas with a mixture of native shrubsteppe habitat, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasslands, and wet meadows/wetlands. Your first clue will be weedy and tall vegetation on the roadsides, which provides good cover. Good pheasant hunting can be found in Foster Creek (GMU 260), St. Andrews (GMU 254), and Big Bend (GMU 248).

WDFW has released cock pheasants at both the Swakane and Chelan Butte wildlife units and will continue to do so in 2020. Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites at these units can visit the WDFW hunting website for more information: [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#).

REGION 2



REGION 2



To reach the **Swakane Wildlife Area** and release site, travel north from Wenatchee on Alt. Hwy 97. It follows the Columbia River on the west side toward the town of Chelan. To find the release site, head west up the Swakane Creek Road.

**NONTOXIC SHOT REQUIRED
ON DESIGNATED
RELEASE AREA**

**SWAKANE RELEASE SITE
Chelan County, Washington**



QUAIL

District 7 offers some of the best quail hunting in the state, with a five-year average of 11,000 quail harvested in Chelan and Douglas Counties.

Quail production appears good this year, and harvest should be similar to recent years. Quail receive considerable anthropogenic supplementation and benefit from a variety of agricultural land uses that create the edge habitat on which quail often rely, such as where the edge of an irrigated field meets shrubsteppe. In Chelan County especially, quail will tend to be found in and near orchards and other irrigated crops. Swakane Canyon also provides great quail opportunities in Chelan County, and hunters can find quail in most riparian drainages in Douglas County.

Public lands can be tough places to find larger coveys well into the season. To improve success, hunters should seek out those areas without easy access and spend some time seeking permission from private landowners.

For more information, see [Quail Hunting](#).

GRAY PARTRIDGE

Gray partridges or “Huns” as they are commonly called, are more common in Douglas County and associated with grasslands or agricultural areas, that are interspersed with patches of sagebrush. Brushy “hedgerows” adjacent to agricultural fields can often harbor Huns in the winter. They occur at low density, with coveys dispersed across larger areas. Look to fields enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program with lots of grass cover extending into draws, these are often a good place to find coveys.

Covering a wide range of cover types is the best way to locate coveys. While most gray partridges are taken while hunting other species, with a little focus and dedication, you can be successful hunting for Huns. Snow depths were below average in Douglas County this past winter and the Columbia Basin has been in drought conditions this year.

For more information, see [Hunting Gray \(Hungarian\) Partridge](#).

CHUKAR

More chukar are harvested in District 7 than any other district in the state, with a five-year average of roughly 3700 chukar harvested from 2014-2018. While WDFW conducts no official monitoring of chukar populations, there is every indication that chukars are doing well in north central Washington, and hunter participation has increased in recent years.

Opportunities for chukar hunting are numerous within the district due to a large amount of habitat that falls under public ownership. The breaks of the Columbia River provide the majority

of the chukar habitat, along with areas adjacent to Banks Lake and Moses Coulee. On the Chelan County side of the Columbia River, BLM, USFS, DNR, and WDFW all control lands that provide chukar hunting opportunities. Chukar also occur in abundance on the north shore of Lake Chelan in the rocky exposed grassland habitats below the Grade Creek Road. Along the Douglas County breaks, almost all the appropriate chukar habitat falls under private ownership, and landowner permission is required.

Chukar hunting falls into two distinct seasons: without snow and with snow. While trying to negotiate chukar habitat with snow and ice on the ground can be hazardous, there is no doubt that birds become concentrated following the accumulation of snow. Chukar populations throughout Chelan and Douglas Counties will likely remain stable in 2020.

For more information, see [Hunting Chukar Partridge](#).

FOREST GROUSE

Three species of forest grouse occupy the Wenatchee District: blue grouse (sooty and dusky grouse), spruce grouse, and ruffed grouse. Most grouse harvested in District 7 are taken in Chelan County, with fewer dispersed opportunities for ruffed grouse and blue grouse in Douglas County. Look for conifer pockets and deciduous riparian areas for the best hunting opportunities. GMUs 248 and 266 are your best options here. Most of the harvest occurs over the opening weekend and then again with the general mule deer season. Hunters are asked to deposit one wing and the tail from each harvested grouse in wing barrels, which will be dispersed across Chelan County.

We use data from these samples to build estimated population trend datasets for each species to evaluate harvest changes over time. For directions and diagrams to assist hunters in retrieving these samples, as well as a list of wing and tail collection barrel locations, see [Forest Grouse Wing and Tail Collection](#).

Within Chelan County, forest grouse occupy habitat dominated by coniferous and riparian forests. Hunters can find ruffed grouse in healthy riparian forests and aspen stands at the margin of timbered habitat, and blue grouse will use timbered stringers that extend down as far as the shrubsteppe. Spruce grouse are restricted to higher elevation conifer forests, usually above the distribution of ponderosa pine. GMUs 243, 244, 245, 246 & 251 offers some of the best grouse hunting opportunities in Chelan County.

Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by searching out areas where fewer hunters concentrate. Popular road systems can provide early season hunting. However, due to the numbers of hunters and the vulnerability of hatch-year birds, they often dry up quickly. Chelan County has a relatively limited road system within grouse habitat, and dedicated hunters

know where they are, so hunters can increase the productive length of their season by hunting areas on foot away from roads and the bulk of the other hunters.

For more information, see [Hunting Forest Grouse](#).

DOVE

Hunting success will be like the past several seasons within the district. In general, mourning doves are stable to increasing based on compiled breeding bird surveys. Although 2019 data are not available yet, hunter success rates were increasing over the past few seasons prior. District 7's five-year average from 2014-2018 was approximately 2,300 doves harvested.

Hunters should secure hunting opportunities by contacting growers and getting permission. Look to areas near wetlands, brushy upland streams, agricultural fields, and orchards where birds find both roosting cover and food later in the season. The amount and distribution of CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) fields has increased in Douglas County over the past few years, with new seed mixes providing more diversity in forage within stands. Scouting for these habitats can be a productive way to find new unexploited hunting areas. It may take some extra work and require ranging a little farther from home this fall to find birds.

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. Most hunters will be familiar with the difference between these two species, but the Eurasian Collared dove is a stocky bird with a distinct black collar on the dorsal side of the neck. See page 29 of the Upland Game Bird Regulations for a photo comparison of the two species.

TURKEY



Merriam's turkeys in Chelan County are the result of the release of over 400 birds between 2000-2002. Turkeys are not native to Washington, but their popularity with hunters make them a prized game species. Turkey densities in the district are relatively concentrated, but populations appear to be increasing in the northern portions of Douglas County and parts of Chelan County. A low level of harvest occurs on public lands, with local hunters being the most successful, as densities are low, and finding seasonal habitat is important.

In Chelan County, the number of turkeys the landscape can support is determined primarily on the amount and availability of wintering habitat under typical snow depths. When winter snow depths reach 20 inches or more, wild turkeys have a difficult time making it through the winter. In areas where turkey can utilize ranches, barnyards, and farms of winter forage, they can show significant survival over winter. In Chelan County, GMUs 245, 250, and 251 produce the greatest turkey harvest.

Hunters should have a more productive season in several of the more consistent turkey producing areas, such as the Colockum Wildlife Area. The Stemilt Basin outside of Wenatchee and canyons of the Wenatchee River between Cashmere and Leavenworth offer good opportunities to find turkeys. Turkeys frequently occur in these areas near the edge of private and public lands. Some recent forest thinning projects on public lands have promise for supporting turkeys in the spring. Areas to focus for turkeys on recently logged USFS lands include Derby Canyon, Yaksum Canyon, Mission Creek, Eagle Creek, and any other canyons that lead off Chumstick Highway

between Leavenworth and Plain. Hunters can also find turkeys west through Plain, but they are often on private land. In Douglas County, GMUs 266 and 248 have been producing an increasing number of turkeys. Remember to scout early, and get permission to hunt private lands.

WATERFOWL



Photo credit: Adam Neff

Across the country, annual breeding population surveys of waterfowl were not conducted in 2020 due to COVID-19 health and safety restrictions. Estimates from 2019 indicate that populations are stable and some species, such as mallards and gadwalls, are increasing. Hunters should continue to have good opportunities in traditional areas and where permission to access ponds and lakes can be secured. Hunting along the Columbia River is usually consistent but dictated by local weather patterns. Local production can help early-season success. Later in the season most of the birds are migrants from the north.

Most waterfowl harvest in Chelan County is focused along the Columbia River. However, it is important to note that due to county ordinances and the expansion of Wenatchee City Limits, a **no-shooting zone exists from the Odabashian Bridge to the George Sellar Bridge**, which connects Wenatchee and East Wenatchee.

The Columbia River is also the primary site for waterfowl hunting in Douglas County. A popular and productive place for waterfowl hunting is the Bridgeport Bar Unit, where ducks form large rafts on the Brewster pool. However, northern Douglas County also has a concentration of small lands and ponds that hold waterfowl. As in most years, the success of the season depends on the timing of migration through the area.

Local production of Canada goose has increased in recent years. Although productivity surveys were not performed in 2020 due to COVID-19 health and safety restrictions, anecdotal accounts suggest that resident Canada geese may have had a better than average nesting season. The increase in goose hatch observed may be due to decreased public use of parks and campgrounds in the spring and summer. Regular season hunting harvest has been declining, with numbers since 2002 normally under 2,000 geese harvested.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see [Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting](#).

Table 3. Average upland bird and small game harvest and hunter participation in District 7 (Chelan and Douglas Counties) over a five-year period, 2014 through 2018.

Species	Harvest	Hunters
Quail	11,368	1,297
Chukar	3,786	891
Dove	2,322	220
Forest Grouse	2,524	1,436
Pheasant	1,027	640
Gray Partridge	733	293
Duck	11,619	872
Canada Goose	1,761	393
September Canada Goose	153	78
Cottontail Rabbit	169	91
Snowshoe Hare	17	28
Snipe	53	7

PRIVATE LANDS HUNTER ACCESS

WDFW maintains hunter access agreements with hundreds of willing landowners across the state, which allows for public hunting to occur on private lands. Hunter Access Program lands in District 7 are entirely in Douglas County, where most rural private lands occur. WDFW lands personnel work closely with agricultural producers to provide access for hunting. As a result, there are thousands of acres in Douglas County to hunt on throughout the season. Access lands are marked with signs displaying contact information, and you can find all private land hunter access areas on this page: https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_land/

In Chelan County, private land hunting opportunities often occur with deer or elk concentration areas, but no formal hunting access agreements exist. As such, hunters in Chelan County must be proactive in gaining permission from landowners. Hunters wishing to apply for tags in the Lake Chelan North Deer Area or the Malaga Elk Area are encouraged to contact the Wenatchee District Office prior to applying.

Table 4. Acres of private lands enrolled in WDFW’s Hunting Access Program in District 7 for 2020.

Hunting Access Type	Acres in Douglas County
Feel Free to Hunt	9,694
Hunt by Reservation	2,255
Hunt by Written Permission	70,202
Total	82,151

ADDITIONAL ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

As digital technology has rapidly advanced, today’s hunters have a myriad of apps and online resources available to them to help plan their hunting trip. While these tools are excellent for focusing your efforts, navigating, and coordinating logistics, but they can’t replace scouting in the field. Below we present a select list of helpful sites to help you plan your hunting trip, which is by no means exhaustive.

USGS Topo maps: downloadable topo maps for the United States

<https://www.usgs.gov/core-science-systems/ngp/tnm-delivery/topographic-maps>

GoogleEarth: widely known free application for exploring aerial and 3D imagery. Useful for importing and exporting locations.

<https://www.google.com/earth/>

AgWeather Net: Washington State University maintained an array of weather stations from across Washington. View real-time and historic weather data. Also available as a free app.

<https://weather.wsu.edu/>

Interactive Snow Depth Map: This map compiles NOAA snow-fall data for the US

http://adamschneider.net/hiking/snow_depth.html

SNOTEL: Clickable map of Washington SNOTEL sites, that allows you to make customizable tables looking at historic and forecast data.

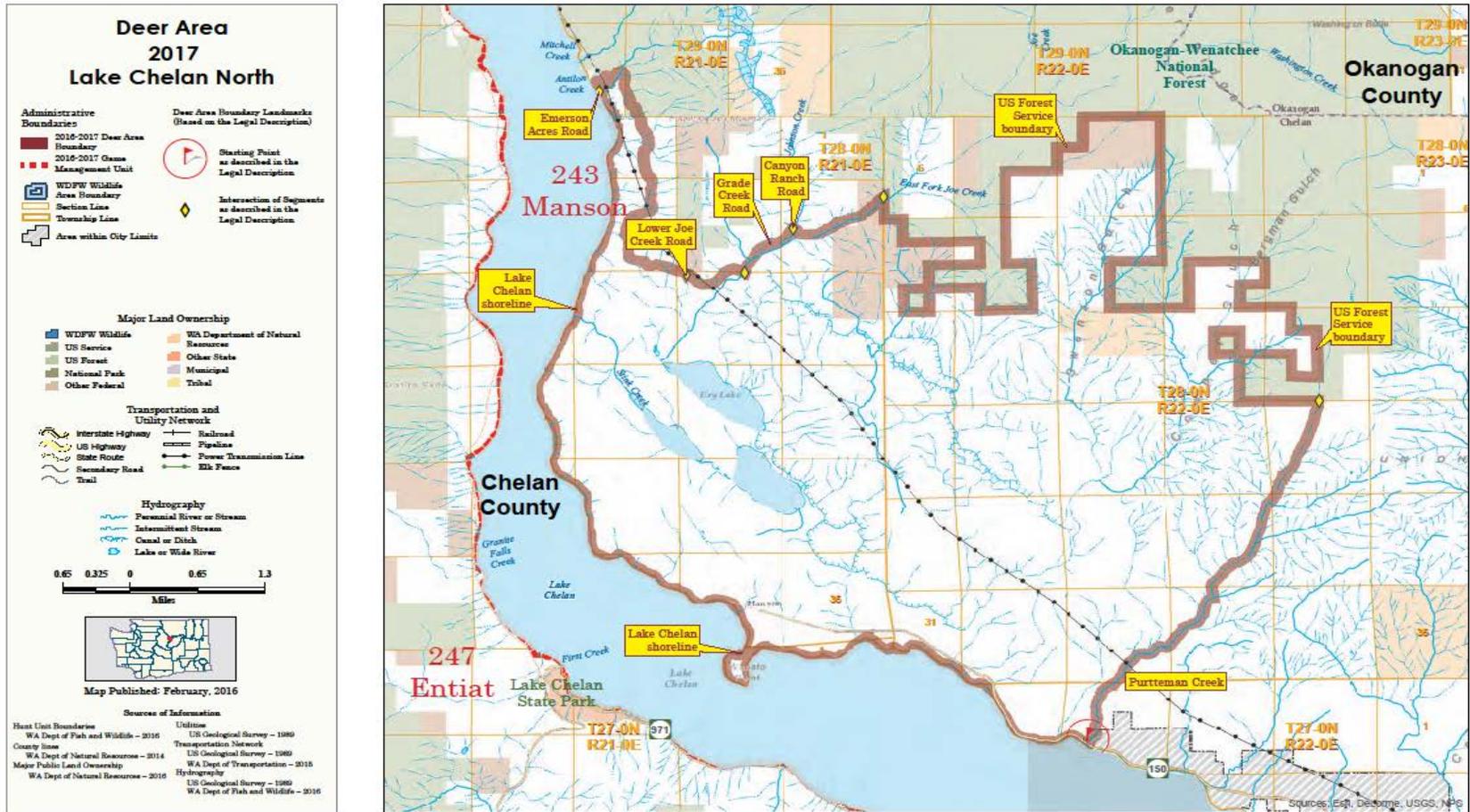
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/or/snow/products/?cid=nrcs142p2_046350

County landownership maps: Most counties in Washington publish web maps with landowner data by parcel. These maps can be used to ensure you're hunting on public lands and to be aware of where private land permissions may be needed.

Chelan County Assessor: <https://www.co.chelan.wa.us/assessor/pages/gis-mapping>

Douglas County Mapsifter: <https://douglaswa-mapsifter.publicaccessnow.com/disclaimer.aspx>

FIGURES



1:57,670

Figure 1. Map of the WDFW Deer Area 2017, Lake Chelan North, Chelan County.

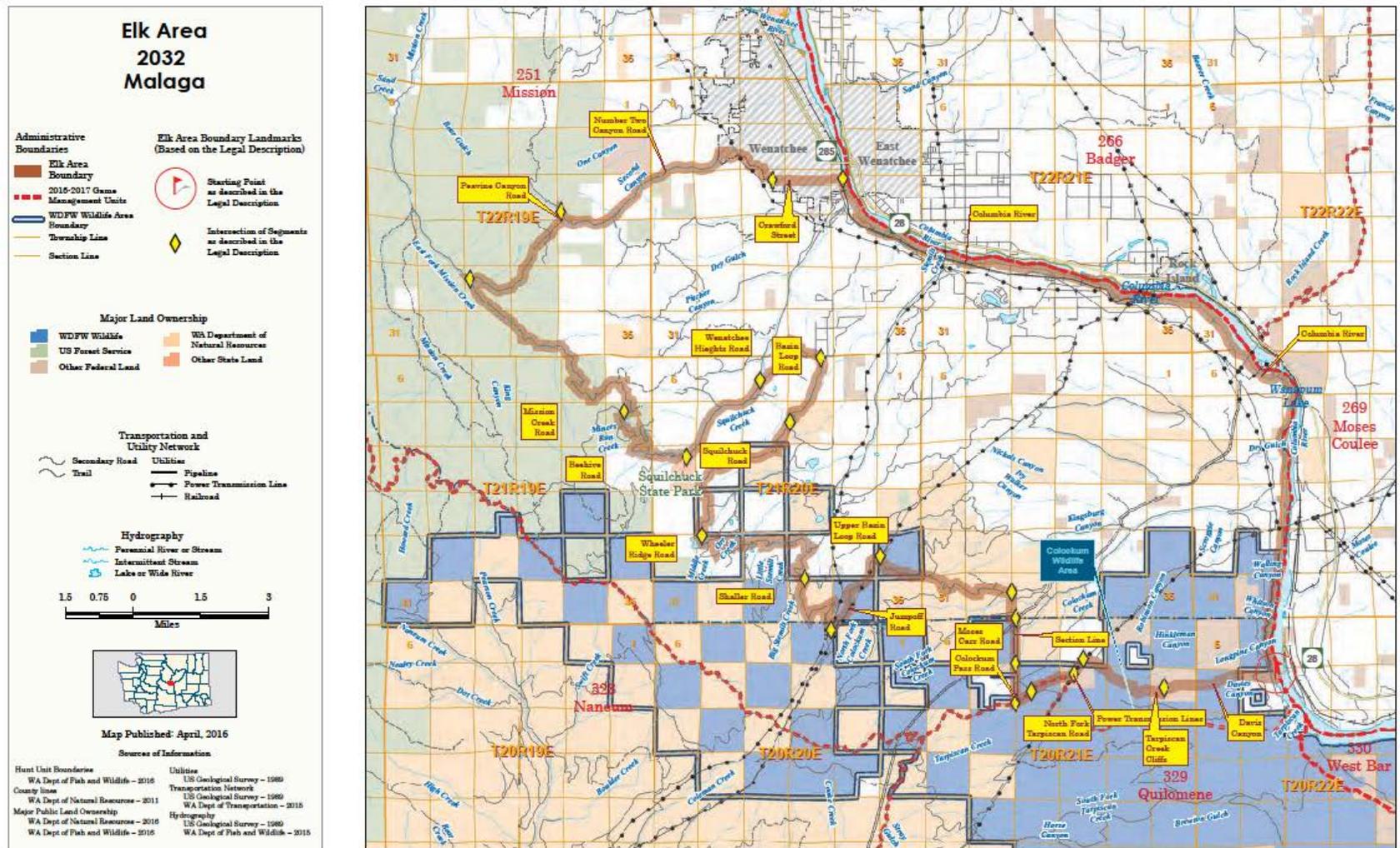


Figure 2. Map of the WDFW Elk Area 2032, Malaga, Chelan County.

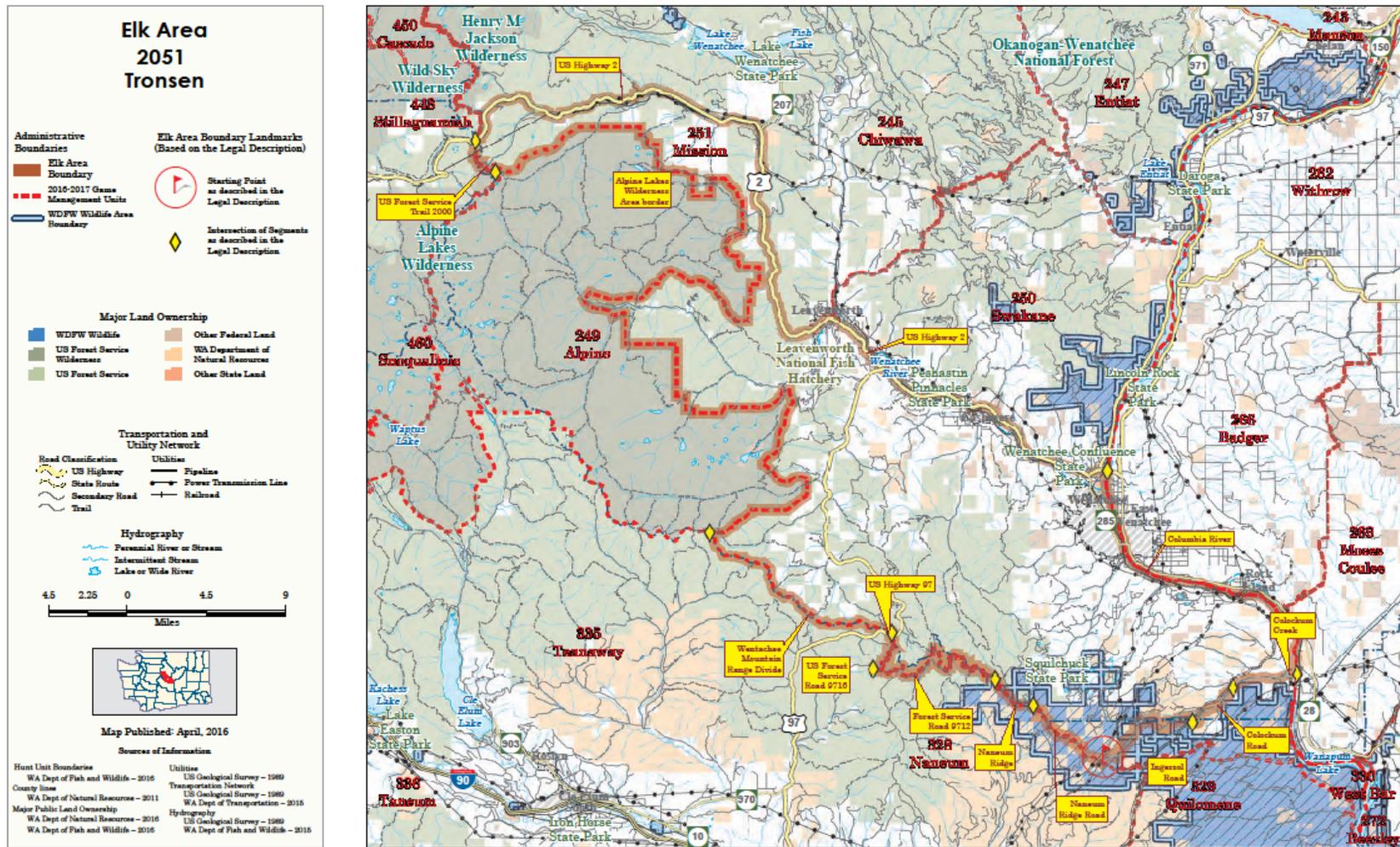


Figure 3. Map of the WDFW Elk Area 2051, Tronsen, Chelan County.