

# 2021

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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



## **DISTRICT 1 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties

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## DISTRICT 1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 1 is in the northeastern corner of Washington, and includes Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Ferry counties (Figure 1). District 1 is comprised of seven game management units (GMUs): 101 (Sherman), 105 (Kelly Hill), 108 (Douglas), 111 (Aladdin), 113 (Selkirk), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry) (Figure 2). The topography is dominated by four prominent mountain ranges that run north and south: the Selkirk, Calispell, Huckleberry, and Kettle mountain ranges. There are broad valleys between these ranges drained by the Pend Oreille, Colville, Columbia, and Kettle rivers, all within the upper Columbia River watershed.

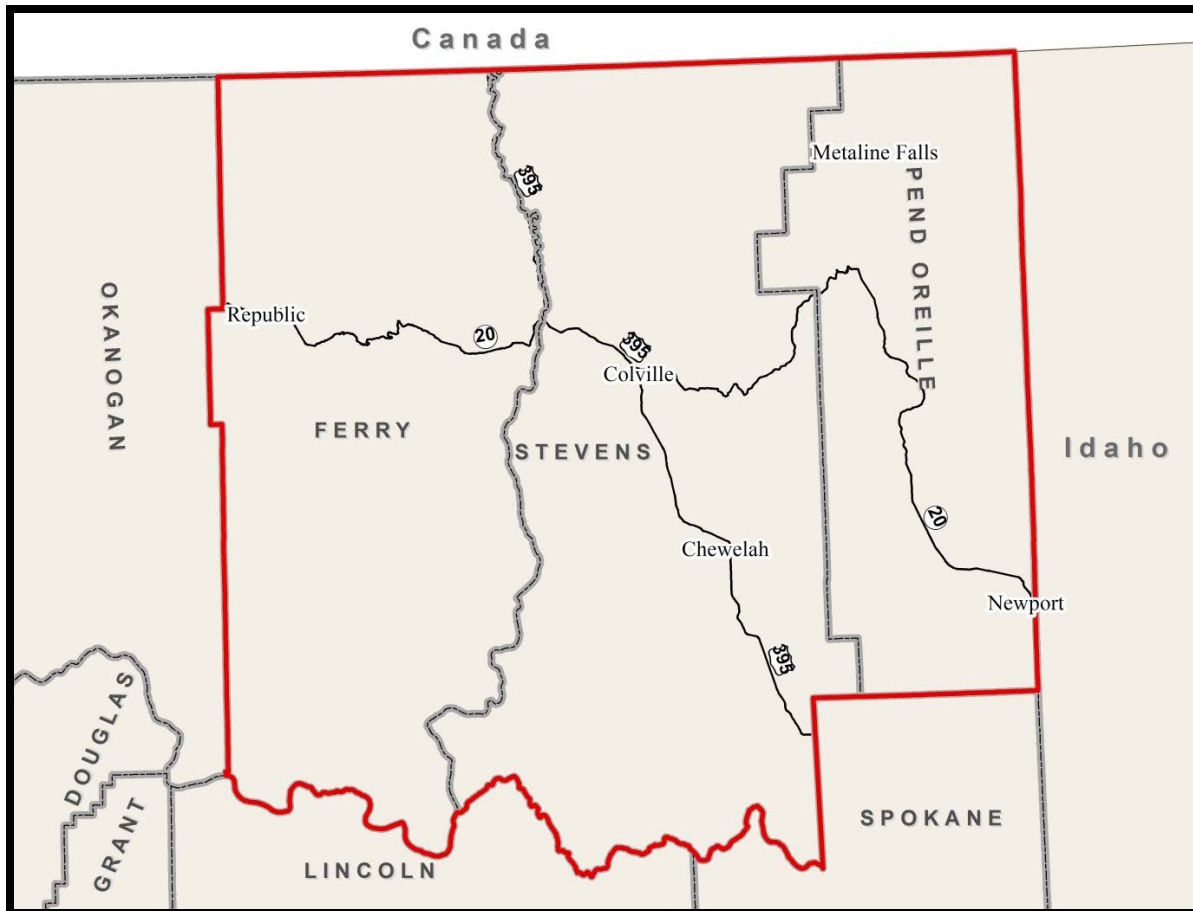


Figure 1. District 1 in northeastern Washington includes Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Ferry counties.

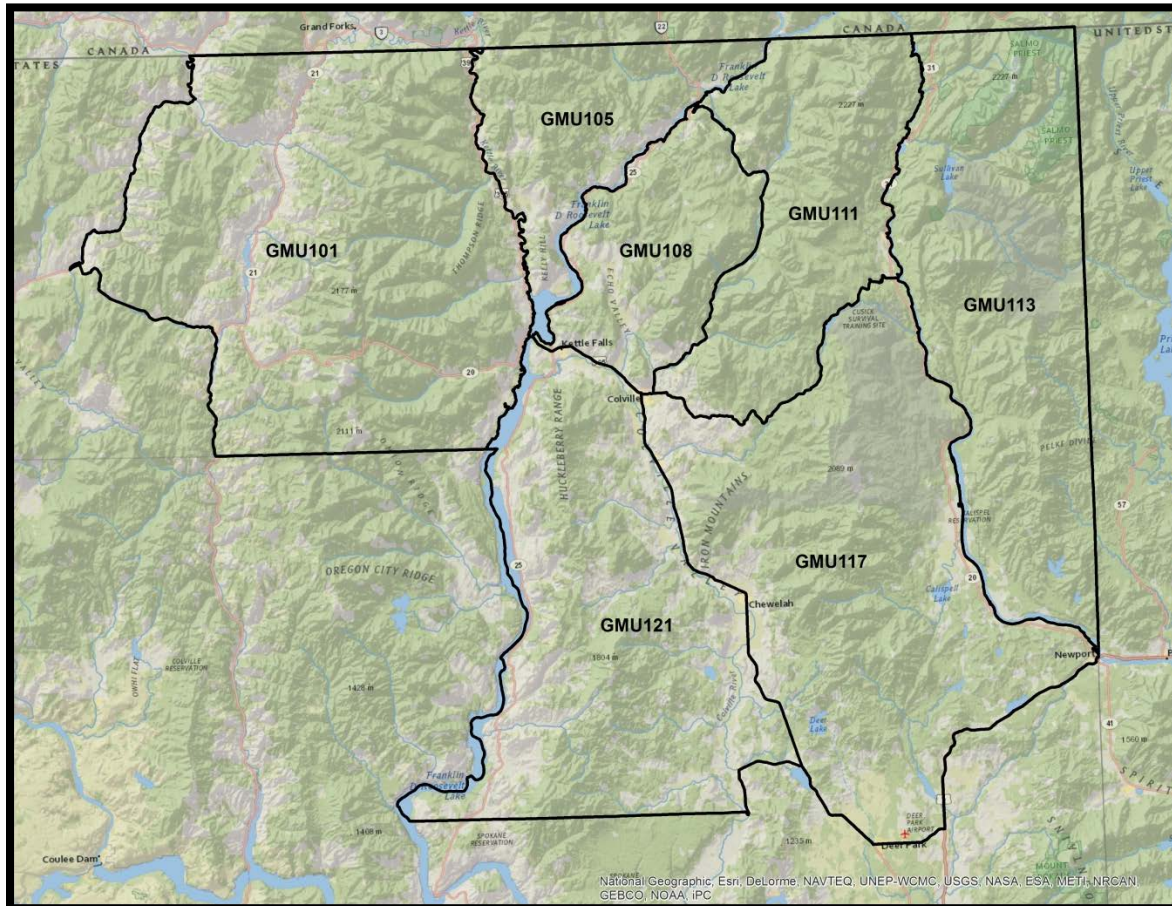


Figure 2. Game Management Units (GMUs) within District 1.

Elevations vary from about 1,290 feet at the normal pool level of Lake Roosevelt (Reservoir) to 7,309 feet on Gypsy Peak in the north Selkirk Range. Coniferous forest is extensive within District 1, covering about two thirds, or 68 percent, of the district’s landscape. Agricultural land, range land, and water features cover most of the balance.

Over one third (37 percent) of the land mass in District 1 is public land. It is mostly national forest, but state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) lands are also present. Additional public lands include federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and a few other government agencies. Most of the public lands outside of Indian reservations are open to public hunting. There are large timber company lands open to public hunting, although not necessarily open to private motorized vehicles. Private lands are typically only open to hunting by first gaining written permission from the landowner or manager.

District 1 is well-known for its white-tailed deer, moose, and turkey hunting opportunities. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including mule deer, black bear, forest grouse, and cougar.

Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and days per kill for most game species in District 1 during the 2020 general hunting season, and how those estimates compare to the 2019 season and the 5-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends or permit statistics, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

Table 1. Harvest and days per kill for most game species found in District 1 during the 2019 and 2020 hunting seasons. Also included are the 5-year average and a comparison of 2019 estimates and 2020 estimates and the 5-year average.

Species	Harvest					Days/Kill				
	5-yr avg.	2019	2020	% change (5yr)	% change (2019)	5-yr avg.	2019	2020	% change (5yr)	% change (2019)
Elk	227	253	218	-4%	-14%	83	77	105	+27%	+36%
Deer (both species)	4880	4021	4394	-11%	+8%	24	23	22	-8%	-5%
Black Bear		246	322		+31%		93	75		-24%
Cougar		37					Not available			
Turkey	2964	3467	3020	+2%	-15%	20	20	18	-6%	-6%

\*Includes fall and spring turkey harvest within GMUs 101-121.



## ELK



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

All elk that occur in District 1 are Rocky Mountain elk. There are ten identified elk herds in Washington, and elk in District 1 are part of the Selkirk Elk Herd. The quality of elk hunting opportunities in District 1 varies from poor to fair depending on the GMU, but in general, **opportunities are marginal and harvest success is very low.** Elk are widely scattered in small groups throughout the densely forested region of northeastern Washington. As a consequence, elk in northeastern Washington are difficult to both survey and harvest. Population data are limited, but there is currently no clear indication that bull to cow ratios or opportunities for quality hunting are declining. The best elk hunting opportunities occur in GMUs associated with the Pend Oreille sub-herd area, which includes GMUs 113 (Selkirk), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 111 (Aladdin). Elk hunter numbers in the Colville District have increased over the last several years with hunter participation and harvest well dispersed across the Colville District through all three hunting methods. **However, hunting elk successfully within District 1 is no small challenge.**

The management objective for elk in the Colville District is being met with a sustained annual harvest of a viable and productive elk population with desirable population characteristics. The prime bull (6 point or more) percentage in the 2020 bull harvest (all weapon types) was 21 percent.

Currently, WDFW does not make formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor elk populations in District 1. Harvest levels have been relatively low for the northern Selkirk Herd compared with other regions of Washington. Consequently, devoting substantial resources to surveying bull to cow ratios has not been a high priority. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill, are used as surrogates to a

formal index or estimate. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and hopes to gain the resources necessary to begin monitoring populations using formal sampling designs in the future.

Increasing hunter harvest, documented expansion of elk distribution, and anecdotal information indicate that elk populations are stable and possibly increasing in northeastern Washington. For more detailed information related to the status of Washington's elk herds, hunters should read through the most recent version of the [Game Status and Trend Report](#) and/or the [Selkirk Elk Herd Plan](#).

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

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt?" This is not easy to answer because it often depends on access to private land, the hunting method, and the type of hunting experience desired. For example, not all GMUs are open to late archery hunters.

Many if not most hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature bull. Although large mature bulls do exist in District 1, they are not very abundant, and hunters are usually advised to apply for special permit opportunities within District 3 (Blue Mountains) if they are searching for the best opportunity to harvest a large mature bull elk on public land in Region 1.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would have high densities of elk, low hunter densities, high hunter success rates, and be mostly if not entirely comprised of public land that's open to hunting. Unfortunately, this scenario does not exist in any GMU that is open during the general elk modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 1. Instead, because of general season opportunities, the GMUs with the highest elk densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them not to hunt in a GMU where they see lots of elk. Other hunters prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of elk if that means there are also fewer hunters.

Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how District 1 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are the three-year averages for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of elk harvested and hunters per square mile. This approach was taken because comparing total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison, as GMUs vary in size.

Each GMU was ranked for elk harvested/mile<sup>2</sup> (bulls and cows), hunters/mile<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates for the general season only. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum (lower rank sums are better). The modern firearm comparisons are the most straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same in each GMU.

For archery seasons, consider that antlerless elk may be harvested in all GMUs in the early season, but only five GMUs are open for any bull during late archery seasons. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs.



Table 2. Rank sum analysis that provides a quick and general comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. Data presented are based on a three-year running average. As a generalization, the lower the rank sum, the better the overall elk hunting opportunity is within a GMU.

<b>MODERN FIREARM</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	3	0.00	6	117	0.11	1	3%	4	<b>11</b>
105	296	10	0.03	4	133	0.44	2	7%	2	<b>8</b>
108	289	7	0.02	5	167	0.55	3	4%	3	<b>11</b>
111	455	7	0.02	5	269	0.58	4	3%	4	<b>13</b>
113	736	15	0.02	3	620	0.85	7	2%	5	<b>15</b>
117	954	19	0.02	2	687	0.69	6	3%	4	<b>12</b>
121	796	48	0.06	1	545	0.61	5	9%	1	<b>7</b>
<b>ARCHERY</b>										
GMU*	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
<b>101</b>	1,103	5	0.00	4	84	0.06	1	6%	3	<b>8</b>
<b>105</b>	296	4	0.02	2	66	0.22	4	7%	2	<b>8</b>
<b>108</b>	289	4	0.01	3	60	0.20	2	7%	2	<b>7</b>
111	455	6	0.02	2	100	0.21	3	6%	3	<b>8</b>
113	736	10	0.01	3	294	0.39	7	3%	4	<b>14</b>
<b>117</b>	954	23	0.03	1	347	0.33	6	7%	2	<b>9</b>
<b>121</b>	796	19	0.02	2	219	0.25	5	9%	1	<b>8</b>

MUZZLELOADER										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	0	0.00	2	27	0.02	1	0%	6	9
105	296	2	0.01	1	34	0.10	2	6%	3	6
108	289	2	0.01	1	29	0.11	3	7%	2	6
111	455	3	0.01	1	65	0.15	4	5%	4	9
113	736	7	0.01	1	181	0.22	6	4%	5	12
117	954	12	0.01	1	181	0.17	5	7%	2	8
121	796	8	0.01	1	96	0.11	3	9%	1	5

\* GMUs bolded in the archery section are open during early and late archery seasons. All GMUs allow for antlerless harvest in the early archery season.

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Elk populations typically do not fluctuate dramatically from year to year, but periodic severe winters can trigger substantial die-offs. The 2020-21 winter was mild and no die-offs were detected. There was a slight decrease in harvest in 2020, but it's unclear at this point if that will continue to be the trend. Populations available for harvest are expected to be at least similar in size compared to the 2019 and 2020 seasons. The total hunter harvest of elk in District 1 is low compared to other WDFW districts, hovering around 200-300 animals per year since 2009.

## HOW TO FIND ELK

When hunting elk in District 1, hunters should research areas and spend plenty of time scouting before the season opener, because it is often difficult to predict elk location, especially after hunting pressure increases. Elk within District 1 are scattered in small groups throughout the district, but some drainages hold more elk than others. Many, if not most, hunters spend great amounts of their time focusing on forest clear-cuts, which makes a lot of sense because elk often forage in clear-cuts and are highly visible when they do. However, there are many elk (especially bulls) that do not frequent clear-cuts during daylight hours. Instead, they spend most of their time during the day in closed canopy forests, swamps, or young forest. Moreover, those highly visible elk often attract many hunters to open clear-cuts, and these areas can get crowded in a hurry.

From a landscape perspective, some generalities can be made that will help increase the odds of locating elk. When going to a new area, hunters will benefit by covering as much ground as possible and making note of areas where they see sign along roads and log "landings." Log landings from past timber harvest operations are an especially good place to look for sign because they are often not graveled, which makes it easier to see fresh tracks. This scouting approach will give hunters a good idea of what areas hold elk and where to focus their more intensive scouting efforts.

After those areas with abundant elk sign have been identified, hunters should focus in on higher elevation stands that provide cover and are adjacent to open hillsides and/or clear-cuts. During early seasons when it is warm, these areas often include creek bottoms, river bottoms, or any place that is near water. Once the season progresses and temperatures cool, typically by late October, elk are not as attracted to water and the challenge of finding them becomes more difficult. Hunting pressure also has an effect and will force elk to use areas that provide thicker cover or are less accessible to hunters because of topographical features.

Later in the season, it is a good idea to consult a topographic map and find “benches” located in steep terrain and thick cover. Elk often use these areas to bed down during the day. Any snow cover generally enhances the ability to find elk tracks. Hunting right after a fresh snow usually presents a particularly good advantage in tracking down an individual or group of elk. Lastly, provided that non-motorized access is allowed, hunters should not let a locked gate in an otherwise open area keep them from going in on foot, horseback, or bicycle to search for elk. More often than not, these areas hold elk that have not received as much hunting pressure, which can make them less skittish and easier to hunt. A popular approach to hunting these areas is to use mountain bikes or fat-tire bikes, which is not extremely difficult given the network of maintained gravel roads that frequently occur on timber company lands.

## DEER



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

In northeastern Washington, white-tailed deer are the most abundant deer species. Mule deer are locally common, especially in the higher elevations and throughout Ferry County, but their overall numbers are low compared to white-tailed deer on a district scale. Deer hunting opportunities in District 1 vary from fair to excellent, depending on the GMU. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 1 generally occur in GMUs 101 (Sherman) and 121 (Huckleberry). All GMUs within the district offer good opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer.

The white-tailed deer harvest management objective is to provide antlered and antlerless hunting opportunity for all hunting methods whenever feasible.

Management goals for mule deer are to provide conservative hunting opportunity and allow population levels to increase by managing antlerless hunting opportunity.



Surveys for deer in District 1 are conducted before the modern firearm hunting season. Pre-season ratios come from roadside surveys conducted during August (for buck to doe ratio) and September (for fawn to doe ratio). These ground-based surveys provide an estimate of buck ratios prior to the modern firearm hunting season (Figure 3). However, these surveys tend to occur in more agriculturally dominated areas where visibility of deer from a road is good. There are quality bucks in the more heavily forested areas within the District, but they are just not as visible and therefore not represented in our survey sample.

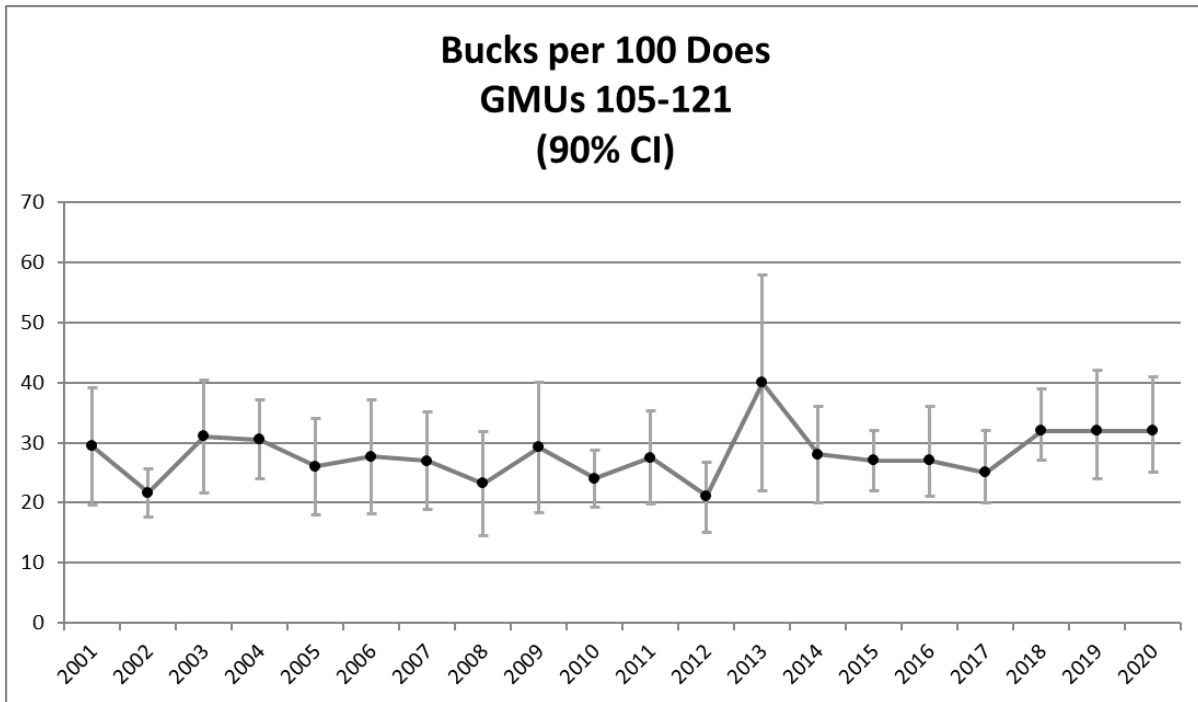


Figure 3. Pre-season white-tailed deer ratios and 90 percent confidence intervals from ground surveys within District 1.

All available harvest and survey data indicate white-tailed deer populations appear to be stable in all GMUs associated with District 1. According to harvest data, mule deer populations appear to be stable or slightly decreasing. For more detailed information related to the status of deer in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the [Game Status and Trend Report](#), which is available for download on the department’s website. For more information,

hunters could also look at the [White-tailed Deer Management Plan](#) and the [Mule Deer Management Plan](#).

## WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” This is not easy to answer because it depends on the hunting method and the target hunting experience. Some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature buck, while others just want to harvest any legal deer in an area with few hunters.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would be entirely or mostly comprised of public land, have high deer densities, low hunter densities, and high hunter success rates. Unfortunately, this scenario does not exist in any GMU that is open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 1. Instead, because of general season opportunities, the GMUs with the highest deer densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well.

For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them not to hunt in a GMU where they see lots of deer. Other hunters prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if that means there are also relatively few hunters.



The information in Table 3 provides a general assessment of how GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. The values presented are the three-year averages for each statistic. Mule deer and white-tailed deer are combined for this table, but it is a reasonable assumption that in GMUs other than GMU 101, the vast majority of the deer harvested are white-tailed deer. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of deer harvested and hunters per square mile. This approach was taken because comparing total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison, as GMUs vary in size.

Each GMU was ranked for deer harvested/mile<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mile<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum. Comparisons are pretty straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs.

When choosing a species to hunt or a GMU to hunt in, differences that should be considered are:

1. Mule deer have a 3-point minimum harvest restriction during all general seasons.
2. The late archery season in 101 runs longer than other GMUs.
3. There is no late archery season in GMUs 111 or 113.
4. There is a late muzzleloader season in GMU 113.

Table 3. Rank sum analysis that provides a quick and general comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. Data presented are based on a three-year average. As a generalization, the lower the rank sum, the better the overall deer hunting opportunity is within a GMU.

<b>MODERN FIREARM</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	392	0.4	5	2406	2.2	2	16%	5	<b>12</b>
105	296	226	0.8	3	756	2.6	3	31%	2	<b>8</b>
108	289	322	1.1	2	1017	3.5	6	32%	1	<b>9</b>
111	455	282	0.6	4	1355	3.0	4	21%	4	<b>12</b>
113	736	215	0.3	6	1373	1.9	1	16%	5	<b>12</b>
117	954	717	0.8	3	3272	3.4	5	21%	4	<b>12</b>
121	796	1242	1.6	1	4176	5.2	7	30%	3	<b>11</b>

<b>ARCHERY</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
101	1,103	180	0.2	1	738	0.7	4	22%	4	<b>9</b>
105	296	19	0.1	2	94	0.3	2	24%	2	<b>6</b>
108	289	28	0.1	2	107	0.3	2	29%	1	<b>5</b>
111	455	12	0.0	3	70	0.2	1	18%	5	<b>9</b>
113	736	9	0.0	3	124	0.2	1	8%	6	<b>10</b>
117	954	108	0.1	2	536	0.6	3	21%	3	<b>8</b>
121	796	113	0.1	2	514	0.6	3	21%	3	<b>8</b>

<b>MUZZLELOADER</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	



101	1,103	71	0.06	2	230	0.2	2	33%	2	6
105	296	6	0.02	6	21	0.1	1	28%	3	10
108	289	11	0.04	4	29	0.1	1	38%	1	6
111	455	18	0.04	4	62	0.1	1	26%	4	9
113	736	56	0.08	1	319	0.4	3	19%	6	10
117	954	29	0.03	5	136	0.1	1	24%	5	11
121	796	38	0.05	3	108	0.1	1	33%	2	6

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Harvest has remained stable in District 1 over the past two years, an expected trend based on regulation changes. In 2015, muzzleloader and archery hunters could harvest any deer, whereas in 2016 and 2017 this was changed to any buck, requiring a slight increase in hunter effort to harvest a deer. **In 2021, hunters of any user group or weapon type will not be able to harvest a doe**, this regulation change was enacted to protect the reproductive component of the population. Pre-season surveys for the past three years yielded stable buck to doe and fawn to doe ratios.

District 1 runs voluntary check stations on select weekends during the modern firearm season. Check stations allow biologists to collect important biological information that informs management. This may include teeth to determine the age structure of a population, detailed information about the size of bucks being harvested, tissue samples to test for diseases like chronic wasting disease, and body condition score for harvested animals. Aside from collecting biological information, check stations allow biologists an opportunity to interact with the hunting community, answer questions, and receive immediate feedback on how the season is going.

**During the 2021 hunting season, additional check stations will be run throughout the District to do surveillance for Chronic Wasting Disease. We are very interested in sampling deer harvested in GMUs 108, 111, 113, and 117. If you pass a check station, we encourage you to stop.**

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal illness of deer, elk, moose, and caribou. The disease is caused by mutated proteins known as prions, which can contaminate the environment and be transmitted between animals through their feces, saliva, urine, and other bodily fluids.

To date, the disease [has been detected in a number of U.S. states and Canadian provinces](#), but has not been detected in Washington.

Check station locations during the 2021 season are:

- Chewelah - DOT gravel pit at Sand Canyon Rd. and Hwy 395
- Colville - WDFW District 1 Office at 755 S. Main Street
- Ione – Tiger Store at intersection of Hwy. 20 and Hwy. 31

- Usk – Crossroads at intersection of Triangle Rd. and Hwy. 20

A good predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent trends in harvest and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill. Figures 4 and 5 provide trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where to hunt in District 1. Remember from 2011-2014, a 4-point minimum restriction was imposed for white-tailed deer in GMUs 117 and 121, which led to decreases in the overall harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Available evidence shows this regulation change brought about these decreases and not a dramatic decrease in the white-tailed deer population. With the retirement of the 4-point rule within GMUs 117 and 121, the deer harvest increased substantially in 2015 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Trends in the estimated number of bucks (blue) and antlerless (red) deer harvested during the general season (all weapons combined) in each GMU from 2016-2020. Harvest totals do not include tribal harvest or special permit harvest.

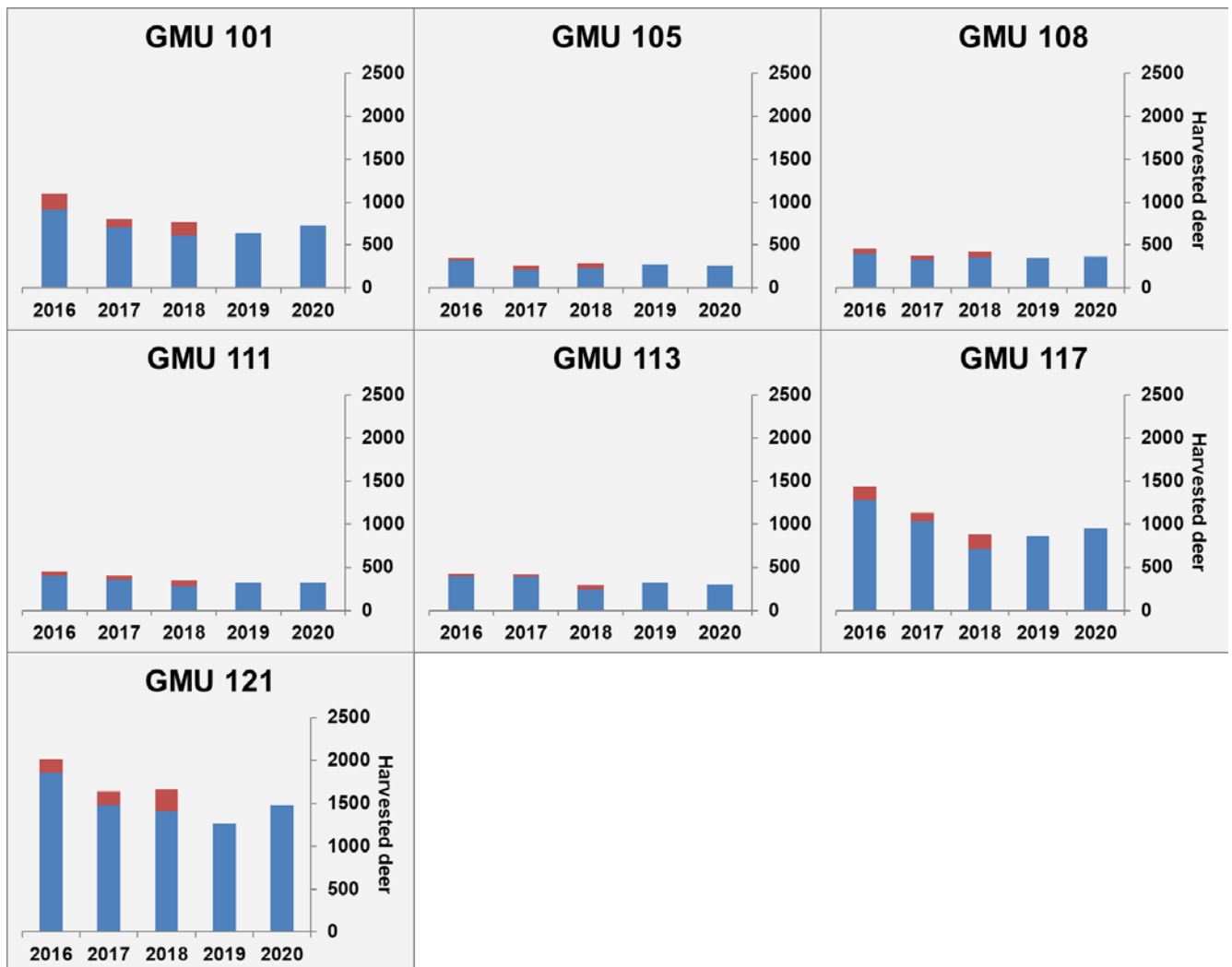
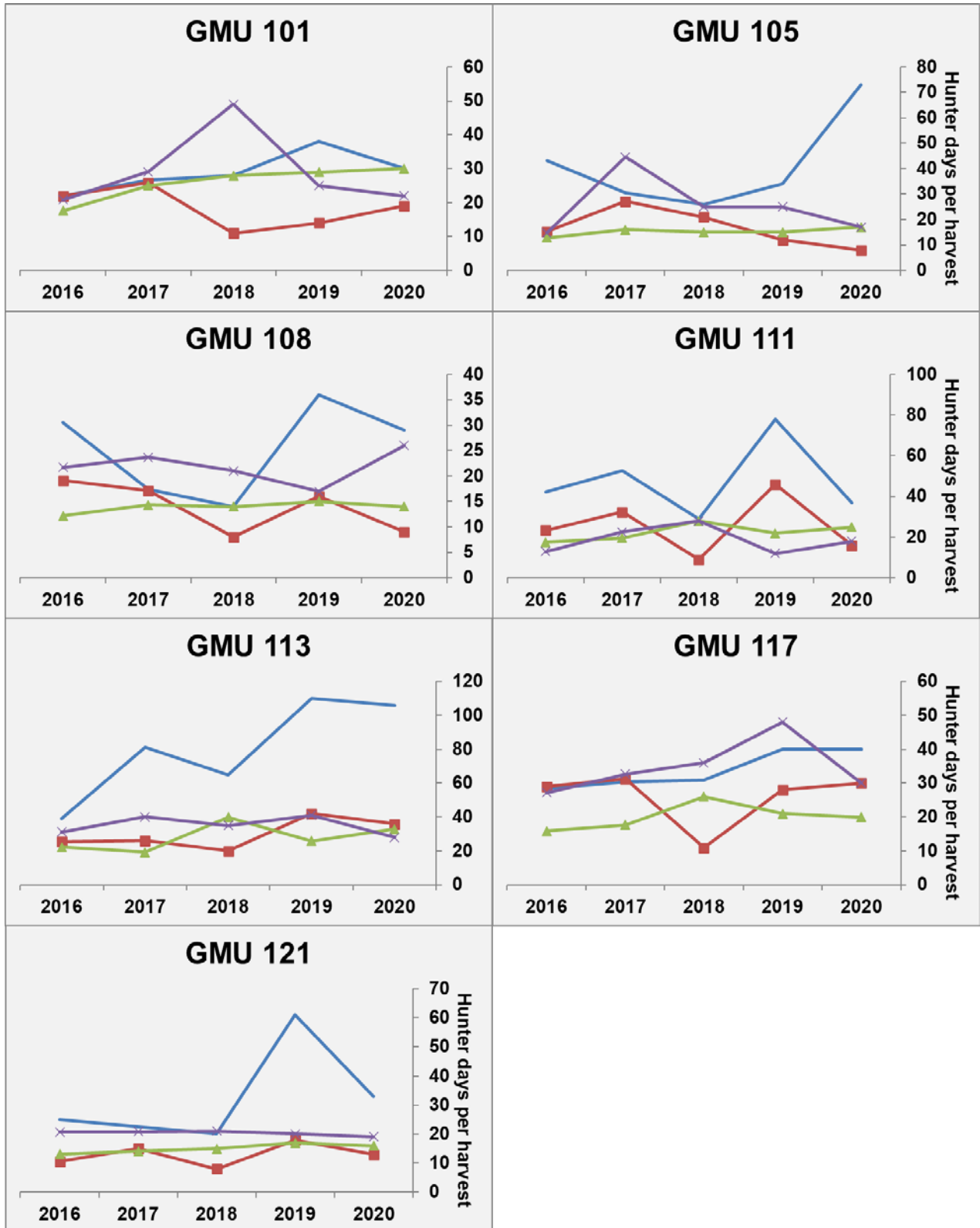


Figure 5. Trend in days per kill for archery (blue), muzzleloader (purple), multiple weapon (green), and modern firearm (red) during the general season for deer in each GMU from 2016-2020 within District 1.



## HOW TO FIND AND HUNT WHITE-TAILED DEER

As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a white-tailed deer in District 1 is scouting. White-tailed deer occur throughout the district and in nearly every present habitat type. White-tailed deer densities are highest on private lands in the valleys and foothill benches bordering the valleys, especially in the farm-forest mosaic within GMUs 105, 108, 117, and 121. GMUs 101, 111, and 113 also have white-tailed deer, but with more localized distributions, again with the highest densities typically on private lands.

The majority of hunting is done in or adjacent to agricultural fields or recent forest timber harvest areas. When deer are present, they are much more visible than in adjacent habitats. However, deer typically use these more open areas at night, dawn, and dusk, especially once they have been disturbed by human presence. Therefore, it is advantageous for hunters to seek out areas a short to moderate distance away from these openings, which provide more cover where deer are spending more time. If a hunter is seeing large amounts of deer sign in an area, odds are those deer are not far away.



The traditional approaches to hunting white-tailed deer generally include several methods. The first is still-hunting, where the hunter is moving, but very slowly through a patch of habitat, stopping frequently to scan or glass the vegetative cover ahead with binoculars. The hunter looks for parts of a deer, like legs, an antler, or a portion of the body or head, as opposed to the whole deer, which is usually not visible through the vegetation. Stand hunting is another technique. This method involves the hunter patiently waiting in a tree stand, on a stump, against a tree trunk, on a ridge rock, etc. in high deer use areas (highly traveled trails, habitat edges, bottlenecks, funnels, etc.) until deer show up. A third deer hunting approach is conducting drives. This technique involves at least two hunters, but larger groups maximize its effectiveness. The hunters divide into “drivers” and “blockers.” The blockers position themselves in an organized spacing, often downwind of a patch of deer bedding habitat (thick woods, forested swamp, or heavy brush field). The drivers then slowly hike through the habitat patch, alerting the deer and hopefully pushing them to the blockers. Sometimes it’s a good idea to post one blocker at the front of the habitat patch behind the drivers in the event that any deer double back to evade them. Although each of these approaches is highly effective, there is another technique that is not as well-known or used as much. This includes rattling and grunting to simulate two bucks fighting over a doe. This technique is more common with mid-western and eastern white-tailed deer hunters, but can be effective here as well, especially in the days leading up to the rut (deer breeding season) in mid-November. A quick internet search on this topic will yield plenty of evidence to illustrate its effectiveness when conditions are right. More information on deer hunting can be found by following this [link](#) to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife website.

## HOW TO FIND AND HUNT MULE DEER

Mule deer occur in District 1, but in much lower abundance than white-tailed deer, especially east of the Columbia River. Although mule deer occur within every District 1 GMU, the highest density is in GMU 101. As is the case with most game species, the key to harvesting a mule deer in District 1 is scouting. The classical western method of hunting mule deer is sometimes called spot and stalk. The hunter uses good optics, binoculars, and spotting scopes to scan from ridge tops and other vantage points to find the mule deer, pick out suitable bucks, and stalk them to within shooting distance. Ordinarily, the stalk entails a strategic hike and cautious sneak action. Much of District 1 does not offer the open country required for this method of hunting, but where it does, it can be effective. More information on deer hunting can be found by following this [link](#) to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife website.



## DEER AREAS

There is one deer area in District 1, Parker Lake (Deer Area 1031). This deer area is described in the Area Descriptions section of the [Big Game Pamphlet](#). Hunting is by special permit only within the Parker Lake area.

## NOTABLE CHANGES

Antlerless white-tailed deer opportunity for archery and muzzleloader, and modern firearm youth and disabled hunters is no longer available; **all legal harvest is buck only for all user groups**. This change was enacted to conserve the reproductive portion of the population. Mule deer does are no longer legal for harvest during the early archery season within GMU 101.

## INFORMATION ABOUT EHD/BLUETONGUE AND DEER

During the late summer of 2015, agency staff members documented a largescale bluetongue outbreak in District 1. In certain areas, WDFW received many reports of large numbers of dead deer. The bluetongue outbreak in 2015 was brought about by the severe drought in northeast Washington. No outbreak was detected in subsequent years, and it's hard to predict when the next outbreak may occur. The summer of 2021 is shaping up to be similar to 2015 and because of the severe drought an EHD or bluetongue outbreak is possible. However, it's hard to predict the severity of a potential outbreak. More information about bluetongue can be found [here](#).



## BLACK BEAR



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

The goals for black bear management in Washington are to: 1) preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage black bear and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations; 2) minimize threats to public safety from black bears, while at the same time maintaining a sustainable and viable bear population; 3) manage black bear for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, wildlife viewing, and photography; and 4) manage populations statewide for a sustained yield. For management purposes, the state is divided into nine black bear management units (BBMUs). Harvest levels vary between BBMU depending on local population dynamics and environmental conditions.

District 1 consists of GMUs in part of the Northeastern BBMU. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for the Northeastern BBMU are designed to maintain black bear populations at a level which would not increase impacts to big game herds. The metrics used to direct black bear harvest include the proportion of harvested bears that were female, the median age of harvested females, and the median age of harvested males.

WDFW does not conduct annual surveys to monitor trends in black bear population size. Trends in harvest data are used instead as population surrogates or indices. However, in 2019, biologists conducted a survey to estimate black bear density in GMU 117. Density was found to be 31 bears/100km<sup>2</sup>. Currently, black bear populations are believed to be stable in District 1.

Black bears occur throughout District 1, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a bear likely occur in GMUs 101 (Sherman) and 117 (49 Degrees North), mainly on account of abundant public land that is open to hunting.

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Although some hunters specifically target black bears, most bears are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest and hunter success can vary quite a bit from one year to the next. Since 2004, hunter success in District 1 GMUs has varied from 4 percent to 18 percent. The success rate is likely higher for hunters who specifically hunt black bears versus those who buy a bear tag just in case they see one while deer or elk hunting.

Overall, annual black bear harvest during the general bear season in District 1 showed a stable trend from 2014 to 2016 before declining sharply in 2017 and 2018 (Figure 6). Harvest has increased steadily since 2018.

At the GMU level, most black bears will likely be harvested in GMUs 101 (Sherman), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry). Harvest numbers, during the 2020 season and compared to long-term (ten year) and short-term (five year) averages, show an increase in harvest in most GMUs within District 1 (Figure 7). Following the 2019 regulation change (August 1 opener and two bear bag limit), harvest throughout District 1 has increased and may continue to increase or stabilize.

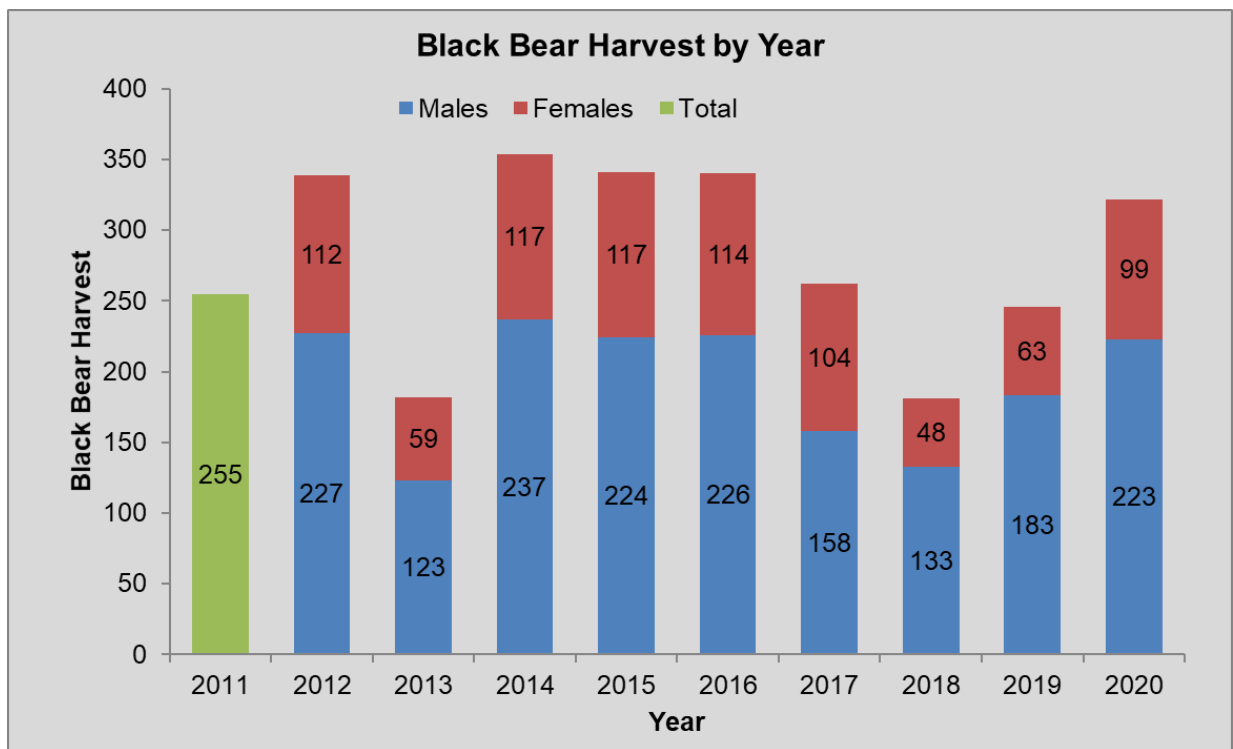


Figure 6. Trends in the number of male and female black bears harvested during the general bear season in District 1 (GMUs 101-121), 2011–2020. Harvest estimates do not include bears harvested during spring permit seasons or bears removed because they were causing damage to private property. The sex of harvested bears is not available for 2011.



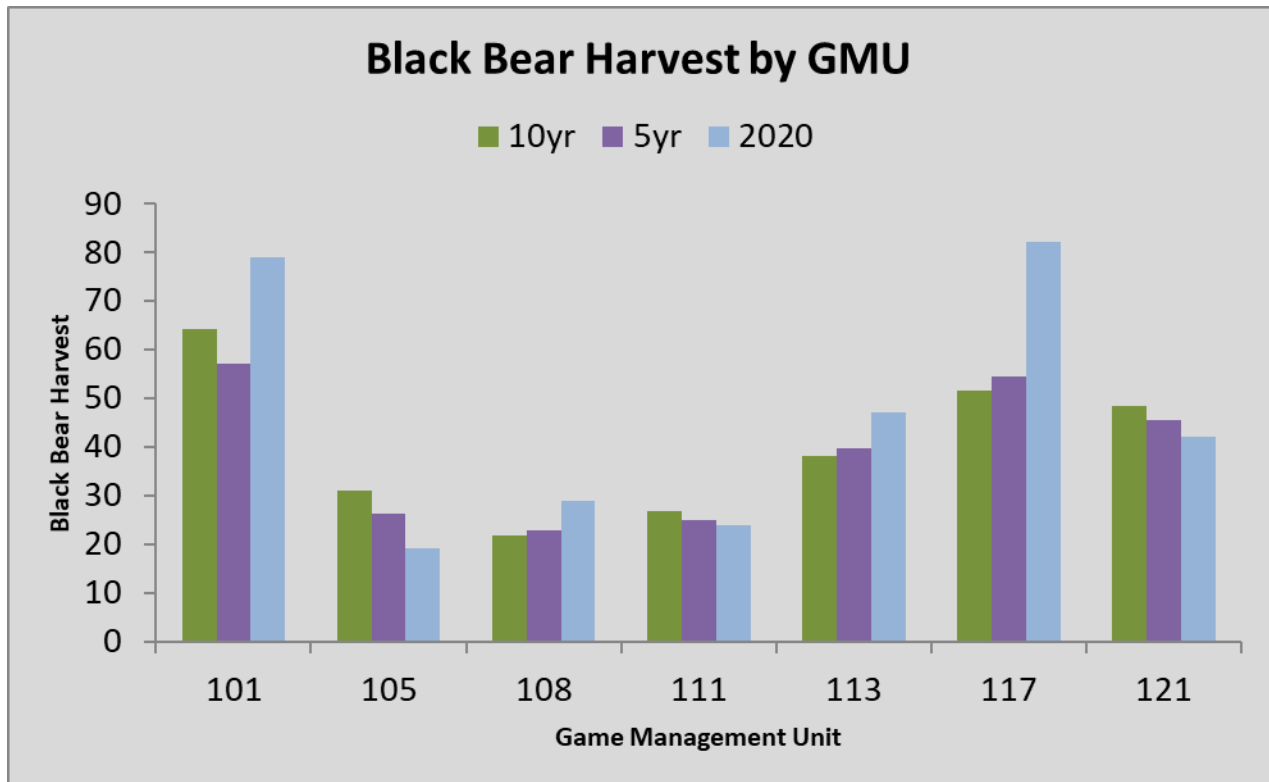


Figure 7. The number of black bears harvested in each GMU during the 2020 general bear season in District 1. Also included are the 10-year (2011-2020) and 5-year (2016-2020) average for the total number of bears harvested in each GMU.

## HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR

Scouting is an extremely important factor that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 1. Although black bears are fairly common and occur in some areas at high densities, they are seen infrequently because of the thick evergreen conifer forest and other vegetation that dominates the landscape.

Black bears can occur in a variety of habitat types, so it can be difficult to narrow down where to search for them. In the early fall, hunters should focus their efforts at higher elevations and in open terrain (e.g., open hillsides). Huckleberries ripen throughout the summer, but in the early fall prior to heavy frost, the most berries remaining are typically at higher elevations. A large huckleberry patch yielding lots of fruit would be a good place to hunt.

Bears can also be located in recent timber harvests that contain a large number of berry-producing shrubs, including huckleberries, serviceberries, snowberries, soapberries, and thimbleberries. During the fall, hunters need to find openings with these characteristics and hike through them to see if there is any bear sign. If they do find fresh sign, odds are there is a bear frequenting the area. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching these areas, they stand a reasonable chance of harvesting a bear. Patience is the key.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

**Black bear hunters in GMUs 101 – 117 are required to complete WDFW’s online bear identification test each year and carry proof that they have passed. Prep for and take the test at [Bear Identification Program](#).**

There are consistent sightings and known resident grizzly bears in District 1. Grizzly bears are a federally threatened and state-listed endangered species. Killing one, either unintentionally or intentionally, can bring costly fines and penalties, and set back recovery efforts for grizzly bears. Just like with other similar looking game species such as elk/moose/caribou, mule deer/white-tailed deer, bobcat/lynx, and other animal groups, Washington hunters are responsible for being able to tell the difference between black bears and grizzly bears. This knowledge and skill is critical in areas where the ranges of these two bear species overlap (Figure 8). In addition, hunters within GMUs 113 and 105 are **STRONGLY** encouraged to carry bear spray while hunting. Hunters should know how to use bear spray before heading into the field. Information about bear spray and how to use it can be found [here](#).

Bear hunters are urged not to shoot sows with cubs. Sows may be accompanied by cubs in the fall that tend to lag behind when traveling, so please observe and be patient before shooting.

**WDFW requires the submission of a tooth from successful black bear hunters.** Hunters are encouraged to submit teeth by December 1 of the current hunt year. Biologists use this information to better monitor black bears, make management decisions, and evaluate the impacts of harvest on the population. In addition, black bear hunters that submit a tooth can find out the age of their harvested bear by entering their Wild ID [here](#). Just be aware that it takes about 6 months after the close of all bear seasons to receive the ages back from the lab, so there is a delay in this information being available. Hunters can pick up a tooth envelope at WDFW regional and district offices and some sporting goods stores. If available, a biologist can pull the tooth for you if the skull is not frozen. A helpful instructional video for pulling a tooth can be found [here](#).

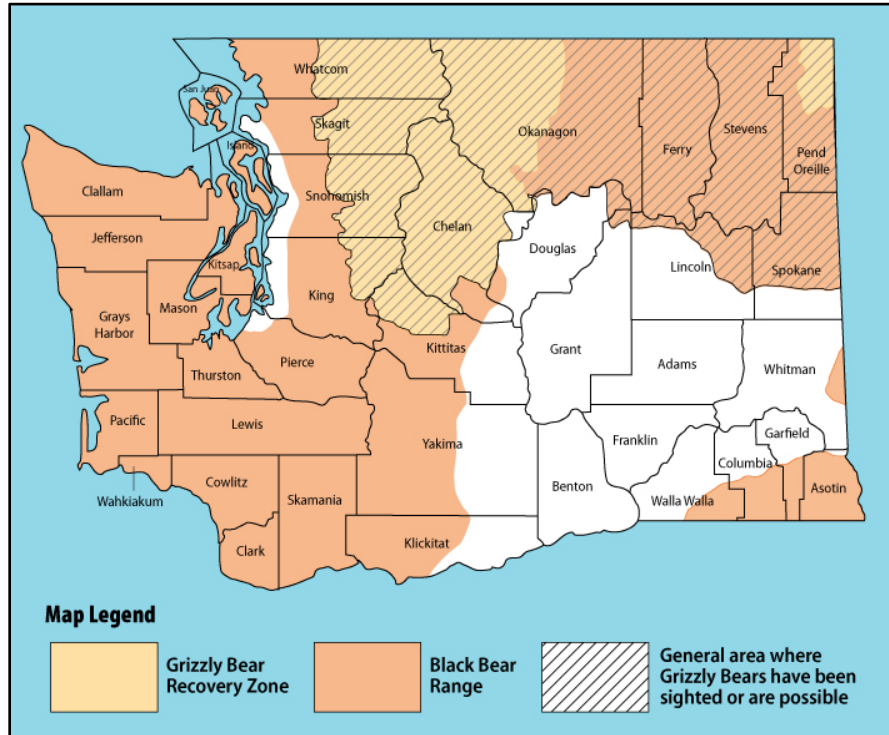


Figure 8. Black bear range and grizzly bear sighting areas in Washington.

## NOTABLE CHANGES

**District 1 black bear hunters (GMUs 101 – 117) are required to complete WDFW’s online bear identification test each year and carry proof that they have passed. Bear identification information can be found on the [Bear Identification Program website](#).** Fall black bear season dates have been extended and bag limits have increased in eastern Washington, hunters now have the opportunity to start hunting August 1 throughout the state and the bag limit has increased to two bears. Hunters must purchase a second bear tag to harvest a second bear. Spring permit levels for 2022 will be announced in the winter of 2021/22.

# COUGAR

## GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



Cougars occur throughout District 1, but local densities can vary among GMUs. Cougars in District 1 are managed with the primary objective of maintaining a stable cougar population.

Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed cougar harvest management throughout Washington. The biggest change was shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougar harvested, and instead using a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intent was to

have a longer season, without any hunting implement restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline.

Beginning in the 2015 hunting season, cougar season dates were extended through April 30. **However, to hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, hunters need to purchase a 2022 hunting license and cougar tag.** Harvest numbers are examined starting January 1 and any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline may be closed. **Hunting cougar after December 31 requires first confirming that the cougar season is open in the intended hunt area by calling 1-866-364-4868.** Harvest guidelines for each hunt area located in District 1 are provided in Table 4. After December 31, all hunters must report their kills via the cougar hotline within 72 hours (1-866-364-4868, press 3 after greeting). During the cougar season, kills must be sealed by WDFW within five days. Skulls and hides (with proof of sex attached) must not be frozen when presented to WDFW for sealing.

Table 4. Harvest guidelines and 2020-21 adult only cougar harvest for the six cougar hunt areas located in District 1.

Hunt Area (GMU)	2021-22 Harvest Guideline	2020-21 Harvest
101	7-11	5
105	4	1
108,111	9-11	4
113	4-5	2
117	11-13	11
121	9-11	4

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

The total number of cougars harvested in District 1 in 2020 was slightly higher than in 2019 (Figure 9). However, beginning in 2020, only adult harvest (2 years +) counted towards the harvest guideline. The average age at harvest is variable for both males and females, but is typically three years old or younger (Figure 10). Due to backlogs from COVID 19, more updated age information is not available for this year's hunting prospects document.

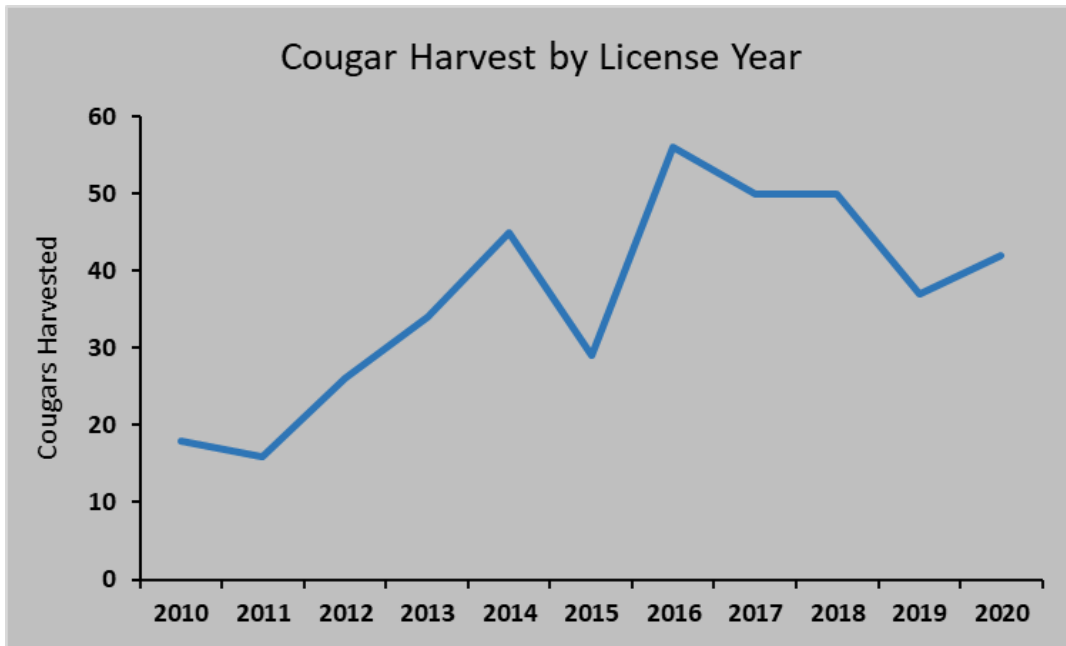


Figure 9. General season cougar harvest in District 1, 2009-2020. All subadult and adult harvest is displayed, but only adult harvest counted towards the guideline beginning in 2020.

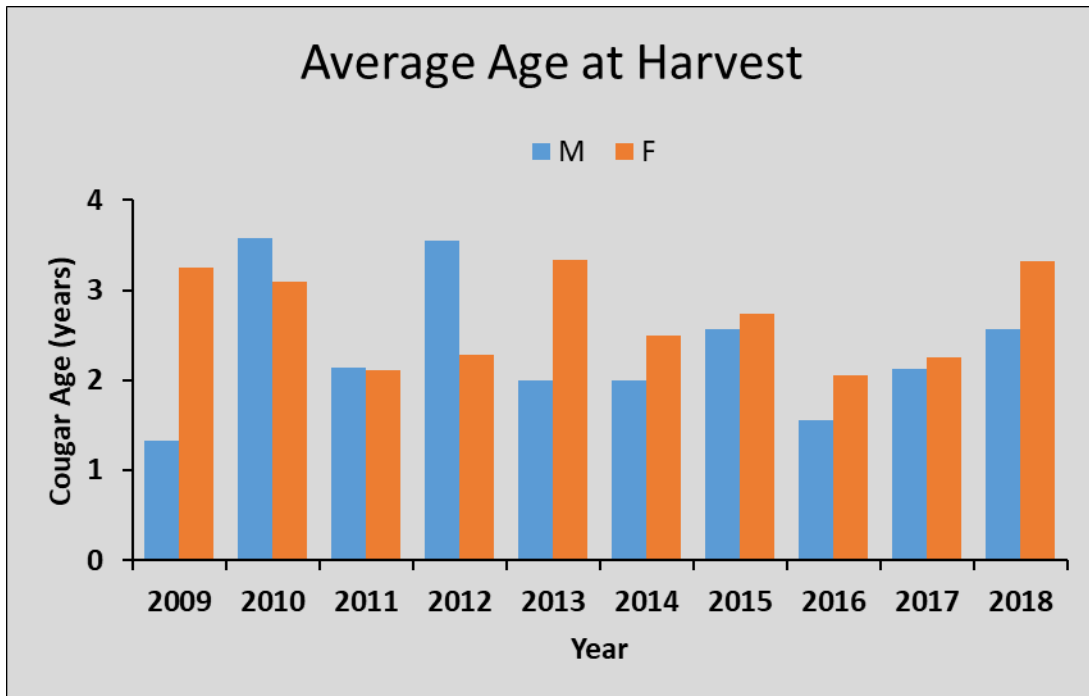


Figure 10. Average age of female (orange bars) and male (blue bars) cougar harvested during the general season in District 1, 2009-2018.

### NOTABLE CHANGES

Cougar harvest guidelines were increased for GMUs within District 1 for 2021. Season dates will still be extended until April 30 unless harvest guidelines are met within the GMU. However, to hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, hunters need to purchase a 2021~~2~~ hunting license and cougar tag.

## FOREST GROUSE



### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

There are three species of grouse that occur in District 1: ruffed grouse, dusky (blue) grouse, and spruce grouse. Ruffed grouse are the most abundant and occur at lower elevations and valley bottoms. Spruce grouse are usually located in high elevation forest comprised of lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and/or Engelmann spruce. In District 1, these habitats are prevalent within the Kettle and Selkirk mountain ranges. Dusky grouse can be found in habitats that occur at elevations between ruffed and spruce grouse habitat, but overlap does occur.

### POPULATION STATUS

Trends in harvest data are generally used as surrogates for estimating a population or indices of population size. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers, so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), or birds harvested per hunter day, is the best indicator of population trends. In District 1, forest grouse populations appear to have declined since 2009. However, 2015 was a very good year, with CPUE of 0.72 birds/day. The 2020 hunting year continued a declining trend in grouse harvested and hunters afield, the CPUE was 0.37 birds/day (Figure 11).

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

The total number of forest grouse harvested in District-1 has declined from 2014-2020. However, 2015 and 2017 had higher than average harvest. We anticipate 2022 harvest to be similar to previous years, but perhaps on the lower end. District-1 experienced a summer drought and this can sometimes negatively impact chick survival.

The average number bagged amongst hunters could fall between 0.4 and 0.6 forest grouse per hunting day.

### HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt forest grouse in District 1 is by walking little used forest roads and shooting them as they flush or after they roost in a nearby tree. Forest grouse tend to occur in higher densities along roads that do not receive much motor vehicle traffic. Consequently, hunters should target roads behind locked gates and roads that have been decommissioned by the respective landowner. Some forest grouse hunters use trained bird dogs, a team system that can be extremely effective. To learn more about how to hunt each of Washington's grouse species, see WDFW's [upland bird hunting webpage](#).



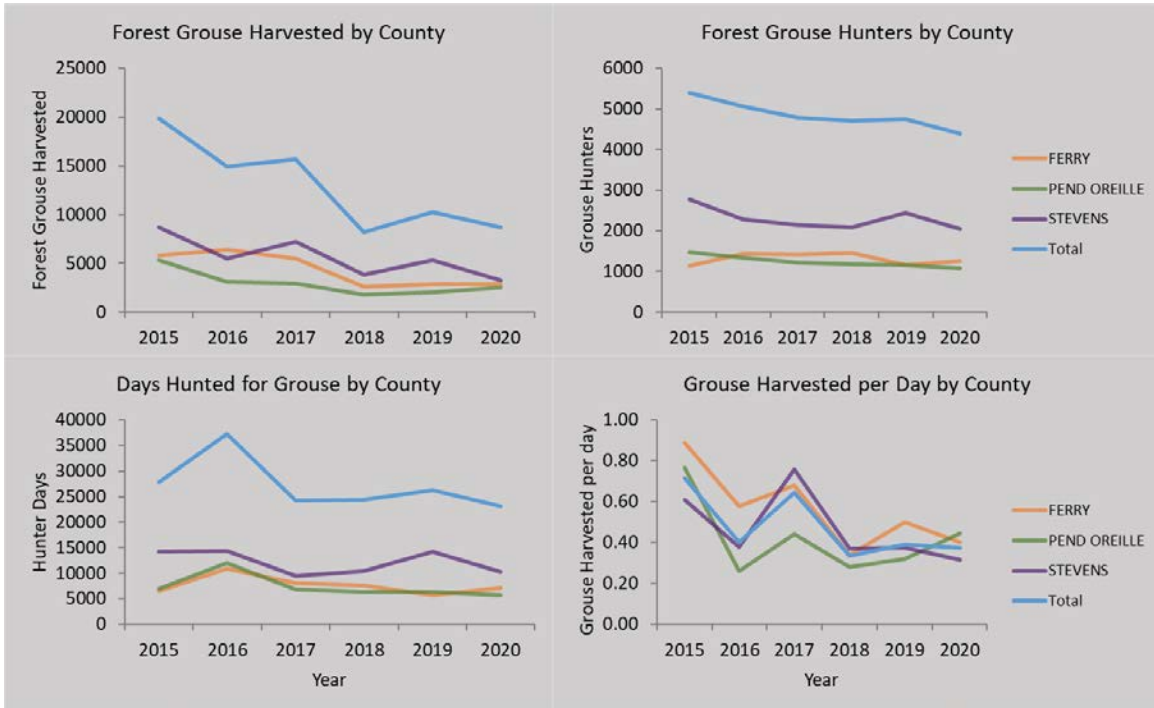


Figure 11. Trends in total harvest, hunter numbers, hunter days, and forest grouse harvested per hunter day during forest grouse seasons in Ferry County (orange), Stevens County (purple), Pend Oreille County (green) and throughout District 1 (blue), 2015–2020.

## NOTABLE CHANGES

**Season start date is now September 15, 2021**

Bag and possession limits are as follows:

Bag limit: four grouse with no more than three of any one species.

Possession limit: 12 grouse with no more than nine of any one species.

WDFW will have wing and tail collection barrels distributed throughout District 1 in 2021. **If you drive by a barrel, please follow the instructions at the barrel and deposit one wing and tail from each forest grouse harvested using the paper bags provided.** This information helps biologists determine the distribution of species, age, and sex in the harvest.



## PHEASANTS

There is only a small, range-limited population of wild ring-necked pheasants in District 1. The population occurs almost entirely on private lands within the Colville Valley. Consequently, most pheasant hunting opportunity within District 1 is associated with the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement and Release Program. The primary intent of this program is to provide an upland bird hunting opportunity and encourage participation from young and older-aged hunters. Each year, thousands of captive-reared ring-necked pheasants are released at



33 sites, and one of those sites (Sherman Creek Wildlife Area) occurs within District 1. The Sherman Creek Release Site is located in Ferry County south of the headquarters to Sherman Creek Wildlife Area between the Inchelium Highway and Lake Roosevelt (Figure 12).

To protect other wildlife species, including waterfowl and raptors, nontoxic shot is now required for all upland bird, dove, and band-tailed pigeon hunting on all pheasant release sites statewide. At these release sites, hunters may use only approved nontoxic shot (either in shotshells or as loose shot for muzzle loading). Possession of lead shot is also regulated on some wildlife areas. See the [Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons](#) pamphlet for more information. Visit the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement and Release Program](#) website to learn more about pheasant releases.

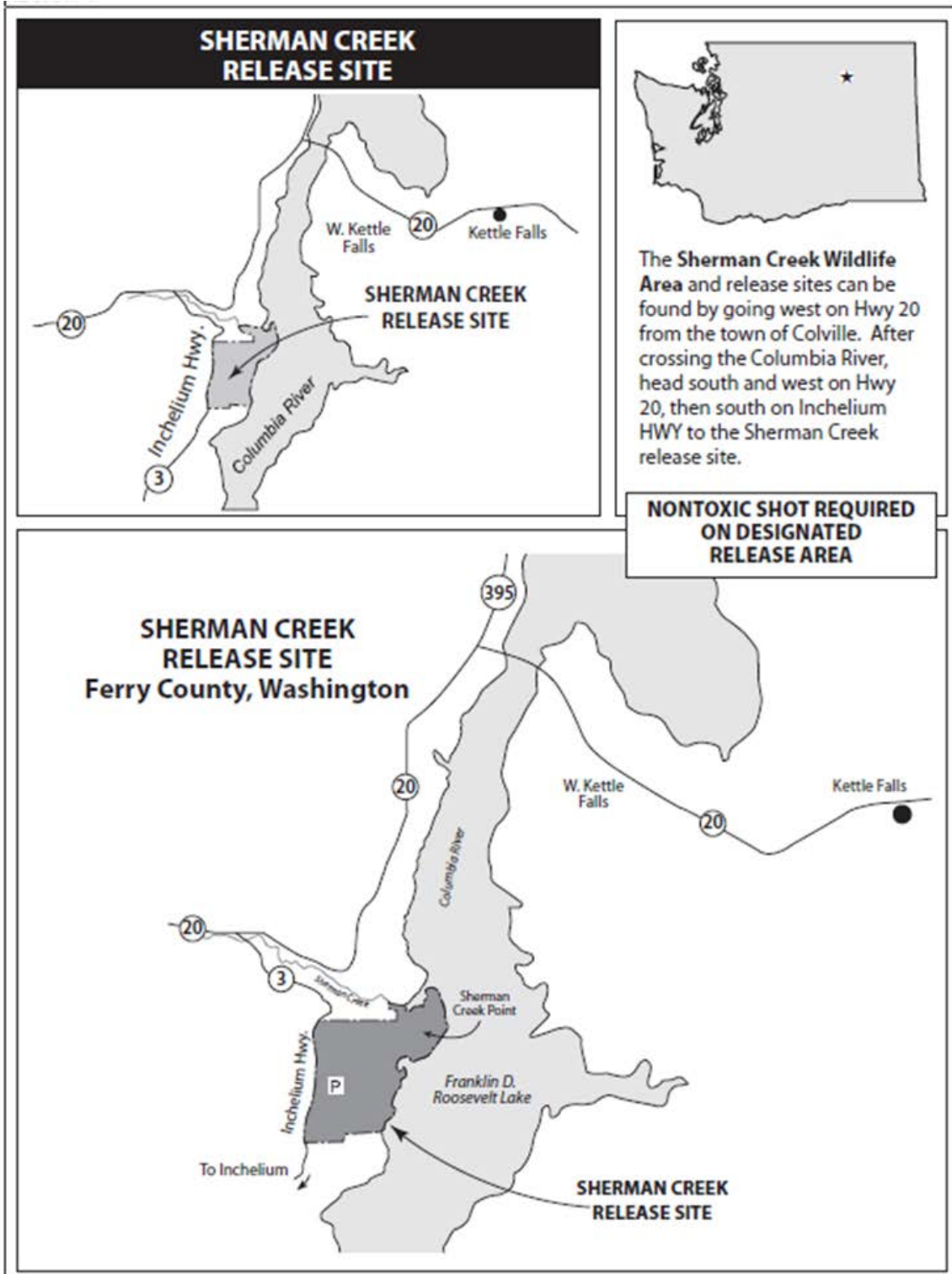


Figure 12. Map of the Sherman Creek Pheasant Release Site in Ferry County.



## WILD TURKEYS

The turkeys found in District 1 are Merriam's wild turkeys. Merriam's turkeys flourished in the district after being introduced in 1961, but then slowly declined. Since a large transplant from South Dakota in 1988-89, this population has steadily expanded in both range and abundance.

In most GMUs within the District, fall harvest has increased, while spring harvest has remained relatively stable (Figure 13). The recent increase in fall harvest could be from an increase in the population but is more likely the result of a longer season and more liberal bag limit that began in 2018. Harvest in spring 2020 decreased likely due to a later season start date. Harvest in 2021 and spring 2022 should be similar to previous years.



### HOW TO FIND AND HUNT TURKEYS IN THE SPRING

Increasing daylight between late winter and early spring triggers the beginning of breeding season, although unusually prolonged cold, wet, or warm weather may delay or advance it. Gobbling and strutting start well before mating, when turkeys are still on their winter range in late March or early April. There are normally two peaks of gobbling. The first occurs when males call and females are not yet nesting, and the second occurs a few weeks later, when most hens are incubating eggs. Finding these gobbling toms and moving close enough to call them in without bumping (flushing) them is the challenge and excitement to traditional spring turkey hunting. For more information on how to hunt turkeys, click [here](#).

### HOW TO FIND AND HUNT TURKEYS IN THE FALL

During fall and winter, wild turkey priorities are food and roosting areas. In the fall, food remains critical for growth of poults (juvenile turkeys) and for adults adding fat reserves. Forest edges that offer seeds, nuts, and fruits, as well as some green vegetation, are used the most. At this time of year, turkeys are at their highest population and widest distribution within northeastern Washington, including District 1. As autumn wears on and snowfall comes, the turkeys gradually constrict their range to lower elevations. Where agriculture predominates, a mosaic of short grass fields or cropland and forest is generally the best place to find turkeys.



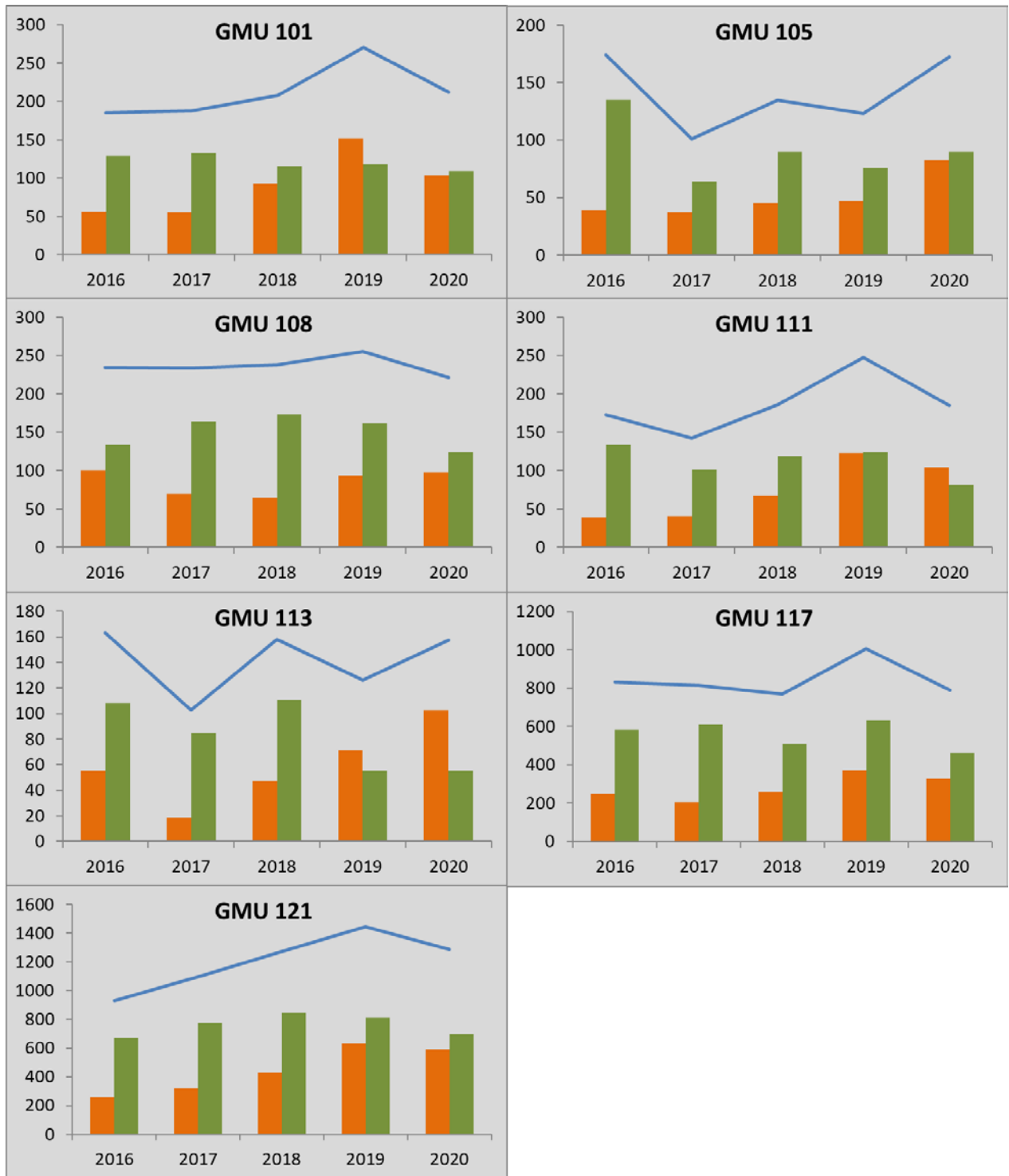
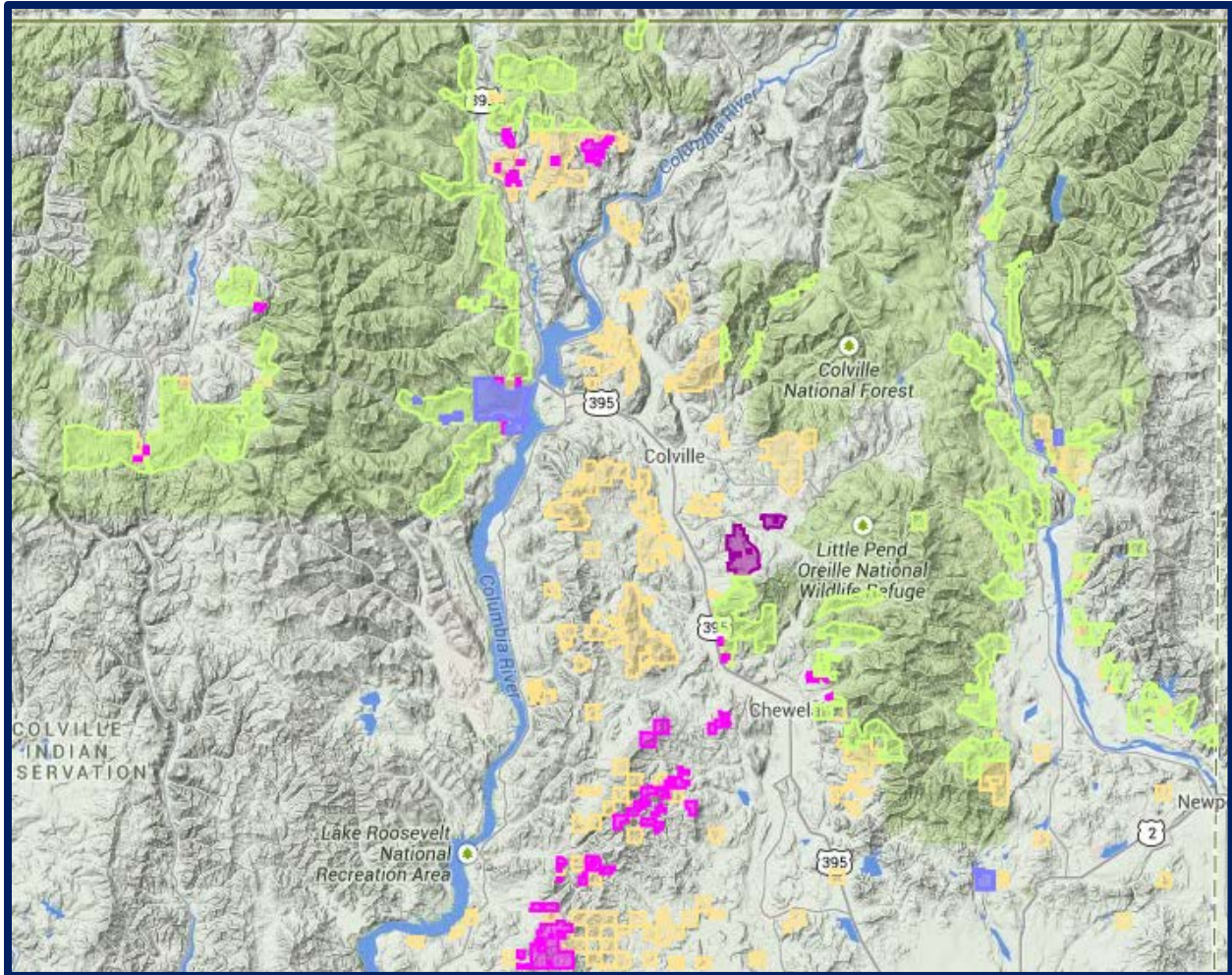


Figure 13. Fall (orange), spring (green), and total (blue) estimated turkey harvest for each GMU in District 1, 2016-2020.



Figure 14. Map depicting public lands good for turkey hunting. This map is produced by map metrics.



## WATERFOWL



### COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 1. Common dabbling ducks include mallard, gadwall, American wigeon, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Diving ducks are also present, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, redheads, goldeneyes, and mergansers. Nesting wood ducks can be located in the Pend Oreille, Colville, and Kettle River valleys, and can provide a unique hunting opportunity early in the season. Mallards are the most abundant duck species in Washington and constitute the majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically  $\geq 50$  percent). They are a commonly harvested duck in District 1 as well.

Canada geese are the only wild goose commonly found within District 1. They are abundant in the Pend Oreille, Colville, and Kettle River valleys, especially in the widest valley bottom areas where there is extensive farmland cultivation.

### BEST HUNTING AREAS

#### **Pend Oreille River**

The upper Pend Oreille River, from Newport downstream to Usk, probably offers the best general waterfowl hunting opportunity within northeastern Washington. Outside of the east shoreline, alongside the Kalispell Indian Reservation, most of the river itself is open for hunting, along with a number of islands. In most instances a boat is required, either to serve as a hunting blind or for access to islands and sandbars open to hunting. There are also Pend Oreille Public



Utility District lands, as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge land (the Cusick Unit) open to public hunting. These parcels are located near the mouths of Tacoma and Trimble creeks, into the Pend Oreille River.

Dabbling ducks: Moderate numbers during migration, mostly gadwall, wigeon, teal, mallards, and some pintails.

Diving ducks: Moderate numbers with the highest densities during peak migration periods.

Geese: Canada geese occur in the greatest abundance in this part of District 1.

### **Lake Roosevelt**

Lake Roosevelt up to the 1310 feet elevation contour is mostly federally owned and managed by the National Park Service. Much of the lake shore also borders the Colville and Spokane Indian Reservations, however, and in these areas the tribes manage the shoreline. As such, where you can legally hunt is somewhat complicated. Hunters should call the National Park Service in Kettle Falls at 509-738-6266 for clarification before hunting.

Dabbling Ducks: Low to moderate numbers during migration, mostly wigeon, and mallards.

Diving Ducks: Relatively few, but higher densities during peak migration periods.

Geese: Canada geese have a scattered distribution in this hundred-mile-long reservoir and can occur in high numbers during peak migration.

### **Colville and Kettle Valleys**

Almost all of the valley bottoms are private lands, so obtaining written permission for hunting access is essential. Ducks are most common where there are slow, meandering streams, sloughs, and/or farm ponds. Geese are most common in the agricultural areas.

Dabbling Ducks: Low to moderate numbers during migration, mostly mallards.

Diving Ducks: Relatively few, but higher densities during peak migration periods, especially on the Colville River.

Geese: Canada geese are fairly evenly distributed in the Colville Valley. When heavy snowfall covers fields late in the season, they tend to migrate south to warmer, snow-free areas.



## HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Duck hunting methods are largely dependent on location. When hunting inland waters associated with ponds and rivers or feeding areas, traditional decoy setups work the best. Birds are most active during early morning and late afternoon as they move from resting areas to feeding areas. See [Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting](#) for more information.

The techniques employed to harvest geese are standard. Find agricultural areas where geese are feeding and set up decoy spreads well before daylight where geese are expected to concentrate. In District 1, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate generally include hay fields and winter wheat (or other cereal grain crop) fields. Because of this, most goose hunting opportunities occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting.

Figure 15 below only shows harvest data through the 2020 season.

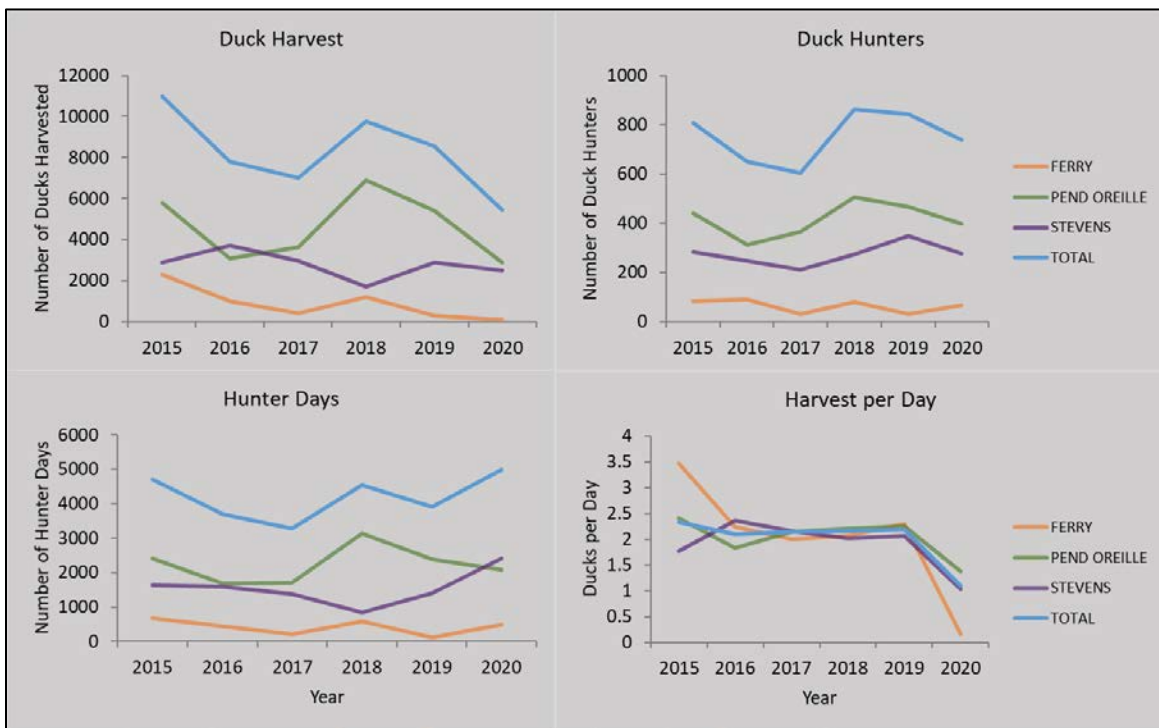


Figure 15. Trends in the number of ducks harvested, duck hunters, duck hunter days, and ducks harvested per hunter day in Ferry County (orange), Stevens County (purple), Pend Oreille county (green), and throughout District 1 (blue), 2015 – 2020.

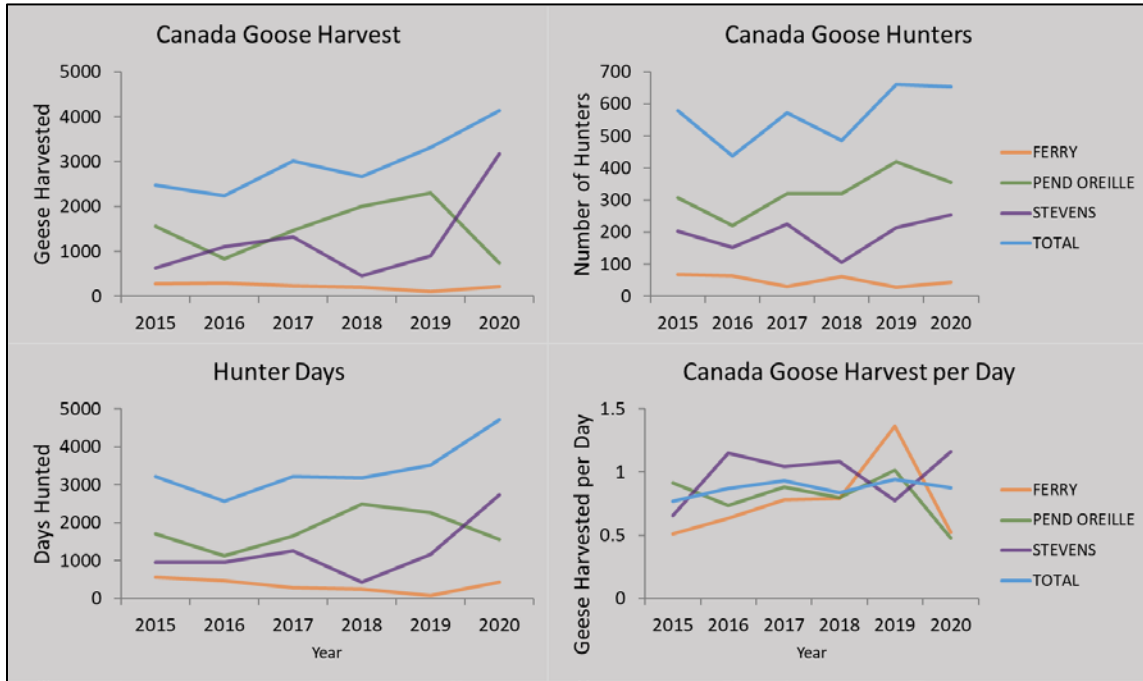


Figure 16. Trends in the number of geese harvested, goose hunters, hunter days, and geese harvested per hunter day in Ferry County (orange), Stevens County (purple), Pend Oreille County (green), and throughout District 1 (blue), 2015 – 2020.

## OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species that occur in District 1 but are not covered in detail include California (valley) quail, Hungarian (gray) partridge, snowshoe hare, bobcat, and coyote. Additional migratory game birds include mourning dove, Wilson’s (common) snipe, and American coot.



## MOOSE – SPECIAL PERMIT ONLY



The moose in northeast Washington are Shiras moose (*Alces shirasi*), which is the smallest of the four subspecies of moose in North America. Shiras moose are named after George Shiras III, an ardent conservationist, explorer, and U.S. Congressman in the early 1900s. This subspecies is native to the northern Rocky Mountains and apparently migrated on its own accord into eastern Pend Oreille County in the 1950s. The first official state documentation of moose in Washington occurred in 1954. In the decades since, moose have dramatically increased both in numbers and distribution, and are now common throughout much of northeast Washington.

Moose may only be hunted by limited special permits that are available by lottery drawing every year. Permit hunters should take note that while moose are fairly common, they are by nature a solitary animal, and occur only individually or in small groups scattered over wide areas. They tend

to select habitats based on forest successional stage and local climatic conditions. Moose can be found at any elevation in northeast Washington but are most likely found in the 3,000 to 5,000-foot elevation band. In the fall they seek deciduous browse, primarily willow, serviceberry, *ceanothus*, and other shrubs in logged over areas or burns approximately 15 years old or older. Moose are drawn to north slopes or east flowing drainages, which are cool and moist. Late fall and early winter snowfall do not seem to deter moose in any way.

Moose rut from mid-September to early October, and some hunters have been effective with calls. Hunters using calls should stay on stand for at least one hour or longer, as bulls come to the call from long distances. Early in the season, moose are widespread and snow is generally not present for tracking. Nevertheless, road and hiking access is good in October. Usually by some time in November snow is common and locating moose tracks, as well as seeing these dark animals against a white background of snow, becomes much easier. However, by late November there is frequently deep enough snow to be concerned about having only limited road access into high elevation moose range. Inland Empire Paper Company and other private timber companies may close their roads to motor vehicle traffic depending on weather conditions.

Forest Service Ranger Stations located at Newport and Colville are good sources of information on moose, weather, camping, and forest road conditions or restrictions. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also sells maps and has a regional office located in Colville.

### **Kettle Range – GMU 101, GMU 105, GMU 204**

Moose continue to expand their range in the Kettle Range moose unit, but currently the most productive locations for hunting are in two general areas. The first is within GMU 101 and includes the South Fork Sherman Creek drainage, the upper Barnaby Creek drainage, and the east slope of the Kettle Crest under Snow Peak, Sherman Peak, Barnaby Buttes, and White Mountain. There also tends to be a lot of moose sign on the west side of White Mountain up Hall Creek Road, but the dense timber makes sighting them difficult. The second area is in GMU 105 near the Canadian border in the vicinity of Churchill Mountain and Lead Pencil Mountain. The creek drainages may be most productive, including Sheep Creek, Crown Creek, and Flat Creek. The Little Boulder Creek drainage west of the Kettle River in Ferry County seems to be an area moose have recently expanded into as well.

### **Selkirk – GMU 113**

Good areas to hunt in the western portion of the Selkirk Mountains Unit include Skookum Lakes to South Baldy, along with the LeClerc Creek, Harvey Creek, upper Sullivan Creek, and Slumber Creek drainages. On the east side of the unit, the West Branch Priest River, Flat Creek, Goose Creek, Kalispell Creek, South Fork Granite Creek, Cache Creek, Willow Creek, and Gold Creek drainages can be productive.

### **Douglas – GMU 108**

Moose are frequently seen in the vicinity of Harrier Creek, VanStone Mine, and Rogers Mountain. Moose have also been commonly found in the headwaters area to Onion Creek.

### **Aladdin -- GMU 111**

Moose are more frequently seen in the south and central portion of GMU 111, but some hunters have had luck in the northern portion of the GMU as well. Some specific areas that generally harbor moose in GMU 111 include Big Meadow Lake, Seldom Seen Mountain, Bon Ayre Ridge, North and South Forks Mill Creek, Amazon Creek, and Clark Creek.

### **49 Degrees North – GMU 117**

The 49 Degrees North GMU is divided by a mountain range into east and west drainages. The areas near the crest of the divide or the drainages on the east side have the most moose activity. In the southern portion, good areas would be Boyer, Nelson, and Chewelah mountains, along with the Calispell, Tenmile, and Gletty creek drainages. In the north portion of GMU 117, Winchester, Small, Ruby, and Flodell creek drainages, along with Tacoma, Dirty Shirt, Little Calispell, Calispell, Goddards, and Olson mountain peaks, tend to hold significant numbers of moose. There are many recent and older harvest units in 117, which allow ample opportunity to glass hillsides from a ridgeline or road.

### **Parker Lake – GMU 117 – NO PERMITS IN 2021 DUE TO EXTENSIVE LOGGING OPERATION**

The Parker Lake Hunting Closure area is approximately 21,000 acres, and is very similar to the surrounding forest, with a blend of timber harvest, mature stand forests, and reproduction/burn units. From approximately September through May, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) Survival,

Evasion, Resistance, and Escape Training (SERE) School is present in either the Tacoma, Cusick, or Ruby Creek watersheds. Training typically occurs 24 hours/day from Saturday through Thursday of each week, except for an approximate three-week period during the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. To aid hunters in their planning and to assist in establishing a pattern of avoidance, deer or moose special permit holders will receive a map of the SERE School area of operation from the USAF Training Area Manager. Moose are found throughout the Parker Lake Closure, but seasonal timing will dictate elevations, population densities, and hunting opportunities. There are quite a few small ponds and swampy areas where moose can be found. Northern slopes and eastern drainages between 3,000 feet and the crest of Timber Mountain should provide ample opportunities. The SERE School conducts little activity above 3,500 feet in elevation.

### **Huckleberry – GMU 121**

Good areas to hunt in the Huckleberry Range are the mountains extending north and south of the Springdale - Hunters Pass off the Springdale - Hunters Highway. The east side of the pass has the majority of the moose habitat, especially the headwaters of the forks of Chimokane Creek and Deer Creek. Moose sightings are also common east of the Fruitland area with access to the mountains through the Fruitland Valley or up the “O-Ra-Pak-En” Creek drainage.

### **HARVEST TRENDS**

Moose hunting in Washington is regulated through a permit system. Hunters are required to return their hunt report to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Permit availability, and therefore moose hunting opportunity, has increased in Washington in the last 10 years. For more information about harvest trends, see the most recent [status and trend report](#).



## **ACCESS**

### **Sherman – GMU 101**

The majority of GMU 101 is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. All of the Kettle Range has good but somewhat limited road access for automobiles. In GMU 101, there are roads leading up to the Kettle Crest from both the east and the west, but only three that cross over, including two paved and maintained roads, Sherman Pass and Boulder Pass, and one unpaved road, Little Boulder. During the late hunt, some access may be limited in the higher elevations if there is snow. A four-wheeled drive vehicle is recommended in the late season if there is a possibility of snow. A Colville National Forest map is also recommended.

### **Kelly Hill – GMU 105**

Much of the northern portion of GMU 105 is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. Largely in the southern portion of the GMU, there are lands owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), industrial timber companies (mainly Hancock Forest Management), and other private lands. The eastern portion of the GMU also has some private timber company ownership. Road access is good throughout the unit. A Colville National Forest map is recommended.

### **Douglas – GMU 108**

The majority of GMU 108 is private, but there are a few sizeable blocks of Colville National Forest and DNR land. Road access is good in this GMU. A Colville National Forest and/or Department of Natural Resources map is recommended.

### **Aladdin – GMU 111**

Access is best either from Colville north on the Aladdin Road, from Highway 20 between Colville and Tiger (south of Ione), or west of Highway 31 between Ione and Metaline. GMU 111 has good driving access south of Smackout Pass, and the majority of land throughout this GMU is owned by the U.S. Forest Service (Colville National Forest) with a lesser amount owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources. In the northern portion of the GMU, there are fewer roads with more opportunities for walk in, bike, and/or horse access, as well as cross-country travel. Throughout the GMU, there are closed or decommissioned roads to get off of the main road system. A Colville National Forest map is recommended.

### **Selkirk – GMU 113**

The northern half of GMU 113 is mostly within the Colville or Idaho Panhandle National Forest, but many of the roads are gated or retired, which limits vehicle access. The southern half of GMU 113 is a mix of private timber company, private property, national forest, and Washington Department of Natural Resources. Most timber company gates are locked year-round, as well as some national forest roads. If hunting the eastern portion of GMU 113, it may be easier to access the area through Idaho. The higher elevations in GMU 113 may likely have some snow during the late hunt. A four-wheeled drive vehicle is recommended if there is a possibility of snow. A Colville National Forest map is also recommended.

### **49 Degrees North – GMU 117**

49 Degrees North is a mix of private property, Colville National Forest, the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, and private industrial timber company land. Road access on national forest land is fairly good, but most access on industrial timber company land is restricted to non-motorized. In some of the southern portion of GMU 117, all motorized access is restricted within the Buck Creek Road Closure Area, which includes Boyer Mountain and Nelson Peak. The Colville National Forest travel map is recommended. The Washington Department of Natural Resources map is also recommended, especially for the southern portion of the unit.

### **Huckleberry – GMU 121**

The majority of GMU 121 is in private ownership, but there are scattered sections or small blocks of Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands. Hancock Forest Management owns much of the private forest land in this area. Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maps are recommended.

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Hunters with permits to harvest antlerless moose are requested to refrain from taking cows with calves in their immediate vicinity. Some moose cows in Washington do not produce calves in all years or may have already lost them by hunting season. WDFW requests that hunters with antlerless moose permits avoid harvesting cows with calves.

**All successful moose hunters are required to submit a tooth within 60 days of harvest in the envelope provided with your informational packet.** Tooth samples allow WDFW to get an

overview of the age structure of the moose population and make better management decisions based on this information. Extra tooth envelopes are available at most WDFW Regional offices.

To find out the age of your harvested moose, visit the following website:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/harvest-reporting/tooth-lookup>



## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Over one third (approximately 37 percent) of the land mass in District 1 is public, consisting of mostly national forest, but also state DNR and WDFW, federal BLM, USFWS, and a few other government agencies. Most of these lands outside of Indian reservations are open to public hunting. The public lands tend to be at higher elevations, with steep terrain, a shorter growing season, no row crop agriculture, and in general a lower density of game animals, especially deer and turkey. GMUs with the most public land include 101 (Sherman), 111 (Aladdin), 113 (Selkirk), and 117 (49 Degrees North). If you plan to hunt on DNR land, you will need to purchase and display on your vehicle a [Discover Pass](#). For hunting on WDFW wildlife areas, you will need to display a WDFW [Vehicle Access Pass](#) (free with hunting or fishing license purchase) or a Discover Pass.

For more information related to the location of WDFW wildlife areas, see Figure 19 and see [WDFW's hunting access website](#). For more information on resources available to locate public lands, please see the Online Tools and Maps section below.

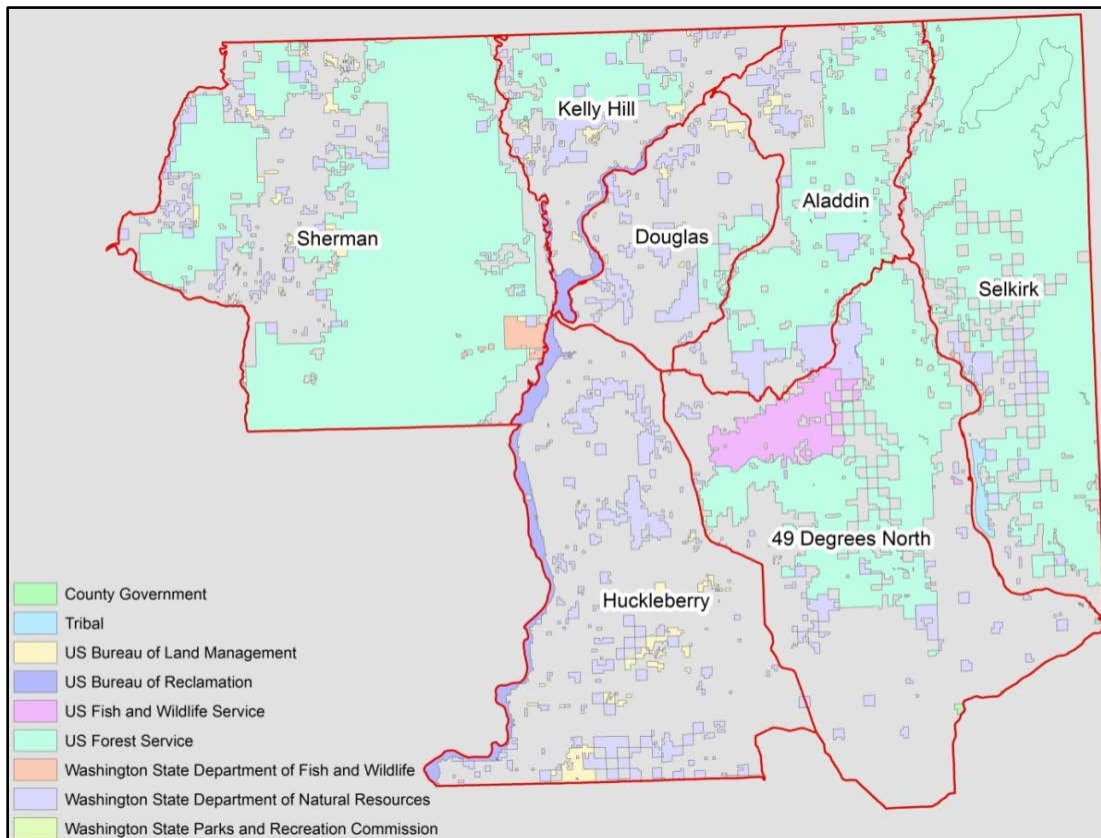


Figure 17. Map depicting the location of public lands within each GMU comprising District 1.

## PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Much hunting opportunity, especially for big game and forest grouse, occurs on private industrial forest lands. Timber companies that own large tracts of land and are the most well-known include Hancock, Stimson, and Inland Empire Paper. Hunters should be aware that there are a number of other smaller timber companies that have operations in District 1 but are not mentioned here.

WDFW recognizes that some of the best hunting opportunities occur on private industrial forest lands. WDFW works cooperatively with private timber companies to maintain reasonable public access during established hunting seasons. Private industrial forestlands have typically been open for public access, but hunters should always remember access granted to private property is a privilege. Hunters should also refrain from calling timber companies and asking them hunting questions. Foresters are very busy and hunters should be referring these types of questions to their local WDFW wildlife biologists.

Recently, there has been an increasing trend of timber companies restricting public access and shifting towards a permit system to limit the number of hunters who hunt on their lands. One of the primary reasons for access restrictions and loss of access is disrespect of the landowner's rules. WDFW reminds all wild land recreationists to treat this privilege with respect and follow basic access rules.

Electronic bikes (e-bikes) are a popular new mode of transportation for hunters. Please be aware that while they are not considered motor vehicles and allowed on most public land, some timber companies DO NOT allow e-bikes behind locked gates. These include Stimson and Molpus, but there may be others that do not allow them. Check first before riding behind a locked gate.

**FIRE CLOSURE INFORMATION:** Due to extreme drought conditions, all timber company lands in ~~NE~~northeast Washington are currently closed. Confirm through the websites below that land is open before going out to scout or hunt. Obey all posted signs. Signs and access restrictions will be removed when fire danger has abated.

### BASIC ACCESS RULES

Specific rules related to hunter access on private industrial forest lands vary by timber company. WDFW encourages hunters to make sure they are aware of the rules in areas they plan to hunt. Most timber companies provide these rules on their website or will provide them to hunters who call to inquire about access (see below for contact information). However, hunters are encouraged to follow these basic rules if they find themselves in an area they are not familiar with and are in doubt about specific landowner rules. The following are intended to be a general guideline of the basic access rules that are commonplace on many private industrial forest lands. Timber companies may have more or less restrictive rules in place and ultimately, it is the hunter's responsibility to be familiar with those rules.

- ✓ Respect the landowner and other users.
- ✓ Obey all posted signs.
- ✓ Drive slow with headlights turned on when driving on roads opened to public access.
- ✓ Avoid areas of active logging.
- ✓ No camping (unless allowed), littering, ORVs, off road driving, target shooting, or forest product removals. Exceptions: mushrooms and berries for personal use.
- ✓ An open gate does not mean the road is open to public motorized access.
- ✓ Gate closures apply to all motorized vehicles, including motorcycles and quads. This includes vehicles with electric motors.
- ✓ Help prevent forest fires.

### HEADS UP FOR ARCHERY AND MUZZLELOADER HUNTERS

Private timber companies have traditionally opened their lands to modern firearm hunters during established seasons. Archery and muzzleloader hunters should be aware they may not have full access, and access levels during their respective seasons varies by year and by landowner. Most often, access is influenced by industrial fire classifications issued by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Hence, timber lands may be closed during archery and muzzleloader seasons, which typically begin earlier in the autumn when there is a greater risk of forest fire. Hunters are urged to respect the landowners by adhering to any access restrictions they have in place.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

Some landowners have hotlines and/or websites where hunters can find information about public access. **It is important to remember, however, that these companies do not have personnel dedicated to answering hunter questions.** Therefore, hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW Region 1 office in Spokane (509-892-1001) if there are questions related to public access on private industrial forest lands.

Inland Empire Paper: <https://iepc.com/forestry/rec-use/>

Hancock Natural Resource Group: <https://www.hancockrecreation.com/> - Fire closure information ONLY

Stimson Lumber: <https://www.stimsonlumber.com/social-responsibility/recreational-access/>

## PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through a negotiated agreement. 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. In addition, lands under agreement are well known by WDFW Enforcement.

There are several private landowners in District 1 who are enrolled in WDFW’s Private Lands Access Program. Specific information, including property locations, can be found on [WDFW’s Hunter Access website](#). Below is a summary, by GMU, of cooperators and acres currently enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. The Feel Free to Hunt Program acres listed are those lands in the Cooperative Road Management Program with private timber companies.

Table 7. Cooperators and acres currently enrolled in the private lands hunting access program within District 1.

GMU	Hunting Only by Written Permission		Feel Free to Hunt		Hunt by Reservation	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
101 (Sherman)	5	2,150	1	2,702		
105 (Kelly Hill)			1	240		
108 (Douglas)	2	202	1	800		
111 (Aladdin)			2	6,660	1	238
113 (Selkirk)			2	51,117		
117 (49 Degrees North)	4	1,024	4	72,500	1	1019
121 (Huckleberry)	7	2,360	2	35,200	0	0

## ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 1 are a checkerboard of ownerships and sometimes it can be extremely difficult to determine who owns the land where a hunter wishes to hunt. However, there are several online tools and resources many hunters do not know about but provide valuable information that helps solve the landowner puzzle. The following is a list and general description of tools and resources that are available to the general public.

### DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES PUBLIC LANDS QUADRANGLE (PLQ) MAPS

A good source for identifying the specific location of public lands is DNR PLQ maps, which can be purchased for less than \$10 on DNR's website.

### ONLINE PARCEL DATABASES

Technology has come a long way and has made it much easier for the general public to identify tax parcel boundaries and the associated landowner. However, because this technology has not been readily available in the past, many hunters are not aware that it exists.

Stevens County tax parcels can be searched using the assessor's website at <http://propertysearch.trueautomation.com/PropertyAccess/?cid=0>.

Ferry County tax parcels can be searched using Mapsifter at <http://ferrywa.mapsifter.com/Disclaimer.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fdefault.aspx>.

Pend Oreille tax parcels can be searched using the assessor's website at <http://216.229.170.172/PropertyAccess/PropertySearch.aspx?cid=0>. You will need the address of the property to use this search tool.

### WDFW'S ONLINE MAPPING TOOLS

WDFW's [Hunting Webmap](#) has been revamped and provides hunters with a great interactive tool for locating tracts of public and private land hunting opportunities within each GMU.

### COLVILLE AREA MAPS

There are a variety of maps showing trails, camping locations, public lands, and popular landmarks available for download on the Colville Chamber of Commerce [website](#).

### OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

[Ferry County hunting page](#)

[Colville Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Ferry County Chamber of Commerce](#)

[North Pend Oreille Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge](#)



[Colville National Forest](#)

[LC Sportsmaps, Inc](#)

[OnX](#)

2021

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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# DISTRICT 2 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman counties

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## DISTRICT 2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) District 2 is in eastern Washington, bordering Idaho, and covers Lincoln, Whitman, and Spokane counties. Game management units (GMUs) in District 2 include 124 (Mount Spokane), 127 (Mica Peak), 130 (Cheney), 133 (Roosevelt), 136 (Harrington), 139 (Steptoe), and 142 (Almota) (Figure 1). The majority of the district is in private ownership, so hunters are highly encouraged to secure access prior to the hunting season or applying for special permits.

The geography of District 2 includes the edge of the Rocky Mountain Range in the east, the Columbia Basin in the west, and the Channeled Scablands and Palouse in between. This diverse geography supports a wide range of habitats that include mixed coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir, larch, Ponderosa pine, scattered aspen groves, scabland, sagebrush steppe, grasslands, and extensive agricultural lands. Topography varies from ~500 feet above sea level along the Snake River in the south to the 5883-foot Mount Spokane in the north. Dominant river drainages include the Spokane, Palouse, Columbia, and Snake rivers.

District 2 is best known for its deer hunting opportunities, including white-tailed deer in the Spokane and Palouse agricultural lands and mule deer in the Channeled Scablands and breaks of the Snake River. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including pheasant and elk, if hunters have secured access to private lands. Moose and bighorn sheep hunters can enjoy quality hunts if they are selected for special permit hunts and if they have secured private land access prior to applying.

## CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

CWD continues to expand across the country and in 2019 was detected in Libby, Montana. WDFW will be conducting active surveillance in 2021 for CWD, focusing on GMUs 105 – 127. If you harvest a deer in any of these units please stop by a check station or contact the department to have a sample taken.

If you hunt in any of the CWD-positive States please follow all regulations regarding importing your harvest. A list of CWD-positive States and summary of import regulations can be found here: [Chronic Wasting Disease \(CWD\) | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)



## BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions, and other emergency rules before you head out. In addition to potential wildfires, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) may be conducting prescribed burns and/or forest-thinning projects in your hunt area. For more information, see:

- Wildfire status updates ([InciWeb – Incident Information System](#))
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [WDFW Wildlife Areas](#)

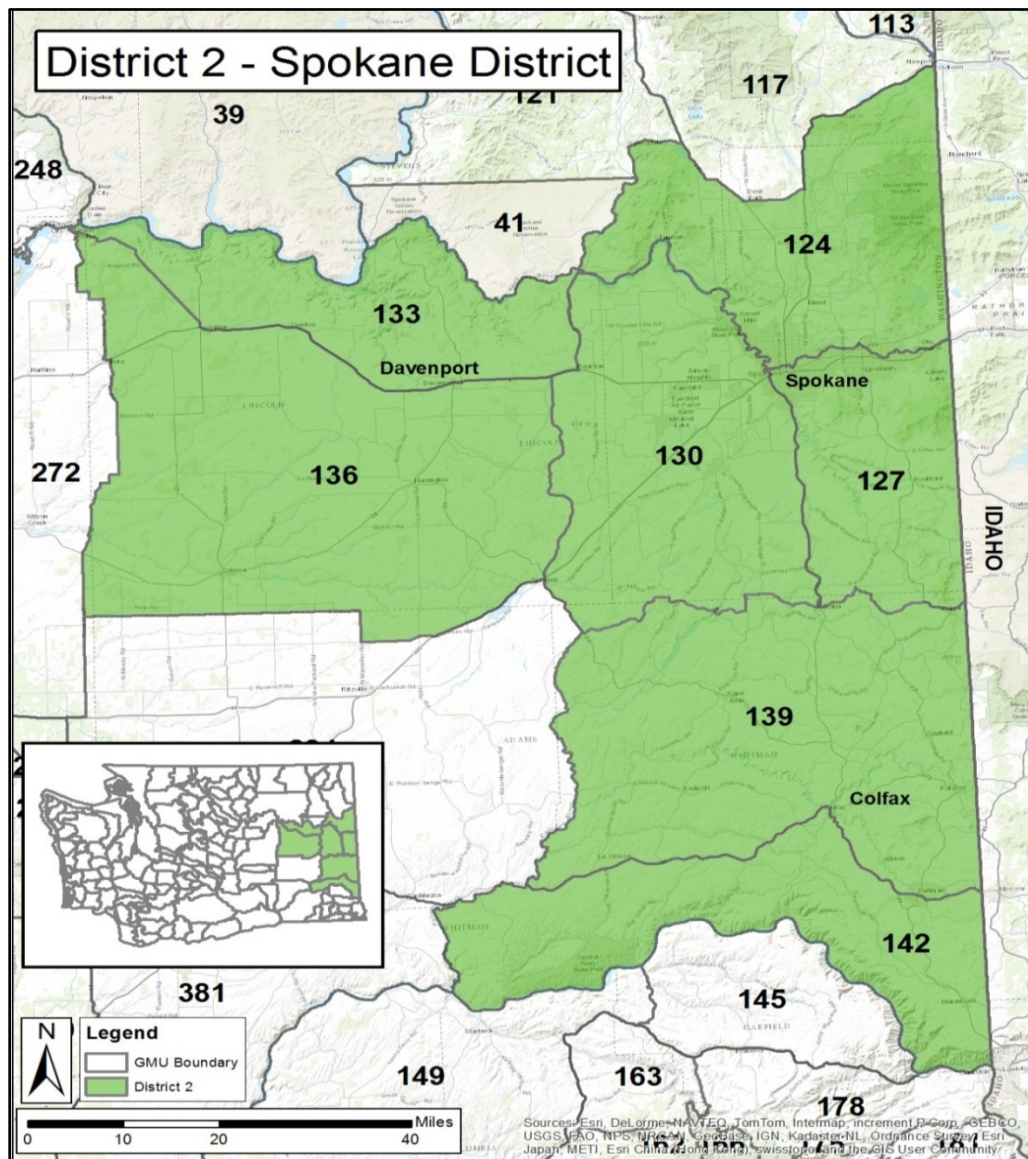


Figure 1. General location and game management units (GMUs) for WDFW District 2.

## ELK

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

All elk that occur in District 2 are Rocky Mountain elk and belong to the Spokane sub-herd of the Selkirk elk herd. The Selkirk herd originated in Pend Oreille County and has expanded its range over the last 40 years to this area. As elk habitat in District 2 continues to be lost to agricultural conversion and urban sprawl, our goal is to maintain the population at its current level (roughly 1000–1500 elk) while limiting agricultural damage and conflict within exurban areas. Consequently, an “any elk” harvest is offered for the general season in all GMUs. The majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, so managing this population requires landowner tolerance and cooperation. Elk in this herd can be highly mobile and difficult to locate, so learning their behavior and gaining access to numerous private lands will greatly increase your chance of success.

Currently, WDFW does not conduct formal population surveys to monitor elk populations in most of District 2. Rather, harvest data, opportunistic surveys, sightings, and damage complaints are used to indicate population trends. The exception to this is the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge located in GMU 130 (Cheney). Aerial surveys have been conducted on and near Turnbull for the last 15 years to obtain herd size and composition data. The survey area only covers a small portion of the Spokane sub-herd range; it is designed to inform management decisions for the Refuge and is not likely representative of the entire area. WDFW’s herd composition objective is to maintain a ratio of 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows pre-hunt and/or 12 to 20 bulls per 100 cows post-hunt. The 2020 pre-hunt aerial survey of Turnbull and the surrounding area within GMU 130 found the bull to cow ratio to be well above this management objective. Also based on the survey, 2020 calf production was above average, with a calf to cow ratio of 60 calves per 100 cows. Combined data sources for the entirety of District 2 over the last ten years indicate an overall stable population with some local populations declining and others increasing. For more detail on the status of elk in Washington, see WDFW’s most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#). Also available is a general how-to guide for elk hunting entitled “The Basics of Elk Hunting in Washington.” You can find this document on the WDFW website [here](#).

### WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

This question does not have an easy answer, because it depends on access to private land, hunting method, and the type of hunting experience desired. For archery hunters, GMUs 124 and 127 provide the best terrain and generally more forested land, irrigated agriculture, small developed lakes, and riparian areas. The terrain in GMUs 136–142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm, with open landscapes predominated by shrub steppe, scablands, and dryland farming

The majority of the district's elk harvest (25-50 percent) is usually in GMU 130, though a high proportion consistently occurs in GMUs 124 and 127 as well. Hunters who gain access to private lands in GMUs 127 and 130 have often had the highest success, though success in GMUs 136 and 139 has been higher the past couple of years. In GMU 130, hunters likely benefit from animals moving on and off Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge during the season. Elk are often targeted by nearby landowners due to seasonal crop, fence, and haystack damage. With one-third of the elk hunters in District 2, GMU 124 (Mt Spokane) sustains the greatest hunting pressure. As a result, overall hunter success is lower there, although the unit periodically produces one of the higher harvests of mature 6-point bulls. Private timber companies, especially Inland Empire Paper (IEP), offer public access in this unit with a paid permit. See IEP - [Recreational Use](#) for their rules and regulations. Hunters should be aware that motorized access may be limited or closed completely on IEP and other timber company lands due to road conditions, logging operations, or fire danger. Hunters are advised to check closures and restrictions before setting out. Quality Services, the property access manager for IEP, provides access updates online. Also be aware that GMU 124 contains several county parks, conservation areas, and state parks, and they do not allow hunting. In addition, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge in GMU 130 is NOT open for hunting except for Turnbull special permit holders.

The information provided in Table 1 provides a quick and general assessment of how GMUs compare regarding harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for each statistic. The table also summarizes the number of elk harvested per square mile and hunters per square mile to account for the variation in sizes between GMUs.

Each GMU was ranked for elk harvested/mile<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mile<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates during the general season. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum, the lower the score the better. Comparisons are most straightforward for modern firearm because seasons are the same across all GMUs. However, when choosing which GMU and/or species to hunt, differences that should be taken into consideration are:

1. In addition to the early general archery season in all GMUs, there is a late archery season in GMUs 124 & 127.
2. In addition to the early general muzzleloader season in all GMUs, there is a late muzzleloader season in GMUs 130-142.
3. There is a late Antlerless Only Master Hunter season for all weapon types in GMUs 127 & 130.
4. There are considerable differences in the sizes of GMUs, so looking at only total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison.

MODERN FIREARM											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
			Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	50	0.06	2	554	0.72	7	9%	5	14
127	509	1%	57	0.11	1	310	0.61	6	18%	1	8
130	940	7%	46	0.05	3	283	0.30	5	17%	2	10
133	555	6%	9	0.02	4	96	0.17	4	8%	6	14
136	1586	11%	4	0.00	6	41	0.03	1	9%	5	12
139	1327	3%	10	0.01	5	84	0.06	2	11%	4	11
142	771	8%	13	0.02	4	90	0.12	3	15%	3	10
ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
			Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	12	0.02	2	235	0.30	6	5%	5	13
127	509	1%	13	0.03	1	142	0.28	5	9%	4	10
130	940	7%	10	0.01	3	59	0.06	4	17%	2	9
133	555	6%	1	0.00	4	10	0.02	2	9%	4	10
136	1586	11%	0	0.00	4	6	0.00	1	0%	6	11
139	1327	3%	7	0.01	3	24	0.02	2	33%	1	6
142	771	8%	4	0.01	3	27	0.04	3	13%	3	9
MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
			Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	9	0.01	3	84	0.11	3	9%	6	12
127	509	1%	11	0.02	2	60	0.12	4	18%	3	9
130	940	7%	33	0.04	1	246	0.26	5	13%	4	10
133	555	6%	8	0.01	3	68	0.12	4	11%	5	12
136	1586	11%	3	0.00	4	14	0.01	1	19%	2	7
139	1327	3%	20	0.02	2	100	0.08	2	21%	1	5
142	771	8%	7	0.01	3	58	0.08	2	13%	4	9

Table 1. Rank sum analysis that provides a quick and general comparison of how harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons. As a generalization, the lower the rank, the better the overall elk hunting opportunity is within a GMU. Data presented are based on a five-year average (2016-2020).

## ELK AREAS

Most of the special permit elk hunts available in District 2 occur in Elk Area 1015, which is located within Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Turnbull special permit hunts were created in 2010 to address damage to aspen stands on the refuge and address damage complaints from landowners in the area. These are walk-in only hunts, except for disabled hunt permit holders, and the area open to hunt is limited and determined by Refuge staff. In past years, one Any Bull permit (any weapon type) and 62 Antlerless permits were offered. Beginning in 2019, this was changed to 58 and includes 1 Any Bull, 4 Spike-only, and 53 Antlerless permits. Permits include

each weapon type as well as hunts for youth, master hunters, and hunters with disabilities. Turnbull hunters averaged 12 percent success for antlerless hunts in 2020, compared to the previous 5-year average of 22 percent. The archery hunt has been particularly challenging with an average success rate of 9 percent. In 2020 the Any Bull permittee was successful for the first time since 2017. For more detailed harvest information, see District 2 - 2020 Game Harvest Statistics Online: [Elk Special Permits Harvest](#). For more information about elk management in the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, visit [Turnbull - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#).

To address winter property damage in the area, there are also several late-season raffle permits and one WDFW special permit offered on Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA) properties in areas around Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. See the Private Lands Program section for more information on acreage enrolled and the [CPWMA](#) website for details on their hunt management.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

Harvest of antlered and antlerless elk in the district has been fairly evenly split, with an average of 181 antlered and 154 antlerless elk harvested each year over the past 5 years. In the 2020 season, 21 percent of bulls harvested were 6-point or better, and 27 percent of bulls were 5-point. Across all GMUs, elk hunter success during the general season has averaged 12 percent over the last 10 years, and hunter effort (days/kill) has averaged 42 days/kill. These numbers vary widely by GMU. A good predictor of future harvest during general seasons is the recent trend in the harvest and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill. Figures 2 and 3 below provide trend data for these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where to hunt. As these numbers are highly variable between GMUs, pay attention to the scale of each, as they are not all the same.

Elk in District 2 appear to be expanding into new areas, and harvest in GMUs 139 (Steptoe) and 142 (Almota) has increased over the last five years (Figure 3). Some of these elk appear to move back and forth between Idaho and Washington, so timing and access to private lands will be the key to successful elk hunting in these GMUs. Complaints of agricultural damage have been on the rise, especially in areas where crops have been recently converted to legumes. Scattered groups of 20–100 elk have been reported causing damage in areas including Fairfield south to Tekoa in GMU 127, the area from Dusty east to Palouse, south to Uniontown, and along the Snake River breaks in GMUs 139 and 142, and from Tyler near the Lincoln/Spokane County border to Sprague and north to Edwall in GMU 130. There has also been an increase in reported crop damage by 60-80 elk along the river breaks in northern GMU 133 in recent years.





Figure 2. GMUs 124 – 130. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season elk harvest by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter effort (measured in days per kill) by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). Note the difference in scales for each GMU.

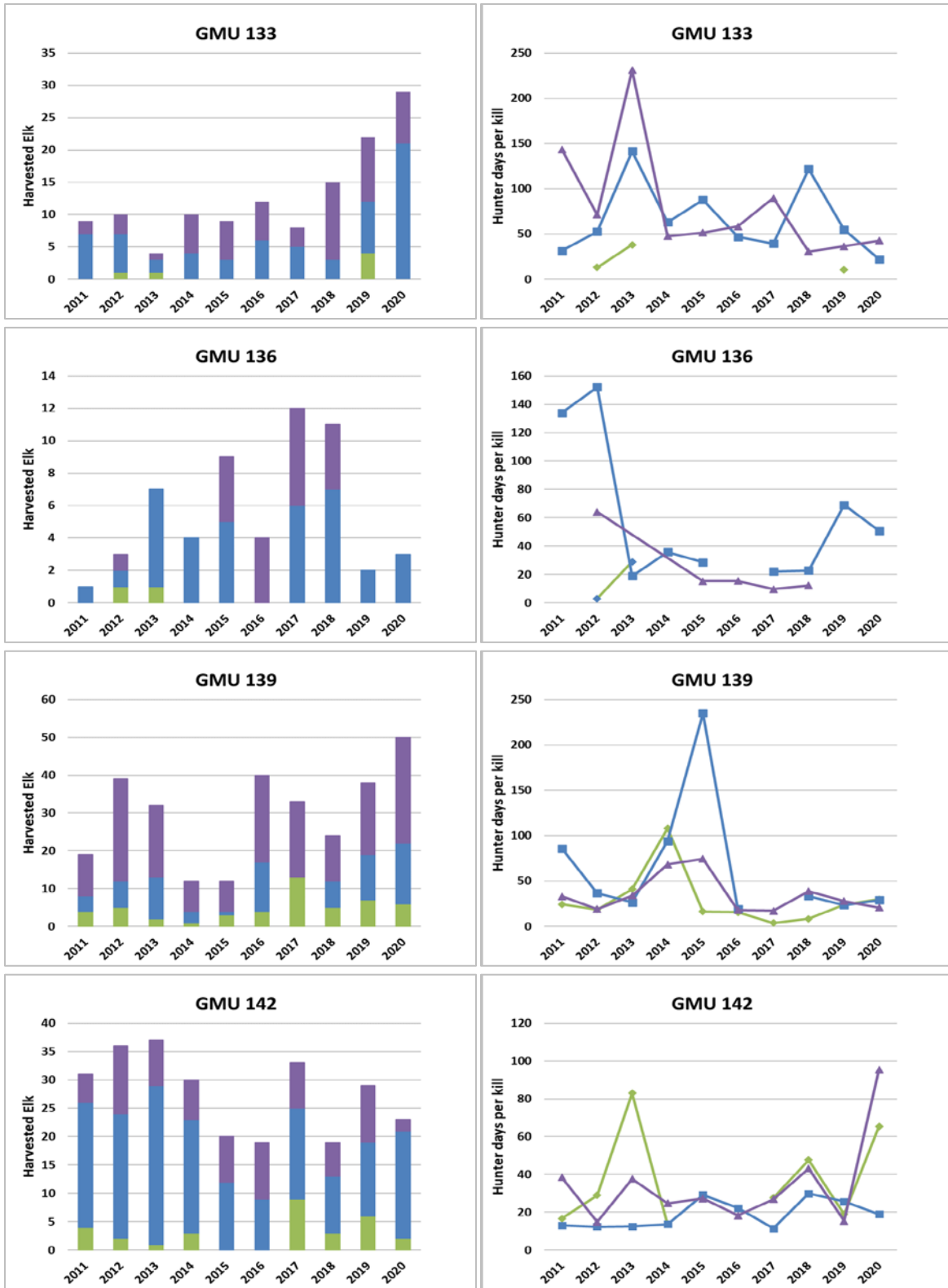


Figure 3. GMUs 133 – 142. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season elk harvest by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter effort (measured in days per kill) by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). Note the difference in scales for each GMU.

Success depends heavily on the work the hunter is willing to put in to obtain access to private property. There are over 100 properties enrolled in WDFW's private land hunting access program in District 2. The majority of these are built around upland game and deer hunting, however, some support elk hunting as well, so opportunities exist for elk hunters who do their research. For locations of these properties, visit our new [Hunt Planner Webmap](#). For more detailed harvest information, see District 2 - 2020 Game Harvest Statistics Online: [Elk General Season Harvest](#)

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

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range. While elk are susceptible to many conditions which result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and western Lewis County. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area. It has **NOT** been detected in the Selkirk herd to date.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### **How hunters can help:**

- **Hunting in areas with NO known TAHD:** If you harvest an elk with abnormal looking hooves (for example, overgrown or broken hoof claws or skin lesions), please keep the

hooves and report your observation to your local WDFW regional office. There are several conditions other than TAHD that may cause hoof deformities, and we may want to examine the hooves and/or arrange for diagnostic testing.

- **Hunting in TAHD positive areas:**

- Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form (link below).
- Clean shoes and tires: Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/). Additional information on TAHD and the west-side incentive program to harvest elk with TAHD, can be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.

## DEER

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

District 2 has both white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). White-tailed deer are found predominantly in the north and east portions of the district, in the forests, irrigated ag fields, and along riparian corridors. Mule deer are predominantly found in the west and south of the district, in the shrub steppe, scablands, and farmlands.

Deer population levels are closely tied to droughts, severe winters, disease, and land-use practices. The primary management objective for white-tailed and mule deer in District 2 is to keep the herds stable to slightly increasing and within landowner tolerance. Given that the majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, managing this population without landowner cooperation is impossible.

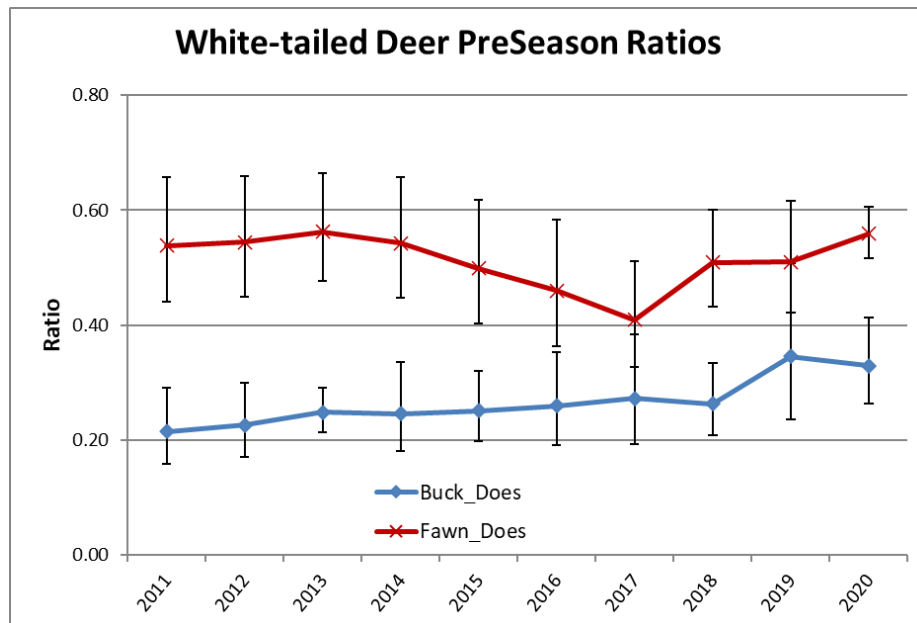


Figure 4. District 2 pre-season buck to doe (August) and fawn to doe (September) ratios (90 percent Confidence Interval in black) for White-tailed deer.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to manage white-tailed deer populations in District 2. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, days per kill, and pre-hunting season sex and age ratios are used to monitor populations. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using this data to monitor trends in population size and we are evaluating new approaches to monitoring white-tailed deer populations. In general, the harvest metrics indicate a



decline in the white-tailed deer population from the high in 2014, however, pre-season ground surveys indicate fawn to doe ratios (i.e., recruitment) have rebounded (Figure 4).

The harvest statistics noted above are also used in managing mule deer, but congregations of mule deer on wintering grounds allow for viable postseason aerial surveys to estimate populations. Flights are conducted every three to five years in conjunction with Districts 4 and 5, and ground surveys for ratios are completed every year. The last aerial survey for the Washtucna sub-herd (GMUs 139, 142, 284, & 381) was completed in 2015; biologists were supposed to fly this unit in 2020 but were not able to due to COVID-19 restrictions. In 2015 the population was estimated at ~13,000 mule deer; the 2020 ground survey estimated ~66 fawn per 100 does. The Odessa sub-herd (GMUs 133, 136, & 272) was last flown in 2019 resulting in an estimate of ~12,000 mule deer; the 2020 ground survey estimated ~71 fawn per 100 does. All are in line with previous estimates for these herds, indicating stable to slightly increasing populations.

For more details, please see the Columbia Basin Mule Deer Management Zone section and the Palouse White-tailed Deer Management Zone section of the [2020 Game Status and Trend Report](#).

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

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” This is not always easy to answer because it depends on the hunting method and the type of hunting experience desired. Some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature buck, while others just want to “fill the freezer,” and still others prefer to hunt an area with few other hunters.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would be entirely or mostly comprised of public land, have high deer densities, low hunter densities, and high hunter success rates. Unfortunately, this scenario does not exist in any GMU that is open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 2. Instead, because of general season opportunities, the GMUs with the highest deer densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to deter them from hunting in a GMU where they see lots of deer. While some hunters prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if that means there are also very few hunters and it provides a backcountry experience.

The information provided in Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for each statistic. Furthermore, harvest and hunter numbers were divided by the area of each GMU to account for the variation in sizes between GMUs. Mule deer and white-tailed deer are combined in this table. Because both species can be hunted with the same tag, we cannot separate white-tailed deer hunters from mule deer hunters. However, the percentage of mule deer in the total harvest is given to provide a gauge of how prominent each species is in each GMU.

<b>MODERN FIREARM</b>												
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	<u>Harvest</u>				<u>Hunters</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
			Total	% Mule Deer	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	1375	1%	1.78	1	4130	5.35	7	33%	1	<b>9</b>
127	509	1%	151	4%	0.30	4	681	1.34	4	22%	6	<b>14</b>
130	940	7%	146	56%	0.16	7	871	0.93	2	17%	7	<b>16</b>
133	555	6%	222	56%	0.40	3	929	1.67	6	24%	5	<b>14</b>
136	1586	11%	283	90%	0.18	6	943	0.59	1	30%	3	<b>10</b>
139	1327	3%	391	41%	0.29	5	1332	1.00	3	29%	4	<b>12</b>
142	771	8%	381	70%	0.49	2	1197	1.55	5	32%	2	<b>9</b>
<b>ARCHERY</b>												
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	<u>Harvest</u>				<u>Hunters</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
			Total	% Mule Deer	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	416	2%	0.54	1	1216	1.58	7	34%	1	<b>9</b>
127	509	1%	141	1%	0.28	2	437	0.86	6	32%	3	<b>11</b>
130	940	7%	47	69%	0.05	4	189	0.20	4	25%	7	<b>15</b>
133	555	6%	57	80%	0.10	3	170	0.31	5	33%	2	<b>10</b>
136	1586	11%	28	91%	0.02	7	112	0.07	1	25%	6	<b>14</b>
139	1327	3%	25	69%	0.02	6	97	0.07	2	26%	5	<b>13</b>
142	771	8%	16	70%	0.02	5	60	0.08	3	26%	4	<b>12</b>
<b>MUZZLELOADER</b>												
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	<u>Harvest</u>				<u>Hunters</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
			Total	% Mule Deer	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	45	3%	0.06	3	145	0.19	4	31%	1	<b>8</b>
127	509	1%	7	29%	0.01	7	32	0.06	1	23%	7	<b>15</b>
130	940	7%	117	42%	0.12	2	446	0.48	7	26%	6	<b>15</b>
133	555	6%	79	40%	0.14	1	262	0.47	6	30%	2	<b>9</b>
136	1586	11%	38	83%	0.02	6	132	0.08	2	29%	5	<b>13</b>
139	1327	3%	76	26%	0.06	4	264	0.20	5	29%	4	<b>13</b>
142	771	8%	39	50%	0.05	5	131	0.17	3	30%	3	<b>11</b>

Table 2. Rank sum analysis that provides a quick and general comparison of how harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. As a generalization, the lower the rank, the better the overall deer hunting opportunity is within a GMU. Data presented are based on a five-year average (2016-2020).

Each GMU was ranked for deer harvested/mile<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mile<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum, the lower the score the better. Comparisons are relatively straightforward because bag limits and seasons are fairly similar between GMUs. However, when choosing which GMU and/or species to hunt, differences that should be taken into consideration are:

1. There is a 3-point minimum harvest restriction for both species in all GMUs, except for white-tailed deer in GMU 124 where “any buck” is legal.
2. There is a late general modern firearm season for white-tailed deer in GMU 124. Late modern firearm season for white-tailed deer is by permit only for all other GMUs.
3. There is a late general muzzleloader season for white-tailed deer in GMUs 130-142.
4. There is a late general archery season for white-tailed deer in GMUs 124 & 127.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

Overall, the white-tailed deer population is down in District 2 due to a series of events starting with the drought and blue tongue (BT) outbreak of 2015 that lasted well into October and had deer dying in Region 1 from Canada to Oregon. The relatively mild winter of 2015/16 helped a little, as did more normal precipitation that spring and summer, however, the winter of 2016/17 was one the hardest in the past 10 years and decreased overwinter fawn survival. The population got a break in 2017 and started showing signs of recovery, however, the winter of 2018/19 was another difficult winter (though not as bad as 2016) and there was a small outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in north Lincoln and northwest Spokane counties. The winters of 2019/20 and 2020/21 were mild, which should help the white-tailed deer population start to rebound. However, the lack of precipitation this spring and the high likelihood that this will continue for the rest of the summer does not bode well for white-tailed deer.

Overall, mule deer herds are near their long-term averages. The mule deer populations suffered losses due to the same series of events noted above, however, mule deer do not typically die from BT and EHD, and the snows left the basin a bit sooner than in the northeast. However, the lack of precipitation and the likelihood of continuing drought will hurt our mule deer and especially fawn survival/recruitment. The reduced recruitment will likely not impact this year’s harvest but will be felt in the 2022 season.

In general, the best opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 124 and 127. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 136, 139, and 142. For archery hunters, GMUs 124 and 127 provide the best terrain, whereas the terrain in GMUs 136–142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm.

White-tailed and mule deer hunting opportunities in District 2 vary from marginal to excellent, depending on the GMU and if private land access has been secured. A good predictor of future

harvest during general seasons is recent trends in the harvest and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill. Figures 5 and 6 provide trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where to hunt.

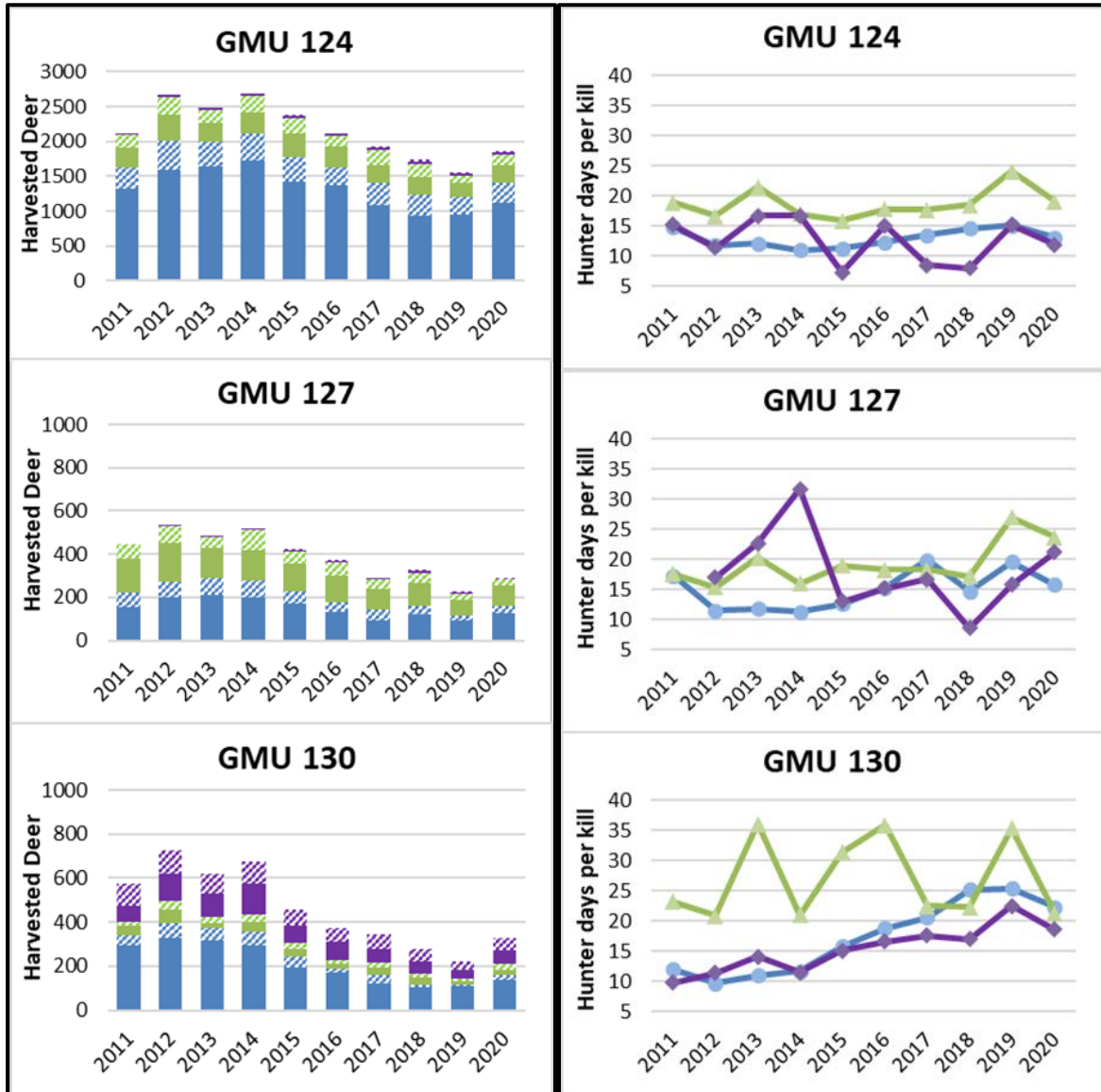


Figure 5. GMUs 124 – 130. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season harvest of deer bucks (solid) and antlerless (slash) by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). Note the different scale for GMU 124. **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter days per kill by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple).

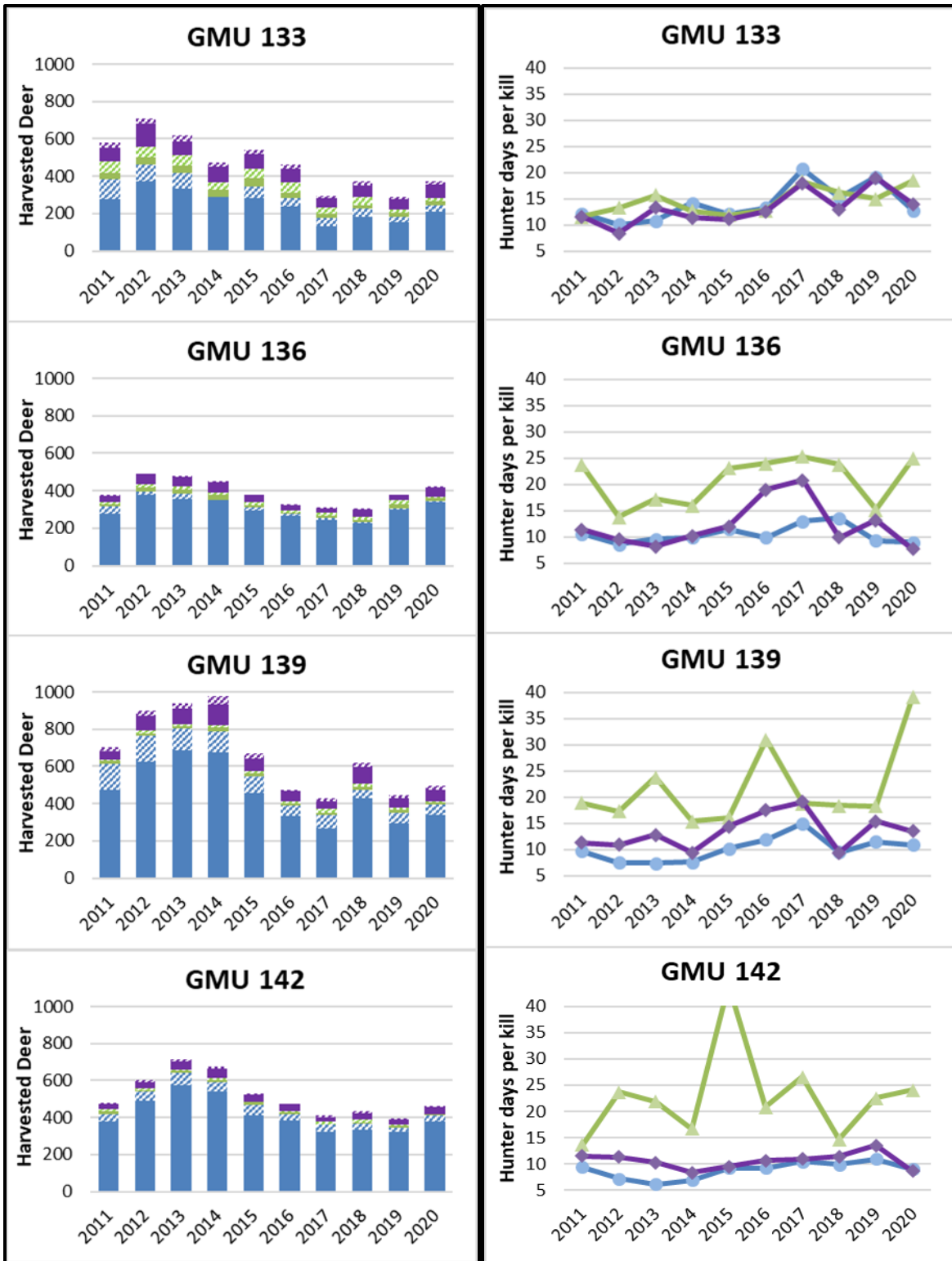


Figure 6. GMUs 133 – 142. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season harvest of deer bucks (solid) and antlerless (slash) by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter days per kill by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple).



There is a 3-point minimum antler point regulation in GMUs 127–142 for white-tailed deer, and the late white-tailed deer season in GMUs 127–142 is by permit only (the Palouse Special Permit Hunt) as of 2006. Hunter success over the past 10 years is, on average, higher for the Palouse hunt (43 percent versus 30 percent in the general season), with 5+ point bucks making up, on average, a greater percentage of the kill (37 percent versus 28 percent in the general season). There are currently 650 permits offered for the Palouse hunt.

Mule and white-tailed deer populations overlap in District 2, so make sure to identify the species before harvesting an animal, as regulations can differ between species within a GMU. The bulk of District 2 is private land, and buck hunters will have to put in time to get access. Doe hunters should have an easier time given the agricultural nature of this district. We have enrolled many cooperators in our hunter access programs in southeastern Washington. See the Private Lands Program section below and note that the locations are mapped on the [WDFW Hunt Planner](#).

For more 2020 harvest information from District 2, see:

- [Deer General Harvest District 2](#)
- [Deer Special Permits Harvest District 2](#)

## BIGHORN SHEEP

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

District 2 is home to one herd of California bighorn sheep, the Lincoln Cliffs herd, found in GMU 133 north of Highway 2 in Lincoln County (visit the [Hunt Planner Webmap](#) for a map). These sheep can most often be seen throughout the residential community of Lincoln and the cliffs above it, and in the cliffs around Whitestone Rock approximately seven miles downriver from Lincoln on Lake Roosevelt. Sheep are also observed frequently in the cliffs and canyons above Sterling Valley (the area between Lincoln and Whitestone) and in surrounding agricultural fields, where they are sometimes reported causing crop damage.

WDFW has conducted regular aerial surveys to assess the status of the Lincoln Cliffs herd since 2002, however an aerial survey was not conducted in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. The minimum population size is estimated by the count of rams and ewes observed during these flights (Figure 7). After several years of increase, the population is showing signs of leveling off and has likely reached the largest feasible herd size here due to human tolerance and availability of quality habitat. For more details on the history of the Lincoln Cliffs herd and the status of bighorn sheep in Washington, see WDFW's 2020 Game Status and Trend Report [here](#).

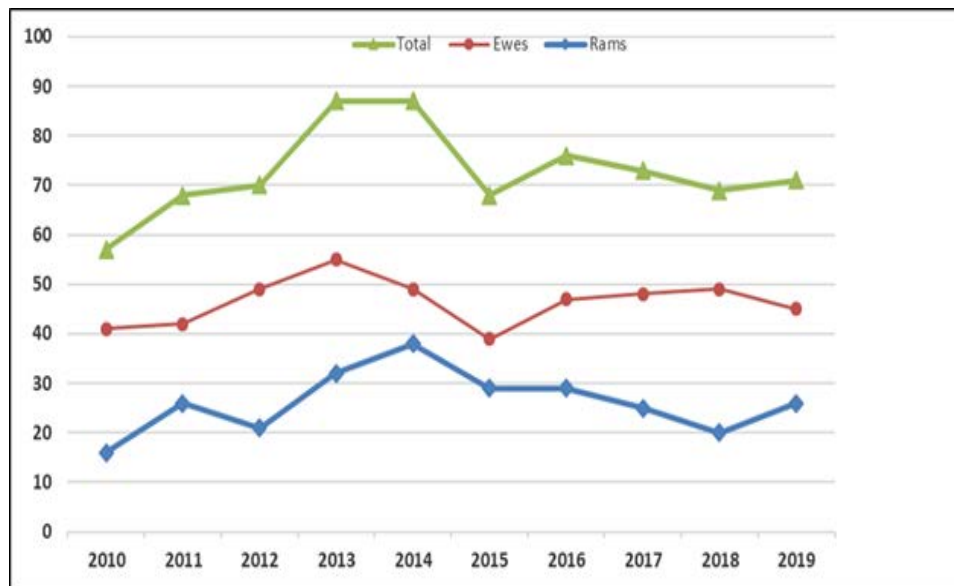


Figure 7. Lincoln Cliffs' minimum population estimate by sex for 2010–2019. Estimated as the maximum adult count from helicopter surveys conducted each year. No survey was conducted in 2020.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

Bighorn sheep hunting in Washington requires a special permit. One ram permit for the Lincoln Cliffs herd was offered each year from 1997–2013 and in 2017. Based on ram numbers and population size, this was increased to two permits in 2014–16 and again starting in 2018. The average number of applicants for this ram hunt over the last five years is 2203 and harvest success has been 100 percent. Neither ram permittee reported in 2020, although one ram is known to have been harvested. Ewe permits were introduced in 2018, with two offered– one in the Whitestone Unit and one in the Lincoln Cliffs Unit. Only one ewe permit, in the Whitestone Unit was available for the 2020 season; for the first time the ewe hunter was unsuccessful. Again in 2021 there will be only one ewe permit in the Whitestone Unit. The area is almost entirely private property and permittees will need to obtain permission to access these properties for their hunt.

## MOOSE

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

Moose in northeast Washington are Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*), the smallest of the four subspecies of moose in North America. Moose were not believed to be common or widely distributed in the Rocky Mountain states in the 1800s, and it was not until 1908, when explorer George Shiras III found a fairly large population in Yellowstone National Park, that this mountain race was described. Shiras moose were only rarely noted in Washington until the late 1950s when distribution began to expand into eastern Pend Oreille County. Moose dramatically increased in number and distribution in the decades that followed and are now relatively common throughout northeast Washington.

Statewide moose management goals are to 1) Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage moose and their habitats to ensure healthy productive populations; 2) Manage for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes; and 3) Manage statewide moose populations for a sustained yield. The proximity of a moose population near the Spokane metropolitan area adds the challenge of balancing population objectives with human safety and the community's tolerance of moose.

From 2013-16, WDFW completed a project to develop a new survey methodology that would produce a reliable population estimate over the entire northeast (GMUs 101–130). This project resulted in an estimate of 5,169 (3,510 to 7,034) moose in the northeast in 2015. Though the estimate produced by the new method was less variable than previous methods, the larger area of coverage made it impractical to apply the results to individual hunt units and the cost makes it unviable to repeat annually.

Currently, WDFW uses harvest, success, and hunter effort to monitor and manage moose populations in District 2. Based on these harvest metrics and results from a WDFW/University of Montana partner study from 2014-2018 in northeast Washington, it appears that the ~5000 moose in 2015 was a high point in the moose population in northeast Washington and now we are seeing a decline. Primary drivers of this decline are the poor condition of cows and reduced calf survival. Poor cow condition is likely caused by reduced habitat quality and quantity due to reduced timber harvests, increased tick infestations due to warmer winters and more hosts (i.e., moose), and decreased foraging by cows in winter due to high temperatures (moose become thermally stressed at 28°F once in their winter coats). Reduced calf survival is due to increased predation likely tied to the recent re-establishment of wolves in the northeast. However, the effects of predation (wolf and otherwise) are exacerbated by the impact of poor cow condition on their young nursing calves and poor habitat quality (i.e., forage) for older calves.

Harvest management emphasizes quality hunting opportunities through limited special permits drawn by lottery each year. A total of 34 permits are offered in District 2 in a variety of categories (Table 3). Prior to 2012, District 2 had two moose hunt units (MHU), Mount Spokane (GMU 124 east of Highway 395), and Hangman (GMUs 127 and 130). In 2012, the Mount Spokane MHU was split into Mount Spokane North and Mount Spokane South Moose Areas (maps found [here](#)) to help distribute hunters more evenly across the area and increase hunter opportunity. In 2015, the Hangman MHU was split into the Mica Peak (GMU 127) and Cheney (GMU 130) MHUs for the antlerless hunts to better distribute hunters and try to address increasing moose conflict in Cheney. Additionally, in 2015, the Spokane West MHU was split off from the Huckleberry MHU to distribute hunters and increase opportunity.

Table 3. Permits offered in District 2 by moose hunt unit for 2021.

Moose Unit	Antlered Bull	Antlerless Only		
	General	General	Disabled	Youth
Mount Spokane North	8	2	1	0
Mount Spokane South	8	2	0	1
Spokane West	2	2	0	0
Hangman	4	0	0	0
Mica Peak	0	2	0	0
Cheney	0	2	0	0

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Hunters should take note that moose are by nature a solitary animal and are scattered over very wide areas as individuals or in small groups. While they can be found at any elevation, they are most likely found between 3,000 and 5,000 feet. In the fall they are looking for deciduous browse, primarily willow brush, alder, serviceberry, ceanothus, and other shrubs in clear-cuts or burns 10–20 years old. Moose seek out cool, moist drainage basins and slopes, and generally prefer north slopes or east-flowing drainages. Moose are still in the rut in early October and some hunters have been effective with calls. By November, snow is common, and locating moose tracks and seeing these dark animals with a snow background is much easier. However, by mid to late November, there is usually enough snow that motor vehicle access can be limited.

Moose seek out snow rather than avoid it in late fall and early winter because they are in their winter coats and start to experience thermal stress at temperatures exceeding 28°F. In years without much snow, they are typically found at a higher elevation and on north slopes with tree cover. In years with a lot of snow, they move down to the foothills of the mountains. Moose habitat in District 2 is largely located on private timber company lands, but smaller private ownerships can also harbor good moose concentrations. Permit holders should exercise caution and know where they and the targeted moose are at all times given the percentage of private land



ownership, proximity to Idaho, and non-hunting lands (State and County parks, National Wildlife Refuge) within the moose hunting units. WDFW requires all successful moose hunters to submit tooth samples in the envelopes provided with their informational packet. Tooth samples allow us to get an overview of the age structure of the moose population, which will help inform future management decisions.

See below for specific harvest metrics and access for each MHU:

### **Mount Spokane North Moose Area**

The success rate for the eight Bull Moose permits in this unit was 86 percent in 2020 and has averaged 92 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have spent eight days per kill on average, but the trend is increasing with hunters spending on average 12 days per kill in the last four years of the hunt compared to just five days per kill in the first five years. The average spread of bulls harvested is 35 inches, with the largest bull harvested measuring 49 inches.

Success rates for the Antlerless Only hunt in this unit was 100 percent in 2020 and has averaged 87 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have spent seven days per kill on average, though it reached as high as 19 days per kill in 2016. Decreasing hunter success rates and increasing hunter effort combined with low pregnancy rates and low calf survival in a local study have led the department to reduce antlerless opportunity in this area to two permits starting in 2020. We also offer one antlerless permit to disabled hunters in this unit.

Access in this unit is primarily on timber company lands, Inland Empire Paper (IEP) and Hancock Timber, and DNR lands around the [E Blanchard Rd area](#). The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be careful and read signage at gates—they might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. IEP allows vehicular access but will close gates to full-sized rigs once there has been enough rain to soften the roads (typically in late October or early November). IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepc.com/forestry/rec-use/>). Hancock has traditionally had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with WDFW to allow **non-motorized** access for free to our hunters, but please check with Hancock or WDFW to confirm this MOU is still in place prior to hunting their properties. WDFW Enforcement monitors their property and will ticket offenders. Please respect the agreement or this access could be lost. Hancock does not supply a map of their property; we recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify Hancock ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps).

### **Mount Spokane South Moose Area**

The success rate for the eight Bull Moose permits in this unit was 100 percent in 2020 and has averaged 94 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters spent 13 days per kill on average in 2020,

the average for this hunt since its creation is seven days, but has been in the low teens the last three years. The average spread of bulls harvested is 34 inches, with the largest bull harvested measuring 48 inches.

Success rates for the Antlerless Only hunt in this unit was 100 percent in 2020 and has averaged 86 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have spent seven days per kill on average, though it has been as high as 16 days per kill. Decreasing hunter success rates and increasing hunter effort combined with low pregnancy rates and low calf survival in a local study have led the department to reduce antlerless opportunity in this area to two permits starting in 2020. We also offer one antlerless permit to youth hunters in this unit.

Access in this unit is primarily on Inland Empire Paper (IEP) timber company lands in [Thompson Creek](#) and [Brickel Creek](#). There is a small chunk of DNR lands north of the Brickel Creek area as well. The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be careful and read signage at gates—they might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. IEP allows vehicular access but will close gates to full-sized rigs once there has been enough rain to soften the roads (typically in late October or early November). IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. IEP lands are adjacent to Mount Spokane State Park, which is not open to hunting, and the border with Idaho, so hunters need to know where they are before taking a shot. We recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps). For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepc.com/forestry/rec-use/>).

### **Spokane West Moose Hunt Area**

This Hunt Area was split off from the Huckleberry GMU 121 in 2015, so there is little historic data for comparison. The 2015 Any Moose permittee harvested a 32-inch bull in one day of hunting. The 2016 permittee harvested a 44-inch bull in five days. The 2017 Any Moose permittee did not report their hunt. The 2018 permittee harvested a 43-inch bull in one day. The 2019 permittee harvested a 30-inch bull in five days. The 2020 permittee harvested a 48-inch bull in seven days.

For the two antlerless permits offered each year both hunters were successful in 2015, 16, and 17. In both 2018 and 19 only one of the two hunters reported, but each was successful. In 2020 both hunters reported, but only one was successful. Average days per kill have ranged from 2 to 10 days. Based on harvest stats and limited composition flights the moose population in this unit is doing better than the other units in District 2. However, most of the access is non-motorized, so do not apply if you are not in good physical condition or do not have private land access.

Access in this unit is primarily on Hancock Timber Company lands and scattered DNR parcels. The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be

careful and read signage at gates-they might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. Hancock has traditionally had an MOU with WDFW to allow **non-motorized** access for free to our hunters, but please check with Hancock or WDFW to confirm this MOU is still in place prior to hunting their properties. WDFW Enforcement monitors their property and will ticket offenders. Please respect the agreement or this access could be lost. Hancock does not supply a map of their property; we recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify Hancock ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps). Access to Hancock lands in this unit are from the gate east off [Hwy 231 just south of the intersection with Reservation Road](#).

### **Hangman Moose Hunt GMUs 127 and 130**

The number of Bull Moose permits offered for this hunt was reduced from seven to four in 2017, due to reduced success, ≤86 percent, and increased effort (as high as 23 days) observed the previous four years. Since this reduction success has averaged 88 percent and effort has averaged 7 days per harvest. The average spread of bulls harvested in the last 10 years is 37 inches, with the largest bull ever harvested measuring 52 inches. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears to be declining in areas open to general hunting access (e.g., DNR and Inland Empire Paper Company), but increasing in areas closed to hunting or where access is limited (Conservation Areas and suburban Spokane). Hunters are strongly encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt before applying.

Access in this unit is primarily on Inland Empire Paper (IEP) timber company lands on Mica Peak and scattered sections of DNR throughout. The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be careful and read signage at gates before entering. They might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. IEP does NOT allow vehicular access on their lands in this unit due to a history of road damage. IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. IEP lands are adjacent to Spokane County Parks lands, which are not open to hunting, and the border with Idaho, so hunters need to know where they are before taking a shot. We recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps). For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepc.com/forestry/rec-use/>). Two primary entry points for this hunt are the [Belmont Road County Park](#) trailhead and [FAA Starr Road gate](#).

### **Mica Peak Moose Hunt GMU 127**

There are no Bull Moose permits specific to just this unit (Hangman MHU incorporates both Mica Peak and Cheney MHUs). The following Antlerless harvest statistics include the Hangman Unit data because the vast majority of permittees prior to 2015 harvested their animals in Mica Peak. Due to declining hunter success, Antlerless Only permits were reduced from seven to four in 2017. The success rate for this hunt increased to 100 percent in 2017, up significantly from the

previous 5-year average of 69 percent and remained at 100 percent in 2018. However, success dropped to 50 percent in 2019 and effort spiked to an all-time high of 21 days/kill on average. Permits were reduced to two in 2020; hunter success rebounded to 100% and hunter's effort came back into line with the 5-day average observed prior to the more recent increase. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears to be declining in areas open to general hunting access (e.g., DNR and Inland Empire Paper), but increasing in areas closed to hunting or where access is limited. Hunters are encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt if they want to increase their odds of success.

See the Hangman unit above for more access information.

### **Cheney Moose Hunt GMU 130**

There are no Bull Moose permits specific to just this unit (Hangman MHU incorporates both Mica Peak and Cheney MHUs). This MHU was split off from the Hangman MHU in 2015 for Antlerless only hunts because very few permittees hunted it while the number of complaints regarding moose in the unit's suburban/rural areas increased. This unit is almost entirely private land. The larger blocks of public land are NOT open to hunting, and the moose are dispersed and highly mobile. Only one of the two Antlerless Only permittees reported for this hunt in 2015. The permittee was successful after 15 days of hunting. In 2016, neither permittee was successful after spending a combined 20 days hunting. In 2017, one permittee did not hunt, while the other was successful after nine days of hunting. In 2018, both hunters were successful after spending a combined 36 days hunting. In 2019 both hunters were successful after spending a combined 20 days hunting. In 2020 only one hunter reported and they were successful after four days of hunting.

Hunters are **STRONGLY** encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt prior to applying for the permit.

## COUGAR

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

Cougars may be found in varying densities throughout District 2, depending on habitat availability. Cougars are managed to provide maximum harvest opportunity while promoting population stability and social structure and minimizing human-cougar conflict.

Beginning with the 2012 season, WDFW shifted away from using season length and/or permits to manage cougar harvest and instead divided the state into cougar hunt areas and implemented a standard early general season with no harvest limit across all hunt areas from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, followed by a late season (Jan. 1 to Apr. 30) the duration of which is dependent on a harvest guideline. The harvest guideline is 12-16 percent of a hunt area's estimated population (not including kittens). Starting Jan. 1, harvest numbers and composition of the harvest in each hunt area are evaluated, and hunt areas may be closed for meeting or exceeding the guideline with relatively short notice. Hunters that plan on hunting cougar after Jan 1 are responsible for knowing if their hunt area is open or closed; to confirm hunt area status, hunters must call the cougar hotline (1-866-364-4868) or [check online](#). In order to facilitate implementation of the guideline all successful cougar hunters must report their harvest to WDFW within 72 hours of harvest. A pelt sealing must also be scheduled within 5 days of the notification of kill.

GMUs 124, 127, and 130 comprise a single hunt area with a harvest guideline of 7–9 adults. Therefore, if you would like to hunt cougar in GMUs 124–130 after Jan. 1, you will have to verify the unit is still open. Harvest in this unit has met or exceeded the guideline for the past 4 seasons and has been closed prior to April 30. GMUs 133–142 are part of the Columbia Basin Hunt Area that has no harvest guideline due to limited cougar habitat and corresponding lower cougar population.



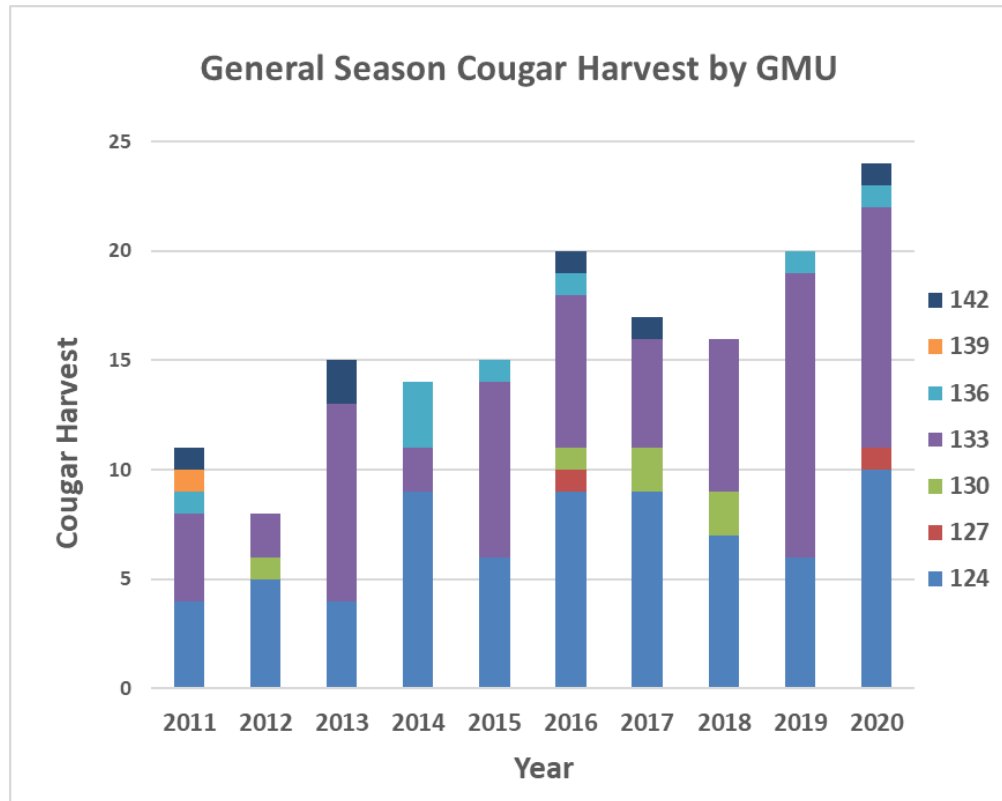


Figure 8. General season cougar harvest by GMU for license years 2011–2020.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Starting in 2017, the cougar season was extended until April 30. If you hunt in a unit that has not been closed to harvest, **you will have to purchase a 2022 hunting license and cougar tag to hunt cougar after March 31, 2022.**

In general cougar harvest has been increasing in District 2 over the last 10 years, with the highest reported harvest of 24 cougars occurring in the 2020 license year (Figure 8). The average harvest across the district over the last 10 license years is 16. Harvest is consistently the highest in GMUs 124 and 133, and sightings in these units are also common. Cougar harvest in all other GMUs in District 2 is usually very low (Figure 8). Most of the general season cougar harvest in the district is opportunistic, occurring most often while hunters are seeking deer or elk. The proportion of males and females in the harvest varies each year, but the typical age at harvest is three years or younger. For harvest details by GMU, see the [Game Harvest Reports](#). For information on reporting and pelt-sealing requirements visit this [link](#).

## BLACK BEAR

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

Black bears in Washington are managed with the goal of ensuring healthy and productive populations while minimizing conflict with people. The state is divided into nine Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs); District 2 is part of both the Northeastern BBMU (GMUs 124–130) and the Columbia Basin BBMU (GMUs 133–142). Harvest levels vary within and between BBMUs depending on local habitat conditions and corresponding bear densities, as well as hunter effort and access limitations. We do not currently conduct annual surveys or have formal population estimates for bear but rely on harvest statistics to infer population trends and evaluate management decisions.

Bear harvest in District 2 is substantially lower than in the rest of the Northeastern BBMU, likely due to habitat and hunter access limitations. Bear harvest in District 2 also varies widely year by year, as bears are most often harvested by deer and elk hunters when they come across one during their general seasons (Figure 9). The proportion of males and females in the harvest is also highly variable from year to year, likely for the same reason (Figure 10). Most of the harvest usually occurs in GMUs 124 and 127. Although the Columbia Basin BBMU is not thought to support resident black bear populations due to lack of forested habitat, GMU 133 has averaged 6 bears per year over the past 10 years. Harvest in the other GMUs in the Basin (136–142) is very low or nonexistent and would not be worthwhile to hunt for this species.

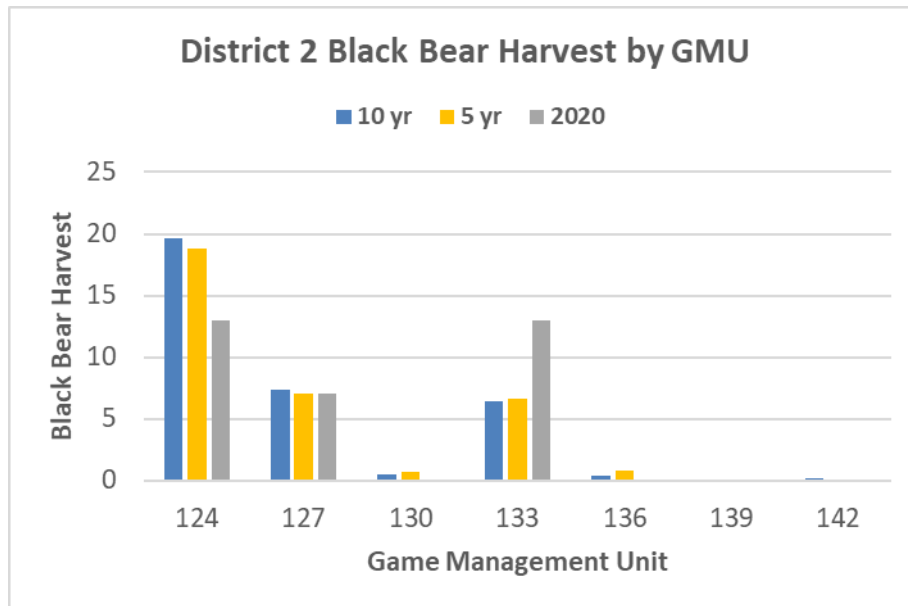


Figure 9. The number of black bears harvested in each GMU during the 2020 general season in District 2. Also included are the 10-year (2011-2020) and 5-year (2016-2020) average for the total number of bears harvested in each GMU.

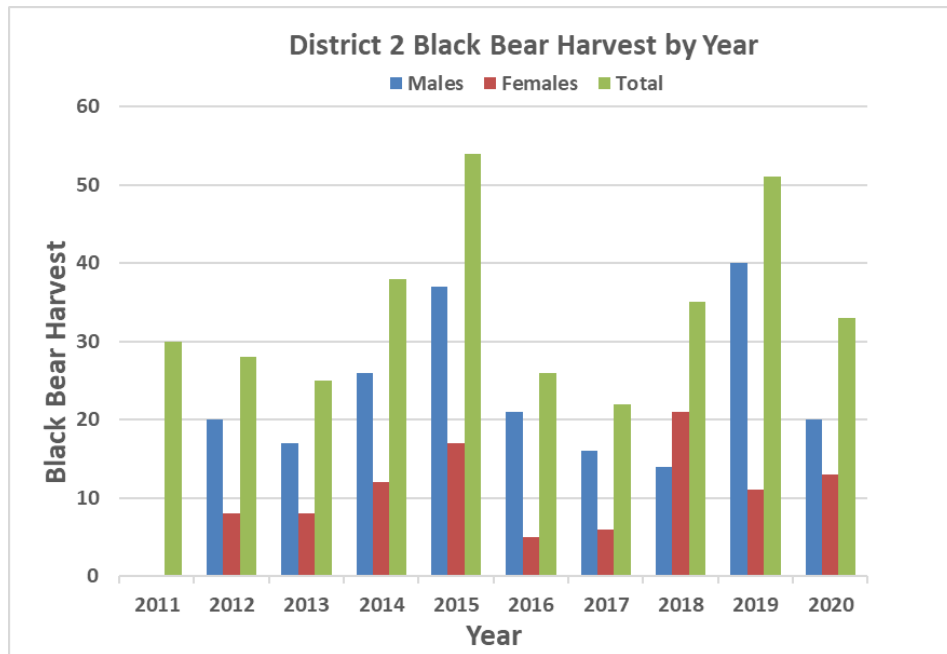


Figure 10. Black bear total harvest in District 2, 2011–2020. The sex of harvested bears is not available for 2011.

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Beginning in 2019, the fall general season dates were standardized statewide, allowing eastside hunters to start hunting August 1 in all GMUs. Additionally, the bag limit was increased to two bears, regardless of location. Hunters must purchase a second bear tag to harvest a second bear. There are no spring permits for bear in District 2. District 2 is not known for black bear hunting, though an increase in harvest in recent years suggests the local population is doing well, especially in the forested areas of Spokane and Lincoln counties.

Scouting and securing private land access are extremely important factors that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 2. Although black bears are fairly common in some areas, they are seen infrequently because they tend to spend most of their time in forest cover and limit their time in the open to cooler times of the day. Much of the bear habitat in the district is either in State or County parks (which are not open to hunt), or private timber company land (where you may need an access permit).

Bear hunters are strongly urged not to shoot females with cubs. In the fall, cubs are 30 to 50 pounds and tend to lag behind when traveling. Please be patient and spend time watching for cubs before shooting a bear. All successful Spring bear hunters must submit the raw pelt with proof of sex attached and the skull for inspection and tooth removal. Please contact the Region 1 office (509)892-1001 to schedule an appointment. In addition, remember that it is **mandatory** to submit a premolar tooth from all fall season harvested bears. Tooth envelopes are available at

WDFW offices, and hunters are welcome to make an appointment for help with pulling the tooth if needed. If you are unable to reach a regional WDFW office for a tooth envelope, contact the Wildlife Program at (360) 902-2515. Hunters that submitted a tooth can look up the age of their harvest several months after the close of the season on our website [here](#).

## WATERFOWL

At the statewide level, District 2 is not known for its duck hunting and is not a large duck production area due to the ephemeral nature of the water bodies in the Channeled Scablands. Local surveys indicate brood production has dropped back to pre-2016 levels (Figure 11). In 2016 and 2017 we had especially high precipitation in the winter and spring, resulting in dramatic increases in wetland size and numbers and increased nesting and broods. The most common breeding duck species in the area are mallard, gadwall, green-winged teal, and redhead. Other common waterfowl species in District 2 include coot, ruddy duck, and northern pintail and American wigeon during migration. Aerial breeding population surveys (BPOP) for the entire Potholes region of eastern Washington show similar trends in ducks as seen in our District ground surveys (Figure 12). However, the BPOP coot numbers remain relatively stable, while our coot brood numbers have spiked. BPOP flights in 2020 and 2021 were canceled due to COVID-19.

Given the limited number of local nesting ducks, the waterfowl hunting opportunity in this district is dependent upon the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska, the amount of precipitation, and how long waterbodies remain ice-free. With little to no spring rain, waterbody numbers and size are down this year and with the drought forecasted to continue through fall, it does not look good for duck hunting this season in District 2. Hunters should focus their efforts on larger perennial waterbodies unless fall rains are significant, then shallow, flooded agricultural fields become duck and goose hot spots. For more information on waterfowl hunting techniques and waterfowl hunting areas in Region 1, see the [WDFW waterfowl webpage](#).

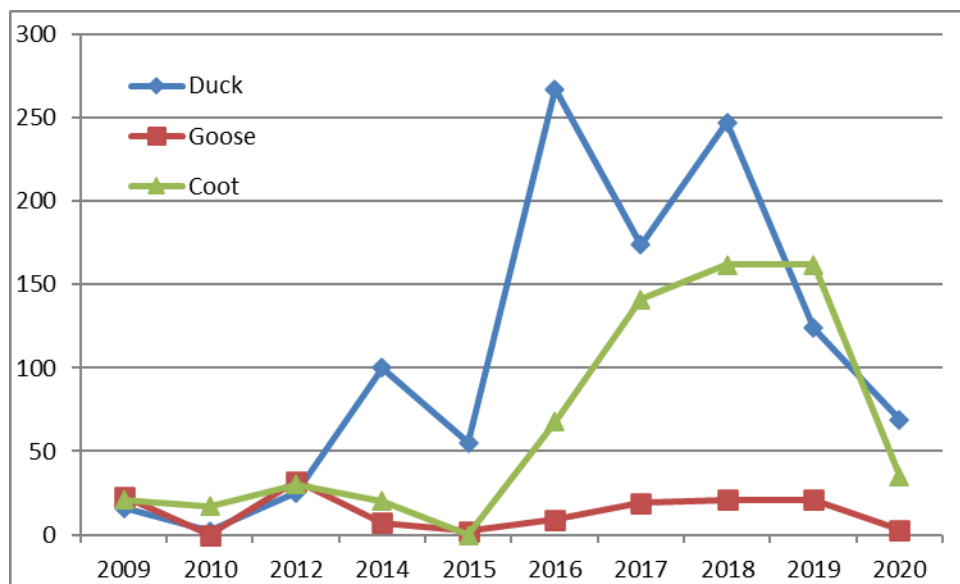


Figure 11. Total number of young of the year observed on District 2 brood ground survey routes.



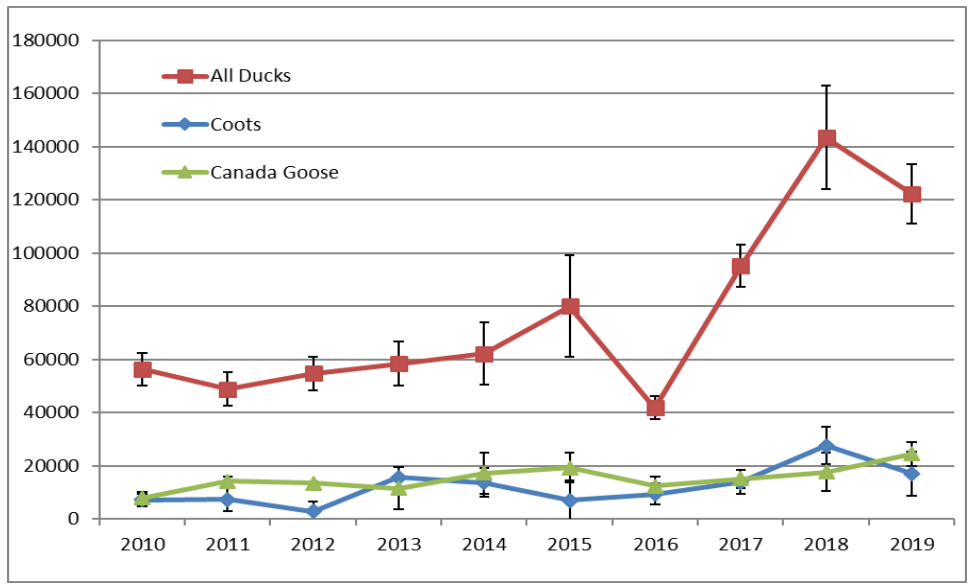


Figure 12. Waterfowl estimates from aerial breeding population surveys for the Potholes region of eastern Washington. BPOP flights were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19.

## PHEASANT

The pheasant population available for harvest in the fall is highly dependent on annual recruitment. The mild 2020/21 winter should have resulted in increased overwinter adult survival and thus more hens available to nest this spring. However, the lack of spring precipitation and likelihood of the drought continuing through summer will decrease the availability of forbs and insects, resulting in reduced chick survival and recruitment.

District-wide harvest has been increasing the past four years, reaching a 10-year high in 2020 (Figure 13, top). Hunter numbers have been relatively stable (Figure 13, top), mirroring statewide trends. Days per hunter and harvest per hunter have remained relatively stable in the district, with a slight increase in both in 2020 (Figure 13, bottom). The majority of pheasant hunting occurs in Whitman County, which has about three times the harvest and about two times more hunters than Lincoln or Spokane counties. For more information on the harvest statistics see the most recent Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics here: [Pheasant - Statewide and by County](#). For more information on pheasant status in Washington, see the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

Overall, pheasant populations are experiencing long-term declines. This is a trend seen across the country and it is likely associated with current cleaner farming practices and habitat loss. Examples of this include the switch to large-scale monoculture farming, removal of hedgerow (farming through small creeks beds and up into the gravel of the road), the more efficient harvest machinery leaving less waste grain, increased use of herbicides and pesticides, and more recently the use of neonicotinoid insecticides. All of these combine to reduce adult, nest, and chick survival through less food (fewer insects and forbs) and less cover, and in the case of neonicotinoids, potential direct mortality of individuals that consume the coated seeds.

Since most of the land in this district is private, hunters will need to spend some time knocking on doors to get access to the better sites. Many private landowners have enrolled in WDFW hunter access programs recently in southeast Washington. See the Private Lands Program section below for access program acres by GMU, and the [Hunt Planner Webmap](#) for mapped locations.

For tips on pheasant hunting in general, visit this [link](#) and the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#).

WDFW will be releasing game farm-produced roosters once again this fall at the traditional release sites, which are also mapped on the Hunt Planner Webmap and the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) publication.

A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).

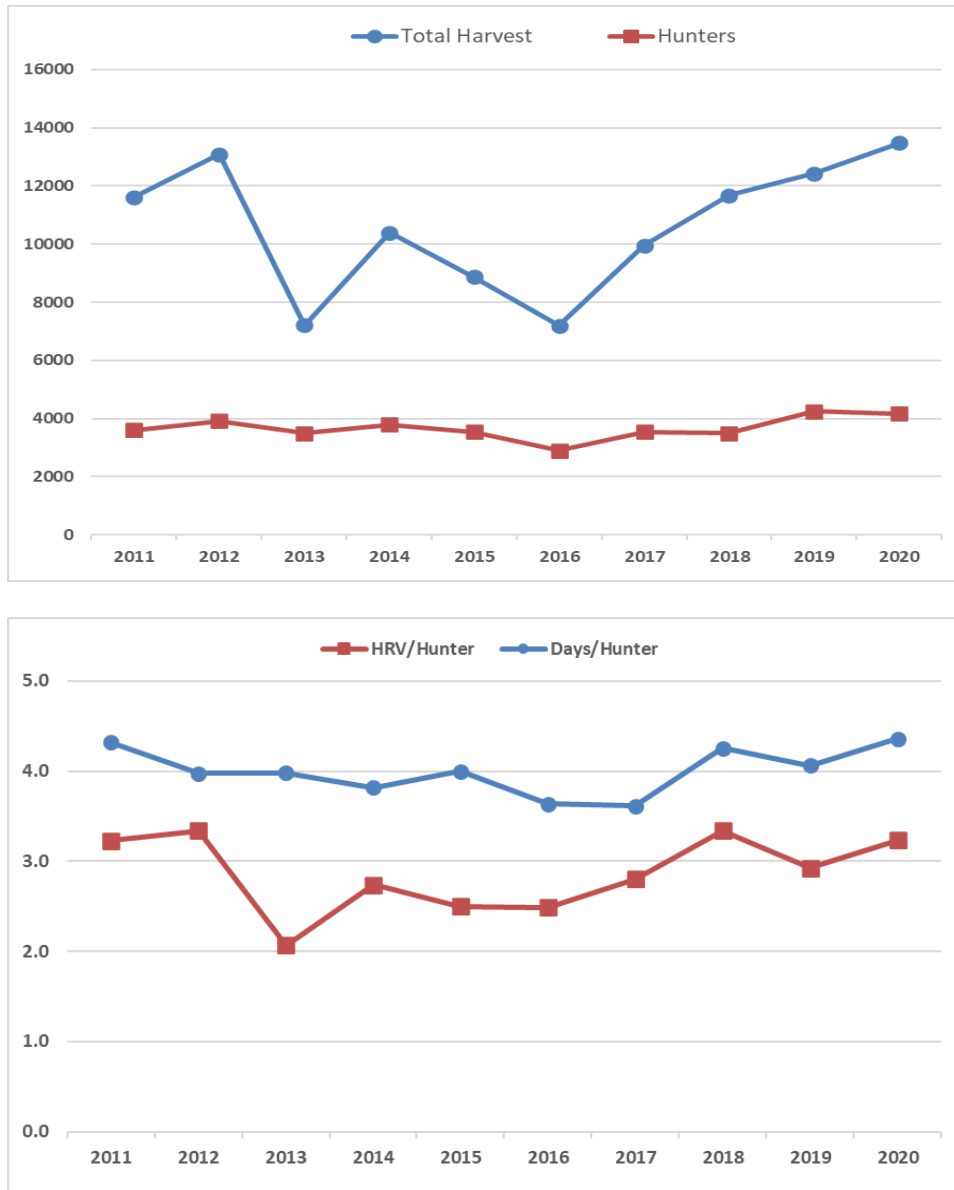


Figure 13. Top graph: Pheasant harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Pheasant harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## CHUKAR AND GRAY PARTRIDGE

Although the winter was mild, nest and early chick survival for chukar and partridge likely suffered from the prolonged spring and summer drought and heat in the region. Except for the spikes in 2012 and 2018, harvest has been fairly stable over the past ten years, averaging 1687 birds a year (Figure 14). Harvest did drop in 2020 to 1127, the lowest it has been in the last 10 years. Hunter numbers did not change, but those hunters put in a lot of effort (measured by days per hunter); harvest per hunter also dropped in 2020 after remaining relatively stable for the past six years (Figure 14).

Partridge are most common in Lincoln and Whitman counties and are most often seen in, and adjacent to, agricultural fields. When hunting for partridge in Lincoln County please be sure to identify your bird before pulling the trigger. There are populations of Sage grouse and Sharp-tailed grouse in the county and both are State Endangered species.

There are very few chukar in District 2. They are predominantly found along the breaks of the Snake River, where the terrain is steep and rocky with limited public access from above. There is some access via the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land along the Snake River from below, but not all the Corps lands allow hunting. See their [website](#) for details.

For more information on gray partridge and chukar harvest, see the [Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by County](#), and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

For tips on chukar and gray partridge hunting in general, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds> as well as the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#).

A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).

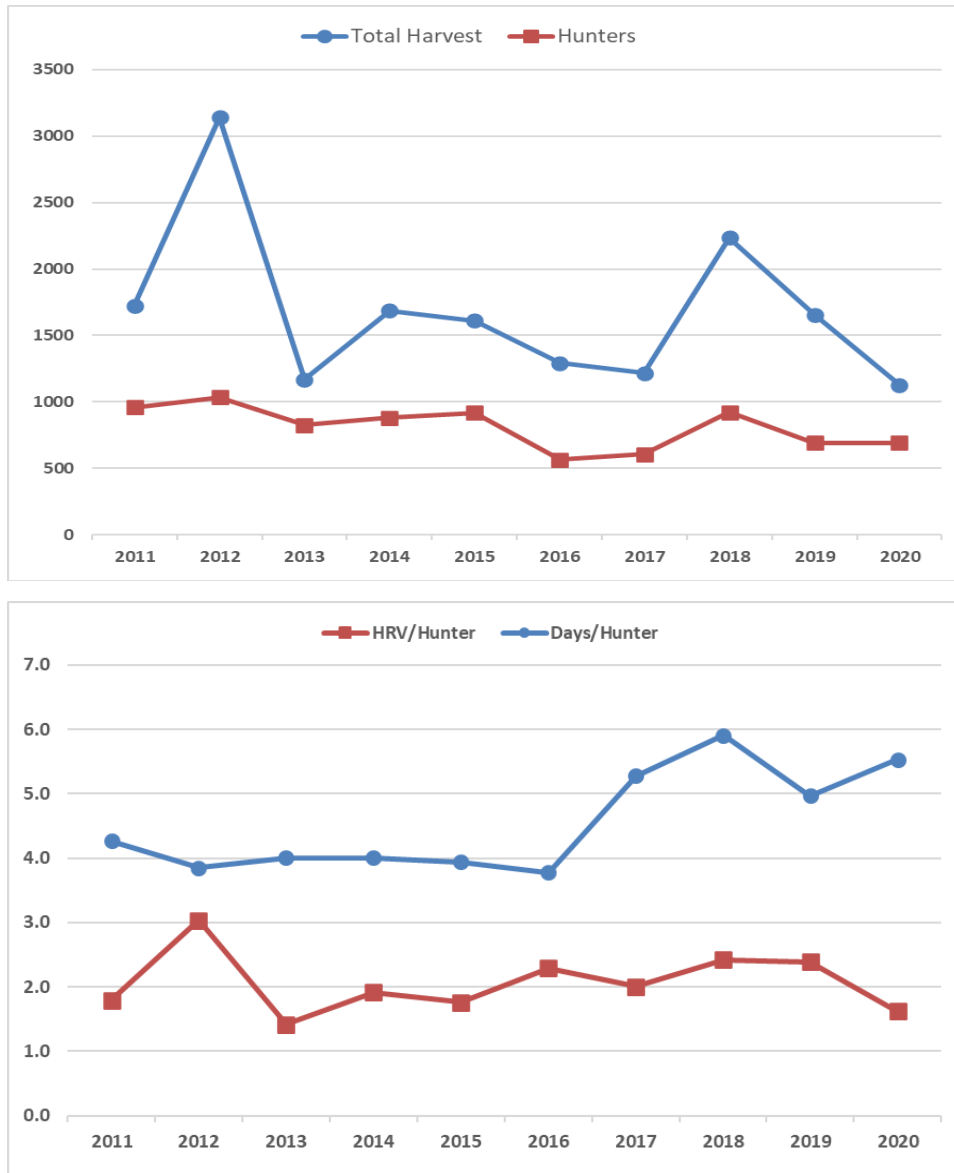


Figure 14. Top graph: Chukar and partridge harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Chukar and partridge harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.



## FOREST GROUSE

The forest grouse season opener will be delayed to September 15<sup>th</sup> starting in 2021. Statewide harvest data indicates a declining trend in the forest grouse population. Wing barrel data indicates that our early season harvest is biased towards young of the year and brood hens (successful hens are the engine of population growth). This delay is being implemented to allow for more brood break up to occur, thereby reducing brood hen vulnerability to harvest and ultimately result in population growth.

Overall, forest grouse populations appear to be low but stable in District 2, with the best success found in the forested portions of GMUs 124, 127, and 133. Of the four forest grouse species, only ruffed and dusky grouse are found in District 2. Ruffed grouse are by far the most common of the two, but dusky grouse can be found in GMUs 124, 127, and 133. Despite another mild winter, the lack of spring precipitation, likelihood of the drought continuing, and prolonged heat in the region will likely result in reduced chick survival and recruitment this year.

Hunter numbers are down relative to long term averages but have been stable over the past few years (Figure 15, top). Hunter effort in 2020 was 5.2 days per hunter, which is the also the five-year average. Total grouse harvested and hunter success (harvest per hunter) both increased in 2020, with an average of 2 birds per hunter (Figure 15, bottom).

For more information on forest grouse, see the [Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by County](#), and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#). For tips on hunting forest grouse, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds> as well as the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#). A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).

To evaluate population trends and harvest changes, WDFW began collecting forest grouse wings and tails from hunters in 2016 and will continue these in 2021. Collection barrels will be distributed at various hunting access points, as well as WDFW offices throughout Region 1. You can help with this effort by dropping off a wing and tail from each forest grouse you harvest, following the instructions at the barrel. Locations of wing barrels and other information about this sampling effort can be found [here](#).



Figure 15. Top graph: Forest grouse harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Forest grouse harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## QUAIL

Similar to pheasant and partridge, the mild 2020/21 winter should have been good for adult survival and increase nest initiation this spring. However, the lack of spring precipitation and the likely continuation of the drought through this summer will impact chick survival and recruitment, decreasing the available population for harvest this fall.

Harvest and hunter numbers in 2020 were both in line with ten-year average (Figure 16, top). Hunter success (harvest/hunter) was slightly below average and hunter effort (days/hunter) was average (Figure 16, bottom). Access can be challenging, especially with most of the good quail habitat occurring in and around farmsteads and towns. For more information on harvest statistics, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics here: [Quail - Statewide and by County](#). For more information on quail status in Washington, see the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

For tips on quail hunting in general, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds> as well as the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#).

A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).



Figure 16. Top graph: Quail harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Quail harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## TURKEY

Opportunistic observations during fieldwork, public reports, and damage claims all indicate that the turkey population is doing very well in GMUs 124–133 and stable in GMUs 136–142. Spring harvest and hunter numbers dropped in 2020 due to the COVID shutdown, but numbers rebounded in the fall (Figure 17). Hunter effort in 2020 was 8 days/kill in spring and 10 days/kill in fall, in line with the previous 5-year average of 9 days for both seasons. GMU 124 has by far the most turkeys and the most turkey harvested (1268 on average for the past 5yrs), but with this comes the most hunters (1320 in spring and 733 in fall on average for the past 5yrs). GMUs 130 and 133 come in a distant second for turkey harvest (around 475 on average) followed closely by GMU 127 (214 on average). GMUs 136, 139, and 142 have relatively few turkeys compared to these other units, but hunting can be very good in some areas within these GMUs.

Again, the district is predominantly private land and hunters will need to secure access. Access during the spring hunt can be competitive, but access should be easier to acquire in GMU 124 for the fall hen season, given the extensive turkey damage complaints the department has received from this area. Many private landowners have enrolled in WDFW hunter access programs recently in southeast Washington. See the Private Lands Program section below for access program acres by GMU, and the [Hunt Planner map](#) for mapped locations.

For more information on turkey harvest in Washington, see the [Turkey Game Harvest Statistics](#) and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

For more information and tips on hunting turkey in Washington check out [“The Basics of Turkey Hunting In Washington”](#) publication from WDFW.



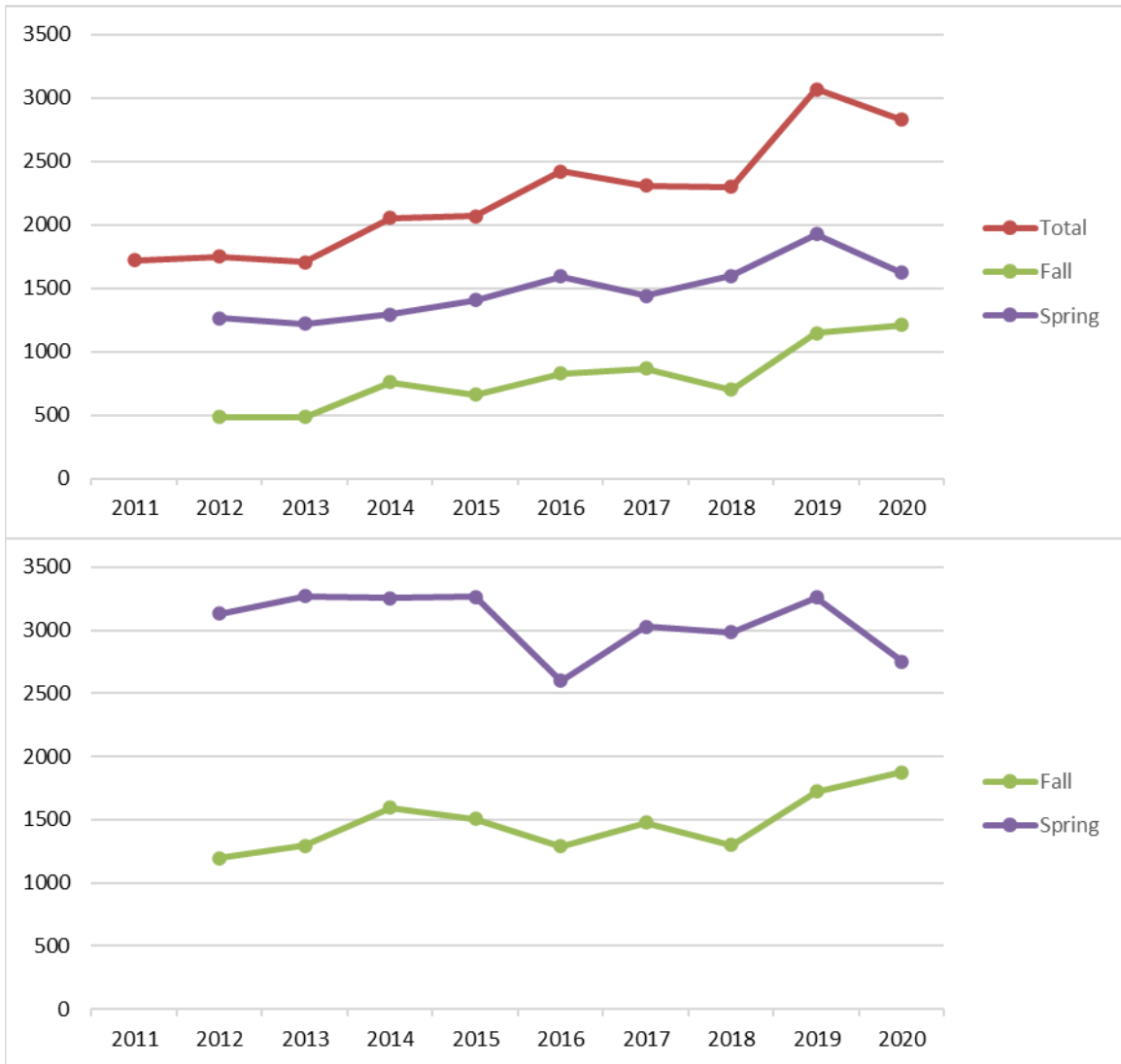


Figure 17. **Top graph:** Turkey harvest (spring, fall, & total) for District 2 from 2011-2020. **Bottom graph:** Turkey hunters (spring & fall) for District 2 from 2012-2020.

## DOVE

Doves in District 2 occur at low population densities relative to the Columbia Basin and similar regions. As often as not, cool temperatures just prior to or during the dove season push many doves further south out of the district. Hunter harvest metrics have been highly variable (Figure 18, top), with harvest averaging about 3200 birds a year by about 370 hunters. Hunter effort (days per hunter) has not changed much over the past ten years, although harvest per hunter spiked in 2020, to 10 birds (Figure 18, bottom). It is important to note that eastside hunters have an additional dove opportunity – the Eurasian collared dove. This dove is an exotic dove that has invaded most of eastern Washington. It can be hunted and trapped with a license year-round. Eurasian collared doves are commonly found in and around towns and around grain elevators.

For more information on doves, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Statewide and by County](#), and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

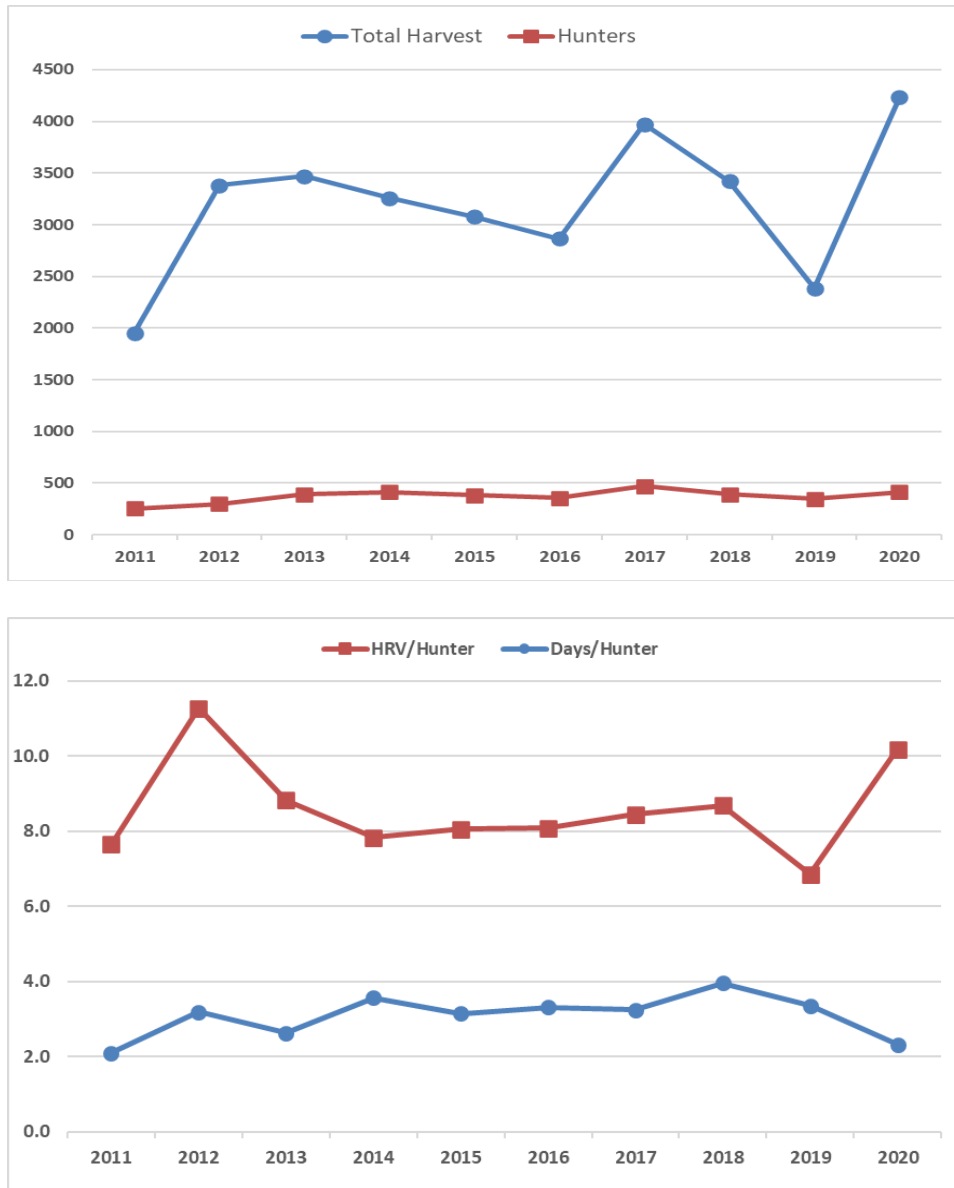


Figure 18. Top graph: Dove harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Dove harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

The majority of the district is privately owned. However, WDFW and BLM own about 60,000 acres in the center of Lincoln County and about 15,000 acres in northwest Whitman County. For more information on BLM property, or to order maps, please visit the [BLM](#) website. To hunt on WDFW wildlife areas, you will need to display a WDFW Vehicle Access Pass (free with hunting or fishing license purchase) or a Discover Pass. For more information on WDFW lands, see the [wildlife areas webpage](#).

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maintains land open to the public for 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 on the [DNR website](#).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also maintains lands associated with the Snake River open to the public for recreational purposes. Not all of these lands are open to hunting, so hunters will want to research beforehand. More information can be found [here](#).

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) has a limited entry youth waterfowl hunt (details available through [TNWR](#)) and allows elk hunting by permit only (permits allotted via WDFW special permit draw in June).

Riverside State Park and Mount Spokane State Park, along with all county parks and conservation areas in Spokane County, are open to public access, but NOT to hunting.

Several private timber companies allow hunting in Spokane County. The largest of these is Inland Empire Paper (IEP), which does allow vehicular access but will close gates to full-sized vehicles once there has been enough rain to soften the roads (typically in late October or early November). IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepco.com/forestry/rec-use/>). Hancock is another large timber company in Spokane County, and at this time has signed a MOU with WDFW to allow non-motorized access for free to our hunters. WDFW Enforcement monitors their property. Please respect the agreement or this access could be lost. Hancock does not supply a map of their property; we recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's online parcel map to identify Hancock ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g. OnX maps).

Throughout the district there are private landowners enrolled in WDFW hunt access programs (see Private Lands Program below and visit the [WDFW Private Lands Access](#) website).

## PRIVATE LANDS

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through a negotiated agreement. 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. In addition, lands under the agreement are well known by WDFW Enforcement.

Currently, the private lands access program includes five basic access agreement types: Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP), Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH), Hunt by Reservation (HBR), Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP), and Register to Hunt (RTH). As of July 2021, the total accessible acreage in District 2 is 16,572 acres in Spokane County, 38,260 in Lincoln County, and 79,454 in Whitman County. A summary of these acres by GMU and the program are in Table 4 below. The LHP in GMU 130 is managed by the Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA). Access to the LHP is only available through WDFW special permitting and CPWMA raffle permit hunts (see WDFW's 2021 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet). More information on the other four access programs and where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's [Hunt Planner Webmap](#) and the [WDFW Private Lands Access](#) page.

Stimson and Hancock timber companies have traditionally had MOUs with WDFW to allow for **non-motorized** access for free to our hunters, but please check with each company or WDFW to confirm these MOUs are still in place prior to hunting their properties. WDFW Enforcement monitors their properties and will ticket offenders. Please respect the non-motorized access agreement or this access could be lost.

Table 4. Acres of private land enrolled in WDFW access programs by GMU in District 2 as of July 2021.

Game Management Unit (GMU)	Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP)		Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH)		Hunt by Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)		Register to Hunt (RTH)	
	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres
124 Mt Spokane	3	428	Multiple Private Timber Parcels	~3000	2	370	0	0	0	0
127 Mica Peak	3	2,620			1	1,800	0	0	0	0
130 Cheney	9	5,476			0	0	1	2,878	0	0
133 Roosevelt	15	20,992	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
136 Harrington	14	17,268	6	5,509	0	0	0	0	0	0
139 Steptoe	16	14,192	5	6,151	34	26,139	0	0	0	0
142 Almota	12	16,666	1	336	20	22,457	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>77,642</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14,996</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50,766</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2,878</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>



2021

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Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# DISTRICT 3 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla counties

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## BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions, and other emergency rules before you head out. In addition to potential wildfires, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) may be conducting prescribed burns and/or forest-thinning projects in your hunt area. For more information, see:

- [Wildfire status updates \(InciWeb – Incident Information System\)](#)
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [WDFW Wildlife Areas](#)

## BE AWARE OF ROAD CLOSURES

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/umatilla/maps-pubs/?cid=stelprdb5414334>



## DISTRICT 3 GENERAL OVERVIEW

WDFW's District 3 is located in southeast Washington and consists of 13 game management units (GMU). GMUs in District 3 include 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 154 (Blue Creek), 157 (Watershed- **Closed entry except elk hunting only by permit**), 162 (Dayton), 163 (Marengo), 166 (Tucannon), 169 (Wenaha), 172 (Mountain View), 175 (Lick Creek), 178 (Peola), 181 (Couse), and 186 (Grande Ronde). Administratively, District 3 includes Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin counties, and is one of three management districts (1, 2, and 3) comprising WDFW's Region 1. The northern part of District 3 (north of Highway 12) includes the southeastern portion of the Palouse Prairie ecoregion, while the southern part of the district is in the Blue Mountains ecoregion.

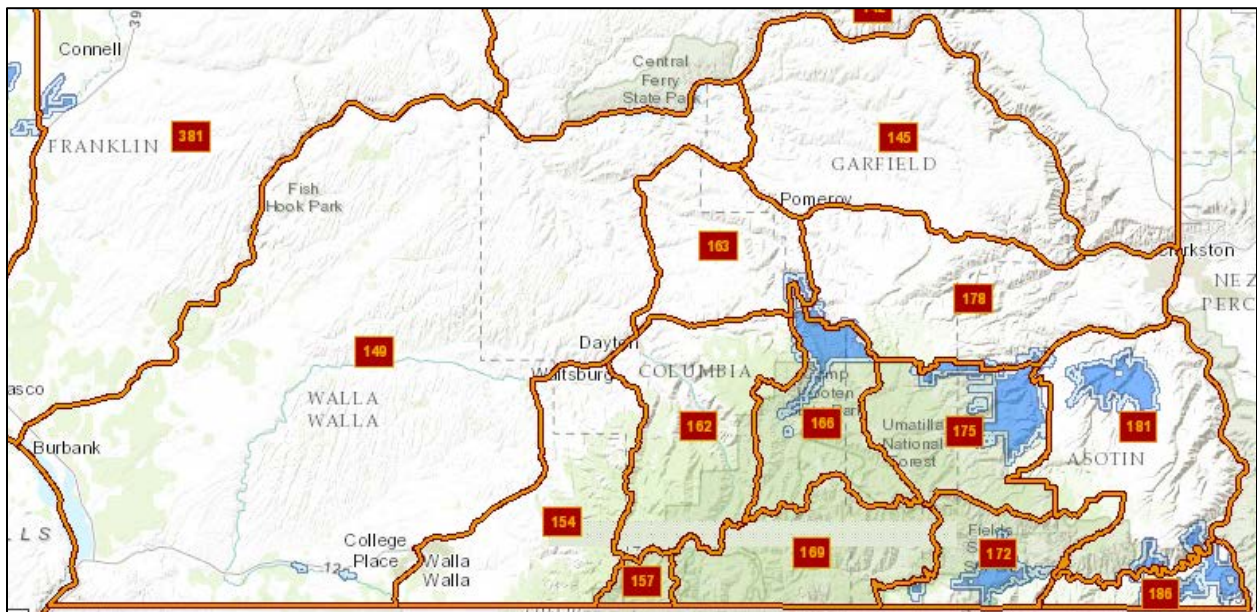


Figure 1. GMU map (from GoHunt) depicting District 3 GMU boundaries, west and south of the Snake River, east of the Columbia River, and north of the Oregon border. Green areas are U.S. Forest Service land and blue areas are WDFW Wildlife Areas.

The landscape in District 3 is dominated by agricultural land in the prairie and foothill regions, with interspersed grassland areas and brushy draws. In the mountains, the most common habitat is characterized by second-growth forests consisting primarily of Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, grand fir, and subalpine fir. The Blue Mountains have been characterized as a high plateau dissected by steep draws and canyons carved by numerous creeks and rivers. The Tucannon and Touchet rivers flow north out of the mountains, while major tributaries of the Wenaha and Grande Ronde Rivers generally flow south. Numerous creeks drain the western edge of the foothills, including Mill Creek, with its drainage located in the Walla Walla Watershed. Asotin Creek is a major watershed on the eastern side of the Blue Mountains that flows east into the Snake River.



Image 1. Blue Creek in the western foothills of the Blue Mountains.

District 3 is best known for its elk hunting opportunities in the Blue Mountains and mule deer hunting opportunities in grassland/agricultural GMUs. However, hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including white-tailed deer, black bear, chukar, turkey, and pheasant. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest and harvest-per-unit effort (HPUE) for most game species in District 3 during the 2020 hunting season, and how those estimates compare to the 2019 season and the five-year average. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

Species	Harvest					HPUE				
	5-yr avg.	2019	2020	% change (5yr)	% change (2019)	5-yr avg.	2019	2020	% change (5yr)	% change (2019)
Elk (General)	92	89	115	25%	29%	111	131	125	-12%	5%
Elk (Bull Permit)	101	80	58	-43%	-27%	45%	46%	48%	(Permit success)	
Deer	2,436	2,150	2,519	3%	17%	14.4	14.6	14.3	-1%	0%
Bear	88	92	102	10%	16%	100	94	77	-22%	-18%
Cougar	21	12	18	50%	-13%	Not estimated			**	**
Wild Turkey	883	1,048	940	7%	-10%	0.10	0.10	0.10	-2%	1%
Canada Goose	3,552	3,860	2,898	-18%	-25%	1.26	1.22	0.94	-26%	-23%
Chukar Partridge	1,943	3,045	2,018	4%	-34%	1.15	1.31	1.25	8%	-5%
Cottontail Rabbit	596	1,101	202	-66%	-82%	0.85	1.92	0.23	-73%	-88%
Duck	27,750	23,412	27,257	-2%	16%	2.86	2.65	2.32	-19%	-12%
Forest Grouse	1,731	1,735	1,658	-4%	-4%	0.39	0.36	0.30	-49%	-42%
Gray Partridge	758	511	1,550	104%	203%	0.46	0.29	0.51	11%	77%
Mourning Dove	3,508	4,303	3,717	6%	-14%	3.63	4.05	3.85	6%	-5%
Pheasant	8,519	8,523	10,552	24%	24%	0.72	0.65	0.61	-16%	-6%
Quail	4,982	3,705	4,942	-1%	33%	0.93	0.71	0.69	-25%	-3%
Snowshoe Hare	35	15	82	136%	447%	0.33	0.05	0.20	-38%	316%

Table 1. General season harvest and HPUE estimates for most game species found in District 3 during the 2019 and 2020 hunting seasons. Also included are the five-year averages and a comparison of 5-year estimates and previous year to 2019 or 2020 estimates. HPUE is expressed as #hunter days/harvest for elk, deer, and bear (lower is better), and as #harvested/hunter day for all other species (higher is better).

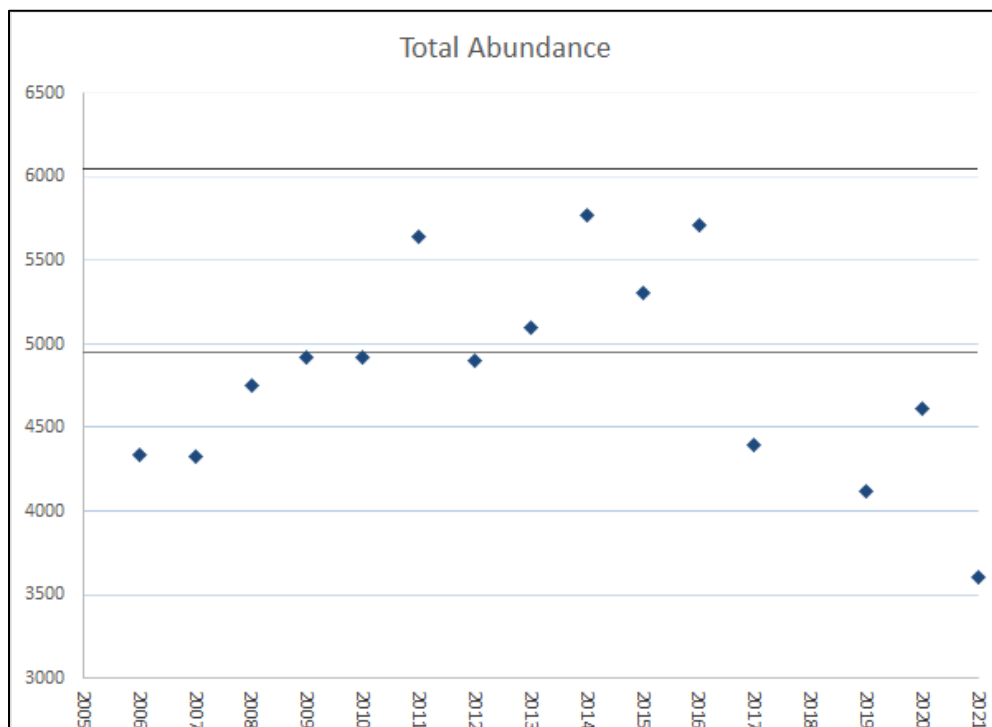
## ELK

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

In Washington, elk are managed at the herd level, while harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. Population objectives are set at the herd level, and survey data is summarized at that level as well. District 3 is comprised of the single Blue Mountains elk herd (GMUs 145, 149, 154, 157, 162, 163, 166, 169, 172, 175, 178, 181, and 186).

Only the GMUs within the forested portion of District 3 are managed for elk population stability or growth (GMUs 154, 157, 162, 166, 169, 172, 175, and 186). GMUs 145, 149, 163, 178, and most of 181 are managed to limit elk numbers, although some recreational opportunity is provided as determined through surveys and damage complaints. In all GMUs, minimizing elk depredation to agricultural crops on private agricultural lands is a priority. An additional management objective is to maintain a minimum of 22 bulls:100 cows in the post-season population, with a range of 22 – 28 bulls:100 cows as the management target.

Biologists in District 3 conduct an annual helicopter survey within the core elk areas to estimate the post-winter population size. In the spring of 2021, survey efforts resulted in a population estimate of 3,600 (90% Confidence Interval of 3,506-3,812) elk. Surveys are conducted along the state line of Oregon (and within Oregon), resulting in approximately 500-600 elk being

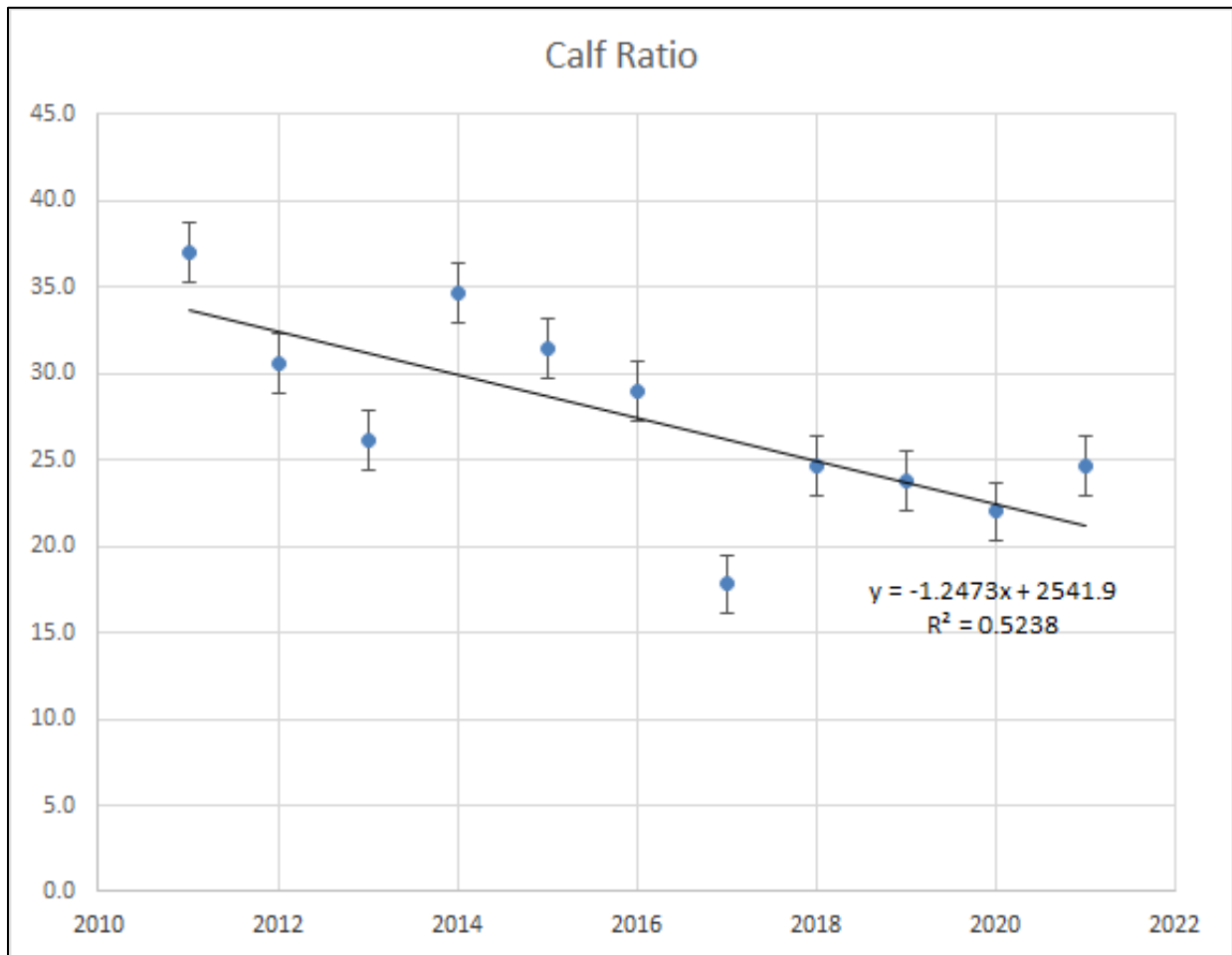


classified that likely are not available for harvest in Washington during the fall. The average five-year population estimate prior to 2020 was 4,830 elk, which is 25 percent higher than the 2021 estimate. The 2021 surveys documented a calf ratio of 22.0 calves per 100 cows and a bull ratio of 24.6 bulls per 100 cows.

Abundance estimates for the Blue Mountains elk population.



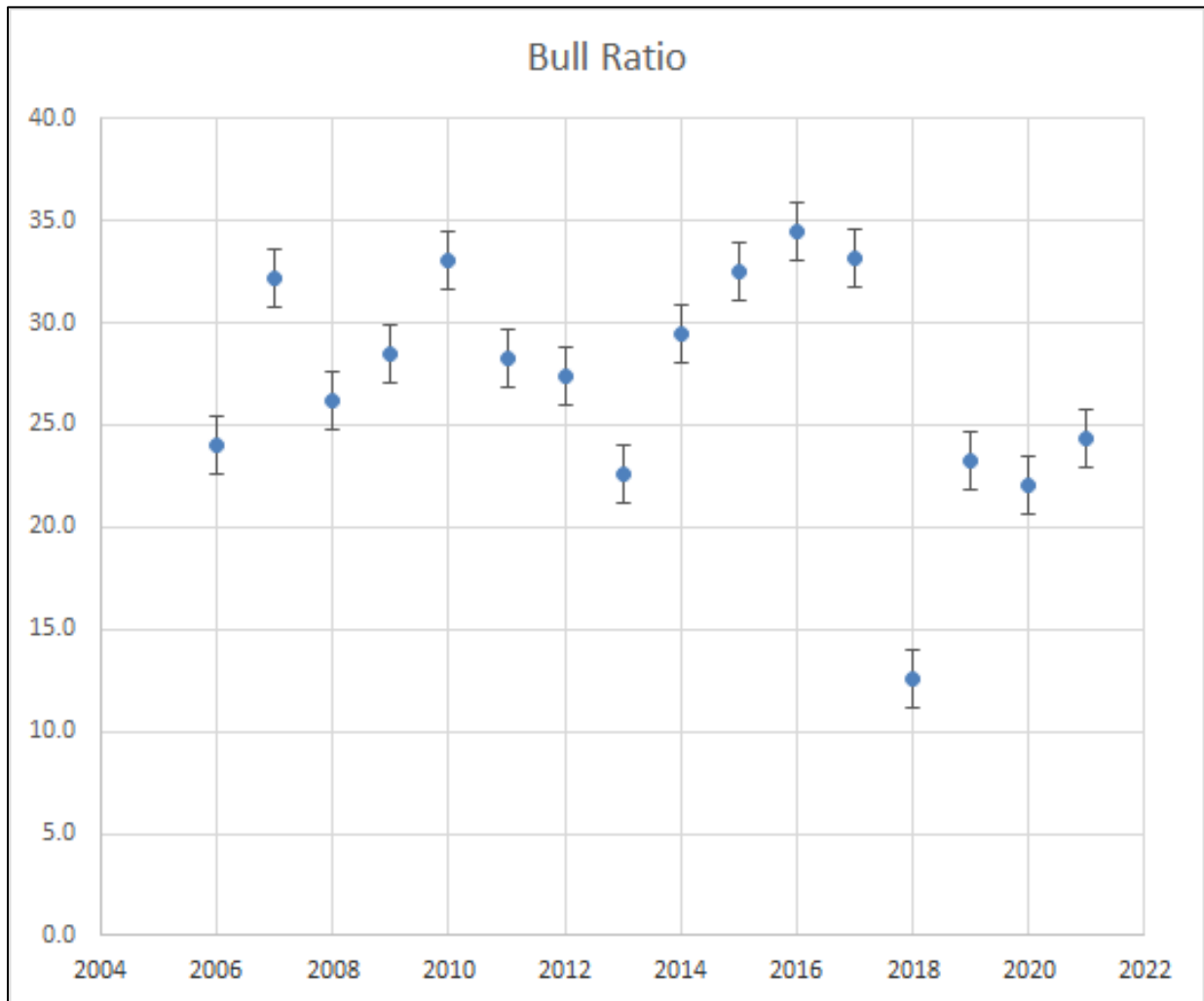
Calf ratios in 2021 of 24.6 (90% CI +/- 0.6) remained relatively similar to the 5-year average of 23.4. The low calf recruitment compared to pre-winter of 2016/2017 is attributed to the lingering effects of severe winters in 2016/2017 and 2018/2019, predation on calves, and other factors such as drought and habitat degradation (noxious weeds). The effects of climate on elk productivity are difficult to quantify in years following a severe winter or summer drought. Poor body condition can result in calves with low birth weight and lower survival, or effects can carry-over into the breeding season (summer drought) decreasing pregnancy rates and resulting in fewer pregnancies, all of which may have influenced depressed cow/calf ratios over the past few seasons. Starting in May 2021, WDFW staff collared 125 neonate elk calves and fitted them with GPS/satellite collars. WDFW will be investigating their survival over the next year to better understand whether calf survival is a limiting factor for growing this elk population.



Calf ratios for the Blue Mountains elk herd, generated from helicopter surveys conducted in March. Vertical lines represent 90% confidence intervals in the estimate.

Bull ratios and total bull numbers remained lower than the 5-year average (29.1 bulls per 100 cows), which will be reflected in lower permit opportunity in 2021. The recent decline in the number of elk in the Blue Mountains is likely a result of multiple factors; such as the severe winters observed in 2016/2017 and 2018/2019, summer droughts, and similar levels of predation over the past 5 to 10 years which cumulatively reduced survival of adults and negatively

impacted recruitment. The low number of calves being recruited into the population in 2021 will result in a low number of yearling bulls (spikes) available for harvest this fall. This fall will be another below-average year for yearling bull harvest.



Estimated bull ratio (bulls per 100 cows) from helicopter-based surveys. Vertical lines represent 90% confidence intervals. The bull ratio in 2018 is low due to the survey being ground based instead of helicopter. Finding bulls from the ground is more difficult and does not accurately represent the population.

For more detailed information related to the status of Washington’s elk herds, hunters should read through the most recent version of the [Game Status and Trend Report](#), which is available for download on the department’s website.

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

Most general season hunters in the Blue Mountains have been hunting here for many years. New hunters to this area will have to consider several options, such as weapon type, private land access versus public land, the difficulty of hunt desired (wilderness versus landscapes with roads), and, as archery hunters, whether the availability of antlerless opportunity is important. In



2021, wildfire activity will be an important consideration on where to hunt. At the time of writing this document, extensive fires are still occurring in the Blue Mountains.

Throughout District 3, the harvest of branched-bulls is regulated through the permit system. All GMUs in District 3 are managed for quality hunting, except GMUs 145, 186, and some hunts in 149. The drawing of these tags can be difficult, and many hunters invest years before successfully obtaining a permit. Once a permit is obtained, district biologists are available to provide information on where to hunt within a GMU.

## **A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH GMU**

### **GMU 145**

This is a private land unit managed for zero elk. Very few elk reside in this unit. Their movements are unpredictable and make them difficult to locate, and knowledge of their locations is often not readily available.

### **GMU 149**

This large GMU is predominantly private land managed to minimize elk numbers because of conflicts with agricultural activities. A relatively large number of bulls inhabit the southwest corner of the GMU and cross back and forth between Oregon and Washington. Most harvest in recent years has occurred in the area of the Boise Cascade poplar tree farm. The poplar tree farm has been converted to row crops and access to this area for elk hunting has changed considerably in the last 2 years. Another herd of elk exists in the northern portion of the unit on the breaks of the Snake River. This is a very difficult herd to hunt without access to numerous private lands, as the elk are highly mobile in this area and can be difficult to locate.

### **GMU 154**

This GMU is 99 percent private land but does include numerous landowners in the WDFW access program. The elk are heavily hunted in this GMU due to conflicts with agricultural activities. Access has historically been available to branched-bull tag holders and general season hunters.

### **GMU 157**

This GMU is 99 percent public land but closed to the public to any entry other than branched-bull permit holders. The Mill Creek Watershed is the source of drinking water for the City of Walla Walla, and access is highly regulated. Successful permit applicants will be contacted by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) with an information packet containing rules for hunting the watershed. This unit is very steep and rugged, contains few maintained trails, and is physically challenging to hunt. No scouting or overnight camping inside the watershed boundaries is permitted. Only the perimeter roads and trails can be accessed for scouting.

### **GMU 162**

The Dayton GMU is a mix of private and public lands and has historically supported about 1,000 elk. Currently, the number of elk in the Dayton GMU is about 60% percent below the historic numbers. This unit has the highest density of general season hunters in District 3. Access to the

northern portion of the GMU can be difficult, as it is predominantly private. The southern portion of the unit is predominantly USFS and lands owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Both of these lands are open to the public, with motorized vehicle restrictions throughout.

### **GMU 163**

This GMU is not managed for elk and only occasionally supports enough elk to hunt. The GMU is predominantly private land.

### **GMU 166**

This GMU has recently had the highest success rate for general season hunters but also has one of the higher densities of hunters. The unit is mostly USFS and WDFW-owned lands. A portion of the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness extends into this GMU and offers backcountry hunting opportunities.

### **GMU 169**

Most of this GMU is located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. Numerous road access points occur along the edge of this GMU, but a majority of the unit requires backpacking or horse packing to access. This can be a physically challenging unit to hunt. Elk densities have remained low in this unit for the past 30 years and do not show indications of improving. However, a large wildfire burned in this unit in 2015, which is expected to have a positive effect on elk numbers and habitat quality for years to come.

### **GMU 172**

Elk numbers have declined slightly in the past couple of years in this GMU with low recruitment observed in the spring of 2020. Calf ratios of 12:100 were observed on the Oregon elk feedlot on Bartlett Bench. Calf ratios throughout the rest of the unit were better. Approximately 60 percent of this GMU is private and access can be challenging. The USFS lands within this GMU are physically challenging to hunt. WDFW has been acquiring land within this GMU recently (4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area), but deer and elk hunting there is managed by permit only access.

### **GMU 175**

This GMU is predominantly public land owned by WDFW, USFS, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Access is good throughout the unit. One major change as the result of declining elk numbers observed in this unit is the restriction of archery hunters to spike-only, with no antlerless opportunity available for any weapon type without an antlerless permit. In July 2021, 80% of this GMU burned in a wildfire.

### **GMU 178**

This private land unit is managed to minimize elk numbers due to conflict with agricultural activities. Access can be challenging to obtain. Elk numbers are highly variable in the unit and do not offer a reliable recreational opportunity during the general season without knowledge of landowners and herd behavior.

## **GMU 181**

This private land unit is managed to minimize elk numbers due to conflict with agricultural activities. Access can be challenging to obtain. Elk numbers are highly variable in the unit and do not offer a reliable recreational opportunity during the general season without knowledge of landowners and herd behavior.

## **GMU 186**

This unit is split equally between private and public lands, with very limited private land access available. This GMU is predominantly winter range for elk in Oregon, although approximately 100 elk reside in the unit throughout the year. The individual elk may reside on private land throughout the season where access is not available, although some years have proven highly successful for the few hunters that know the unit.

## **Summary of GMU Harvest Attributes**

The information provided in Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how District 3 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are from the 2017 harvest reports. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of elk harvested and hunters per square mile.

Each GMU was ranked from one to 10 for elk harvested/mi<sup>2</sup> (bulls only for modern firearm and cows included with bulls for archery), hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum, with Public Access ranking excluded. The modern firearm comparisons are the most straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same in each GMU.

MODERN FIREARM											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	Rank Sum
149	1409	3	0.00	10	50	0.04	1	6.0%	4	3	15
154	216	5	0.02	6	224	1.04	6	2.2%	8	3	20
162	210	4	0.02	6	484	2.30	9	0.8%	10	2	25
166	131	3	0.02	6	251	1.92	8	1.2%	9	1	23
169	161	5	0.03	4	160	0.99	5	3.1%	5	1	14
172	108	15	0.14	2	177	1.64	7	8.5%	2	2	11
175	158	26	0.16	1	406	2.57	10	6.4%	3	1	14
178	275	2	0.01	8	87	0.32	3	2.3%	7	3	18
181	262	2	0.01	8	70	0.27	2	2.9%	6	3	16
186	53	5	0.09	3	22	0.42	4	22.7%	1	2	8
ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	Rank Sum
149	1409	3	0.00	8	24	0.01	2	12.5%	2	3	12
154	216	10	0.03	3	95	0.63	8	10.5%	3	3	14
162	210	3	0.02	4	117	0.78	9	2.6%	7	2	20
166	131	0	0.00	10	50	0.37	6	0.0%	9	1	25
169	161	2	0.01	6	30	0.25	5	6.7%	6	1	17
172	108	6	0.06	2	45	0.43	7	13.3%	1	2	10
175	158	6	0.15	1	82	1.68	10	7.3%	5	1	16
178	275	0	0.01	5	6	0.18	4	0.0%	9	3	18
181	262	2	0.00	7	22	0.08	3	9.1%	4	3	14
186	53	0	0.00	10	7	0	1	0.0%	9	2	20
MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	Rank Sum
149	1409	5	0.00	3	9	0.01	1	55.6%	1	3	5
154	216	0	0.0	6	19	0.09	4	0.0%	6	3	16
162	210	0	0.0	6	37	0.18	5	0.0%	6	2	17
166	131	4	0.0	1	26	0.20	6	15.4%	2	1	9
172	108	0	0.0	6	45	0.42	7	0.0%	6	2	19
175	158	2	0.0	2	78	0.49	8	2.6%	3	1	13
178	275	0	0	6	7	0.03	2	0.0%	6	3	14
181	262	0	0	6	17	0.06	3	0.0%	6	3	15

Table 2. Rank sum totals that provide a quick and general comparison of how total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern firearm, archery, and

muzzleloader seasons. GMUs are generally limited to spike bull harvest, but some may have an antlerless opportunity as well (see hunting regulations for specific restrictions). Data presented are based on 2020 harvest reports.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

It has been uncommon for elk populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 3 where severe winter weather conditions seldom occur. Unfortunately, the winters of 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 were uncommonly severe, resulting in a significant decline in elk numbers. Calf recruitment since 2016 has remained below average, consequently, populations available for harvest are expected to remain lower than years prior to the 16/17 winter. The 2021 general season is expected to be similar to the average during the past 5 years. Harvest since 2016 has been the lowest in the past 20 years. Hunter numbers also typically do not change substantially from one year to the next, but a slow decline has been observed with the declining population. The weather during hunting season does change from year to year, which will influence success rates.

The spring and summer of 2021 has been one of the driest and hottest since records have been kept. This has resulted in very high fire danger, extensive fires on the landscape, and early season closures to public lands. This document was prepared in July, while many of these events were unfolding. Hunters should expect impacts from these events to their hunting seasons and may need to contact WDFW staff for more current updates as the fall approaches.

## **HOW TO FIND ELK**

When hunting elk in District 3, hunters need to do their homework and spend plenty of time scouting before the season opener because it is often difficult to predict where the elk are going to be, especially after hunting pressure increases. The majority of hunters spend most of their time focusing on open ridge tops where they can glass animals from a considerable distance. During the general season, past research on bulls has indicated that a majority of the elk will move to north aspect, mid-slope timbered hillsides within one day of the opener. With only nine days to hunt the general season, there is a lot of pressure in the first few days. Pressure declines as the season progresses and may allow the elk to return to normal behaviors if they are not close to major roads.

Later in the season, it is a good idea to consult a topographic map and find “benches” located in steep terrain and thick cover because elk often use these areas to bed down during the day. Lastly, on public land, hunters should not let a road closed to motorized vehicles keep them from walking into an area to search for elk. More often than not, these areas hold elk that have not received as much hunting pressure.



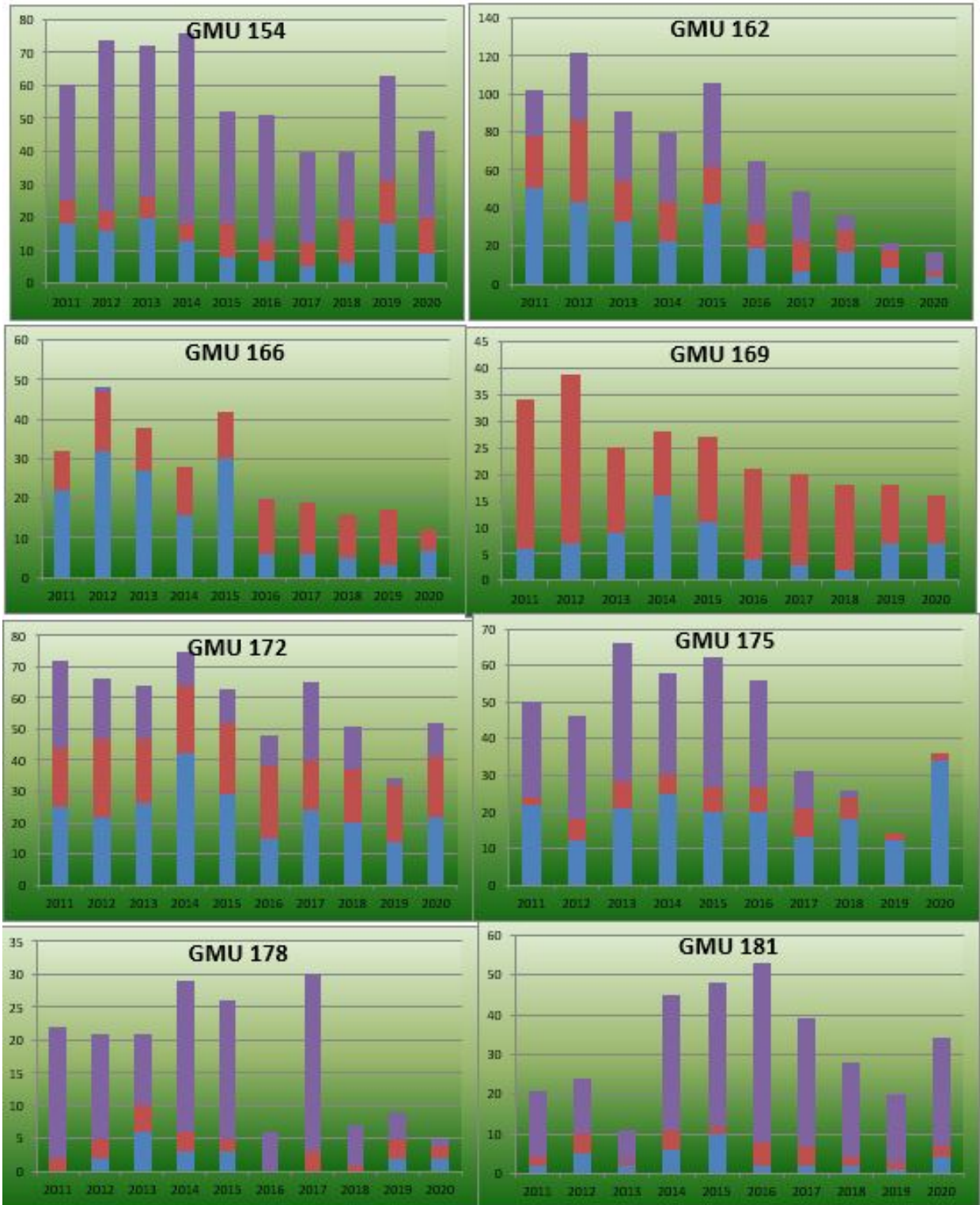


Figure 2. Trends in total number of yearling bulls (blue), branched bulls (red), and antlerless (purple) elk harvested during general and permit seasons combined, 2011-2020. Harvest does not include tribal harvest.



## **ELK AREAS**

There are nine elk areas in District 3: Elk Area 1008 and 1009 (Wenaha Wilderness West and East), Elk Area 1010 (Dayton private lands), Elk Area 1013 (Mountain View Private), Elk Area 1016 (GMU 162 excluding the Rainwater WLA), Elk Area 1040 (4-0 Wildlife Area), Elk Area 1075 (Lick Creek Private Lands), and Elk Area 1081 (GMU 181 + extreme west side of GMU172).

The intent of Elk Areas 1008 and 1009 was to distribute the hunting pressure within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. In the past, most permit hunters focused in the western corner of the unit where the road density was highest. By spreading out the hunting pressure, additional hunting opportunity was created.

Elk Area 1010 is used to focus antlerless and branched-bull elk hunting on private land in the Dayton Unit. In the past, branched bull tag holders focused on public lands where access was guaranteed, but also increased pressure on that segment of the population. This elk area is also used to focus antlerless harvest on the private lands where depredation complaints have historically been high but limits antlerless harvest on public lands where higher elk densities are desired. For the 2021 hunting season, no antlerless opportunity exists in any portion of the Dayton GMU.

Elk Area 1013 is used to manage hunters within GMU 172. Elk Area 1013 limits antlerless hunting to private lands where damage can occur on agricultural areas while maximizing elk numbers and recruitment on public lands.

Elk Area 1040 was the 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area, in 2021 this Elk Area was eliminated. The 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area is now open to all general season and permit hunting opportunities in GMU 172.

Elk Area 1075 has recently been created to try to use hunters to alter the behavior of elk that leave the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area for private agricultural grounds during early winter. To minimize crop damage, hunters are being used to move elk off of private lands in the Lick Creek GMU. The same is true for Elk Area 1081.

## **NOTABLE ISSUES AND HUNTING CHANGES**

1. Elk Area 1040 (4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area) is now open to all general season and permit opportunities for deer and elk as listed under GMU 172.
2. Antlerless elk opportunity has decreased in GMU 181 due to declining herd size and depredation complaints. Boundary changes were made to hunts in this area in 2018 to include Elk Area 1075 and 1082 to continue refining our efforts to address problematic elk distributions. Elk in this unit primarily inhabit private lands during hunting seasons and acquiring access prior to applying for permits is highly recommended.
3. As of late-July 2021, wildfires have burned 80% of GMU 175 and a portion of GMU 166. Severe drought this year has reduced forage and water availability throughout the District.

4. During the summer of 2015, a large wildfire burned through a large portion of the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness, extending slightly into GMU 172 on Grouse Flats. A large portion of the fire that occurred in Washington burned later into September, creating desirable habitat conditions for elk with low intensity burning.
5. Severe winters occurred during 2016/2017 and 2018/2019, resulting in high mortality rates of elk. Antlerless opportunity throughout the Blue Mountains has been severely reduced on public lands as a result. Calf recruitment has yet to rebound and harvest will remain below average.

## DEER

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



Both mule deer and white-tailed deer occur throughout District 3. Deer hunting opportunities in District 3 vary from marginal to quite good, depending on the GMU. The GMUs with the highest success (GMUs 145, 149, 178, and 181) also have the highest amount of private land, and access can be limited. GMUs where access to public land is highest (GMUs 166, 169, and 175) have the lowest success, probably due to a combination of high hunter numbers, a high percentage of legal bucks harvested, and lower quality deer habitat. While overall harvest is one indicator of GMU hunting quality, harvest/unit effort (HPUE) and harvest/unit area (HPUA) equalize GMUs based on hunter numbers, number of days hunting, and GMU size. However, both HPUE and HPUA can be misleading, as HPUE is complicated by private land access limitations and HPUA is complicated by the amount of habitat in the GMU that supports deer. In general, HPUE seems to be a better indicator of hunting success. Hunter success and HPUE of either white-tailed or mule deer in District 3 is highest in GMUs 145 (Mayview), 149 (Prescott), 178 (Peola), and 181 (Couse), with GMU 163 (Peola) seeing a recent increase in success. Total general season harvest is highest in GMUs 149 (Prescott), 154 (Blue Creek), and 162 (Dayton).

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 3. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, and HPUE (harvest/hunter day) are used to monitor population status. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and are conducting annual road surveys to determine herd composition and periodic aerial sight ability surveys to monitor deer populations that are independent of harvest data, in addition to exploring the use of integrated population models.

All available harvest data indicates deer populations are variable within a relatively narrow range in District 3. Although hunter numbers have been trending down, 2020 saw the highest numbers of hunters (9,683) since 2004 (11,528), with overall success at 26%, the same as the 5-year average and higher than in 2004 (21%). For more detailed information related to the status of

mule deer and white-tailed deer in Washington, hunters should read the most recent version of the [Game Status and Trend Report](#), which is available for download on the department's website.

## WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, "What GMU should I hunt?" This is not always easy to answer because it depends on the hunting method and the type of hunting experience desired. Some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature buck, while others just want to harvest any legal deer, and still, others prefer to hunt an area with few other hunters.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would have high deer densities, low hunter densities, and high hunter success rates. Unfortunately, this scenario does not exist in any GMU that is open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 3. Instead, because of general season opportunities, the GMUs with the highest deer densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them not to hunt in a GMU where they see lots of deer. Some hunters prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if that means there are also very few hunters and provide a backcountry experience.

The information provided in **Table 3** provides a quick and general assessment of how GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of deer harvested per hunter and the number of hunters per square mile. This approach was taken because comparing total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison since GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of deer harvested over the past five years during the modern firearm general season in GMUs 149 (Prescott) and 154 (Blue Creek) has been 469 and 256 deer, respectively. Just looking at total harvest suggests deer densities are much higher in GMU 149 than 154. However, when harvest is expressed as deer harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>, the result is an estimate of 0.33 in GMU 149 and 1.19 in GMU 154, which suggests deer densities are probably much higher in GMU 154 than they are in GMU 149. This is further complicated by the amount of actual deer habitat in each GMU. For example, GMU 149 is the largest but is comprised primarily of tilled croplands, and deer are concentrated in CRP fields, rangelands, and along the breaks of the Snake River, so densities in a portion of the GMU are probably higher than the harvest/mi<sup>2</sup> indicates.

Each GMU was ranked from one to 12 (except for ties) for deer harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, hunter success rates, and public land access. The ranking values were then summed (public land access excluded) to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed by GMU number, not by rank. Comparisons are straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs. Differences that should be considered include:

- 1 Some private land GMUs have extensive acreage in WDFW Access programs, such as Feel Free to Hunt, Hunt by Written Permission, Hunt by Registration, or Hunt by Reservation, and may offer similar access to some GMUs with public land. See the Access section of this document for private land acreage available for public hunting in each GMU.

- 2 Some private land GMUs have extensive acreage in tilled croplands, and actual suitable hunting area may be much smaller, leading to higher-than-expected hunter densities.

<b>MODERN FIREARM</b>											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		<u>Public Access</u>	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	Score	
145	355	230	0.65	4	611	1.72	4	38%	2	3	10 (1)
149	1409	469	0.33	9	1541	1.09	1	30%	4	3	14 (4)
154	216	256	1.19	2	967	4.48	11	27%	5	3	18 (5)
162	210	311	1.48	1	1449	6.90	12	22%	8	2	21 (7)
163	149	87	0.59	6	369	2.48	9	24%	7	3	22 (8)
166	131	39	0.29	10	444	3.39	10	9%	11	1	31 (11)
169	161	16	0.10	12	182	1.13	2	9%	11	1	35 (12)
172	108	40	0.37	8	189	1.75	5	21%	9	2	22 (8)
175	158	29	0.18	11	329	2.08	7	9%	10	1	28 (10)
178	275	204	0.74	3	540	1.96	6	38%	1	3	10 (1)
181	262	135	0.51	7	388	1.48	3	35%	3	3	13 (3)
186	53	33	0.62	5	129	2.43	8	25%	6	2	19 (6)

ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Hunter Density</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		<u>Public Access</u>	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
<b>145</b>	355	11	0.04	8	45	0.13	2	25%	6	<b>3</b>	<b>16 (3)</b>
149	1409	44	0.03	9	179	0.13	2	25%	5	<b>3</b>	<b>16 (3)</b>
154	216	60	0.30	1	227	1.05	11	26%	4	<b>3</b>	<b>16 (3)</b>
162	210	39	0.20	2	214	1.02	10	18%	8	<b>2</b>	<b>20 (8)</b>
<b>163</b>	149	29	0.14	3	174	1.17	12	17%	9	<b>3</b>	<b>24 (9)</b>
166	131	9	0.10	5	83	0.64	9	11%	10	<b>1</b>	<b>24 (9)</b>
169	161	1	0.01	12	16	0.10	1	6%	11	<b>1</b>	<b>24 (9)</b>
172	108	11	0.09	6	28	0.26	6	36%	2	<b>2</b>	<b>18 (6)</b>
175	158	3	0.03	9	68	0.43	8	5%	12	<b>1</b>	<b>29 (12)</b>
<b>178</b>	275	33	0.13	4	105	0.38	7	31%	3	<b>3</b>	<b>14 (2)</b>
181	262	7	0.03	9	34	0.13	2	23%	7	<b>3</b>	<b>18 (6)</b>
186	53	5	0.09	6	7	0.14	5	68%	1	<b>2</b>	<b>12 (1)</b>



MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Public Access	Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	Rank	
145	355	20	0.05	4	46	0.13	1	37%	3	3	8 (2)
149	1409	59	0.04	5	193	0.14	2	32%	5	3	12 (5)
154	216	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
162	210	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
163	149	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
166	131	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
169	161	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>172</b>	108	19	0.22	1	54	0.50	5	45%	1	2	7 (1)
175	158	6	0.04	6	47	0.30	4	13%	6	1	13 (6)
178	275	N/A	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>181</b>	262	51	0.21	2	134	0.51	6	40%	2	3	10 (3)
186	53	6	0.09	3	15	0.29	3	32%	4	2	10 (3)

**Table 3.** Rank sum totals that provide a quick and general comparison of how total general harvest, hunter numbers, hunter success rates, and access to public land compare among GMUs during general modern, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. GMUs in **bold type** are open during early and late seasons for the respective weapon type. Data presented are based on a five-year average (2016-2020).

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

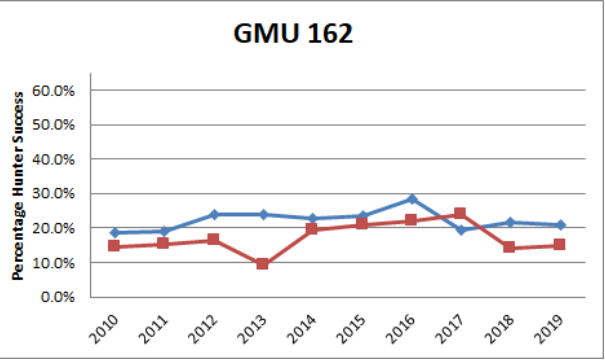
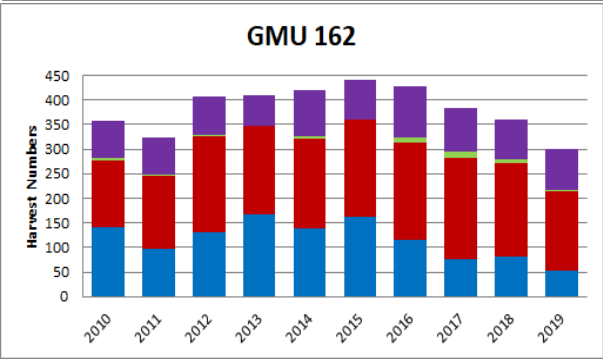
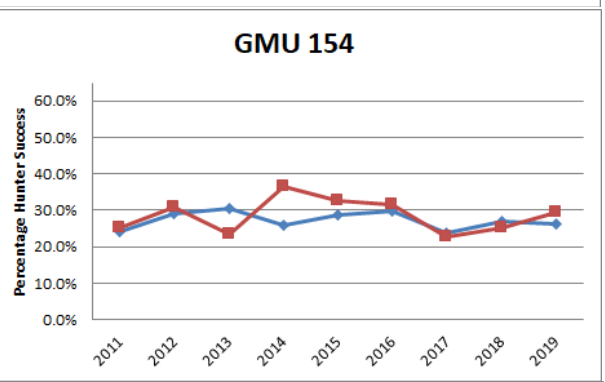
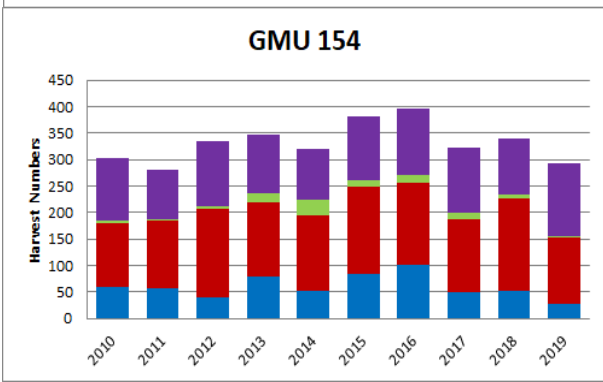
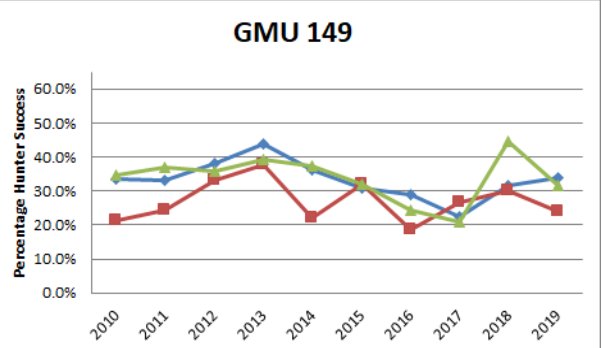
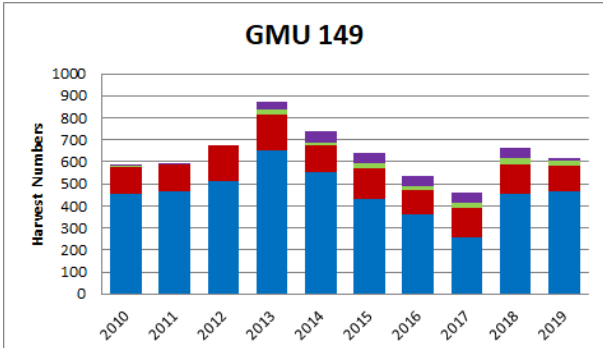
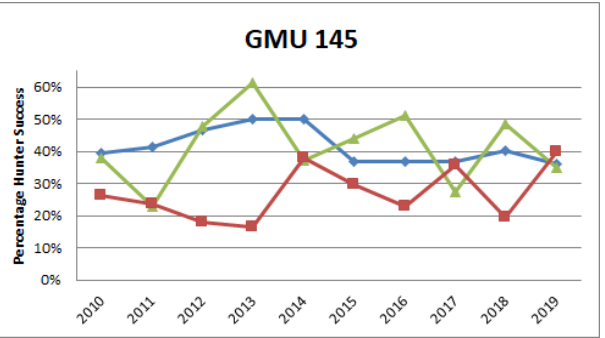
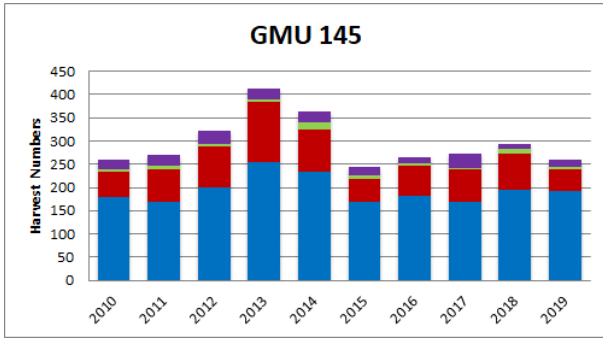
Wildfires are always a possibility that may affect hunter access to some hunting areas, and fires in the Lick Creek GMU this summer are likely to further impact an already declining harvest trend for deer in that GMU. This trend is most evident in success rates in the GMU, not overall harvest, and has been driven by the increase in hunters in GMU 175, which have doubled since 2001. Due to record dry conditions and heat through the early summer, hunters are **strongly encouraged** to check the status of wildfires ([online](#)) and as well as public land access restrictions ([USFS](#)) before planning for the fall hunting season. In addition, USFS and WDFW have been conducting prescribed burns and forest thinning projects to reduce wildfire risk. Check with the local USFS offices and WDFW district offices for current status on forest treatment projects.

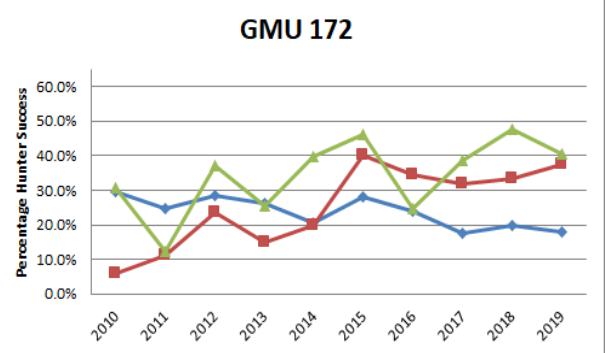
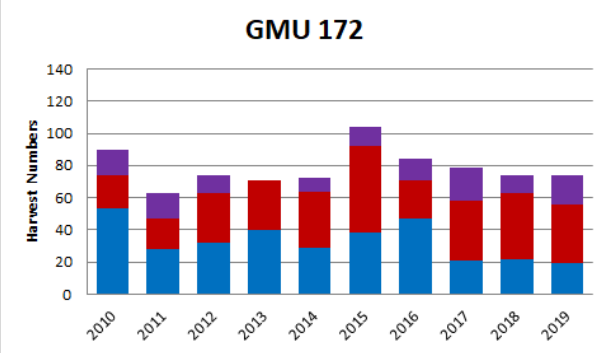
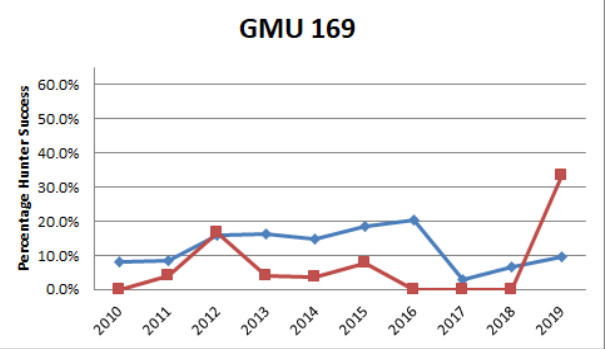
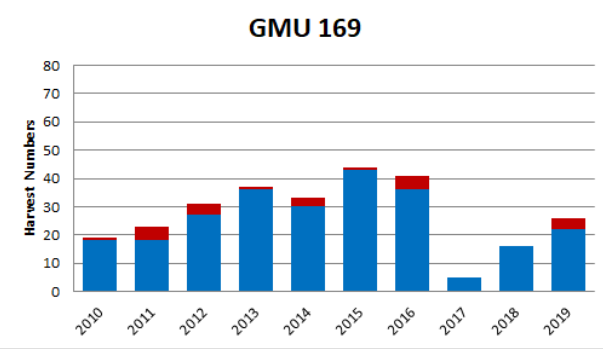
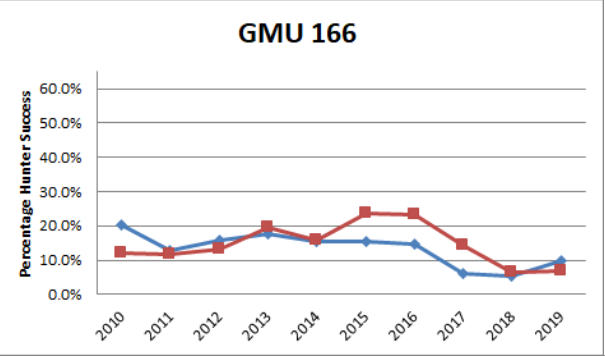
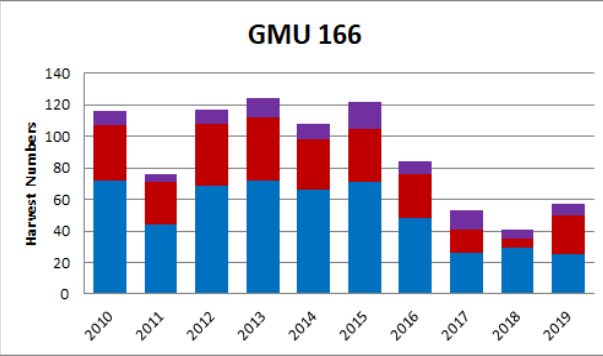
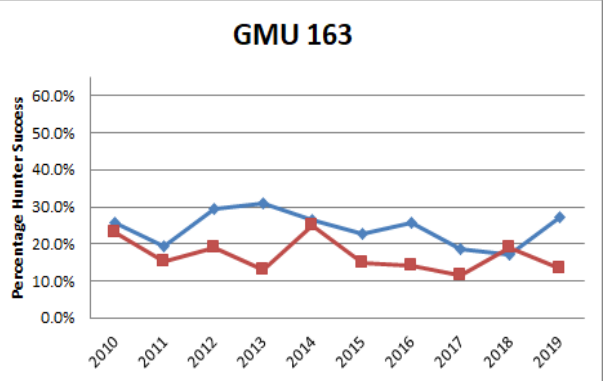
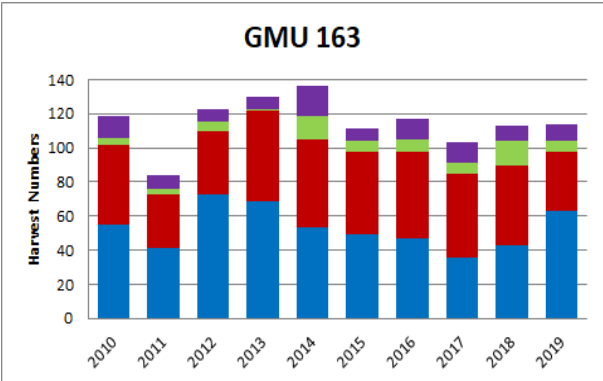
It is typically uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 3 where winter and weather conditions are generally mild and do not result in large winter die-offs. Populations are still recovering from very late and heavy snow cover across the district during the winters of 2016/2017 and 2018/2019, with snow cover persisting well into the usual spring green-up period. With back-to-back average to mild winters over 2019-20 and 2020-21, we expect to see improvements in deer populations across the District. The District saw improvements in both total white-tailed and mule deer harvests in 2020, beyond our expectations, and we expect this trend to continue into the 2021 season, especially for white-tailed deer bucks that have a shorter lag-time to become legal 3-points than mule deer. Depending on the effects of the drought this season, we are still expecting mule deer harvest to improve through the 2022 hunting season.

Periodic die-offs have occurred due to epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) and bluetongue, both viral conditions transmitted by a biting midge, a small fly often found near water or marshy areas, which mainly affect white-tailed deer. Despite extremely hot and dry conditions this summer, which are normally associated with EHD die-offs, we have not had reports of any widespread deer mortality at this time (late-July). It may be that conditions are so dry that the mud preferred by breeding midges has been reduced, thereby reducing the vector for disease spread. While disease outbreaks are monitored annually, there is nothing feasible to be done to prevent outbreaks of hemorrhagic diseases.

Mule deer populations have experienced long-term declines across much of the west with no definitive cause identified. Habitat loss is suspected to be one possible cause, particularly the loss of winter range. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has probably helped maintain winter range in District 3, and mule deer populations outside of the mountains appear to be stable to increasing. However, decreases in available CRP contracts over the last few years have resulted in more land going into agricultural production and will likely have long-term negative impacts on mule deer populations in the District. Mountain populations of mule deer continue to show poor harvest metrics. Recent wildfires in the Tucannon-Wenaha Wilderness should have improved habitat conditions for deer and fires this year in GMU 175 should provide future benefits.

One reference WDFW currently has for future potential harvest during general seasons are recent trends in hunter harvest success and harvest/unit effort. Figure 3 provides trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and is intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where they want to hunt in District 3 and what they can expect to encounter with regard to hunter success and deer numbers.





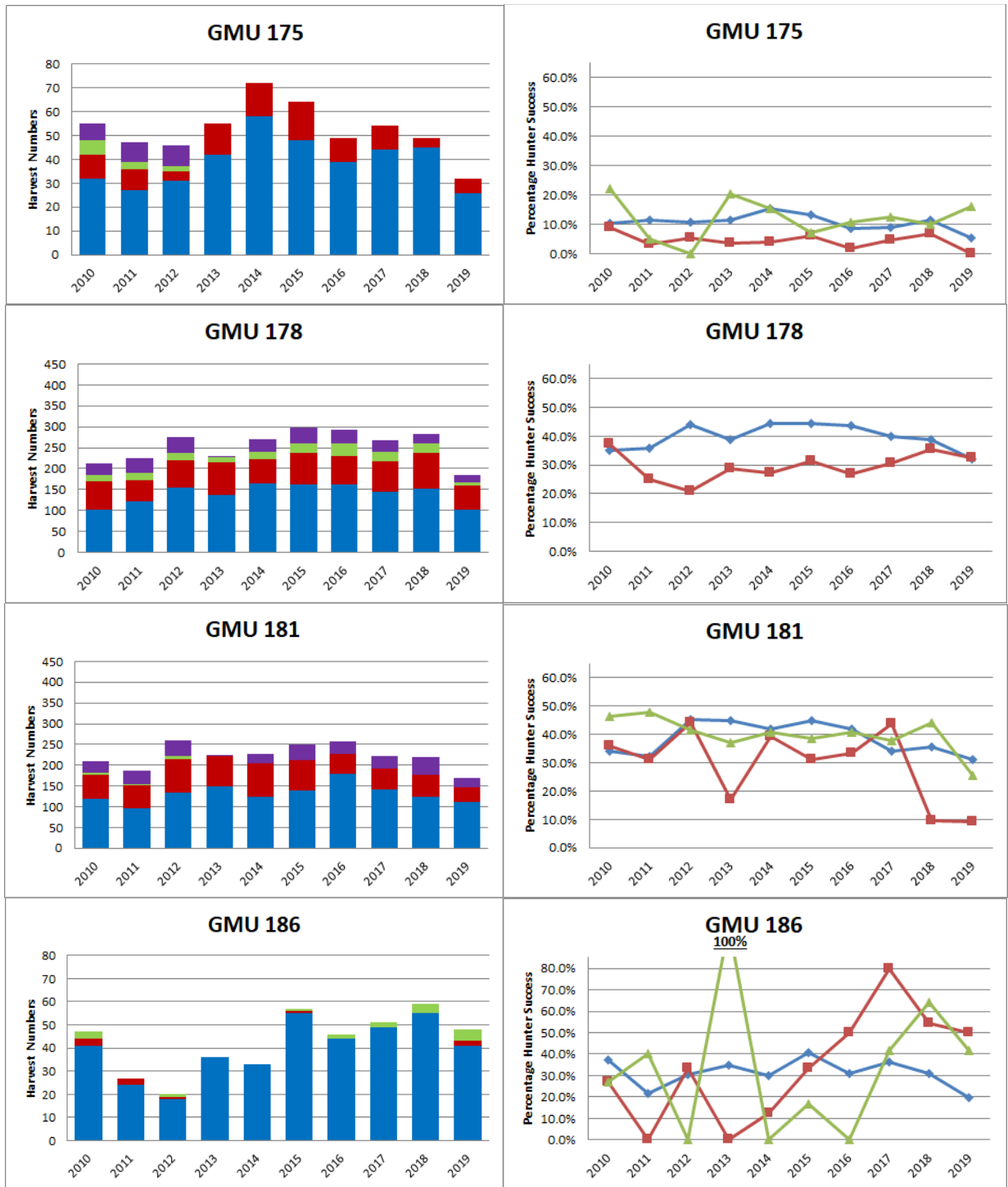


Figure 3. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in total numbers of mule deer bucks (blue) and antlerless deer (green), and white-tailed bucks (red) and antlerless deer (purple) during all general seasons combined from 2010-2019. Totals do not include permit harvest (**note the different scales**, from maximums of 80, 140, 450, and 1,000). **Right column:** Ten-year trends in percentage harvest success for each GMU in District 3 for modern firearm (**blue diamonds**), archery (**red squares**), and muzzleloader (**green triangles**) general season hunters for 2010-2019.

## DEER AREAS

There are three deer areas in District 3 that were created for several purposes. Deer Area 1010 is located within the private land area of GMU 162 and was created to help manage deer damage while limiting antlerless harvest on public land in the GMU. Deer Areas 1008 and 1009 divide GMU 169 and help to manage deer by distributing harvest opportunity across the wilderness area. Deer Area 1021 is in and around the town of Clarkston in GMU 178 and is used to help manage deer in and around the urban area. Deer Area 1040 is located in GMU 172 and consists of the 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area. Deer and elk hunting in this area is by permit only, which helps maintain some quality opportunity in the GMU and also helps keep deer and elk on the wildlife area to limit crop damage on private lands.

## NOTABLE HUNTING ALERTS

1. GMU 166 General Season Archery limited to 3 point minimum white-tailed and mule deer, no antlerless harvest allowed.
2. Deer Area 1040 (4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area) **has been eliminated** and is now open to general season deer and elk hunting under same regulations as GMU 172.
3. Deer Area 1021 **has been eliminated**. This area was originally created to control resident deer in the area around Clarkston. Radio-collaring studies showed that it was likely that many of the harvested deer were only using the Deer Area for winter range and were not resident deer causing damage issues.
4. Any Deer permits were added for youth in selected GMUs.



## BLACK BEAR

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

Black bears occur mainly in the foothills and forested areas of District 3, but population densities vary among GMUs. The highest densities of bears occur in GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton).

District 3 consists of GMUs that are part of the Blue Mountains Black Bear Management Unit 8 (BBMU 8), which is one of nine BBMUs defined by WDFW. Currently, allowing for a general bear season during the fall and controlled permit numbers during the spring has maintained harvest metrics within parameters identified by WDFW as reflective of a healthy bear population. The metrics used to direct black bear harvest include the proportion of harvested female bears (no more than 35-39 percent of harvest), the median age of harvested females (range no younger than 5-6 years), and the median age of harvested males (range no younger than 2-4 years).

WDFW has not been conducting surveys to monitor trends in black bear population size. Instead, we use trends in harvest data as surrogates to formal population estimates or indices. Currently, black bear populations are believed to be stable in District 3. Because we use the age of harvest as a management metric, we want to remind hunters that **it is required that a premolar tooth be submitted**. Tooth envelopes can be obtained by calling a regional office or stopping in at one of the district offices (best to call ahead as these offices aren't staffed full-time), which may be available to help with tooth extraction as well.

This year WDFW did initiate a black bear project in the central portion of District 3 to calculate an estimated density of bears in the District. This project uses sampling sites within 36 grid cells that each have one barbed wire corral around a scent lure to collect DNA samples from hair. There are four sample periods which serve as a mark-recapture effort (based on repeated sampling of individual bear DNA). Current fire conditions will affect the sampling periods, but we will have two complete sample collections and additional collections at accessible sites outside fire perimeters.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Although there are hunters who specifically target black bears, most bears are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest can vary quite a bit from one year to the next and overall hunter success is quite low. Since 2001, hunter success in District 3 has averaged just 6 percent and has never been higher than 9 percent. However, hunter success is likely higher for those hunters who specifically hunt bears versus those who buy a bear tag in case they see one while they are deer or elk hunting.

Overall, there has been no trend in annual bear harvest during the general bear season in District 3, with harvest generally fluctuating between 75 and 100 bears, excluding a few outliers. 2011 was a relatively poor year, with 66 bears harvested, but harvest rebounded during the 2012 and 2013 seasons before dropping off again in 2014 to 62 bears (Figure 8). With annual fluctuations

in hunter numbers, some index of harvest per unit effort is generally a better indicator of harvest trends. Figure 4 shows the number of hunter days per bear harvested, which also does not show any consistent trend.

At the GMU level, most bears will be harvested in GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton) (Figure 5). Harvest numbers during 2010, 2014, and 2017 seasons compared to long-term (10-year) and short-term (5-year) averages were lower in both GMUs 154 and 162, but the yearly District harvest does not show any identifiable trends (Figure 4) other than there have been very few low harvest years back-to-back. This was again highlighted by the rebound in 2012 after the low 2011 harvest, in both the 2015 and 2016 harvests after the low 2014 harvest, and again in 2018 after the low 2017 harvest. Based on general long-term stability in District 3 bear harvest, hunters should expect similar harvest and success rates during the 2021 season. We may see some change in the harvest dynamic over time with the new regulation of a two-bear limit and August 1 opener (compared to a past September opener) and the increase in spring permits in several GMUs. We did experience the highest total harvest in 2020 (140 bears) since the 2002 harvest (165 bears).

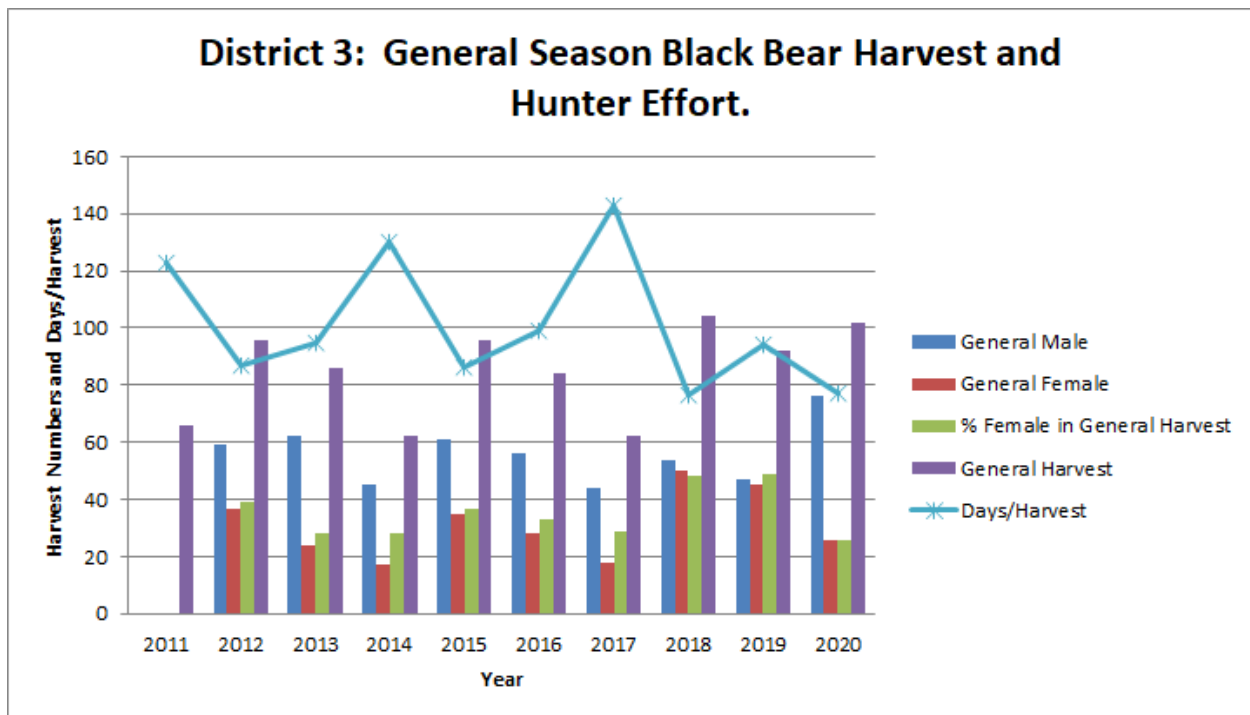


Figure 4. Trends in the number of male and female black bears and total number of bears harvested during the general bear season, and an index of hunter effort (hunter days/bear harvested) in District 3, 2011–2020 (the sex of harvested bears is not available for 2011).

## **HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR**

Scouting is an important factor that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 3. Although black bears are extremely common and occur in some areas at very high densities, they are seen infrequently because they generally limit their time in the open to cooler times of the day and move into thick vegetation in draws and creek bottoms.

Black bears can occur in a variety of habitat types so it can be difficult to narrow down where to search for them. Hunters should focus their efforts early and late in the day in more open terrain (e.g., south-facing slopes). In September, bears can spend a considerable amount of time in the lower elevations of the Blue Mountain foothills in search of fruit that has ripened in the riparian areas and around old homesteads.

Bears can often be located along riparian corridors that contain a large number of berry-producing shrubs, including creeping blackberries and elderberries, or along north-facing slopes with salmonberries, huckleberries, and blackberries. Spring permit holders should look below the snow-line on south-facing slopes that get early green-up of wild onions and other vegetation and near springs or wet areas with green aquatic vegetation. During the fall, hunters will generally find bears foraging across open slopes dissected by shrubby draws early in the day. Also, hunters should check riparian areas that may still have berries or rose hips, and hike through them to see if there is any bear sign. If fresh sign is found, odds are a bear is frequenting that area. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching open areas in these riparian patches and corridors, they may get a chance to harvest a bear. Patience is the key.

## **NOTABLE HUNTING ALERTS**

Beginning in 2019, bear hunting season dates in District 3 were standardized to an August 1 opener running until November 15 to conform to new statewide standard opening and closing dates. In addition, the 2-bear harvest limit was extended statewide. Hunters are still only allowed one bear on their spring bear permit but can harvest an additional bear during the fall season, or 2 bears in the fall if unsuccessful during a spring hunt.

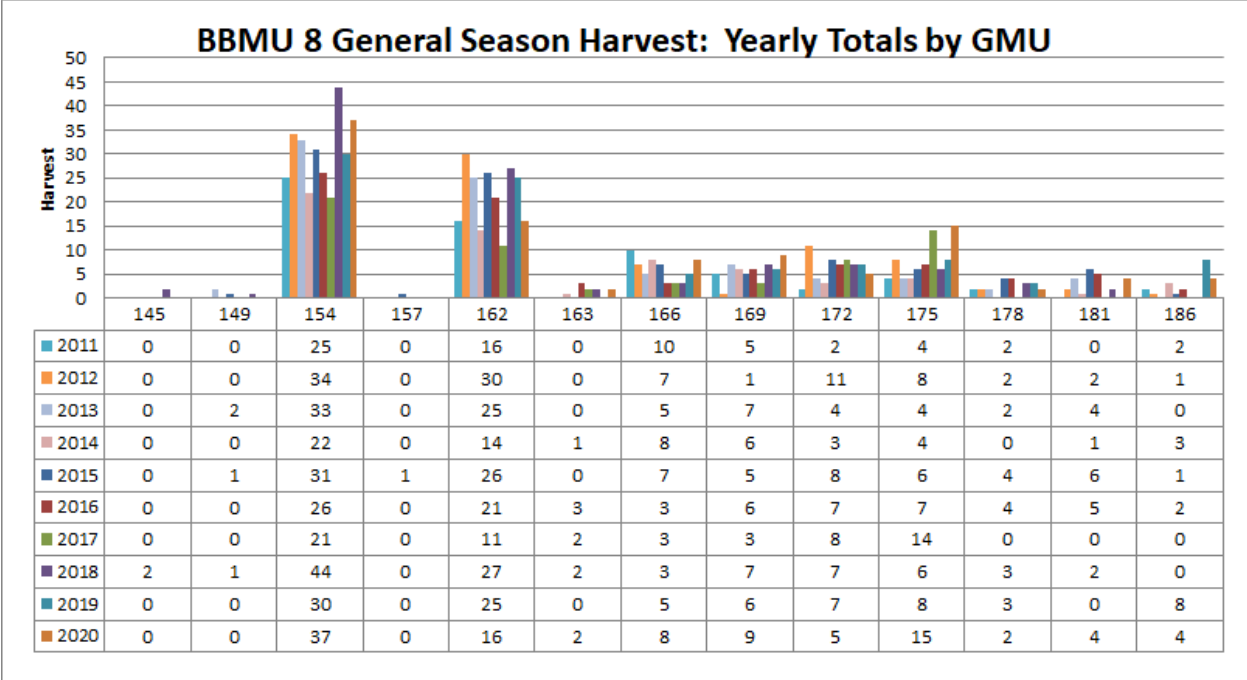


Figure 5. The number of bears harvested in each GMU during the 2011-2020 general black bear season in District 3.

## COUGAR

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

Cougars occur throughout District 3, but densities likely vary among GMUs, with higher densities where shrub and forest cover make up a larger portion of the unit. Cougar populations in District 3 are managed with the primary objective of maintaining stable adult territories and population by limiting the harvest of adult cougars to approximately 12-16 percent of the cougar population. Beginning in 2008, WDFW has continually adjusted the way it manages cougar harvest in Washington. The biggest change was shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougars harvested, and instead using a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intent was to have a longer season, without any weapon restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline.

To accomplish harvest goals, WDFW established a series of hunt areas, each with its own harvest guidelines and with standard season dates of Sept. 1 through April 30. **Harvest guidelines do not affect cougar hunting seasons until harvest numbers are evaluated starting January 1.** At that point, any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline may be closed, depending on the age and sex composition of the harvest. If hunters plan on hunting cougar after January 1, they must confirm that the cougar season is open in the area they plan to hunt. Harvest guidelines for each hunt area located in District 3 are provided in Table 4.

In April 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted higher harvest guidelines for cougars based on local harvest data instead of a Statewide average density estimate to calculate available opportunity, while still meeting the Game Management Plan (GMP) goals. Social stability is one goal stated in the GMP, which is maintained by adult territorial cougars. Based on this, only adult cougars (greater than 24 months of age) will count towards the harvest guideline in the coming years. It is unclear at this time if the harvest will change significantly under these new guidelines. Most harvest occurs during the fall big game seasons during the open season, which was not changed in 2020. The expectation of this change is that the winter season (Jan 1-Apr 30) should remain open in four out of every five years, allowing for good snow tracking conditions for hunters specifically targeting late-season cougars and potentially resulting in a higher harvest than observed in past years.

Table 4. Harvest guidelines and 2020-2021 harvest for the three cougar hunt areas located in District 3. Harvest from 2019-2020 was managed under a lower harvest guideline than applied in 2020-2021. Only cougars >24 months old are counted towards the guideline; total harvest is shown in ().

Hunt Area	2020-2021 Harvest Guideline	2020-2021 Harvest
145, 166, 175, 178	6-7 adult	4 (10) – Did not close
149, 154, 162, 163	7-9 adult	3 (4) – Did not close
169, 172, 181, 186	5-6 adult	4 (4) 0 Did not close

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

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Cougar harvest in District 3 has been variable over the years, with the average since 1990 of 16 cougars and a range between a low of seven and a high of 33. However, in 18 out of the last 25 years, the range has been between 12 and 20 cougars harvested. Since 2001, the number of cougars harvested in District 3 has averaged 14 cougars, and sub-adults typically dominate the harvest. With the yearly variation, it is hard to predict future harvest, but cougar sightings in the district continue to be fairly common and there is no reason to suspect much change in the harvest. Under the new harvest management guidelines, it is much less likely for all hunt areas to close by the January 1 evaluation period, but hunters interested in a cougar harvest in any of these GMUs should still plan on taking advantage of good cougar tracking conditions prior to January.

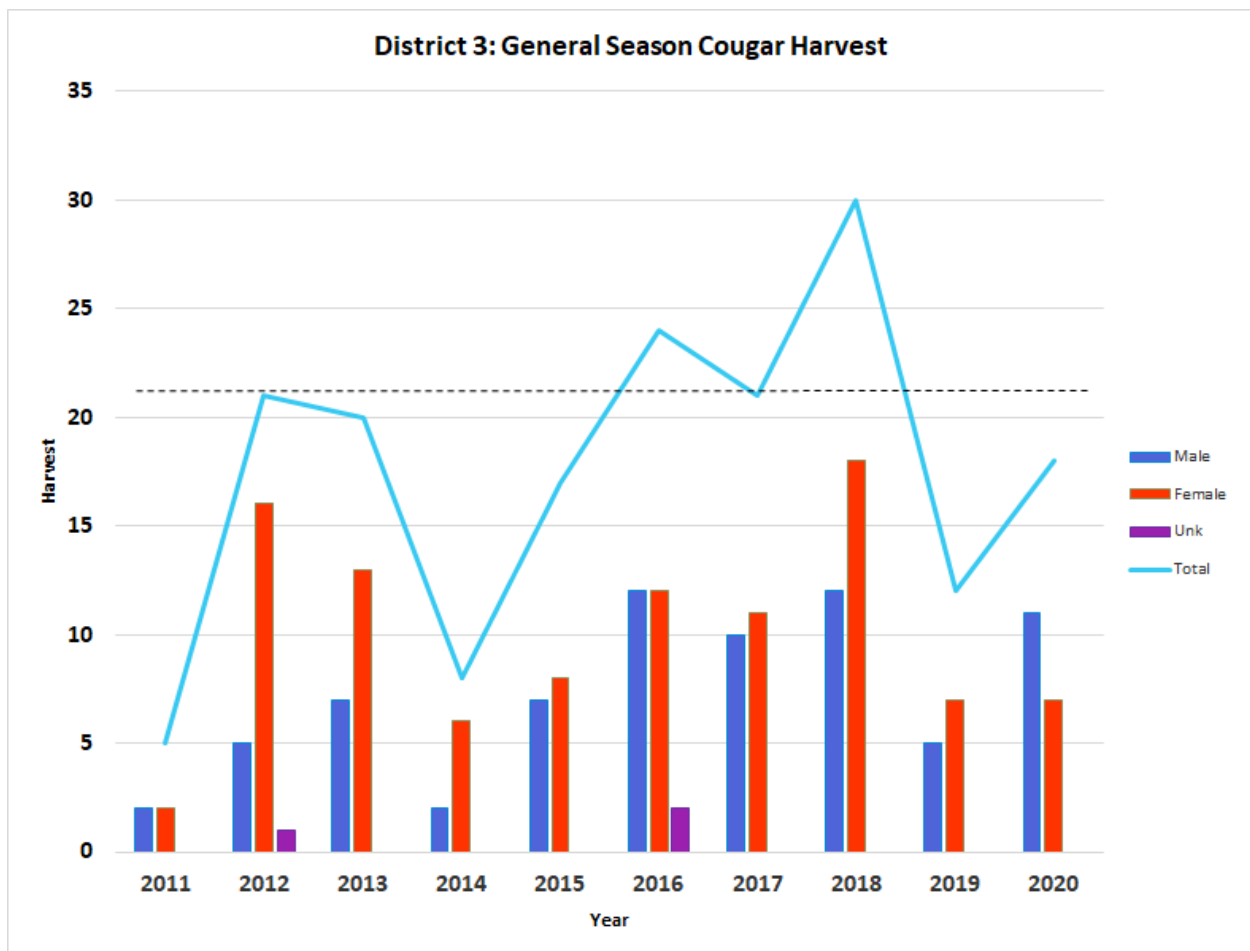


Figure 6. The reported number of cougars harvested in District 3, 2011–2020. The dashed line represents the upper harvest guideline for all three cougar areas combined, which will be increased for the 2020-2021 season.



## NOTABLE HUNTING ALERTS

1. The late season extends from January 1 to April 30, 2022. **Be aware that 2021 licenses expire at the end of March, and a 2022 hunting license and cougar tag is required to hunt cougar after March 31.**
2. The harvest guideline was increased for the 2020-2021 cougar season, and only cougars 24 months of age and greater will be counted towards the harvest guideline.

## DUCKS

### COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 3. Common dabbling ducks include mallard, northern pintail, American widgeon, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, canvasback, and common goldeneye are present along the reservoirs of the Snake and Columbia rivers and can occur in fairly large numbers.

Mallards are the most abundant duck species in Washington and constitute the vast majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically about 50 percent). Mid-winter surveys in the South Columbia Basin segment of District 3 typically yield more than 50 percent of mallards in the dabbling duck count, with goldeneye and canvasback making up 80 percent of the diving ducks. Hunters should expect harvest opportunities to be mostly mallard and American widgeon, although hunting by boat in the river reservoirs can yield good harvests of diving ducks.

### MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY

There are very few ducks in District 3 during late spring and early summer. Beginning in mid to late September, birds will begin migrating south from British Columbia, the Yukon, and Alaska, and numbers will continue to increase until they peak in late October and early November. Although migration patterns have not been intensively studied, it is believed ducks use concentration areas in District 3 as resting and foraging areas and do not stay in the district for long periods of time. Consequently, the number of ducks located in District 3 most likely changes daily but begins to decline sharply as ducks continue their southward migration and there are no more new migrants coming into the area from breeding grounds to the north.

### CONCENTRATION AREAS

In general, concentration areas include the wetlands and rivers around McNary National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Columbia and Snake River valleys. Concentrations within these broader areas are dependent on many factors (e.g., hunting pressure, weather, food, etc.), and have the potential to change daily. The agricultural areas around McNary NWR attract large numbers of foraging ducks and geese, but most of these lands are closed to hunting or leased by private hunting outfitters and access can be difficult to obtain or expensive for a private guide.

### POPULATION STATUS

The number of ducks in District 3 during established hunting seasons is most strongly related to the status of breeding duck populations in Alaska and Canada. The following are the trends from USFW/Canadian Wildlife Service monitoring data over the six-year period from 2014-2019: the 2014 breeding survey estimated the breeding population in Alaska at 3.5 million ducks, a 6 percent increase over 2013 values, but still well below the 2012 estimate of 4.4 million. The mallard estimate recovered from 2013 lows of 338,000 to an estimate of 501,000 for 2014, a 48 percent increase, and similar to the 2012 estimate (USFWS, Trends in Duck Breeding Populations, 1955-2015).

In 2015, the total estimate for the Alaska-Yukon Territory-Old Crow Flats traditional survey area was 3.4 million, a 3 percent decrease from 2014 estimates, and 8 percent below the long-term average. The mallard breeding population estimate was 471,000, a decrease of 6 percent from 2014 levels, but still 24 percent above the long-term average. In 2016, the total estimate for the Alaska-Yukon Territory-Old Crow Flats area was 4.3 million, a 28 percent increase over 2015 estimates, and 17 percent above the long-term trends. The mallard breeding population estimate was 584,000, 24 percent above the 2015 estimates, and 54 percent above the long-term trend. In 2017, the total estimate for the AK-Yukon area was 3.99 million, an 8 percent decline from the previous year, but 8 percent higher than the long-term average. The 2017 estimate for mallards was 538,000, an 8 percent decline from the 2016 estimate but 40 percent above the long-term average. In 2018, the total estimate for the AK-Yukon area was 3.38 million, 15 percent below 2017 estimates, and 9 percent below the long-term average. The 2018 harvest in District 3 mirrored the population estimates, with a 15 percent decline in harvest over the 2017 duck harvest. In 2018, the mallard population estimate was 451,000, a 16 percent decline over 2017 estimates but still 17 percent above the long-term average. In 2019, the total estimate for the AK-Yukon area was 2.61 million, a 23% decline over 2018 estimates, and the third year in a row of population declines. 2019 also saw a continued decline in mallard breeding population numbers, with an estimate of 361,000, 20% below 2018 and 7% below the long-term average.

## **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS**

Although we do not have the 2020 harvest data, recent harvests have mirrored the breeding estimates, with 2018 duck harvest being down 15 percent overall from 2017, marking the third year in a row of decreased harvest, mirroring decreased breeding estimates for two out of the last three years from the breeding grounds in Alaska and Canada. Harvests in 2019 broke this trend and were well above expected levels, being 16% greater than 2018 and only 2% below the 5-year mean. With widespread drought, hot and dry conditions, and early fires, we expect the 2021 harvest to be well below average. Generally, the waterfowl breeding surveys track well with hunter success. Although hunter numbers have remained relatively stable, the number of hunter days were much higher in 2019, resulting in the harvest/day being the lowest in the last 5 years and were well below both the five- and 10-year averages (Figure 8). The 2021 Waterfowl Population Status Report was not available at the time of this writing, but hunters should check the report at the [USFWS page](#) for insight into the 2021 population estimates for waterfowl hunting prospects.

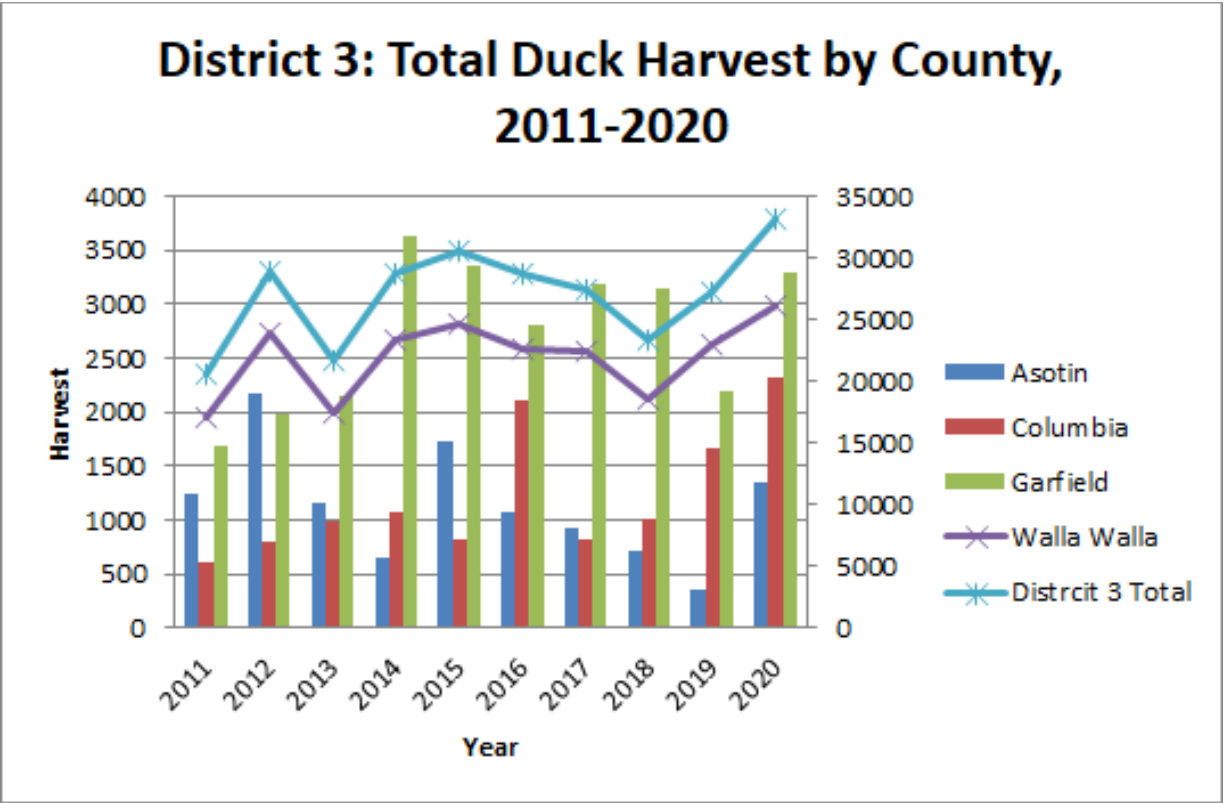


Figure 7. Trends in the total number of ducks harvested (blue line, right axis), and totals by county in Walla Walla (purple line, right axis), Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield counties (bars, left axis), 2011–2020.

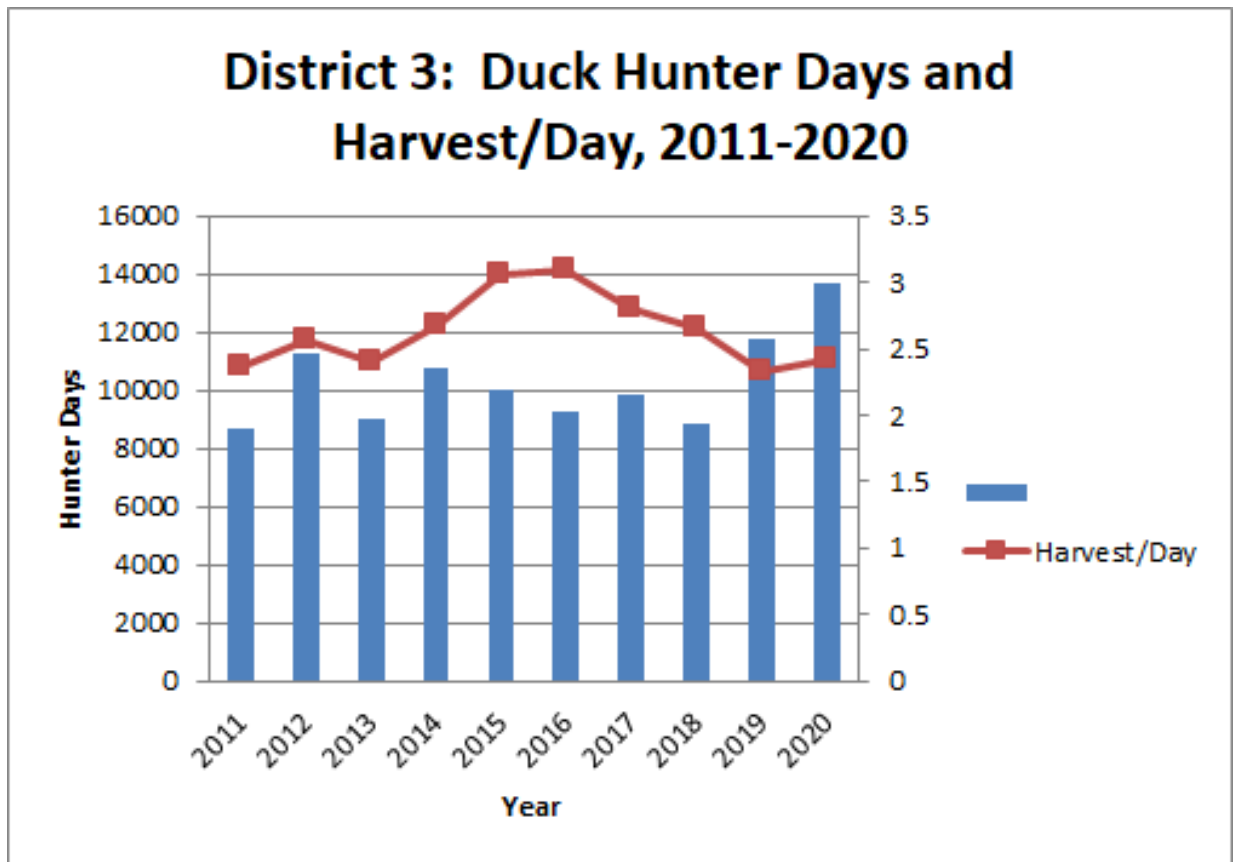


Figure 8. Trends in the total duck hunter days (left axis), and ducks harvested per hunter day (right axis) in District 3, 2011-2020.

## HUNTING TECHNIQUES

How hunters go about hunting ducks is largely dependent on where they choose to hunt. When hunting inland waters associated with ponds and rivers, or feeding areas, traditional decoy setups work the best. Birds are most active during early morning and late afternoon as they move from resting areas to feeding areas. See the [WDFW waterfowl page](#) for more information on hunting ducks.

## PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are several U.S. Army Corp of Engineer (USACE) Habitat Management Units along the Snake River in District 3 that offer good waterfowl hunting opportunities, and McNary NWR along the Columbia River offers some of the premier hunting opportunities in the district. WDFW Wildlife Areas in District 3 are primarily big game habitat and do not offer much waterfowl hunting opportunity, but hunters should see the [WDFW waterfowl hunting page](#) for more detailed information related to their location, current waterfowl management activities, and common species.

## GEESE

### COMMON SPECIES

Canada geese are the only goose species available for harvest in District 3 during the early September season, while Canada, snow, Ross, and white-fronted geese may all be taken during the late season.

### MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

The migration chronology of geese in District 3 is nearly identical to that described for ducks, with very few geese occurring in the district until migrants begin showing up from Alaska in September. However, one distinct difference between ducks and geese is goose numbers do not decline as sharply as duck numbers do around the latter half of November. Instead, many geese choose to over-winter in the agricultural areas of the district as long as snow cover does not become excessive.

### POPULATION STATUS

Few geese breed in District 3, so WDFW does not conduct breeding goose surveys in this part of the state. Urban goose populations can be problematic at times but offer limited hunting opportunities.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

Goose hunting opportunities in District 3 are expected to be similar to trends observed during the last few seasons. Most goose harvest will occur in Walla Walla County during the late season, where twice as many geese are harvested each year compared to Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield counties combined. Although harvest is low in the three eastern counties of the district, creative hunters can find opportunities along the Touchet, Tucannon, and Snake rivers by requesting access from farmers who have geese feeding daily in their crop fields, particularly alfalfa.



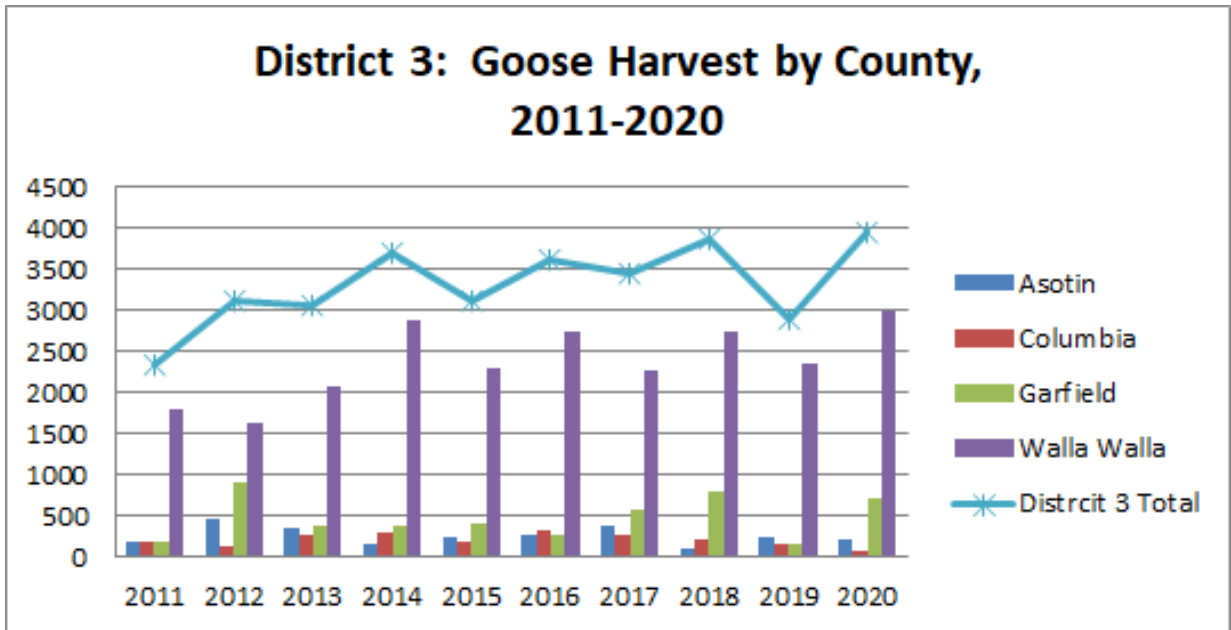


Figure 9. Trends in the total number of geese harvested (pale blue line), and totals by county in Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties, 2011–2020.

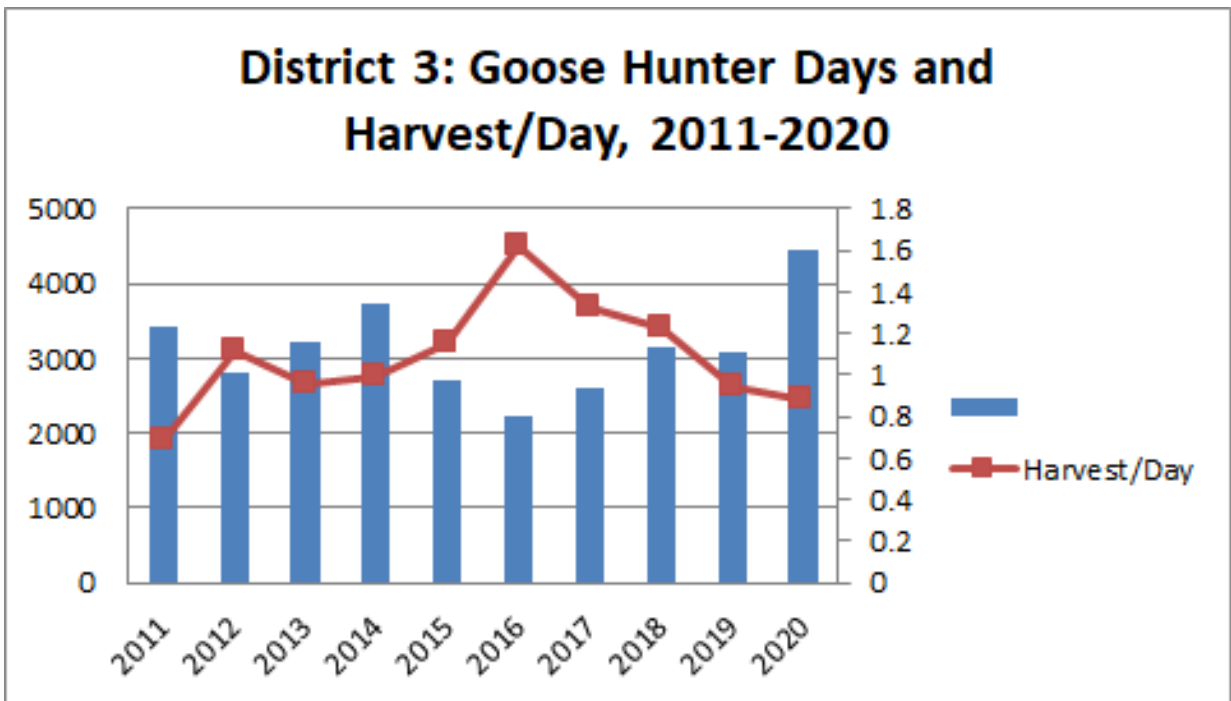


Figure 10. Trends in the total goose hunter days (left axis), and geese harvested per hunter day (right axis) in District 3, 2011–2020.

## **HUNTING TECHNIQUES**

The standard techniques employed to harvest geese include finding agricultural areas where geese are feeding and setting up a decoy spread well before daylight in parts of the fields where geese are expected to concentrate. In District 3, agricultural areas where feeding geese congregate are dryland and irrigated agricultural fields relatively close to the Snake or Columbia rivers. Because of this, goose hunting opportunities most often occur on private property and require hunters to gain permission before hunting. There are multiple guide services available for hunters willing to pay for access and experience.

## **SPECIAL REGULATIONS**

It is strongly recommended that hunters review the most recent Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet to ensure they comply, as there are specific daily regulations. Pamphlets are available at any retailer that sells hunting licenses or they can be downloaded from [WDFW's website](#).

## FOREST GROUSE

### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Two species of grouse occur in District 3 -- ruffed grouse and dusky grouse (formerly called blue grouse). Ruffed grouse are the most abundant grouse in the Blue Mountains and generally occur at lower elevations and along shrubby draws and riparian areas where hardwoods are present. Dusky grouse can be located in upper elevation timbered slopes and mountain meadows, often near springs or some other water source. Both species will be attracted to berry-producing vegetation, such as chokecherry, currant, elderberry, and snowberry, with aspen stands also being an attractive habitat for both cover and forage.

### POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not conduct any standardized surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 3 (expanded wing and tail collection using “wing barrels” at USFS entry points is underway in an effort to identify age and sex of harvested birds). Instead, harvest data trends are used to monitor the general population status. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers, so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), which tracks birds harvested per hunter day, is the best indicator of population trends. In District 3, grouse populations appeared to be at least stable if not increasing until the 2016 season, as CPUE has slowly increased from a low in 2011 until a drop in 2016. While both harvest numbers and hunter days have been decreasing, the increase in CPUE suggests grouse populations have been stable (Figure 11) but were likely impacted by difficult winters in 2016 and 2018.

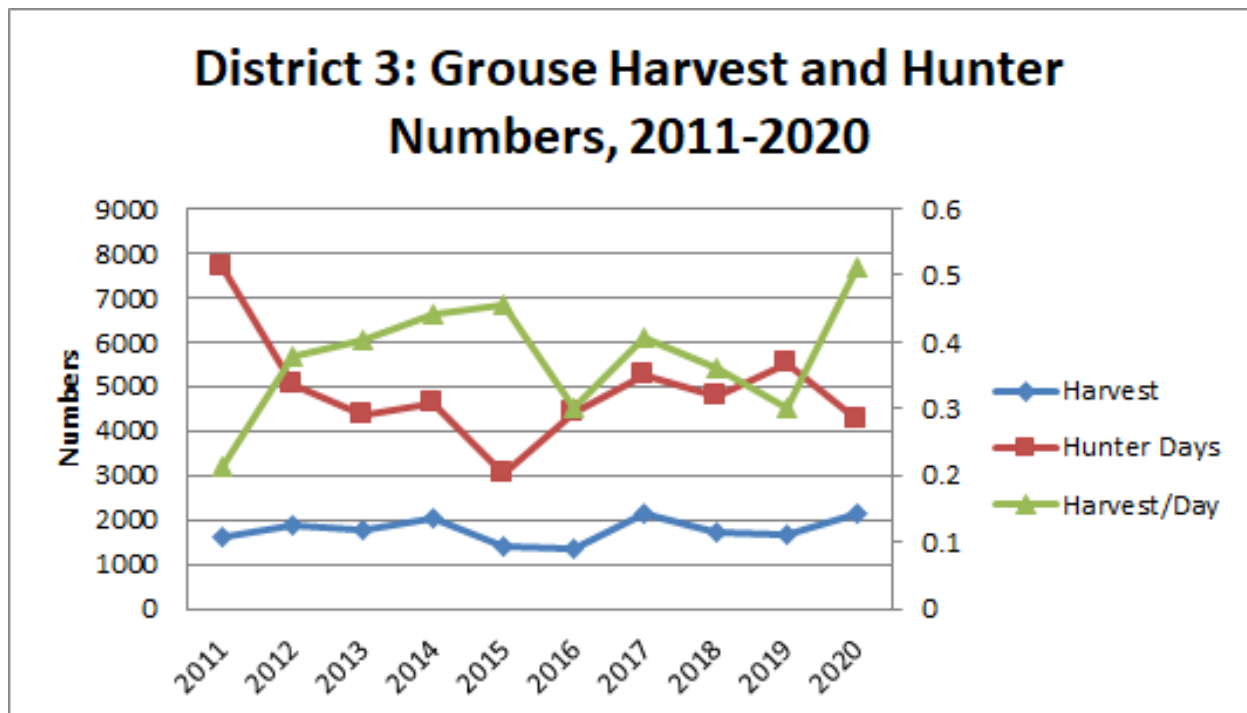


Figure 11. Number of grouse harvested, number of hunter days (right axis), and grouse harvested per hunter day (left axis), 2011-2020.

## **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS**

The total number of grouse harvested in District 3 has declined significantly since 2009 when 5,147 grouse were estimated to be harvested. This is compared to 2,143 in 2017 and around 1,700 in both 2018 and 2019. However, hunter numbers have declined as well, with a dramatic decrease in 2010 followed by a slow decline since then. Despite the sharp declines in harvest, the strong correlation between hunter days and total grouse harvested suggests hunters should expect on average to harvest one grouse for every two to three days hunting. Typically, a hunter may go a few days without seeing birds or getting a shot at any but will harvest multiple birds on a given day, once they find good habitat and encounter birds still in family groups.

**New in 2021, forest grouse hunting season opens September 15, extending through January 15, 2022.**

## **HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT**

In general, the most effective way to hunt grouse in District 3 is by walking roads and shooting them as they flush or flushing after they roost in a nearby tree. Dusky grouse tend to occur in higher densities in the higher elevations of the Blue Mountains and can occasionally be found in good numbers along grassy open ridges mixed with conifer forests. Ruffed grouse are closely associated with riparian areas throughout all elevations of the forested portions of the Blue Mountains. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's grouse species, see WDFW's [upland bird hunting webpage](#).

## PHEASANTS

The best pheasant hunting opportunities in District 3 are associated with the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program. Each year, approximately 3,500 pheasants are released in Region 1, and many of these are destined for release sites in District 3. Nine sites are located throughout the district. Four of those sites (Hollebeke HMU, Mill Creek HMU, Rice Bar HMU, and Willow Bar HMU) are owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, two sites (Asotin Wildlife Area and the Hartsock Unit of the Wooten Wildlife Area) are WDFW-owned, and the rest are on private lands open to the public under WDFW's Feel Free to Hunt access program. Releases take place for the youth season on most of the sites in mid-September, and the remaining releases happen sporadically throughout the pheasant hunting season. **Be aware that only non-toxic shot is allowed at any pheasant release site, regardless of public or private land ownership.** Hunters should be mindful of the regulation, and if they are using lead shot at other hunting sites but hunting multiple sites, be careful to leave lead shot in their vehicles when visiting a WDFW pheasant release site.

### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Pheasants are closely associated with agricultural and grassland habitats throughout the northern and western portions of the district. The best pheasant hunting is located in areas of permanent cover, usually associated with riparian or shrubby habitats. There is no question that the district has lost pheasants and pheasant habitat over the past 30-40 years, due in part to changes in farming practices, increase in invasive weed species, and potentially due to long-term changes in precipitation across the region. However, the district still offers many good hunting opportunities for both wild and planted birds.

### POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not generate population estimates for pheasants. Instead, harvest data trends are used to monitor the general population status. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers, so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), which track birds harvested per hunter day, is the best indicator of population trends. In District 3, pheasant CPUE has remained relatively stable over the past decade. CPUE in 2018 was 0.73 birds harvested per hunter day, with the previous five-year average being 0.69. Other WDFW information implies that populations have declined during the past few decades but appear to have recently stabilized. For the period from 2006-2018, there is a correlation between the number of pheasants harvested and the number of hunter days, which also suggests a stable population over the same period. Much of this harvest is likely supported by the pheasant release program, so harvest is likely not a good indication of wild pheasant populations.

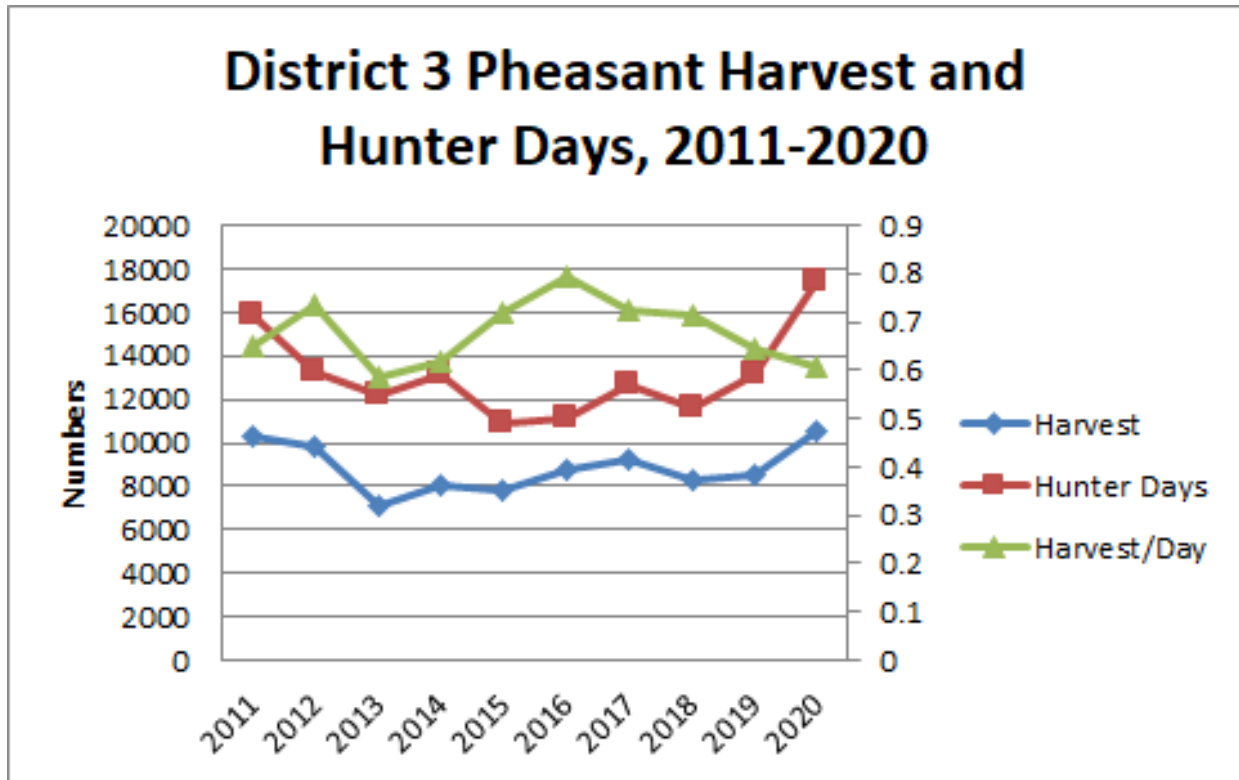


Figure 13. Total pheasant harvest, hunter days, and harvest per day in District 3, 2011-2020.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

The total number of pheasants harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season and is also buffered by the pheasant release program. Although the winter/early spring conditions in 2021 have been fairly mild and we should have good adult bird survival, spring/summer drought and hot temperatures are likely to impact both seed crop and insect resources on which pheasants rely and may not support good brood survival, causing a decline in pheasant populations. Garfield County has been raising and releasing pheasants in an effort to bolster the pheasant population. While WDFW pheasant releases support a put-and-take hunt of male pheasants, Garfield County is releasing both male and female pheasants in appropriate habitat to encourage the expansion of declining populations. You can read more about the program here ([Garfield County pheasants](#)), which includes information on how to support the project.

### HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt pheasants in District 3 is with the use of a bird dog. Pheasants are usually located in thicker cover and often require a dog to flush them if they do not run-in front of hunters. To learn more about how to hunt Washington’s pheasants, please visit WDFW’s [upland bird hunting webpage](#).



Hunters should be aware that special regulations apply when hunting on eastern Washington pheasant release sites. Most notably, hunters are required to use nontoxic shot. To locate maps for the Mill Creek, Hollebeke, Rice Bar, and Willow Bar HMUs, as well as the Asotin and Hartsock WMA release sites, and to learn more about the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#), visit the WDFW website.

## QUAIL

### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

California quail are common in the lower elevation draws and drainages across the foothills of the Blue Mountains, and suitable pockets of habitat across the prairie areas and breaks of the Grande Ronde and Snake rivers. Mountain quail occur in District 3, but there are no sizable populations and sightings are uncommon. When they do occur, it is usually along the Asotin and Joseph Creek drainages and tributaries that have abundant shrub cover, and hunters looking for California quail in this area should be careful to identify their target, as mountain quail are protected in eastern Washington.

### POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not estimate population size for quail. Instead, harvest data trends are used to monitor population status. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers, so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), which tracks birds harvested per hunter day is the best indicator of population trends. In District 3, recent quail CPUE has improved significantly from low levels in 2013, likely due to weather during the nesting period. CPUE in 2014 was 1.23 birds harvested per hunter day and remained stable through the 2016 season at 1.38 birds harvested per hunter day but dropped drastically in 2017 to 0.64 birds/hunter day, with the previous five-year average being 1.14 birds/day. An expected improvement in quail harvest did not materialize in 2018, with another low harvest of only 0.62 birds/hunter day. Harvest in 2019 did see improvement to 0.7 birds/day, but still well below the 5-year average. Conditions this year have not been as favorable as 2019, so there may be another low harvest in 2021.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

The total number of quail harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. The breeding conditions during spring and early summer of 2021 have been poor and have not improved over the summer. Biologists predict that 2021 quail harvest numbers will continue their recent slide.

### HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

In general, the most effective way to hunt quail in District 3 is with the use of a bird dog. Quail are usually located in thicker cover and often require a dog to flush. To learn more about how to hunt Washington's quail, please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage.

## TURKEYS

Wild turkeys of the Rio Grande subspecies have been introduced into southeast Washington and have become very common. Turkeys are found in the lower elevation draws and drainages across the foothills of the Blue Mountains and in suitable pockets of habitat across the prairie areas and breaks of the Grande Ronde and Snake rivers. Turkeys can be found in all GMUs but tend to be concentrated along riparian areas in the lower elevations of the Blue Mountains and often near farmsteads and towns.

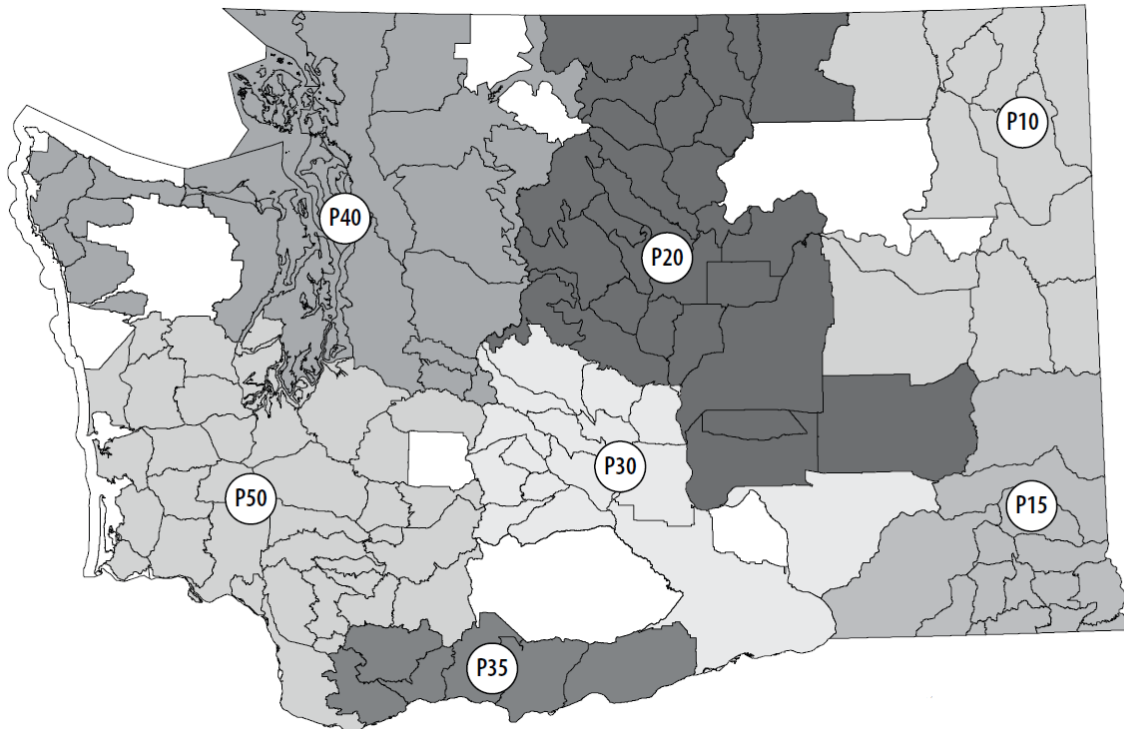


Figure 15. Map depicting WDFW's seven wild turkey population management units.

### POPULATION STATUS

WDFW does not estimate population size for turkeys. Instead, harvest data trends are used to monitor population status. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers so catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), which tracks birds harvested per hunter day, is the best indicator of population trends. In District 3, turkey CPUE rebounded from a below-average year in 2013 to a CPUE of 0.10 in 2014, 0.09 in 2015, and 0.11 in 2016, similar to the previous five-year average of 0.10 turkeys per hunter day. 2017 was another below-average year, with CPUE of 0.077, likely attributed to turkeys experiencing high winter mortality. The fall season was much better with a CPUE of 0.12 birds/hunter day, indicating good brood survival over the spring and summer. The 2019 harvest continued the improving trend from 2018, with a CPUE of 0.11 during the spring season, dropping a bit at 0.09 for the fall. Harvest in 2020 saw a drop during the spring season, which may be an indication that recent increases in harvest limits are

stabilizing the population. That said, the 2020 fall harvest was the second highest in the last 10 years, both in total harvest and CPUE.

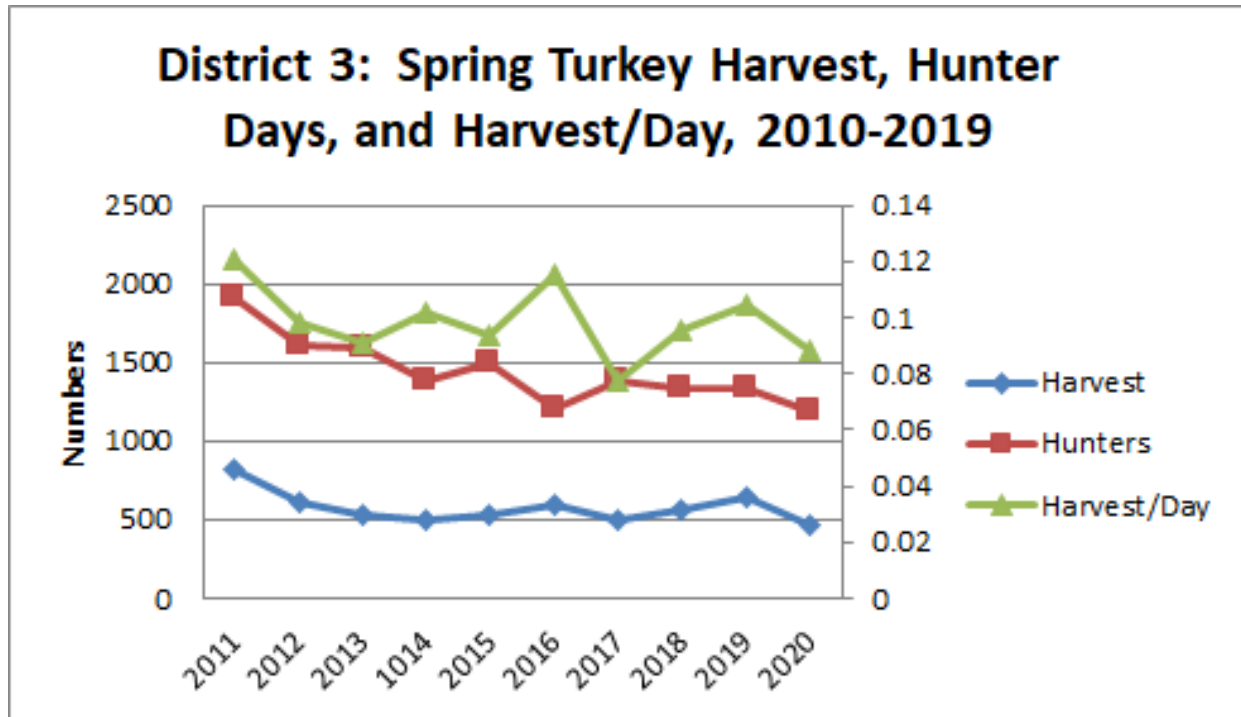


Figure 16. Spring turkey harvest numbers and number of hunter days (left axis), and harvest/day (right axis), 2011-2020.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

The total number of turkeys harvested in District 3 is dependent upon habitat and weather conditions during the breeding season. The total harvest of 742 in 2014 was nearly average, followed by harvests of 770 in 2015, 773 in 2016, and 769 in 2017. With more liberal bag limits, 2018 saw a jump in harvest to 1,053 birds combined for spring and fall seasons, with a similar harvest of 1,048 in 2019, both years being well above the five-year average of 821 birds. Most of the increase was due to high fall harvest, probably due to the new regulations increasing the bag limit to four turkeys during the fall season. The spring season limit remains at two bearded turkeys in Eastern Washington. Based on long-term harvest trends, turkey populations in southeast Washington appear to have stabilized after years of increasing harvest, and future harvest is likely to be most impacted by spring weather conditions on brood survival and the occasional hard winter impacting all age classes. The spring and early summer of 2021 have had good conditions for nesting birds, but brood-rearing is likely to be negatively impacted by drought and hot temperatures affecting seed crops and insect numbers. Biologists predict that turkey numbers will show a decline in the Fall 2021 harvest.

### HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

Most turkey hunters target gobblers in the spring when males are displaying and readily come to box slate, and mouth calls that mimic hen groups. Setting a blind or using camouflage clothing

near meadows or small forest openings used as strutting grounds can be very effective. Often only minimal calling is needed to bring turkeys within range. Identifying roost areas and setting up nearby can also be effective, but efficient calling will be needed to attract birds. Gobble calls should only be used infrequently, and hunters generally should not stalk or approach gobble calls, as it may be another hunter.

GMUs 154 (Blue Creek) and 162 (Dayton) have the highest turkey harvests. The highest densities are often found on private land in the lower foothill areas that have a mix of forest, grassland, and agricultural fields, and flocks can frequently be seen from roadways along the creek drainages in these areas. Some of these flocks have become nuisance birds, and landowners are often willing to grant permission to thin turkey numbers. Be respectful of private land and always ask for permission to hunt. Although densities are lower, good numbers of birds can be found on National Forest lands and local wildlife areas, including the Wooten Wildlife Area in GMU 166 (Tucannon), Asotin Creek Wildlife Area in GMU 175 (Lick Creek), and the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area in GMU 186 (Grande Ronde). Don't overlook the hidden gem of the George Creek Unit (GMU 181) of the Asotin Wildlife Area.

## OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species and furbearers that occur in District 3 but were not covered in detail include cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hares, coyotes, bobcats, beaver, raccoons, river otter, marten, mink, muskrat, and weasels. Additional game birds with significant harvests in District 3 include chukar and gray partridge, and migratory birds including mourning doves, snipe, and coot. Asotin County accounts for the majority of the chukar and gray partridge harvest, with Columbia and Garfield counties having localized pockets of good hunting for these species. Walla Walla County accounts for the majority of the mourning dove harvest, and the introduced Eurasian collared dove, which can be hunted anytime with a small game license, has become common in the developed areas of all four counties.

### NOTABLE HUNTING ALERTS

1. Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV2) is a fatal disease in rabbits affecting both domestic and wild populations. To date, the disease has been detected across the Southwest in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. Although RHDV2 **does not impact human health**, the disease is highly contagious among rabbits and can easily be spread by rabbit hunters who contact infected rabbits. Rabbit hunters should be cautious with all harvested rabbits to avoid the possible spread of the virus by keeping carcasses contained in an area that can easily be disinfected with a 10% bleach solution. It is also a good practice to disinfect boots and wash all clothing before hunting in a new area or visiting anywhere that has domestic rabbits. Hunters should report any incidence of multiple dead wild rabbits they encounter to Federal or State officials (<http://pacific.fws.gov/visitor/washington.html>, <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>).

## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

District 3 does offer considerable public land and Feel Free to Hunt access opportunities. Public land opportunities within the district are comprised of U.S. Forest Service (Umatilla National Forest), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, WA Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Land Management, and WDFW, while the Rainwater Wildlife Area of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is in the Feel Free to Hunt Access Program.

GMUs with the greatest amount of public land include GMU 157 (Mill Creek Watershed, closed to entry except by permit), GMU 162 (Dayton), GMU 166 (Tucannon), GMU 169 (Wenaha), GMU 172 (Mountain View), GMU 175 (Lick Creek), GMU 181 (Couse), and GMU 186 (Grande Ronde).

For more information related to the location of WDFW wildlife areas and other public lands, visit WDFW's [hunting regulations web map](#).



## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU

One of the most common questions from hunters is, “What is hunter access like in particular GMUs?” Generally, this question is referring to the amount of public land in each GMU, and the following ratings reflect that assumption. Please refer to the Private Land Access Program section of this document to determine which GMUs have significant amounts of additional lands available for public hunting.

The following rating system was developed for District 3 GMUs to give hunters a general idea of what type of access is available in the GMU they want to hunt. For the purposes of this exercise, access ratings are specific to the level of public land available. Each GMU was given a rating of excellent, good, or poor, with the level of access associated with each rating as follows:

- **Excellent** – A majority of the GMU is in public ownership.
- **Good** – There is a mix of public land within the GMU.
- **Poor** – Most of the GMU is privately owned.

The information provided is a brief description of major ownership. Hunters are encouraged to contact the WDFW Eastern Region (Region 1) office in Spokane Valley (509-892-1001) with other questions related to hunter access.

### GMU 145 - MAYVIEW

Access rating – Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) owns the shorelines of the Snake River. In many places, the USACE lands only extend a couple of hundred yards above the waterlines, but there are a few large habitat management units that provide considerable recreational opportunity. There is significant acreage from this unit enrolled in WDFW’s Access Program.

### GMU 149 – PRESCOTT

Access rating – Poor

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although USACE owns the shorelines of the Snake River. In many places, the USACE lands only extend a couple of hundred yards above the waterlines, but there are a few large habitat management units that provide considerable recreational opportunity. There is significant acreage from this unit enrolled in WDFW’s Access Program, and the Tucannon Wind Resource area managed by Portland General Electric has limited hunting (see GMU 163 for information and links).

### GMU 154 – BLUE CREEK

Access Rating – Poor/good

The majority of this GMU is in private ownership, although several large landowners participate in the department’s private land access program. Hunters wishing to hunt in this GMU are highly

encouraged to contact landowners long before their season opens to secure access. Hunters applying for special permits in this GMU are encouraged to secure access before applying.

### **GMU 157 – MILL CREEK WATERSHED**

Access rating – No entry without permit

Although this GMU is 99 percent public lands, access is restricted to special permit holders. The Mill Creek Watershed has regulated public access because it is the source of drinking water for the City of Walla Walla. Currently, there are only elk permit opportunities within this GMU.

### **GMU 162 - DAYTON**

Access rating – Good/poor

Approximately half of this GMU is in public ownership, primarily USFS and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Private land access can be difficult to obtain within this GMU, although a few landowners participate in the department's private land access program.

### **GMU 163 - MARENGO**

Access rating – Poor

A majority of this GMU is in private ownership. This GMU has a large percentage of the land developed for wind power. Special rules are in place to ensure the safety of hunters, residents, wind project workers, and equipment. More information is available through the wind project [hunting video](#). Remember, hunting on private lands is a privilege and, as with all hunting activities, rules and prohibitions are enforced by state game agents and local law enforcement. Access to PacifiCorp's Marengo wind facility, Puget Sound Energy's adjacent Hopkins Ridge wind facility, and Portland General Electric's Tucannon River wind farm is jointly administered by the utilities. With this shared access program, hunters only need to register with one utility to hunt at any of these wind facilities.

Written permission for access to these lands may be obtained by completing the online registration form. Forms are also available at:

The General Store  
426 Main Street  
Dayton, Washington, 99328  
509-382-1042  
[tgsdayton@gmail.com](mailto:tgsdayton@gmail.com)

The Last Resort  
Kampstore2005 Tucannon Rd.  
Pomeroy, WA 99347  
[www.thelastresortrv.com](http://www.thelastresortrv.com)

Four Star Supply  
2255 Villard St  
Pomeroy, WA 99347  
509-843-3693  
[pomeroyfourstarsupply@hotmail.com](mailto:pomeroyfourstarsupply@hotmail.com)

## **GMU 166 - TUCANNON**

Access rating – Excellent

A majority of this GMU is owned by WDFW and USFS. Access is good throughout most of the unit, with a portion of the unit being located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness.

## **GMU 169 - WENAHA**

Access rating = Excellent

This GMU is 100 percent public lands, with 95 percent of it located within the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. This is a very rugged wilderness topographically and access can be physically challenging.

## **GMU 172 – MOUNTAIN VIEW**

Access rating – Good

Approximately 50 percent of this GMU is in public ownership. Access to private lands can be difficult to obtain. This GMU also has the 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area located within it, where deer and elk hunting are permitted by special draw only.

## **GMU 175 – LICK CREEK**

Access rating – Excellent

A majority of this GMU is in public ownership, administered by the USFS, WDFW, and DNR. Access is excellent and this GMU has the highest road density of any of the District 3 GMUs.

## **GMU 178 - PEOLA**

Access rating – Poor

This GMU is predominantly private land, with the public land (DNR sections) often being landlocked from public access. Landowners tend to allow significant access throughout the GMU, and numerous landowners participate in WDFW private lands access program.

## **GMU 181 - COUSE**

Access rating – Good/poor

This GMU is mostly private land, but WDFW does own a considerable amount of land. See the WDFW wildlife area webpage.

## **GMU 186 – GRANDE RONDE**

Access rating – Good/poor

Approximately half of this GMU is in public ownership. Access to most of the private land in this GMU has not been available to the public in recent decades.

## PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

There are a multitude of private landowners in District 3 who are enrolled in WDFW’s Private Lands Access Program. However, at the time of this writing, cooperative agreements with some of these landowners have not been finalized. Hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW Eastern Region (Region 1) office in Spokane Valley (509-892-1001) or periodically check for updated information in this document or on WDFW’s [Hunter Access website](#).

The following is a summary of anticipated private land acres available through the department’s Private Lands Access program in 2020.

<b>District 3 Access Acres</b>										
<u>GMU</u>	Hunting Only BY Written Permission (HOBWP)		Feel Free To Hunt (FFTH)		Register To Hunt (RTH)		Hunt By Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
145 Mayview	3	5,697	8	5,781	1	1,837	1	480		
149 Prescott	11	28,407	17	40,065			4	11,563		
154 Blue Creek	9	4,615	21	22,636						
162 Dayton	1	620	4	16,272						
163 Marengo	7	8,946	9	10,050						
166 Tucannon			1	368						
172 Mountain View										
175 Lick Creek	2	2,525								
178 Peola	11	13,503	4	3,604	1	2,602	2	940		
181 Couse	6	7,235	2	3,420	1	1,617				
186 Grande Ronde										
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>71,548</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>102,196</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6,056</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12,983</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Private Lands Access Acres</b>	<b>192,783</b>									

## ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 3 are a checkerboard of ownerships and sometimes it can be extremely difficult to determine who owns the land where a hunter wishes to hunt. However, there are several online tools and resources many hunters do not know about that provide valuable information that helps solve the landowner puzzle. The following is a list and general description of tools and resources available to the general public.

### **DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES PUBLIC LANDS QUADRANGLE (PLQ) MAPS**

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

## **ONLINE PARCEL DATABASES**

Technology has come a long way and has made it much easier for the general public to identify tax parcel boundaries and the associated landowner. However, because this technology has not been readily available in the past, there are several hunters who are not aware it exists.

Walla Walla County tax parcels can be searched using the county GIS site, which is a user-friendly mapping program that allows users to zoom in to their area of interest, click on a parcel, and identify who the owner of that parcel is. The [Walla Walla County GIS tool](#) can be accessed online.

## **WDFW'S MAPPING TOOL**

WDFW's GoHunt tool has been revamped as the new [Hunt Regulations Web map](#) and provides hunters with a great interactive tool for locating tracts of public land within each GMU. The web map can be accessed by clicking the above link or going to WDFW's hunting website.

2021

JASON FIDORRA, District Wildlife Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# **DISTRICT 4 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Benton and Franklin counties

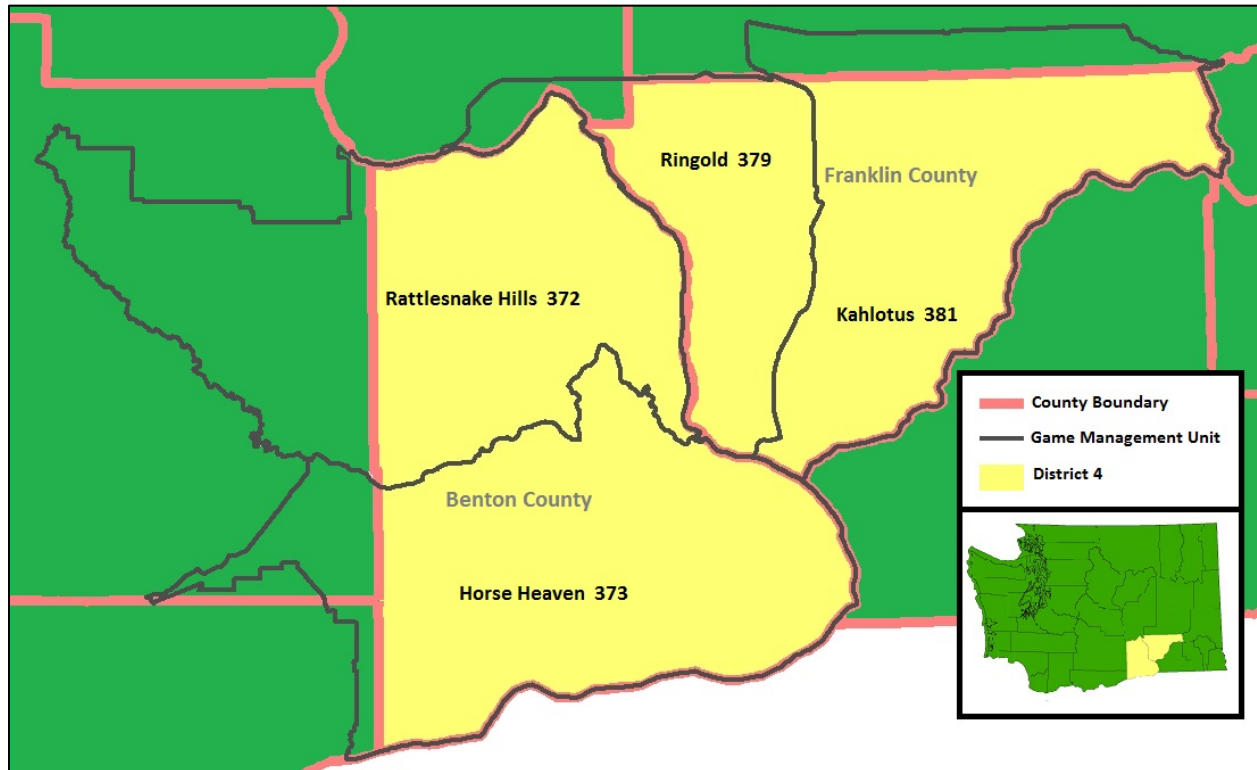


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## DISTRICT 4 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 4 is located in the Columbia Basin in the southcentral part of Washington (Figure 1). The district is comprised of Benton and Franklin counties and administratively is part of WDFW's Southcentral Region 3. The following game management units (GMUs) are included in District 4: 372 (Rattlesnake Hills), 373 (Horse Heaven), 379 (Ringold), and 381 (Kahlotus).



**Figure 1.** Location of District 4 in Washington and associated counties and game management units.

Several of Washington's major rivers occur in District 4. The Hanford Reach of the Columbia River runs between Benton and Franklin counties. This 50-mile stretch is one of the most scenic segments of the Columbia in Washington. The Snake and Palouse rivers delineate the eastern boundary of Franklin County. In District 4 you'll find the confluence of the Yakima, Snake, and Walla Walla rivers with the main stem of the Columbia River near Tri-Cities (Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland). Large populations of waterfowl congregate throughout the district for breeding, migrating, and wintering, even though this is the driest part of Washington with only 6-9 inches of precipitation annually. While a mostly treeless landscape, riparian and shrub-steppe vegetation provides habitat and cover for game birds, and the breaks along the Snake and Palouse rivers are favored by wintering mule deer. The Rattlesnake Hills elk population is centered on the access-restricted Hanford Site and Hanford Reach National Monument, though lucky hunters may find small groups scattered across the district.

Upland habitats are part of the Columbia Plateau Ecoregion, historically dominated by native shrub-steppe. Since the 1800s, farmers and ranchers have been working the land around District 4. Intensive irrigated agriculture—supporting many crops, orchards, and vineyards—is a major land use in the Yakima River Valley, southern Benton County, and western Franklin County. Dryland wheat is dominant in central Benton County and eastern Franklin County. Many thousands of acres of this wheat country have been enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Program (SAFE), providing cover for mule deer and other wildlife that have lost much of their natural shrub-steppe habitat. Fires are currently the largest threat to the remaining habitat and are frequently human caused. Invasive cheatgrass has created a flammable carpet throughout the shrub-steppe, often facilitating large and fast-moving fires. Sagebrush takes decades to return post-fire, so please be careful and fire-wise.

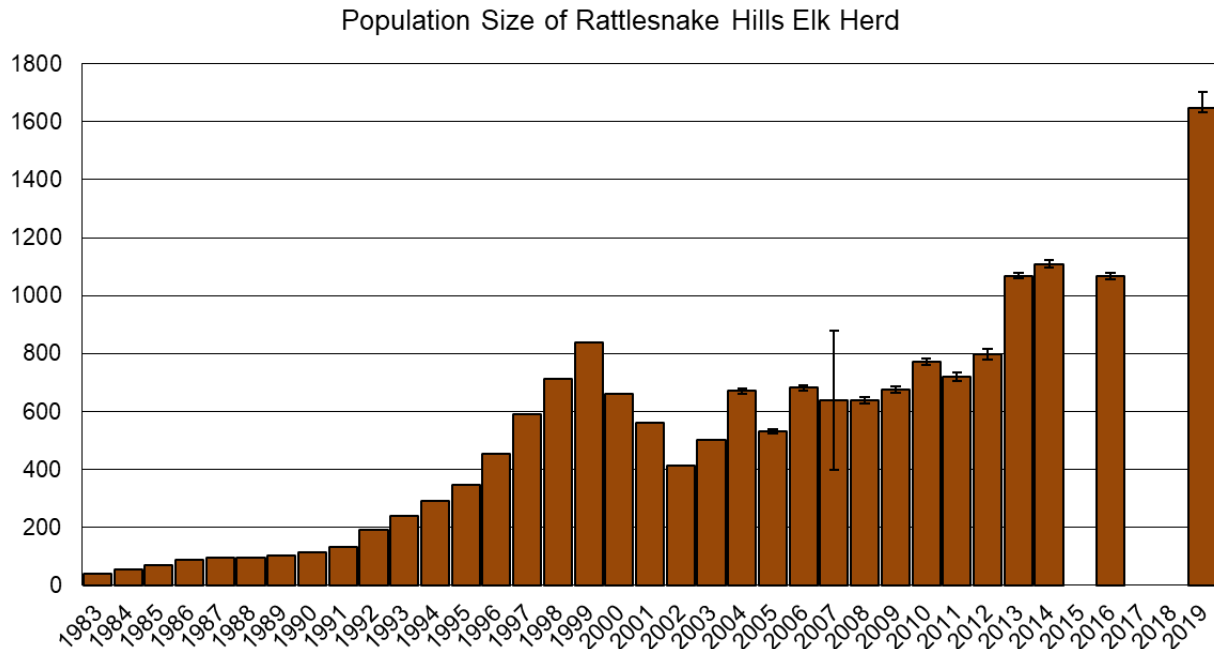
In Benton County, large east-west trending ridges, including the Horse Heaven Hills and Rattlesnake Hills, add to the topographic diversity of the district. The eastern Franklin County landscape includes the rolling hills of the Palouse Prairie and the southernmost extent of the channeled scablands. Western Franklin County contains several small lakes and depression wetlands that provide additional wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

Hunting access in District 4 is more limited than in some other parts of the state, as much of the district is in private ownership or on federal properties closed to hunting. However, quality opportunities do exist, and WDFW is always trying to expand hunting access. Information and related links to several public sites listed in each game section can be found in the Major Public Lands section. Information on how to access private land through one of WDFW's access programs is available in the Hunting on Private Lands section on the [WDFW website](#).

Overall, the landscape of District 4 provides a diversity of habitats favored by waterfowl, upland birds (including chukar, partridge, pheasant, quail, and dove), and big game (including deer and elk). Welcome to District 4 and happy hunting!

## ELK

Opportunities for elk hunting in District 4 occur on lands surrounding the Hanford Reach National Monument in Rattlesnake Hills GMU 372, which contains Blackrock Elk Area 3722 and Corral Canyon Elk Area 3721, as well as parts of the Ringold 379 and Kahlotus 381 GMUs, where in recent years, herds of ~100 elk have resided. Surveys on the Hanford Monument in January 2019 yielded a total herd estimate of 1,646 elk (Figure 2). This herd is well above the management objective of 350, but harvest remains challenging as the herd often seeks refuge on the federal Hanford lands in daylight hours during hunting season.



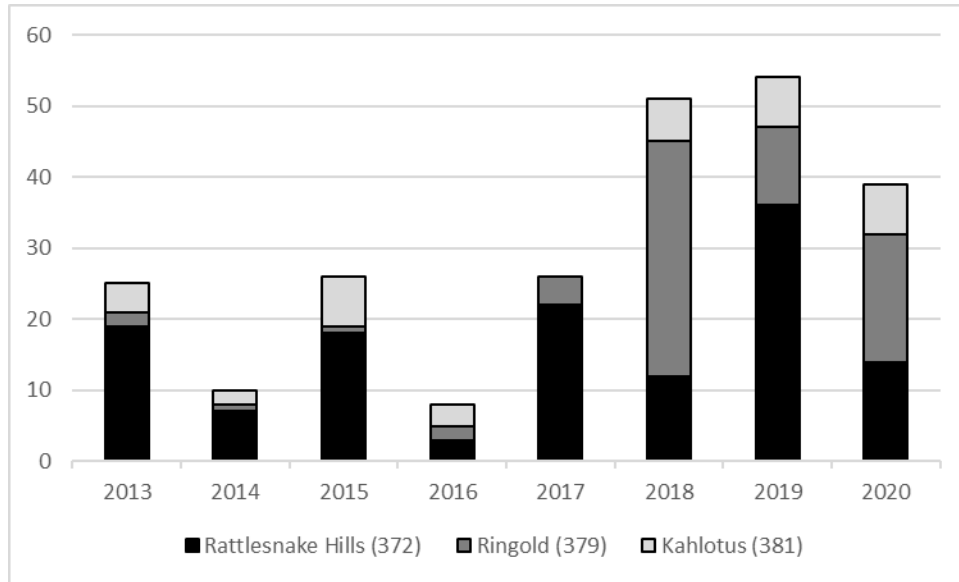
**Figure 2.** Winter population estimates of Hanford elk herd over time.

While most of the land around the Hanford Monument is private, hunters can pursue elk in Benton County on WDFW’s Thornton and Rattlesnake Slope units of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area during Modern Firearm season. There is a high demand for access in this area, but due to the extent of private land and the open landscape, hunter density is low and coordinated ahead of time to improve success. One way to gain access to private lands here is through the Blackrock Ranches and Silver Dollar special permit hunts. These offer a chance to hunt Hanford elk on private land. If selected, permit holders are typically issued a one-day “guided” hunt. There are permits for youth and hunters with disabilities, plus Quality Elk and Antlerless Permits open to any hunter. See the current [hunting regulations](#) for more information.

Increasing numbers of hunters have had success in the Ringold 379 GMU where there are both early and late Archery and Muzzleloader seasons for elk in addition to Modern Rifle seasons. The numbers of elk here are small, but the Windmill Ranch and Bailie Units of the [Sunnyside Wildlife Area](#) might be your best bet. Each of these hunting areas has 2 designated parking areas where hunters are required to park and register, and each allows a maximum of 8 vehicles per lot. Occasionally the Ringold Unit of the [Hanford Reach Monument](#) (shotgun, muzzleloader, and archery see [USFWS Regulations](#)), and rarely the Juniper Dune Wilderness, have elk during hunting seasons. In Kahlotus 381 GMU, small groups roam between Kahlotus and the Palouse River, but they are rarely encountered off private land.

During general hunting seasons, 200-300 hunters report that they pursue elk in District 4. Of which 25-55 are usually successful (Figure 3). You can see online [Harvest Reports](#) for any species, weapon, or hunt over several past years. Harvest success usually depends upon private

land access, forage conditions on the Hanford Site, and the availability of forage crops on farmlands outside of the protected area. Hunters are usually more successful early in the season.



**Figure 3.** Elk harvest in District 4 by GMU over time.



**Image 1.** Youth hunter with elk harvested in GMU 372.



## ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)

Elk Hoof Disease is currently not known to occur in elk from District 4; the affliction is concentrated in southwest Washington, but it occurs rarely in other herds around the state. WDFW diagnostic research, in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that the reported hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### How hunters can help:

- **Report elk:** Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form (link below). If you harvest an elk with abnormal looking hooves in eastern Washington (for example, overgrown or broken hoof claws or skin lesions), please report that harvest to your local WDFW regional office.
- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD and the online reporting tool, see [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/).

## DEER

District 4 primarily offers mule deer hunting opportunities. White-tailed deer seasons exist to allow hunters to harvest any white-tailed deer if encountered, but this species is relatively uncommon in the district, making up less than one percent of deer seen on surveys.

In 2020, the hunter success rate during the general seasons for deer across all weapons in the District was 29%, with a five-year average of 27% success. Statewide average deer hunter success was 26% (all species). District 4 hunters generally enjoy a high success rate primarily due to restricted hunter numbers on private land and a lack of escape cover for deer.

Eastern Franklin County (Kahlotus – GMU 381) is an important wintering area for mule deer that migrate to the relatively mild winter conditions near the Snake River. A small resident population does exist, but most mule deer migrate in from more northern GMUs starting in October. During mild winters, some of these deer remain further north or delay moving into the district. The late general muzzleloader season in Franklin County (GMUs 379 and 381) usually provides a good opportunity to find mule deer in November. The season allows the harvest of bucks 3-point or better, but no longer includes antlerless mule deer as of 2018.

In addition to GMU specific special permit hunts, hunters should look for “Washtucna” permit hunts in the pamphlet that include GMU 381-Kahlotus along with three adjacent GMUs (Figure 4). These replace most of the Kahlotus hunts offered in the past. Washtucna permits include late muzzleloader antlerless, modern antlerless, plus youth, disabled, and senior permits.

Post-hunt surveys in December 2020 yielded an estimated 28 bucks to 100 does in GMU 381 (Figure 5), which is within the management goals for the population. This includes non-legal bucks (spike and 2 point). High hunter success and low buck escapement in the open country where this population lives can contribute to challenges locating legal bucks. Fawn numbers were at 64 fawns per 100 does (Figure 5). The 10-year average has been 65 fawns per 100 does.



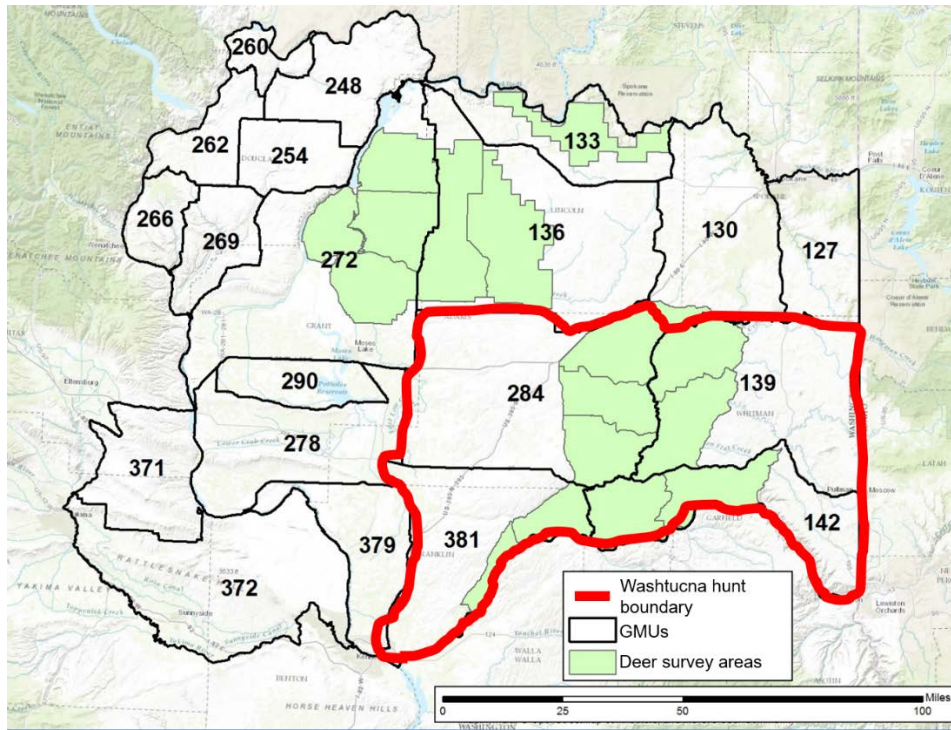


Figure 4. Boundary map of the Washtucna Hunt area encompassing four GMUs.

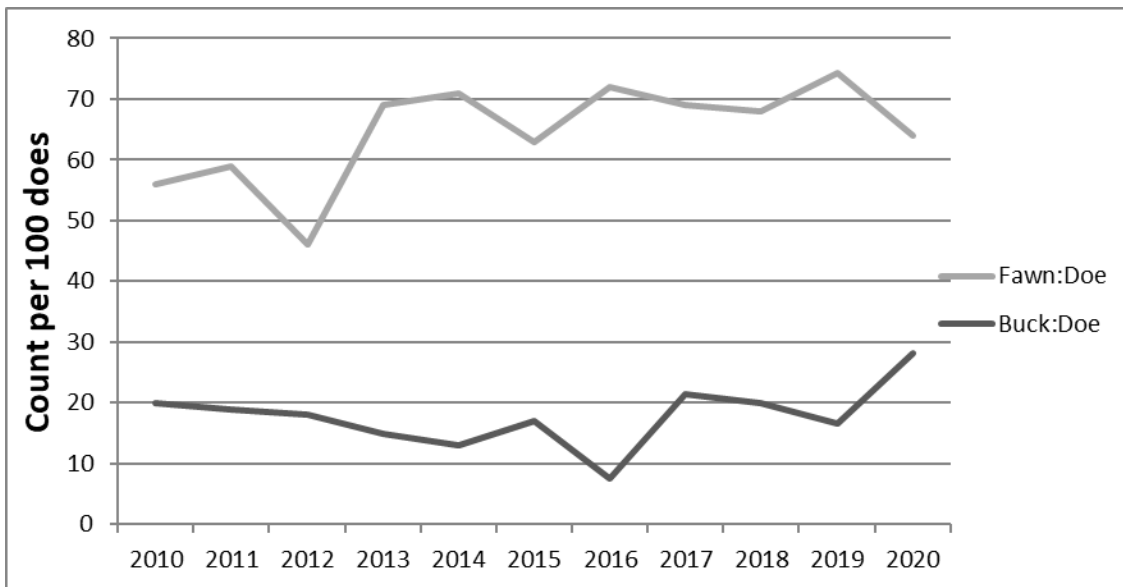


Figure 5. Buck and fawn ratios per 100 does in District 4 based on post-hunt road surveys.



**Image 2.** A buck harvested in Franklin County in GMU 381.

In western Franklin County (Ringold – GMU 379) the Sunnyside Wildlife Area and the Ringold Unit of the Hanford Reach National Monument ([see weapon restrictions](#)) provide good public hunting opportunities for deer. Like Kahlotus, there is a late Muzzleloader season, as well as early Archery and Muzzleloader seasons, plus the Modern season. New in 2020, some late Buck archery permits were added.

In northern Benton County (Rattlesnake Hills - GMU 372), spend some time scouting for deer in the Thornton and Rattlesnake units of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. There are also some Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) parcels available. Be sure to know what land you are on, and do not trespass on private property, including when navigating property corners and retrieving game.

In southern Benton County (Horse Heaven Hills - GMU 373), there are deer on BLM lands in the Horse Heaven Hills, scattered tracts of DNR, and private property within WDFW access programs. Part of GMU 372, Deer Area 3372 - Sunnyside (Benton and Yakima counties) provides an early muzzleloader general season opportunity along the Yakima River from Prosser to Union Gap.

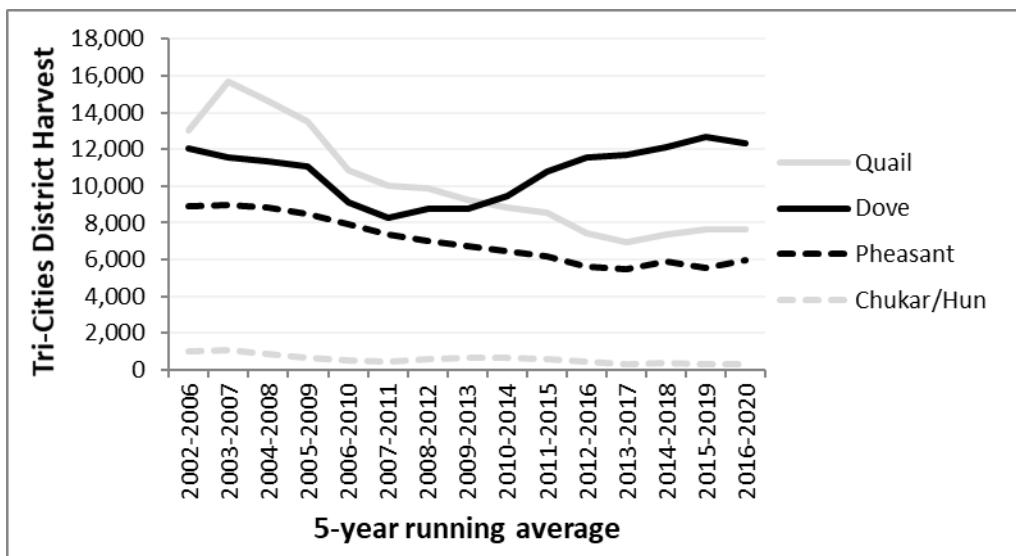
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) [Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge \(NWR\)](#) Deer Areas 3071 (Whitcomb) and 3072 (Paterson) provide 80 special permits to harvest deer on the NWR, including archery hunts in October and muzzleloader hunts from November into December. Permits are available through the state permit draw in the [Hunting Regs.](#)

There are many properties where hunters can gain access to deer through one of WDFW’s private land access programs. Preseason scouting is advisable to learn where to hunt and obtain permission from private landowners where needed. WDFW’s [Hunt Planner Web map](#) (select your species, then be sure the PHLO--private lands hunt opportunities, is checked) and [Private Lands website](#) is where updated access info and locations can be found. Access program properties frequently change from year to year and sometimes even within a season. Please double-check that lands previously available for hunting are still open to the public.

Harvest reports for past general seasons and permit hunts for any GMU are [online](#).

## UPLAND BIRD

Benton and Franklin counties offer upland bird hunter opportunities for Quail, Dove, Pheasant, and even a few Chukar and Partridge if you are lucky (Figure 6). Habitat and weather are the key components influencing the survival and reproductive success of birds. Be sure to review the WDFW [Game Bird Regulations](#) for seasons and regulations.

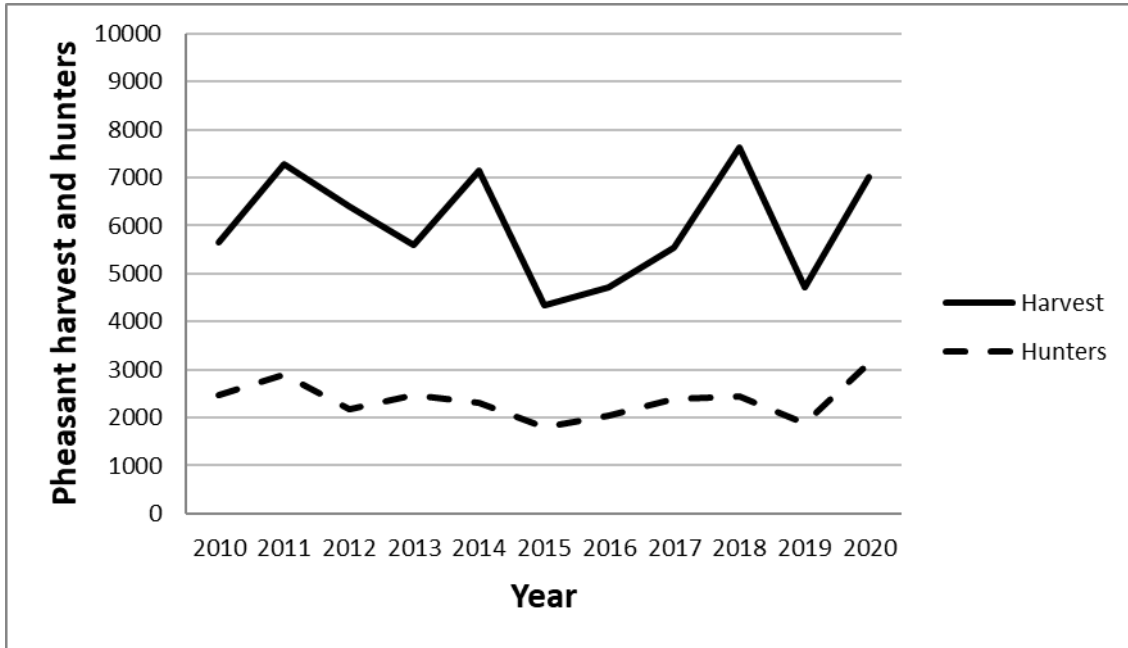


**Figure 6.** District 4 upland bird harvest trends based on five-year running averages.

## PHEASANT

Ring-necked pheasant hunters and harvest have varied over the past decade in District 4 (Figure 7). Pheasant hunters should focus efforts in dense weedy and grassy areas adjacent to wetlands, streams, and irrigation waterways. Birds may also be found around irrigated farmland. Some of the best pheasant habitat in the district is in north Franklin County on and surrounding WDFW’s Windmill Ranch Unit (nontoxic shot), Mesa Lake Unit, and the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch. Each of these hunting areas has 2 designated parking areas where hunters are required to park and register, and each allows a maximum of 8 vehicles per lot. Other areas with good pheasant

habitat include USFWS' Hanford Reach National Monument's East Wahluke Unit, Ringold (GMU 379), and [Umatilla NWR](#) along the Columbia River, near the town of Paterson.



**Figure 7.** Pheasants harvest and hunters in District 4.

Pursuing birds planted as part of WDFW's [Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) is a great way to work dogs and gain experience for new hunters. Last year, WDFW planted pheasants at four locations: the Hope Valley Unit of the WDFW Sunnyside Wildlife Area, and the Toothaker, Big Flat, and Lost Island Habitat Management Units (HMU) held by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) (Figure 8). Pheasant release site locations can be found in the program link above or on WDFW's [Hunt Planner Web map](#) (be sure to select the Layer > WDFW Places > Pheasant Release Sites). Army Corps HMUs information contact is available [here](#). Nontoxic shot is required at all pheasant release sites.

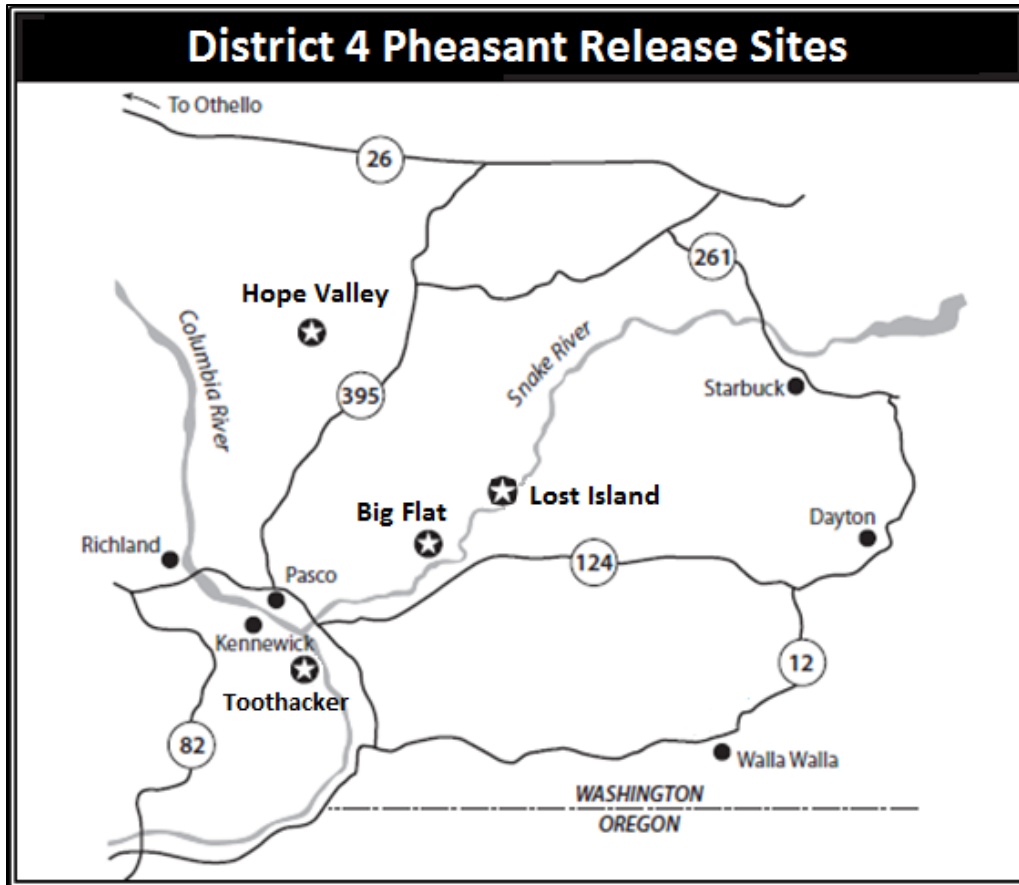


Figure 8. Location of District 4 pheasant release sites.

## QUAIL

Abundant California quail are present in the district. There has been a decreasing trend in harvest numbers over the past decade (Figure 9). The best quail habitat in District 4 is similar to those listed above for pheasant. Also, anywhere along water bodies where riparian and herbaceous vegetation intersects provide quail habitat. An ideal setting is where Russian olives or willows are adjacent to black greasewood or sagebrush.



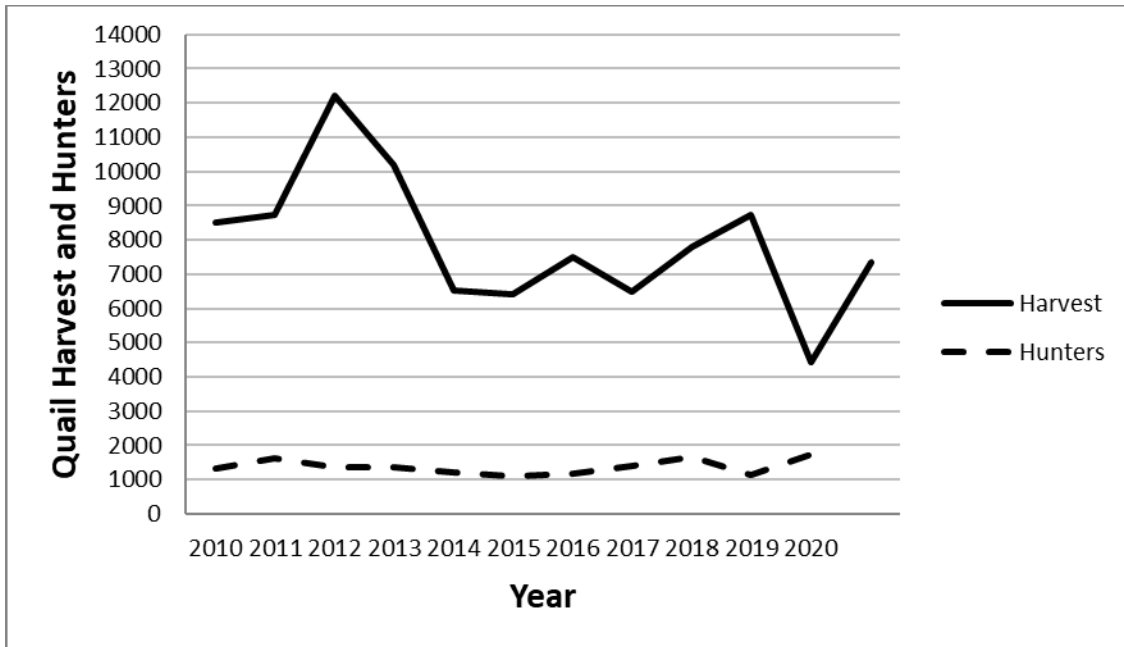


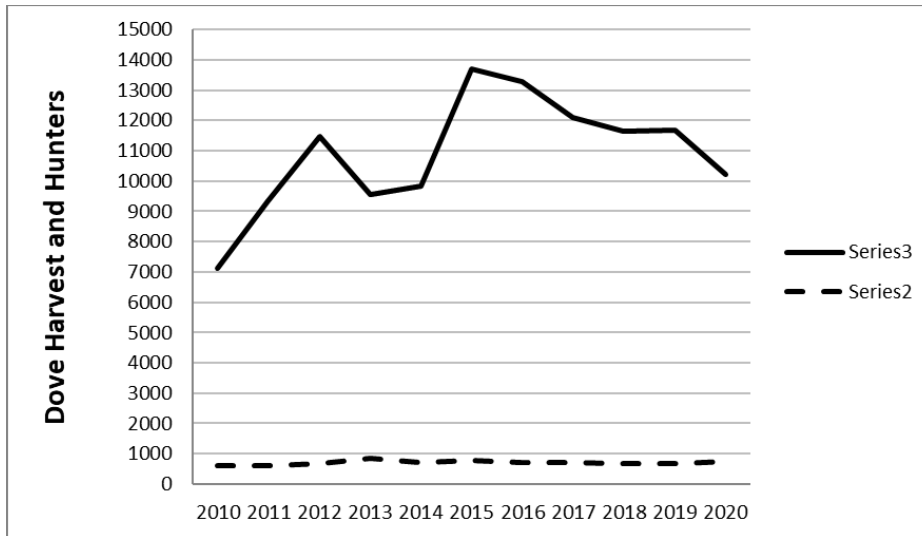
Figure 9. Quail harvest and hunters in District 4.

## DOVE

Mourning dove harvest in District 4 has been increasing over the past several years (Figure 10). There should be an opportunity for hunters to find doves moving through the area and in local patches where production has been successful. Weather patterns play a critical role in determining how many doves are present during the season opener. Focus hunting efforts in or near wheat or corn stubble fields in the irrigated Yakima and Columbia Basins. The best combination of habitat includes a stubble field near water and large isolated trees or power lines where doves perch and attract other doves.

Dove hunters are also encouraged to harvest Eurasian collared doves, an introduced exotic species that has spread across North America. They are larger than mourning doves with a square tail and thin black half-collar on the back of their necks. This species is usually most abundant in rural and suburban areas near mature trees. Numbers have been increasing across eastern Washington since first appearing in the state in the 1990s. There is no limit and collared doves can be hunted year-round in Washington. A hunting license (big or small game) is needed.

WDFW trapping and banding studies in 2020 are so far indicating good success and production of mourning doves this season despite the dry conditions.



**Figure 10.** Dove harvest and hunters in District 4.

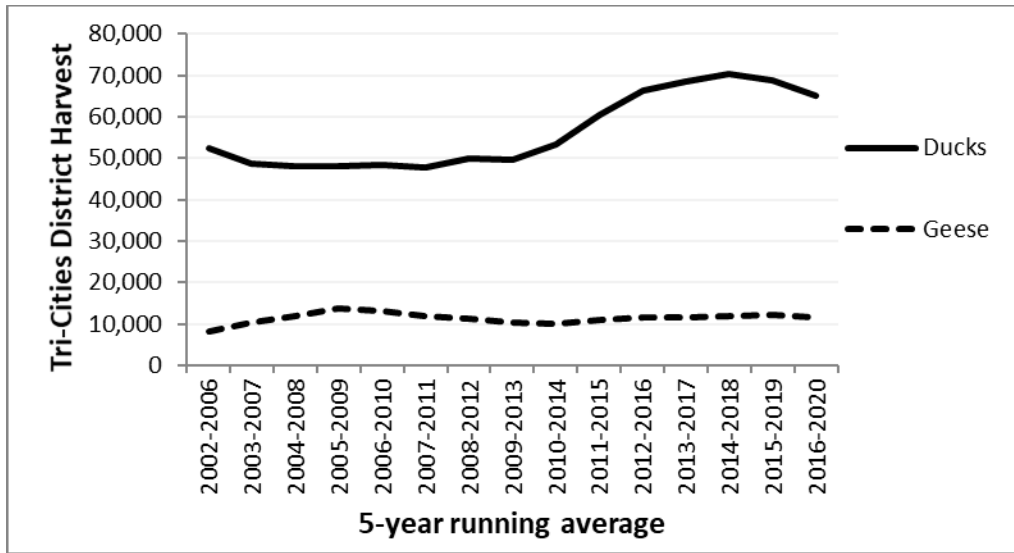
## WATERFOWL

There are many places to hunt ducks and geese in the district. Small ponds and lakes can be found on WDFW’s Windmill Ranch Unit, Mesa Lake Unit, and Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch. Continued management of the [Sunnyside Wildlife Area](#) units will result in more habitat for waterfowl and opportunities for hunters in the coming years. Several Sunnyside WLA Units in Franklin County are managed especially for Waterfowl hunting. Scooteny Reservoir, managed by the [Bureau of Reclamation](#), can also provide good hunting. The Snake and Columbia Rivers and associated water bodies will hold tens of thousands of ducks once the cold weather sets in. See details and map in the Public Lands Section of this document below. Access can be gained at the USFWS McNary and Umatilla NWRs and the Hanford Reach National Monument, or one of the many WDFW managed Water Access Sites on the [Hunt Planner Web map](#) (be sure be sure to select the Layer > WDFW Places > Water Access Sites).

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, please see [Let’s Go Waterfowl Hunting](#) on the WDFW website and be sure to check the [WDFW Migratory Bird Regulations](#) for seasons and rules.

The five-year average of ducks harvested in District 4 over the past decade has been increasing while the goose harvest has been stable (Figure 11). After the season opener, hunter success will likely taper off as the local ducks become less naïve and restrict their daytime movements to local reserves and sanctuaries. At that point, hunters will likely have to wait for the migrants to arrive in the mid to late season. Weather patterns will determine when they arrive and where they will congregate.

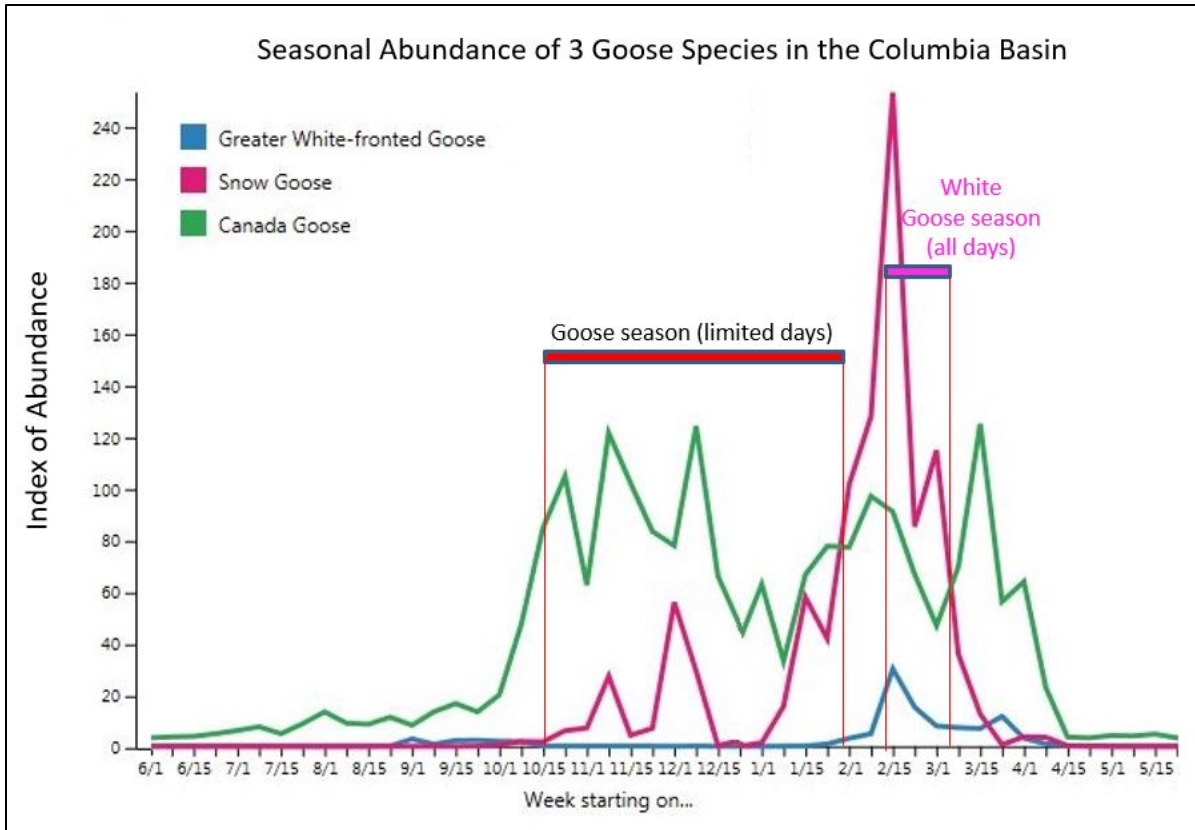




**Figure 11.** District 4 waterfowl harvest trends based on five-year running averages.

Canada geese nest on various river islands in the district and counts indicate a continued upward recovery since decreases in the early 2000s. In addition, thousands of migratory Canada geese will arrive in the district sometime in October or November. They can be pursued in the farm fields near the Snake and Columbia Rivers. Most of the land is private property, so hunters will need to secure permission before hunting.

Changes to the statewide goose regulations in 2017 set daily limits for snow and white-fronted geese in addition to Canada/cackling (dark) geese. Whereas white-fronted geese and the majority of snow geese usually pass through the district before and after the goose season (Figure 12), an increasing number of snow geese have been present in the district during goose season, but peak in February/March. In response to this, WDFW has set up a White Goose Season. The dates in District 4 (Goose Area 4) were expanded further in 2020 for Snow, Ross's, and Blue Geese from mid-Feb to early March (see [season summary](#) for dates). Snow geese are found in large flocks on farmland near the Snake or Columbia Rivers especially near Plymouth and McNary NWR, but are occasionally mixed in with large flocks of dark geese at any location.



**Figure 12.** Seasonal abundance of three goose species in the Columbia Basin relative to hunting seasons. Data source: [www.eBird.org](http://www.eBird.org)



**Image 3.** Goose harvest in the Tri-Cities.

In winters 2017 and 2018, outbreaks of avian cholera occurred at the end of the hunting season in the Tri-Cities area, killing thousands of waterfowl. The past several summers, Botulism outbreaks killed several hundred more waterfowl. There is no long-term impact on regional waterfowl populations expected from these incidents, and the diseases pose no risks to human health. A fast response can contain outbreaks and hunters are encouraged to report groups of more than five sick or dead birds to the regional WDFW office: 509-575-2740.

## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Hunting access in Benton and Franklin counties is more limited than in some other parts of the state, as much of the district is private property or managed by federal agencies that do not allow hunting. However, quality opportunities on both public and private land exist, and WDFW is continually working to expand hunting access.

### WDFW SUNNYSIDE WILDLIFE AREA

This wildlife area (Figure 13) comprises WDFW-owned land in the district and most parcels are open to hunting, but with specific restrictions at some units. Most of the units are managed specifically for wildlife, and enhanced hunting opportunities are possible through crop, habitat, and wetland management. For more information and maps please visit the [WDFW website](#).



**Figure 13.** Map of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area units.

### **MID-COLUMBIA RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX**

The USFWS allows hunting on several units of this refuge complex, including a portion of the Hanford Reach National Monument, a portion of the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge, and certain areas within the McNary National Wildlife Refuge. Hunting lottery information, regulations, and maps can be found [here](#).

### **THE COLUMBIA AND SNAKE RIVERS**

All islands, except privately owned islands, and the Benton County shoreline below the high water mark, Central Hanford Department of Energy property, and any peninsula originating on the Benton County shoreline between Vernita Bridge on Highway 24 downstream to the Richland city limits are designated as closed areas to hunting wild animals and wild birds. The only exception is waterfowl hunting, which is open below the high-water mark between the old Hanford townsite power line crossing (wooden towers) and the Richland city limits. These details are printed in the [Big Game Regulations](#). Several other closures and reserves impact river hunting in the district (Figure 14).



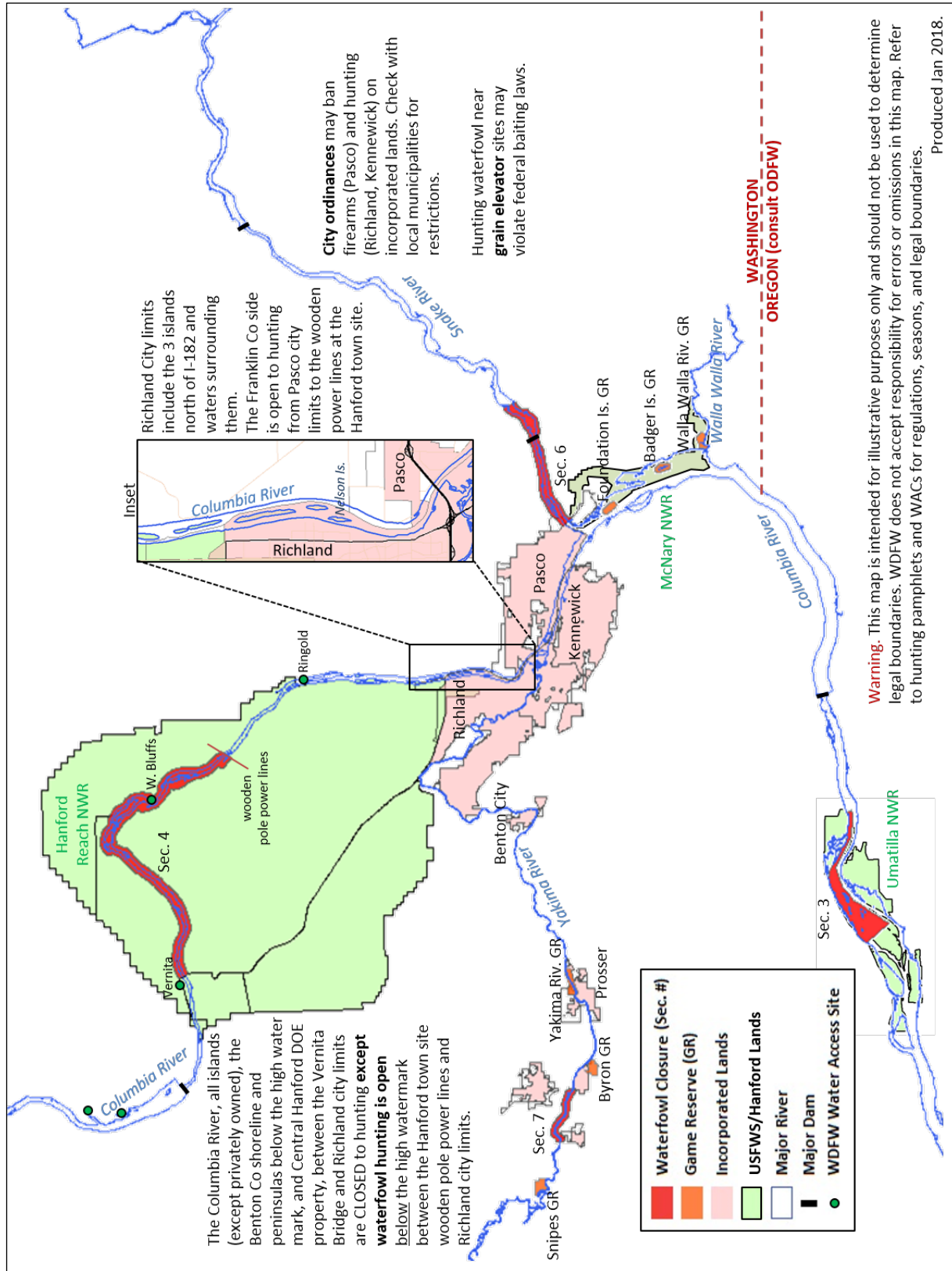


Figure 14. Generalized map of Tri-cities Area rivers, game reserves, closures, and municipalities.

## OTHER PUBLIC LANDS

Each agency/landowner can enact their own weapon and area restrictions related to hunting. Obey all posted signs and contact the land manager with questions.

The DNR manages land that is open to hunting unless otherwise posted. Benton and Franklin counties have a large amount of DNR acreage, but it is often leased to private landowners for agriculture. While leased land is still open to hunting, hunters should always be aware that adjacent landowners are often managing DNR land as part of their business operations, and hunters should be respectful of property boundaries, which may not be signed. Consult a public lands map or [Hunt Planner Web map](#) for or more information (Public lands layer is the default base map).

BLM allows hunting on most of their land and highlights [several sites](#) across OR and WA, including the Juniper Dunes and Horse Heaven Hills.

The USACE and the Bureau of Reclamation also allow hunting on most of their land, but each agency/landowner can enact their own weapon and area restrictions. Several USACE HMUs along the rivers are only open for shotgun and archery hunters.

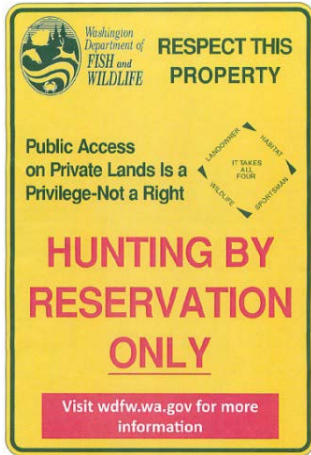
In Washington, it is NOT LEGAL to cross private or closed land without permission to access public lands. Therefore, access to some parcels of public land may not be available.

## PRIVATE LANDS

WDFW provides and maintains a Private Lands Access program that allows the public to hunt on land owned by cooperating private landowners. In most cases, these landowners receive no financial compensation for their enrollment in the program, and hunters should always respect their property and follow all rules. By being a responsible guest on these private lands, hunters can help ensure they remain open for years to come and will continue to enhance WDFW's mission to expand private lands access. Access properties frequently change year to year and sometimes even within a season. Double-check that lands previously available for hunting are still open to the public and in the same access program each year.

Information about private lands access sites, including site-specific regulations, locations, season availability, and contact information, can be found [here](#) and at the WDFW [Hunt Planner Web map](#) (be sure to select the Layer icon > WDFW Places > Private Land Hunting Opportunities). For questions, contact Seth Hulett, the WDFW Private Lands Biologist for District 4: 509-778-2630.

There are four main private land programs. Although each provides public, walk-in only access to private land, they function differently.



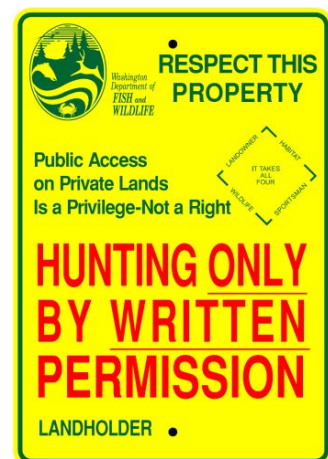
**Hunt by Reservation** The Hunt by Reservation program requires hunters to [register online](https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_land/type/56/). Hunters are required to print out and carry a permit, and they are provided a map of the property. In Benton and Franklin counties, multiple opportunities are available for both big game and bird hunting. **Opportunities are only listed once available for reservation**, which is usually a few weeks prior to the season. [https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private\\_land/type/56/](https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_land/type/56/)

**Feel Free to Hunt** Feel Free to Hunt is the largest access program in District 4. It allows hunters to access designated land at any time during established hunting seasons. Most District 4 Feel Free to Hunt properties provide access for mule deer hunting, with some potential for upland bird hunting as well.



**Register to Hunt** District 4 has several Register to Hunt sites in Benton County. Register to Hunt requires hunters to sign in at registration kiosks and carry a permit with them. District 4's Register to Hunt sites primarily provide waterfowl and upland bird hunting opportunities.

**Hunt by Written Permission** Hunt by Written Permission sites requires hunters to contact the landowner for access. Landowners then issue permits to hunters at their discretion and hunters are expected to carry this permit while they hunt. **Landowner contact information can only be found on the yellow signs marking the site.** WDFW does not give out contact info online or by phone. You should make an effort to contact the landowner weeks or months in advance of your season to increase your chance of gaining access. Hunt by Written Permission properties provide opportunities for both big game and bird hunting in District 4.



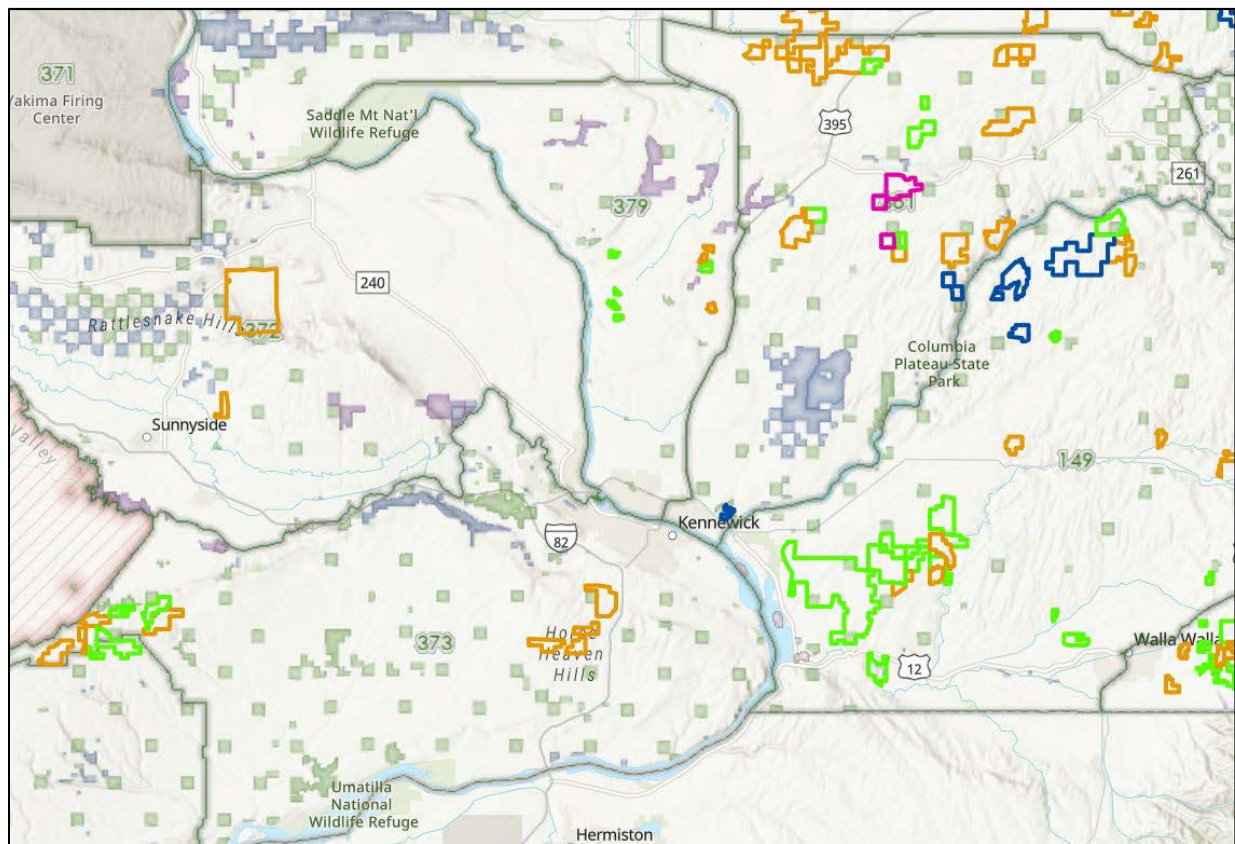


## ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Harvest reports for past general seasons and permits for any GMU and Permit Hunt for all game species are online at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest>

WDFW has released a Hunt Planner Web Map to search for game seasons and private land access around the state: <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>.

A good starting point for hunters looking for a place to hunt is the Web Map that provides hunters with information about public and private lands access points, GMU boundaries, hunting seasons, pheasant release sites, water access points, landscape features such as roads and topography, public lands, and much more (Figure 15).



**Figure 15.** Depiction of private lands access and public lands layers in District 4 from WDFW's Regulations Web Map. Pink, Green, Orange, and Blue bordered parcels are lands in the various public lands access programs. \*Figure for illustrative purposes only\* Check the online map for up to date access and parcel information. <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>.

2021

SEAN DOUGHERTY, District Wildlife Biologist  
ELLA ROWAN, Assistant District Wildlife  
Biologist



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 yearly. There are other opportunities within the district to hunt mourning doves, bobcats, cougars, chukars, gray partridge, cottontail rabbits, coyotes, 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 and scattered.

WDFW manages the [Columbia Basin Wildlife Area](#) that boasts approximately 190,000 acres of public land (Figure 5). There are additional public lands that [WA Dept. of Natural Resources](#), [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#), Bureau of Reclamation, and Bureau of Land Management manage. Habitat in District 5 consists primarily of crop fields, shrubsteppe and wetlands in Grant County, and dryland crop fields, rangelands, and shrubsteppe 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 it's 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

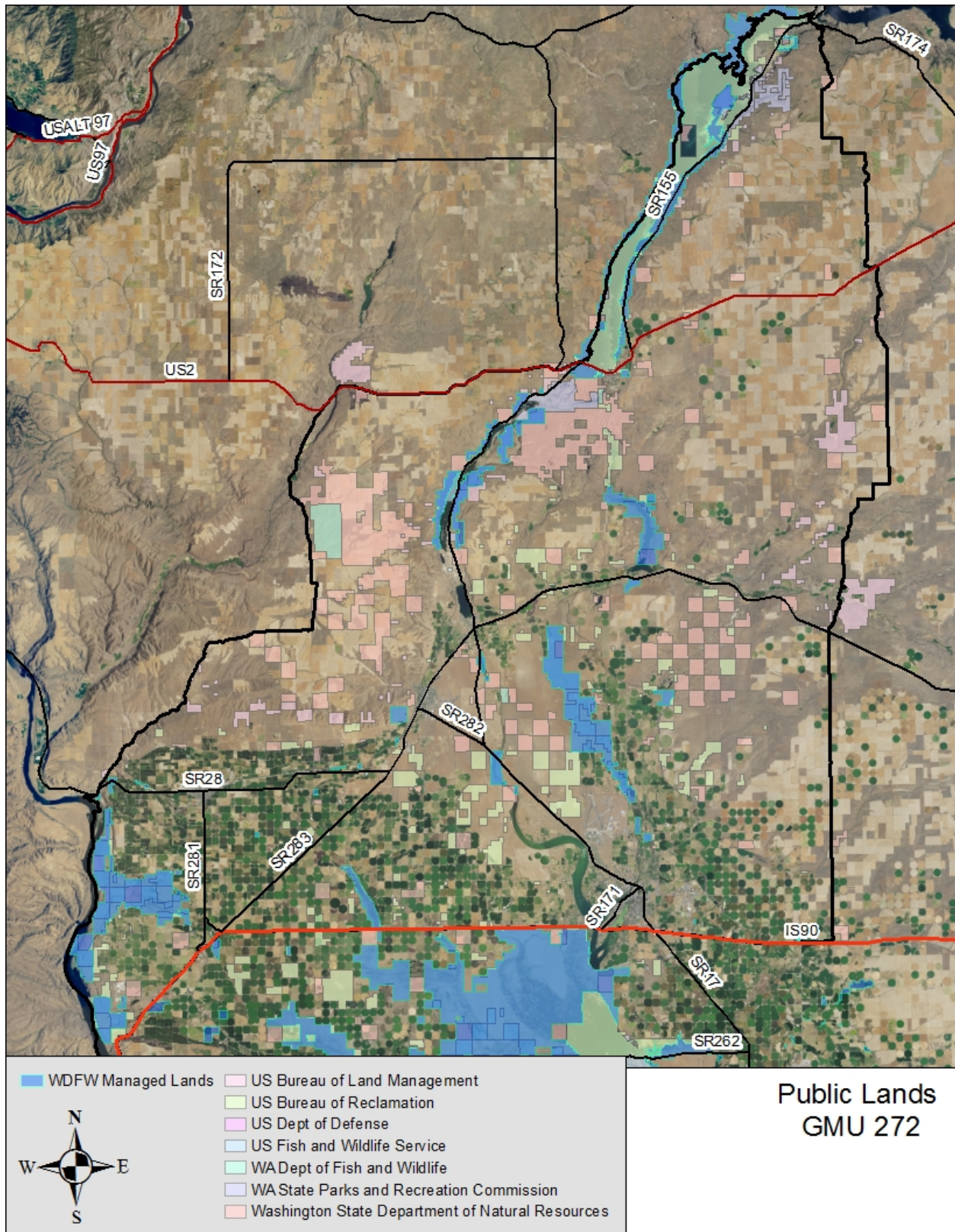
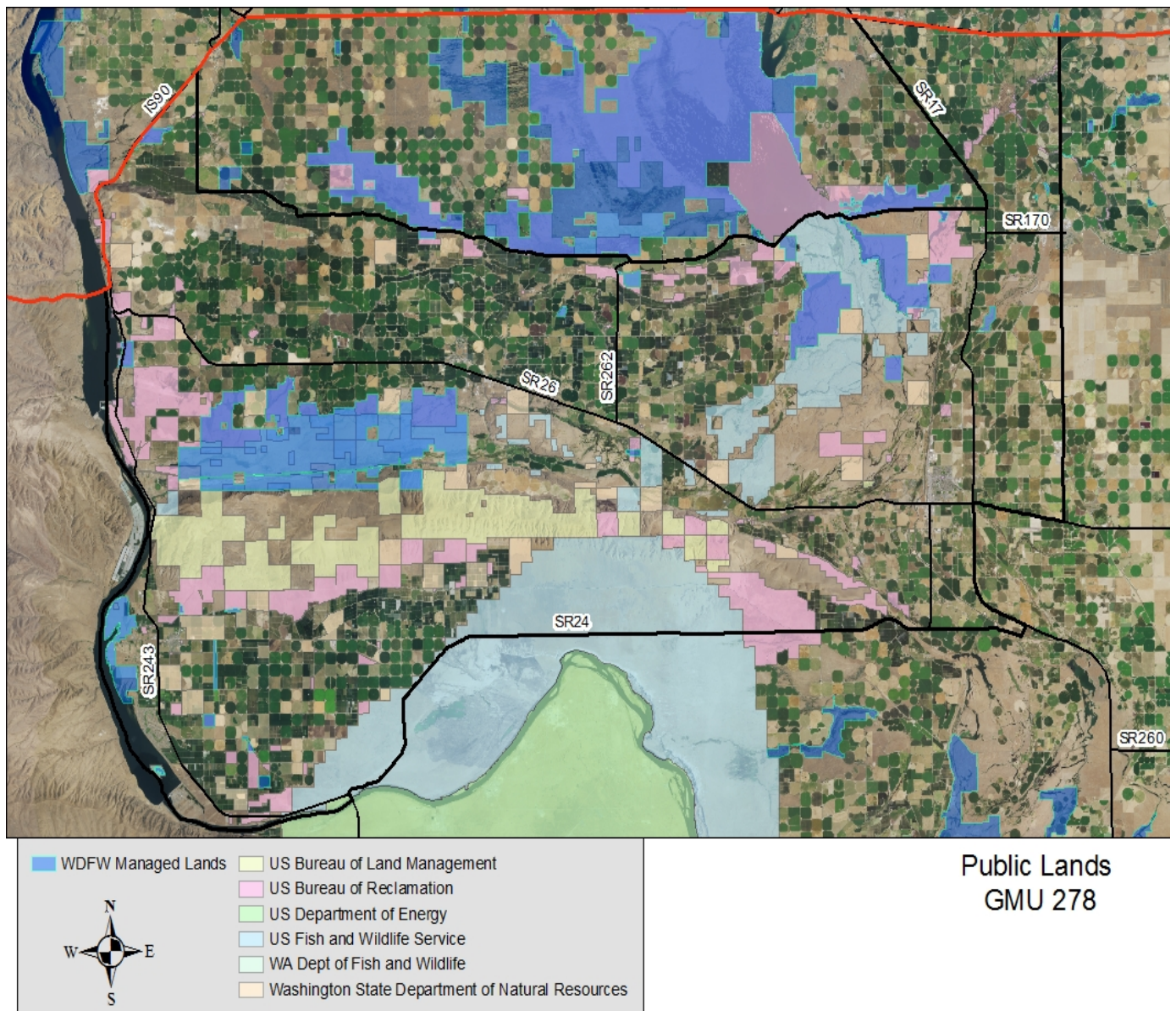


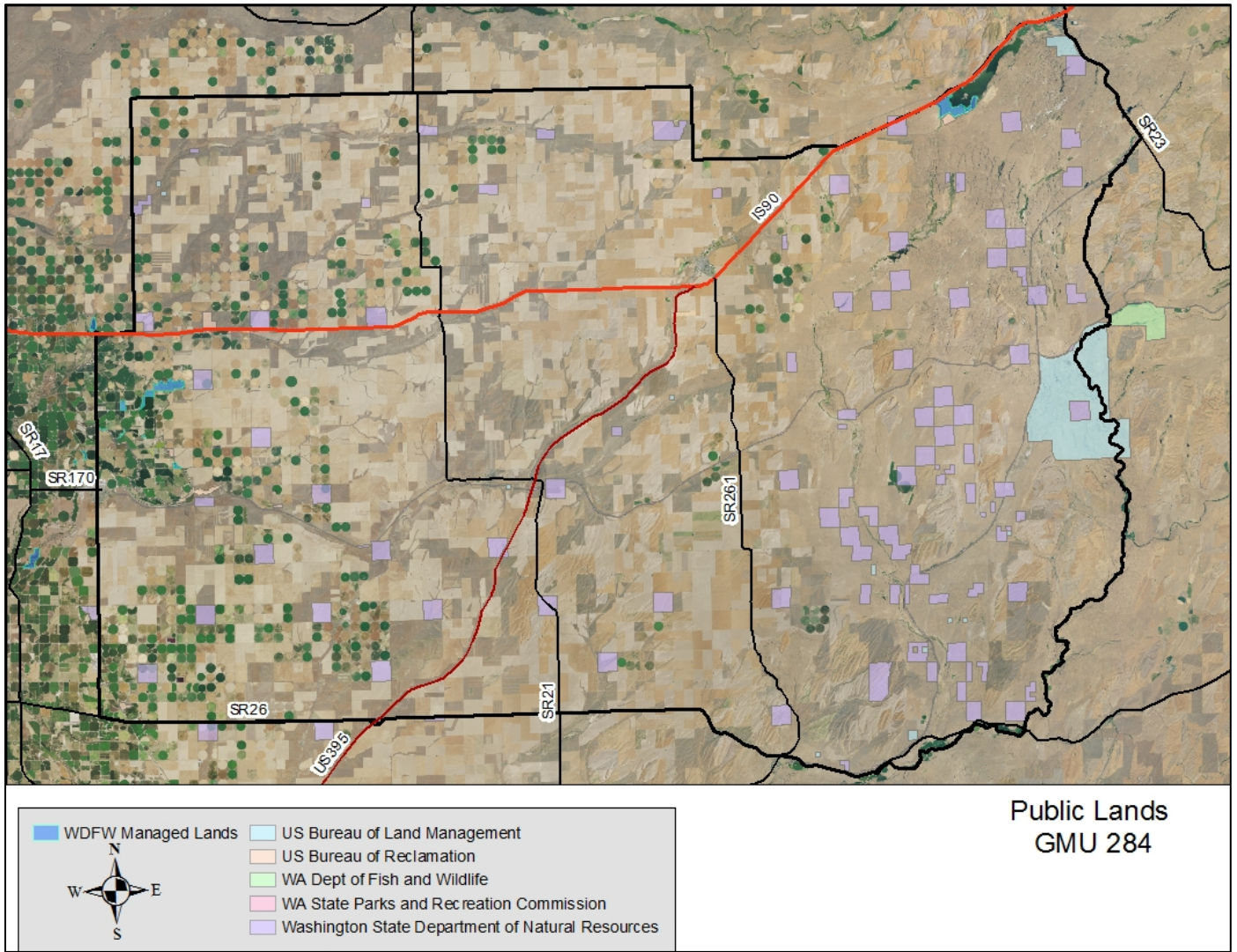
Figure 1. Public Lands in GMU 272.





**Figure 2.** Public Lands in GMU 278.





**Figure 3.** Public Lands in GMU 284

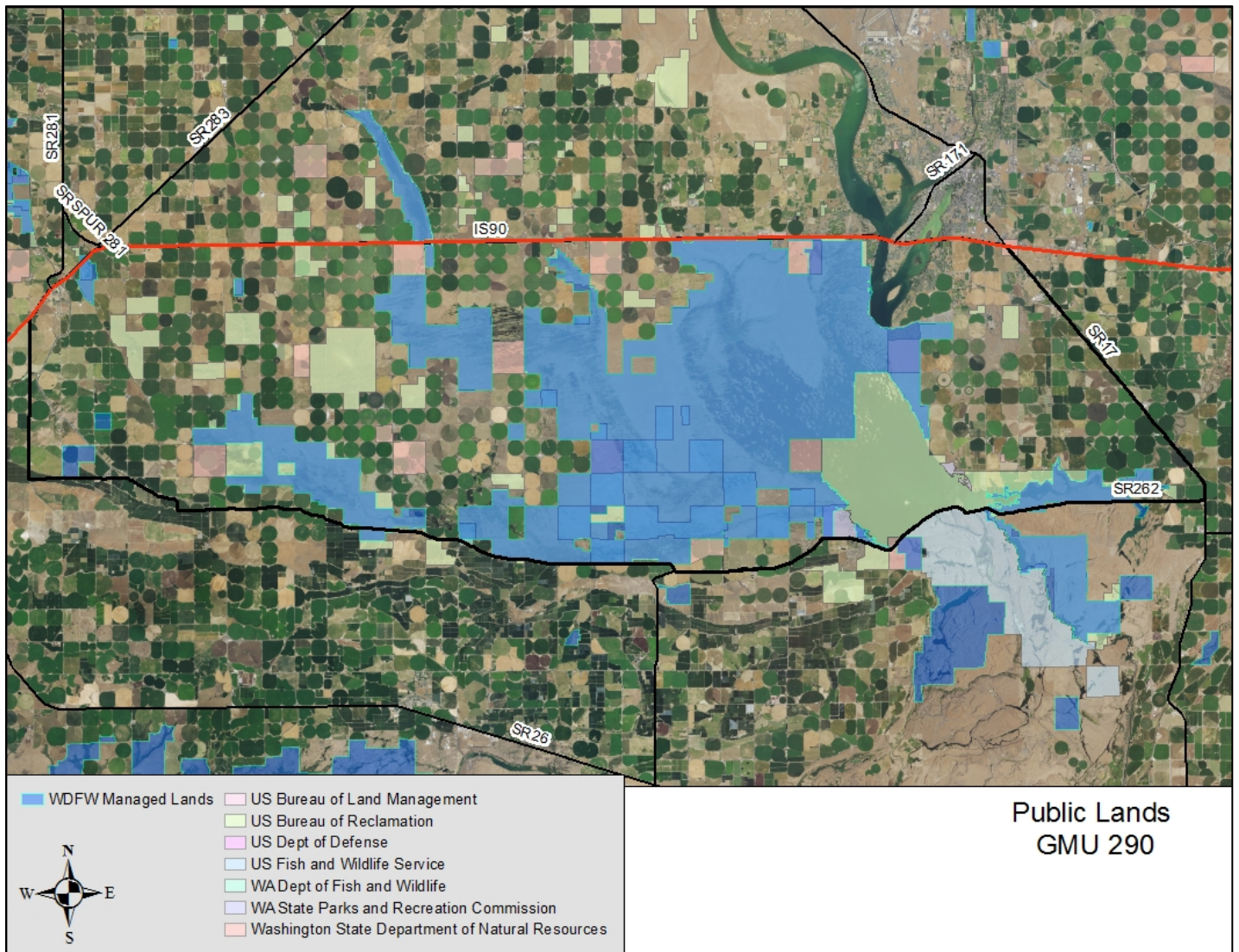


Figure 4. Public Lands in GMU 290.





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

Chance of Locating Species of Interest

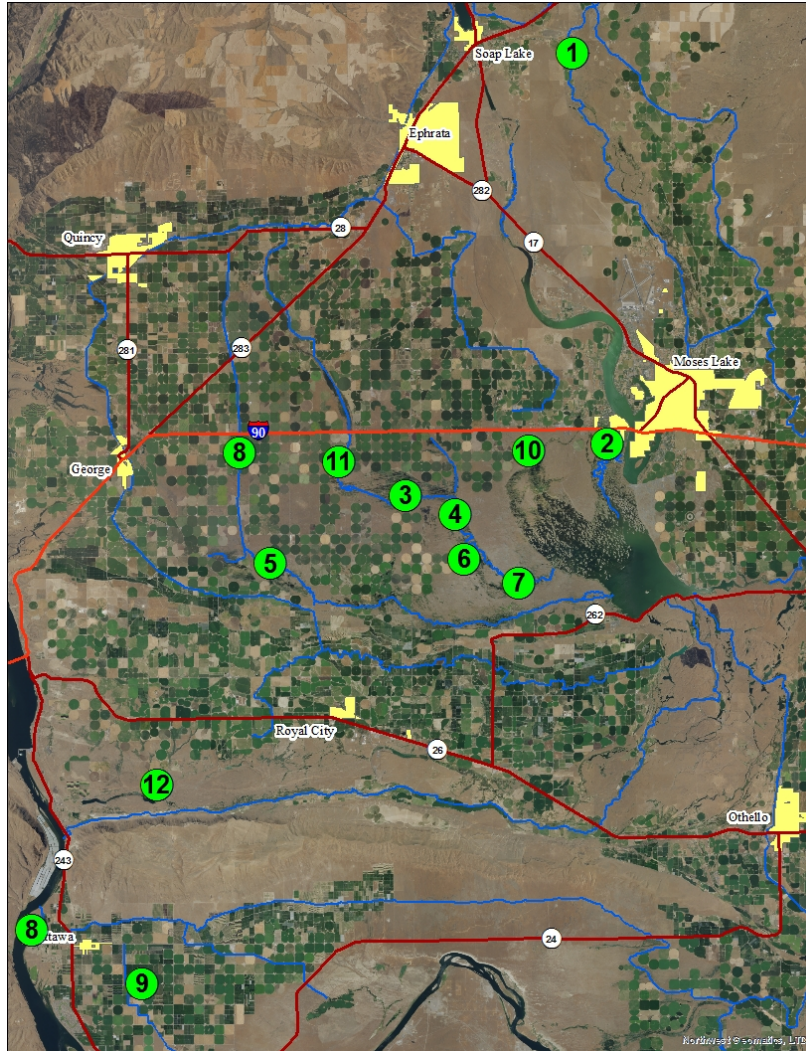
Species/ Habitats	Banks Lake	Sun Lakes	Gloyd Seeps	Quincy Lakes	Winchester Lake	The Desert	Potholes Reservoir	Seep Lakes	Goose Lakes	Lower Crab Creek	Priest Rapids	Billy Clapp	Sprague Lake
	Mule Deer	G	F	L	VL	N	VG*	VG*	L	L	F	L	N
Bear	VL	VL	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Elk	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	VL	N	N	N
Cougar	VL	VL	N	VL	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Coyote	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	F	L	F
Bobcat	L	L	VL	VL	N	N	N	N	N	VL	N	N	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.

Very Good	VG
Good	G
Fair	F
Limited	L
Very Limited	VL
None	N

## 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 has support by several 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. There is the added benefit of improving waterfowl habitat by reducing tall emergent vegetation and creating more open water. Prescribed burning was conducted in spring 2021.



**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. Harvest data reflects the improved water delivery, and subsequent habitat improvement.

**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:** WDFW plants beneficial waterfowl forage and mows 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 corn, so 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.

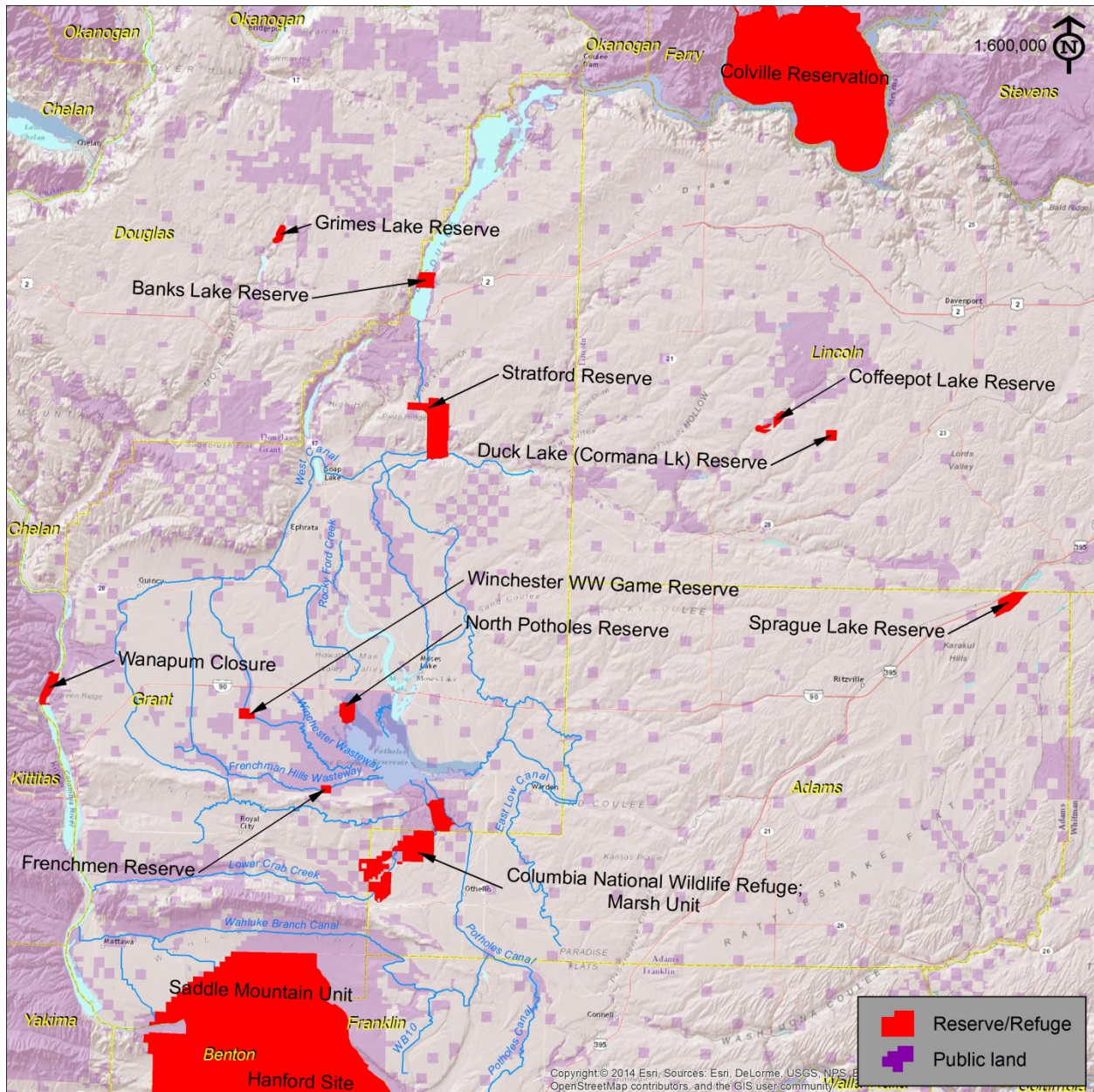
**11. North Winchester Excavations:** Numerous ponds north of the Winchester Game Reserve were excavated in 2019 and 2020 due to encroachment by non-native invasive common reed. Vegetation seeding and management are taking place along the banks to improve waterfowl habitat, hunting, and production.

**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, however that vegetation recovery is quite variable throughout the burned areas.



## GAME RESERVES

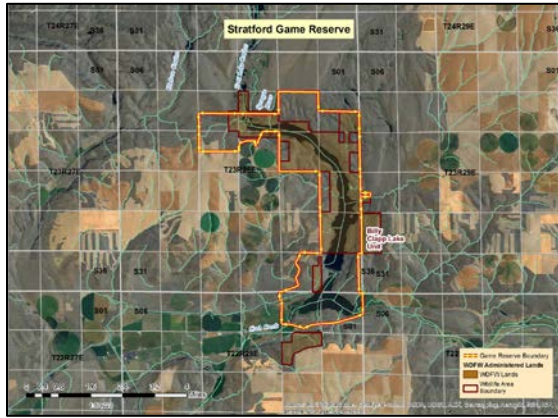
Hunting, trapping, and wildlife disturbance are not allowed on game reserves. These areas provide undisturbed areas during hunting season that help retain waterfowl in the area and improve hunting opportunities. These areas also provide nesting and foraging areas for waterfowl and other wildlife. RAAs 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.



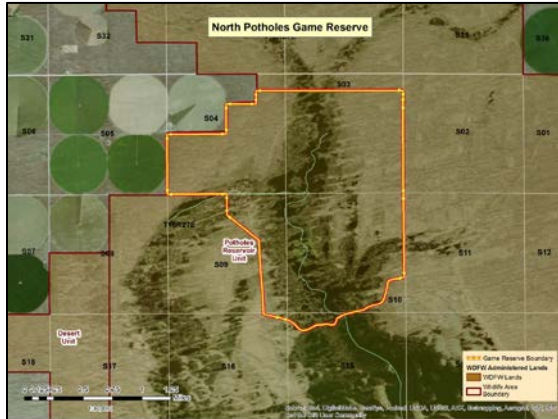
Stratford Game Reserve (Billy Clapp Lake Unit)



Banks Lake Game Reserve (Banks Lake Unit)



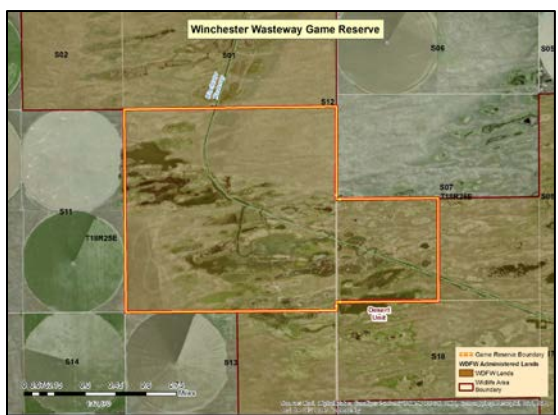
North Potholes Game Reserve (Potholes Reservoir Unit)



Frenchman Game Reserve (Desert Unit)



Winchester Game Reserve (Desert Unit)



Sprague Game Reserve (Sprague Lake Unit)

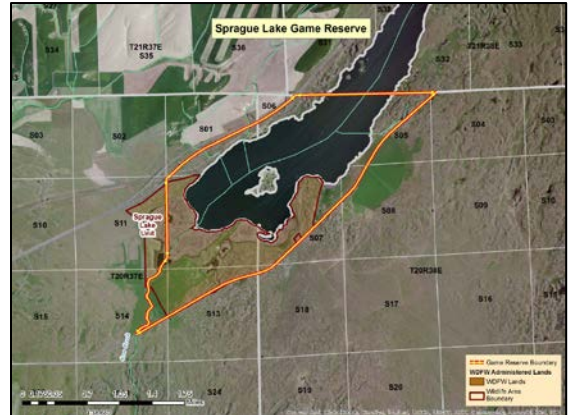


Figure 13. Game Reserve boundaries with Township, Range, and Section numbers in District 5.



## 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 muzzleloader seasons.

GMU 284 is near the Hangman Creek subherd 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. Hunters harvested 29 elk in District 5 in 2020. In GMU 284, there were two antlered and two antlerless elk harvested using muzzleloaders, and 10 antlered and 14 antlerless were harvested with modern firearms. There was one antlered elk harvested during the modern firearm season in GMU 278.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

If hunters wish to hunt elk in District 5 during the 2021 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 1,000 to 1,700. The reported antlerless permit success rate for disabled hunters was 63%. 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 89%. To further increase 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% 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 20-90 deer. The number of general season deer hunters within GMU 278, including multi-weapon permits, ranges from about 100-310. WDFW does not perform formal surveys in GMU 278, but anecdotal information indicates a stable deer population.

**GMU 284** is predominately private property, so hunters should plan to get 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 73% and 69%, respectively.

**GMU 290** is a special-permit Quality Deer Hunt Unit, with restrictions that reduce hunter density and encourages 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 most bucks 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. Most 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 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.

<b>GMU</b>	<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Antlerless</b>	<b>Antlered</b>	<b>Total Harvest</b>	<b>Number of Hunters</b>	<b>% Success</b>
<b>272</b>	Archery	48	33	81	325	25%
	Modern Firearm	0	388	388	1268	31%
	Multi-Season	6	73	79	181	44%
	Muzzleloader	0	41	41	127	32%
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>1569</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>278</b>	Archery	7	14	21	101	21%
	Modern Firearm	0	56	56	243	23%
	Multi-Season	3	15	18	55	33%
	Muzzleloader	0	3	3	24	13%
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>284</b>	Archery	5	13	18	65	28%
	Modern Firearm	0	279	279	831	34%
	Multi-Season	0	39	39	87	45%
	Muzzleloader	0	21	21	71	30%
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>290*</b>	Modern-Early	n/a	10	10	13	77%
	Modern-Late	n/a	5	5	5	100%
	Archery-Early	n/a	1	5	5	20%
	Archery-Late	n/a	5	5	9	56%
	Muzzleloader	n/a	1	1	1	100%
	Second Deer	10	n/a	10	16	63%
	Youth	3	n/a	3	4	75%

\*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 2021 SEASON**

Most deer harvest occurs in GMUs 272 (Beezley) and 284 (Ritzville). Post-hunt buck:doe ratios from ground surveys in 2020 were 20:100 and 27:100, respectively. Fawn:doe ratios were good during the 2020 ground survey efforts, with 71:100 in GMU 272 and 65:100 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.



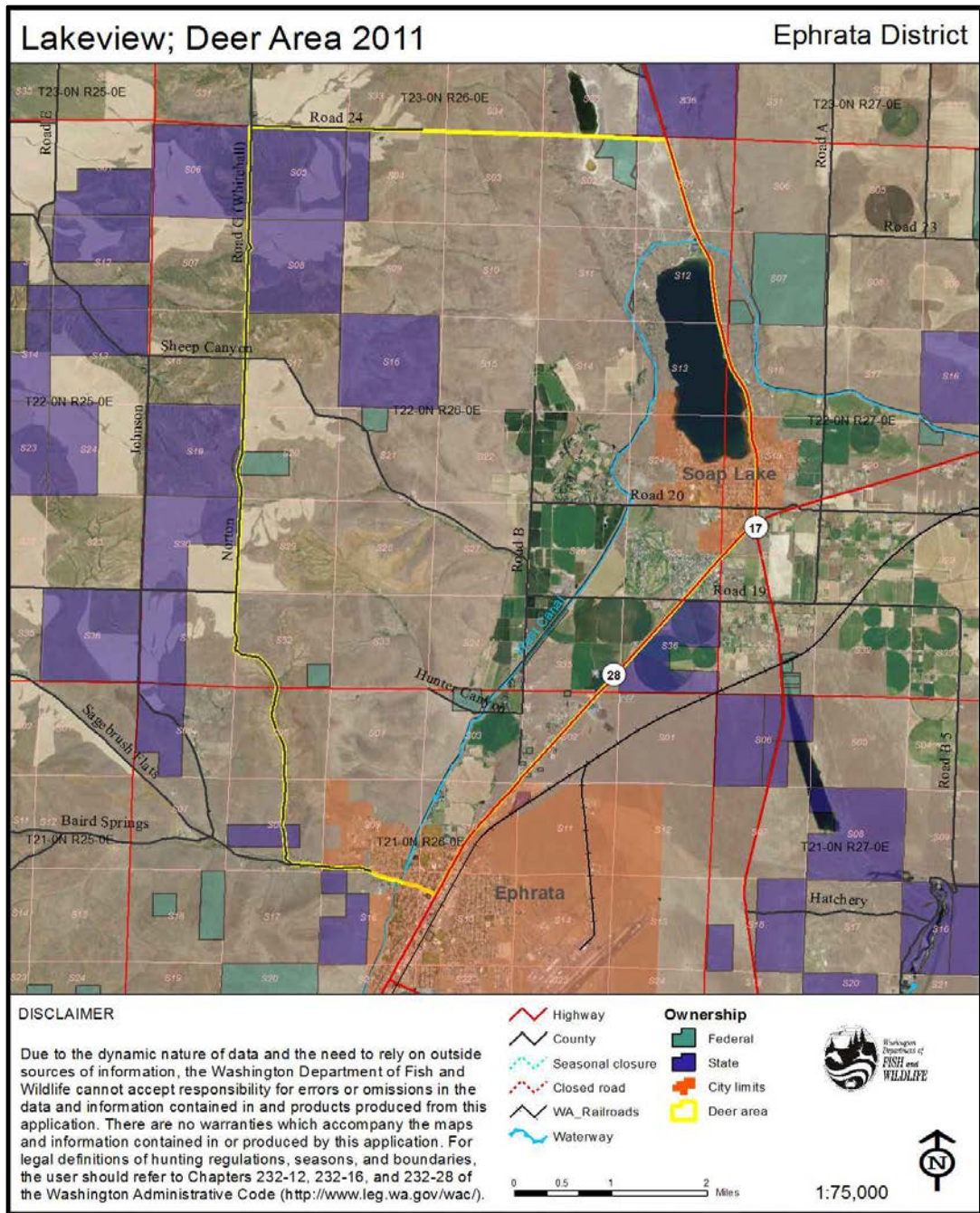
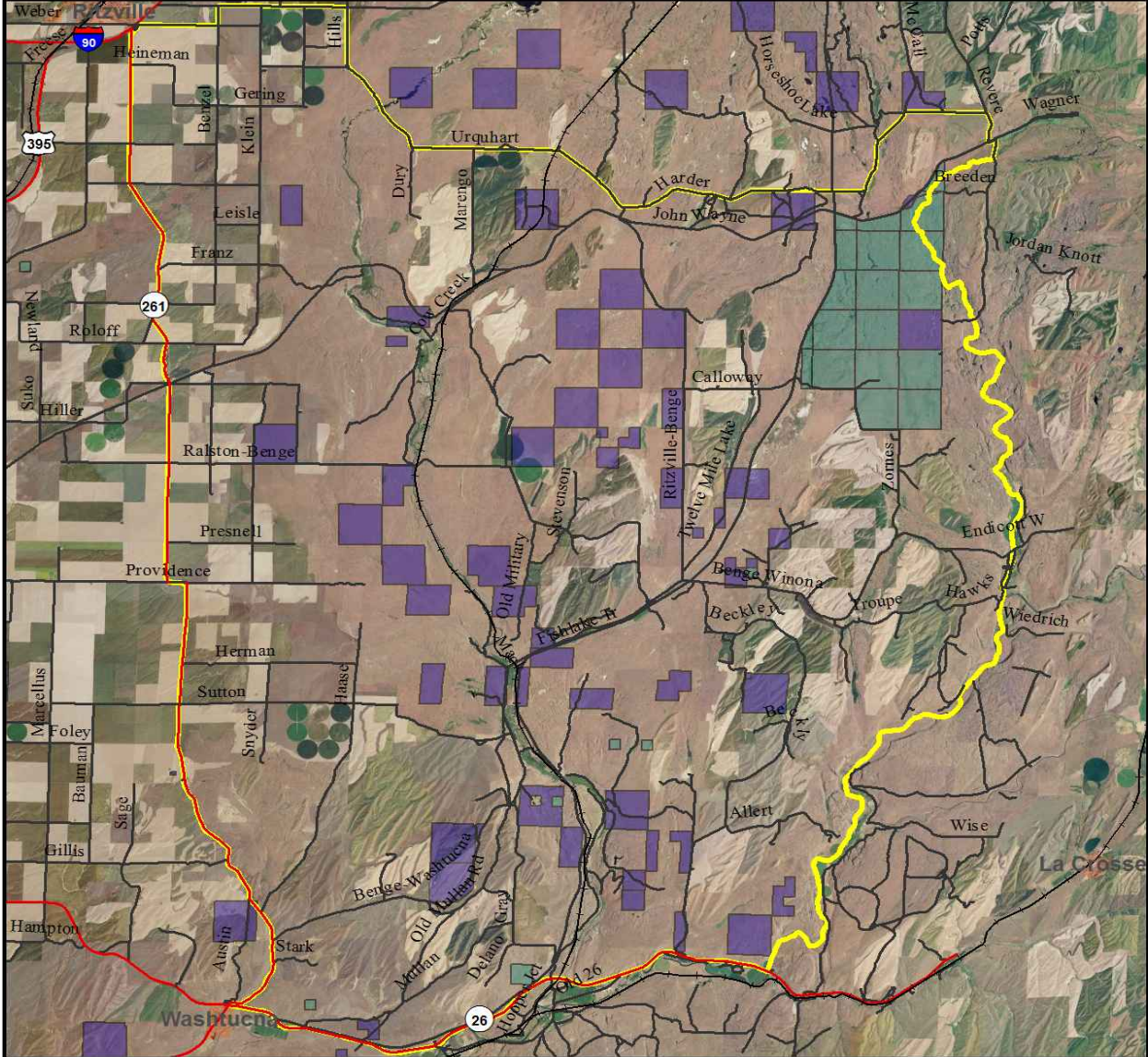


Figure 16. Lakeview Deer Area (boundary highlighted in yellow)



# Benge; Deer Area 2010

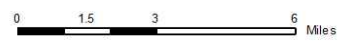
Ephrata District



**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
- Highway
- County
- Seasonal closure
- Closed road
- City limits
- Deer area
- Ownership**
- Federal
- State



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 soon.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 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 2021 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 8,822 birds in Grant County and 1,981 in Adams County for a total harvest of 10,803 pheasants in District 5 in 2019. 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 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. 18-19), before the general season opening day (Oct. 23), 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.

Hunters can anticipate seeing lots 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 new 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 at the time of this publication information was not available about the availability of this opportunity. For more information, please see the [Columbia Basin Pheasants Forever page here](#).

## 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 2019 Grant County had a harvest of 11,824 birds, while Adams County had a harvest of 1,090 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 2019 hunters harvested 669 in Grant County, and 28 in Adams County. Also, in 2019, hunters harvested 318 in Grant County and 23 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 10,579 birds in 2019. Hunters harvested 1,526 doves in Adams County, making 2019 the combined total 12,105 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.



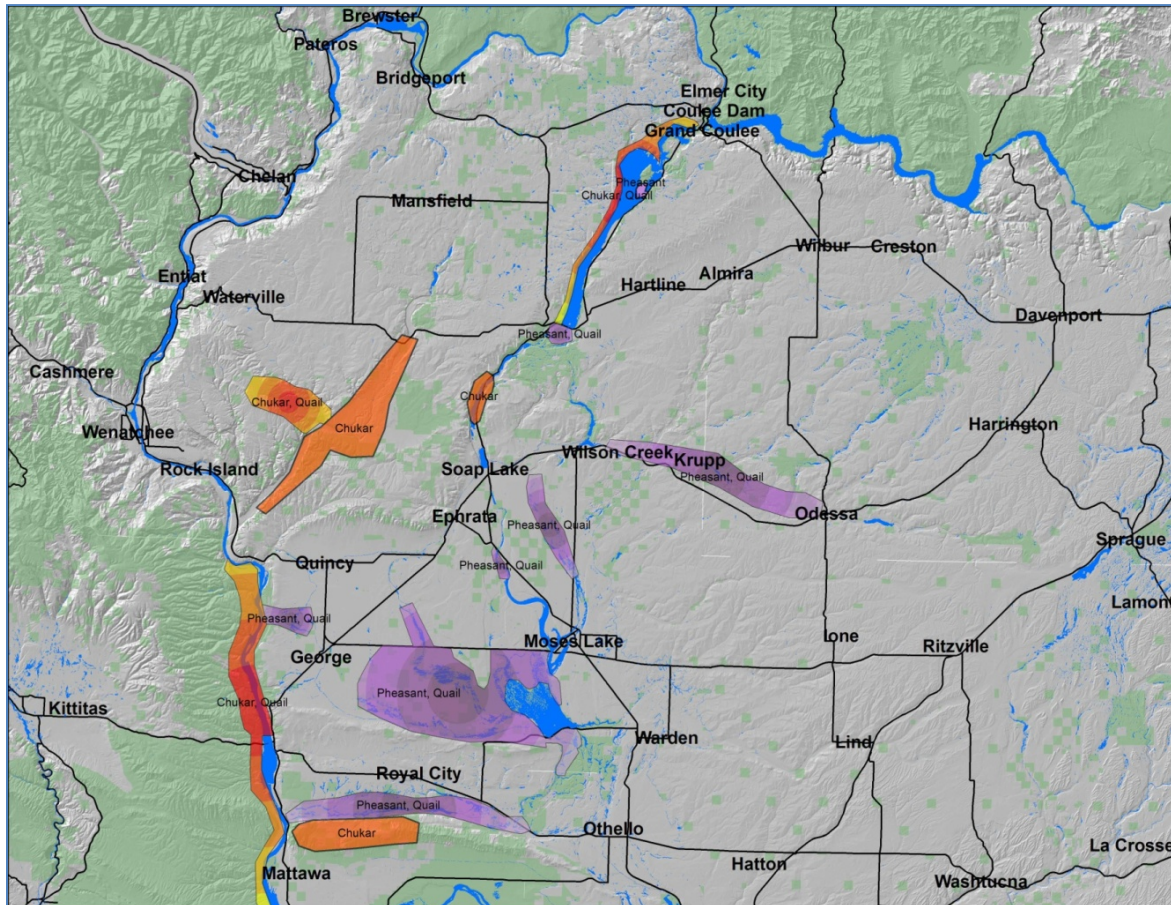
**Figure 19.** Banded mourning dove. Photo by Sean Dougherty



## 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 2019, hunters harvested 50,874 ducks in Grant County. Adams County hunters added another 9,634 ducks. Additional information can be found at [WDFW's game harvest statistics webpage](#).

In 2019, Hunters harvested 16,718 geese in Grant County, and Adams County hunters added 3,016. Additional information can be found at [WDFW's game harvest statistics webpage](#).



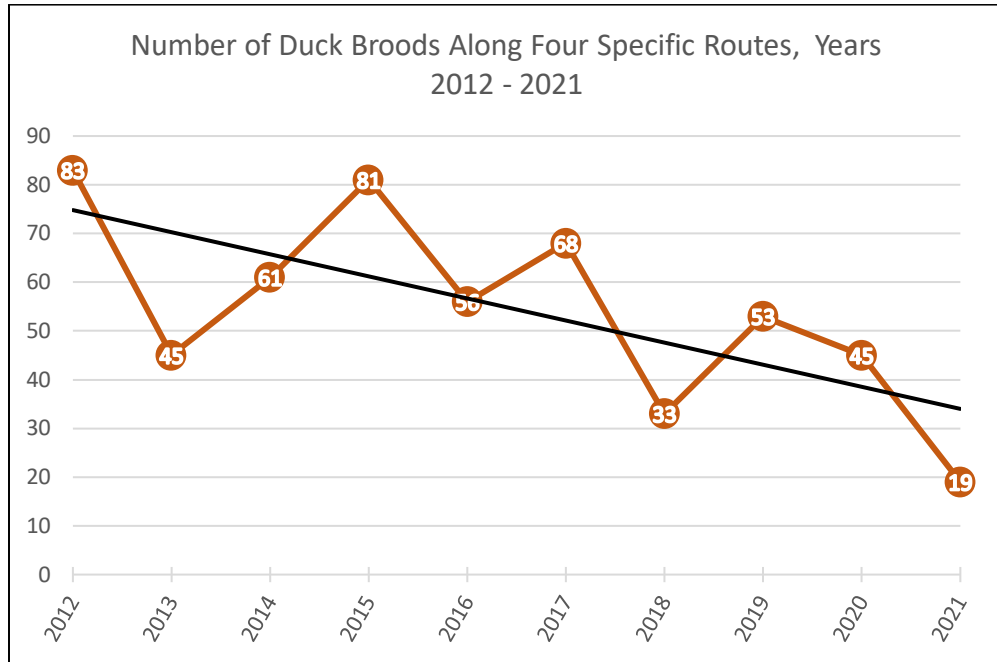
**Figure 21.** Drake cinnamon teal. Photo by Eric Braaten

### WATERFOWL POPULATION STATUS

The Washington Breeding Population Survey (BPOP) has been occurring since 2009, however, due to the impacts of COVID-19 WDFW did not conduct these surveys this spring.

During the opening weekend hunters can encounter mallard, gadwall, American wigeon, and American green-winged teal. Given the impacts of drought conditions throughout much of eastern Washington, duck production this year is likely less than in past years, but no formal surveys were conducted to confirm or disprove this suspicion.

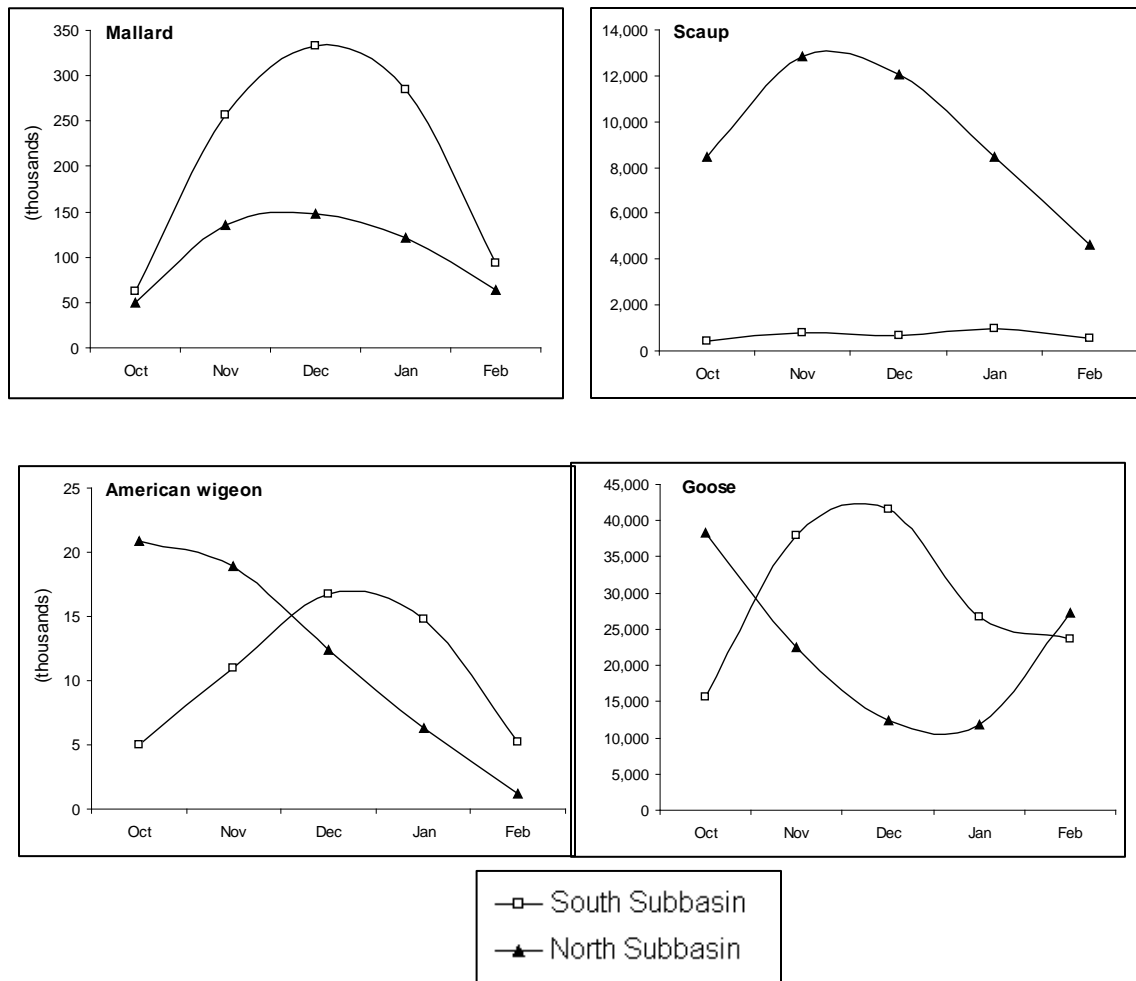
In addition to the BPOP survey, WDFW also conducts regular brood routes throughout eastern Washington. Routes in the Ephrata District include the East Low Canal, West Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake. The total numbers are presented in Figure 23 for 2012-2021. Surveys have continued to document a decline in local duck production along historical survey routes. **It should be noted that in 2021 only 3 of the traditional routes were completed.**



**Figure 22.** Duck brood count totals for Ephrata District strata, including West Canal, East Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake. It should be noted that in 2021 only East Canal, Winchester Ditch, and Ephrata Lake were completed.

## 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 23.** 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, Wamapum 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***

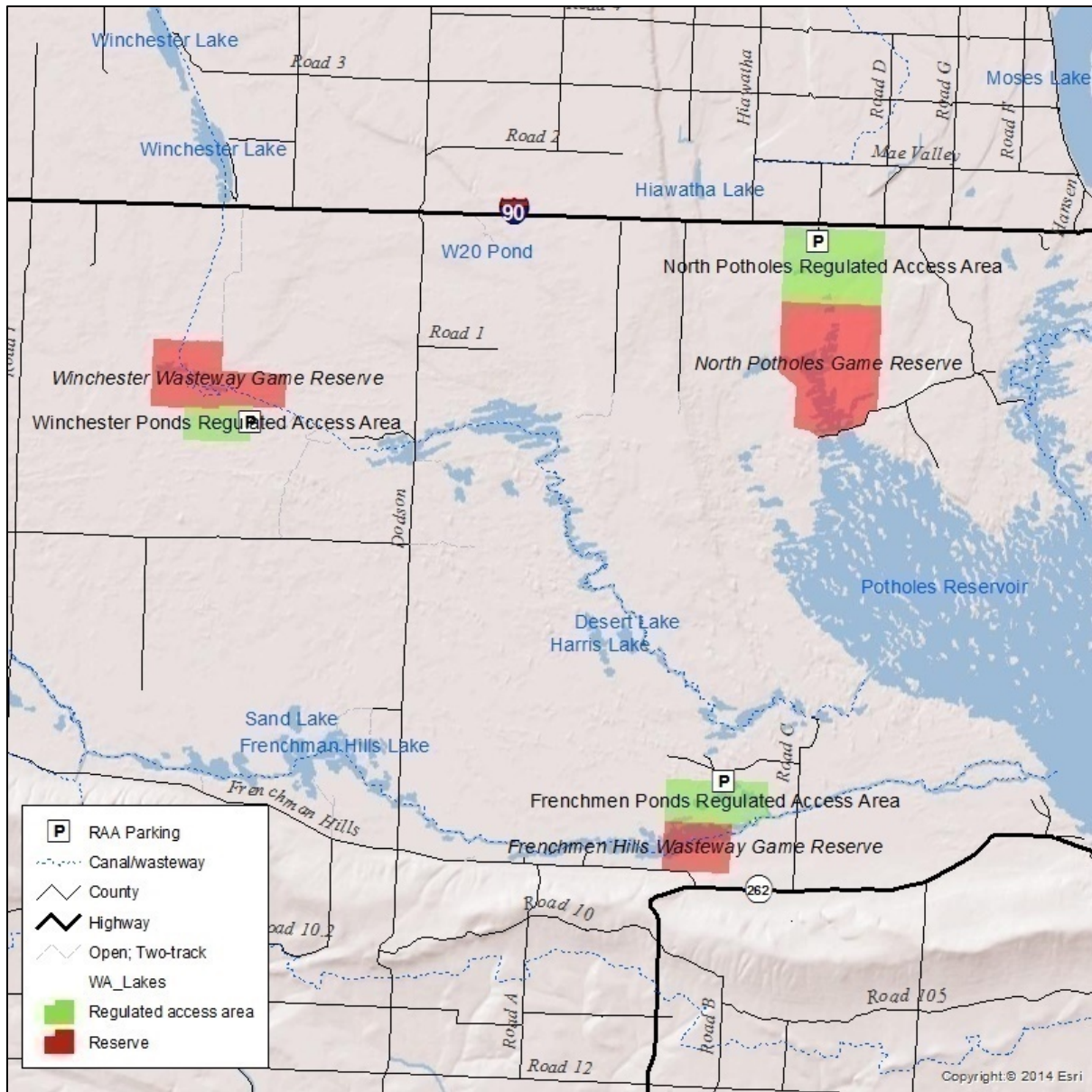
Hunters should continue to be excited about the goose bag limits being separated by species. This change will provide hunters to have the potential to put more birds in the bag. The changes will not affect where to go, but goose hunters in mid-October could increase their focus on white-fronted geese 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***

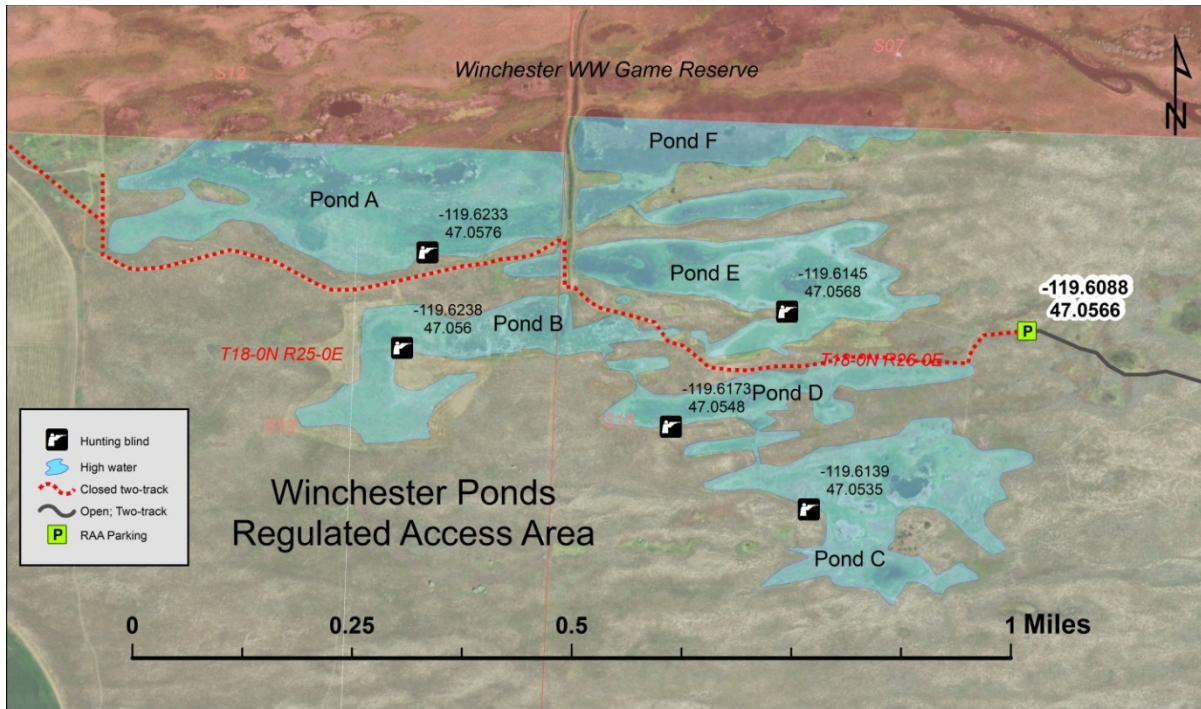
#### ***RAAs***

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 24.** Regulated Access Area locations adjacent to game reserves closed to hunting.

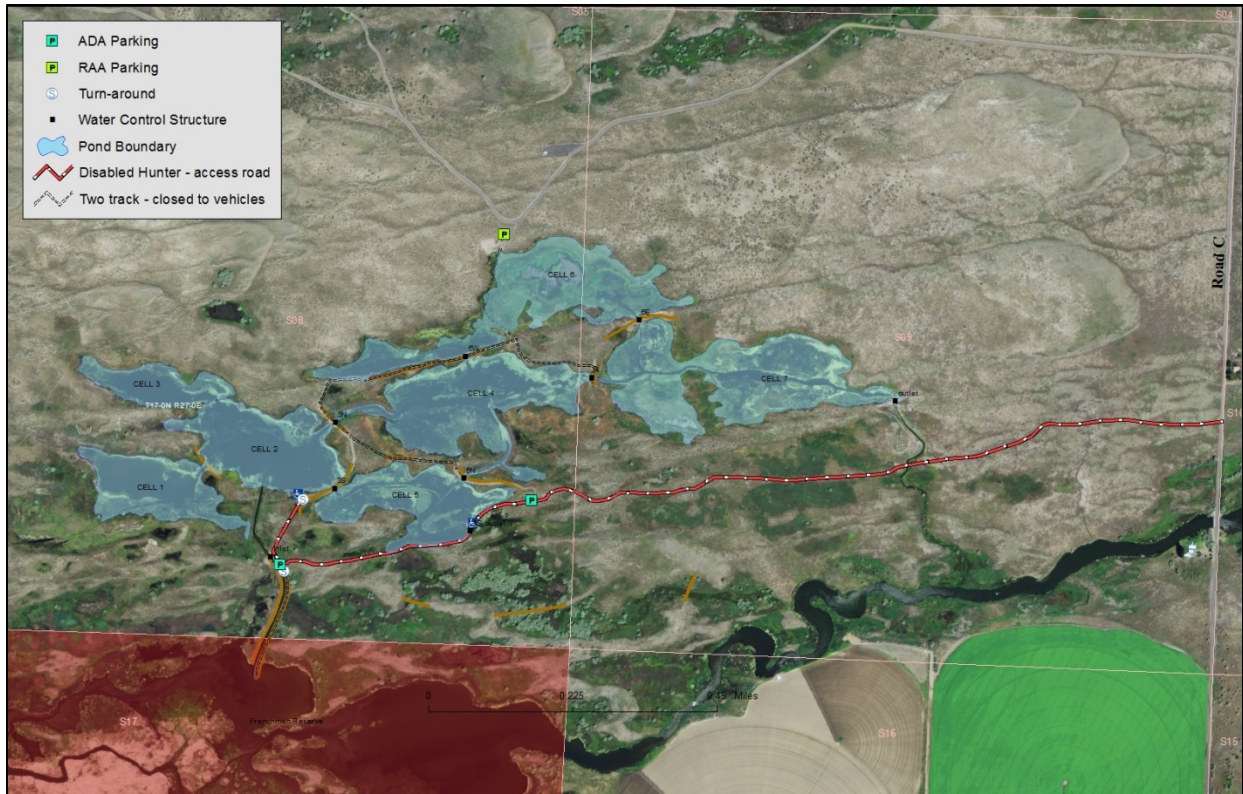




**Figure 25.** Winchester Ponds Regulated Access Area.

### 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.



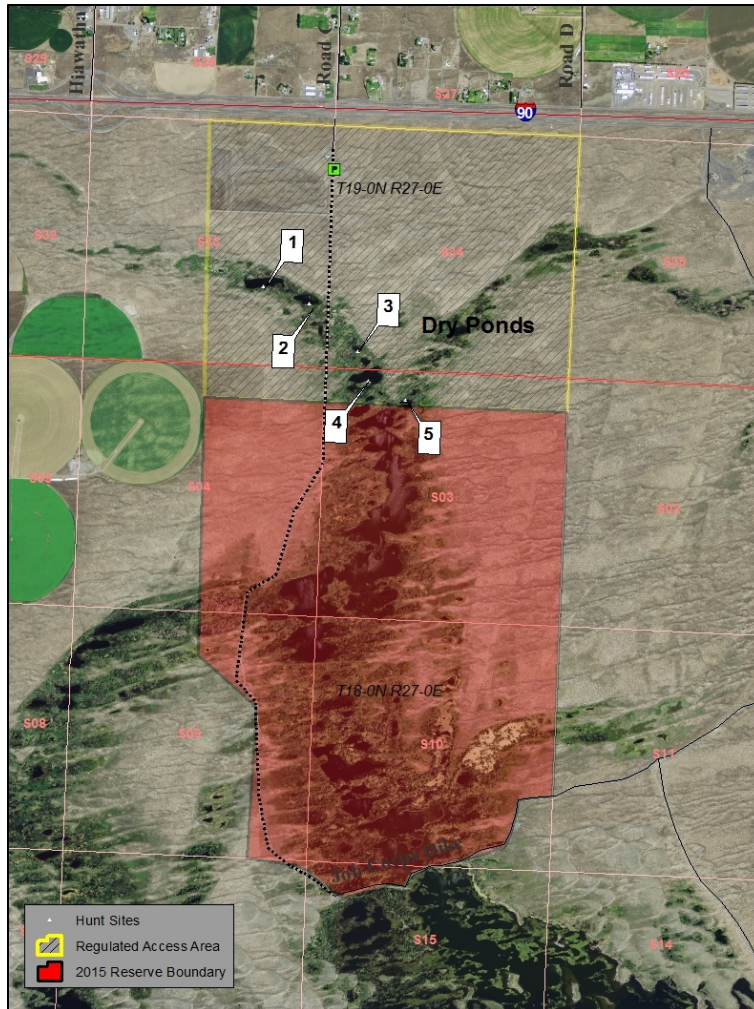
**Figure 26.** Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area.

**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 27.** 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 2.** 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.

<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Harvest</u>			<u>Harvest</u>		
<b>Winchester Ponds</b>	Duck	Goose	<b>Frenchman Ponds</b>	Duck	Goose	<b>North Potholes</b>	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
2020-21	602	5	2020-21	407	4	2020-21	24	5
<b>Average</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>16</b>

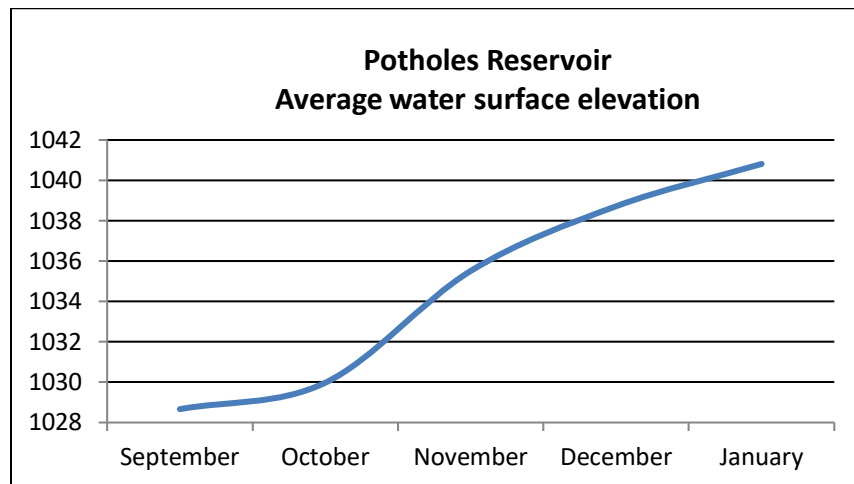
### *Other public lands*

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



**Figure 29.** 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 3.** Approximate acreage of access available by access type.

Private Lands Access Program	Grant County	Adams County
Feel Free To Hunt	11,784	7,776
Hunt By Written Permission	35,583	116,077
Hunt By Reservation (Online)	18,474	2,048
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65,841</b>	<b>125,901</b>

## 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: [title6@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:title6@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 360-902-2703 or email [title6@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:title6@dfw.wa.gov).

## 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 220-500-140, target shooting is allowed on WDFW managed lands, but there are restrictions that should be understood. In order for shooters to gain that understanding, they are strongly encouraged to review the information posted here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/wdfw-lands/recreation-planning/rule-development/target-shooting#>

**Table 4.** 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
Grant	Quincy Gun Club	509-787-5506

## 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:

[pope-young.org/fairchase/](http://pope-young.org/fairchase/)

[boone-crockett.org/boone-and-crockett-defining-fair-chase](http://boone-crockett.org/boone-and-crockett-defining-fair-chase)

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/ethics-safety/conduct](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/ethics-safety/conduct)

### “How to Hunt”

**Hunter Education:** Many links to resources about specific topics

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements)

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

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/hunting-clinics](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/hunting-clinics)

### How to prepare for the Season:

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/preparing-to-hunt](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/preparing-to-hunt)

**First Hunt Foundation** (mentored hunt):

[firsthuntfoundation.org](http://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:

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting](http://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:

[geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs](http://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.

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations)

[wdfw.wa.gov/about/wdfw-lands](http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/wdfw-lands)

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/pheasant-enhancement](http://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: [www.dnr.wa.gov/go#hunting-and-fishing](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/go#hunting-and-fishing)

Bureau of Reclamation: [www.usbr.gov/assetmanagement/](http://www.usbr.gov/assetmanagement/)

USFWS Refuges: [www.fws.gov/refuges/hunting/](http://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.

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/private-lands](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/private-lands)

## **LITERATURE CITED**

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Munro, R. E., and C. F. Kimball. 1982. Population ecology of the mallard: VII. Distribution and derivation of the harvest. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Publication 147.

2021

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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# **DISTRICT 6 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Okanogan County

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**All photos by Scott Fitkin unless otherwise noted.**

## FIRE AND ROAD CONDITIONS UPDATE

As of late August, five major fires are still active in District 6 throughout Okanogan County. Currently all Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands in eastern Washington and some units of the Methow Wildlife Area are closed to recreational access. There are significant access closures on portions of the Methow District of the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest and the Tonasket Ranger District of the Colville National Forest., Some areas of private land may also still be under evacuation orders with restricted access. The extent of the fire activity and associated closures are quite dynamic right now and can be expected to change often. In addition to the access closures there is also a complete ban on campfires throughout Eastern Washington and some areas prohibit an open flame of any kind. Without significant additional precipitation, fire restrictions are likely to remain well into the fall.

The fires are affecting many popular hunting and camping locations in District 6 including sizeable portions of the upper Methow Watershed, the Loomis Forest, the Conconully area, and the Bonaparte Block of the Tonasket Ranger District. Game Management Units that currently have significant access closures include East Okanogan (204), Sinlahekin (215), Chewuch (218), Pearygin (224), Gardner (231), and Pogue (233). Several major trailheads leading into the Pasayten Wilderness (GMU 203) are also closed. Although access to some of these areas might open in the fall, some designated campgrounds and many traditional dispersed camping locations within the fire perimeters are likely to remain closed throughout the season. **It will be important to check the access status of the areas you plan to hunt with the appropriate land management agencies.** The links below should provide updated information on fire activity, access closures, and campfire restrictions.

- [USFS Interactive fire closure map](#)
- [WDFW wildfire information webpage](#)
- [Okanogan National Forest, Methow Valley Ranger District](#)
- [Tonasket Ranger District, Colville National Forest](#)
- [DNR Regulated Fire Restrictions](#)
- [InciWeb Current Fire Status](#)
- [Okanogan County Emergency Management](#)

**As noted in the species sections below, deer distribution is not expected to be noticeably altered by the fire activity. On the other hand, many bears are expected to wander more widely in the wake of fire and drought.**

## DISTRICT 6 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 6 is located along the Canadian border in north central Washington and encompasses 10 game management units (GMUs): 203 (Pasayten), 204 (Okanogan East), 209 (Wannacut), 215 (Sinlahekin), 218 (Chewuch), 224 (Perrygin), 231 (Gardner), 233 (Pogue), 239 (Chiliwist), and 242 (Alta).

The western two-thirds of the district, stretching from the Okanogan River to the Pacific Crest, lies on the east slope of the Cascade Range and is dominated by mountainous terrain that gets more rugged as you move from east to west. Vegetation in this portion of the district ranges from desert/shrubsteppe at the lowest elevations to various types of conifer forests, culminating in alpine tundra on the higher peaks, which top out at almost 9,000 feet. More than three-quarters of the land base in this portion of the county is in public ownership, offering extensive hunting access. Game is plentiful and dispersed throughout the area for most of the year, concentrating in the lower elevations in winter when deep snows cover much of the landscape.

GMU 204 includes the eastern third of the district (from the Okanogan River east to the Okanogan County line) and features moderately rolling terrain, generally rising in elevation as you move east. The vegetation changes from shrub-steppe near the Okanogan River to a mix of tall grass and conifer forest throughout the remainder of the unit. This portion of the district is roughly a 50/50 patchwork of public and private land, with the public lands generally being higher in elevation. Again, game is plentiful and dispersed throughout.

Weather in the Okanogan District can be quite variable and capable of changing quickly in the fall. Be prepared for everything from warm, sunny days to the possibility of winter temperatures and significant snow at higher elevations by the second week of October.

**Please be respectful of private land and treat landowners and their property the way you would want to be treated if roles were reversed.**





From top: Methow Wildlife Area and Pasayten Wilderness

Agency biologists may run a biological check and information station at the Red Barn in Winthrop both weekends of the modern firearm general deer season. We encourage hunters to stop and provide data to biologists whether they have harvested a deer or not. The data we collect helps us assess herd health and shape population management. Efforts may be constrained by COVID restrictions.



## ELK

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

Overall, elk numbers are low in District 6. However, conditions vary noticeably between the east and west portions of Okanogan County. The western two-thirds of the district are not currently covered under a WDFW elk herd management plan, and the existing harvest strategy (any elk general season) is designed to



minimize elk numbers to prevent agricultural damage. As such, elk are quite scarce west of the Okanogan River very difficult to find without extensive local knowledge. Hunters harvested only 20 elk in the nine western Okanogan County GMUs combined in 2020.

The eastern portion of the district (GMU 204) is covered by the Selkirk Elk Herd Plan. Its four primary goals are:

1. To preserve, protect, perpetuate, manage, and enhance elk and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations and ecosystem integrity.
2. To manage this elk herd for a sustained hunting yield.
3. To manage elk for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, biodiversity, wildlife viewing, and photography.
4. To manage elk and elk habitat to minimize human conflicts and agricultural damage.

More specifically, GMU 204 supports part of the Pend Oreille subherd population, where the current management objective is to gradually increase elk numbers while addressing the above four goals. As a result, this unit is now managed with any bull harvest during general modern firearm and muzzleloader seasons. Elk are not currently abundant enough to warrant a survey effort in District 6, but observations suggest numbers continue to increase in GMU 204 and improve harvest opportunity accordingly. Even so, harvest remains modest with only 18 animals taken in 2020.

For specific harvest information see the [District 6 General Season Elk Harvest - 2020](#).

### WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

As noted above, GMU 204 is the only GMU in District 6 with a significant number of elk. Within this unit, elk tend to be most numerous in the area from Havillah north through the Molson and the Chesaw Wildlife Area, the Waconda Summit / Mount Annie area, and USFS lands bordering the Colville Reservation. In the rest of the district, finding animals is extremely difficult unless you have up-to-date knowledge on one of the few small bands of elk that wax and wane in the western portion of the county.



## DEER

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

District 6 supports perhaps the largest migratory mule deer herd in the state, and Okanogan County has long been prized by hunters for its mule deer hunting opportunity. The district also supports significant numbers of white-tailed deer, particularly in GMUs 204 and 215. The District 6 deer management objective is for stable to modestly increasing populations within the social tolerance limits for nuisance and damage issues.



Okanogan District mule deer buck

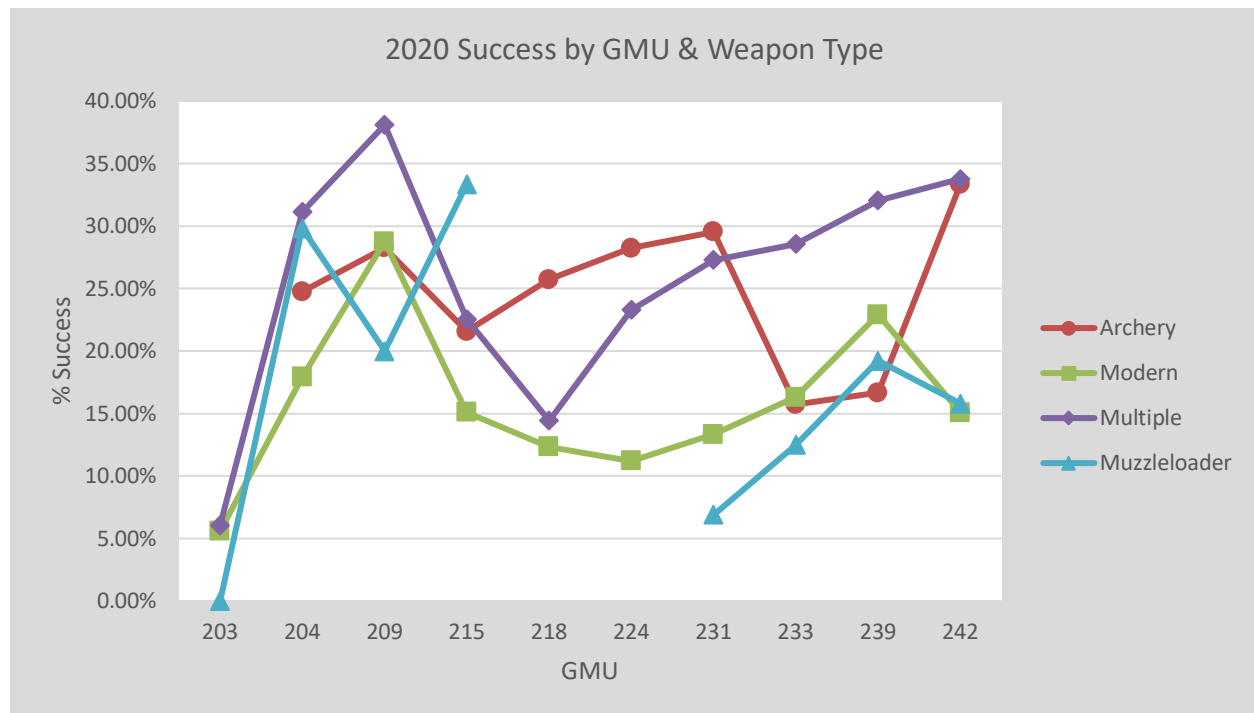
Increasing post-season fawn:doe ratios and higher than average over-winter fawn survivorship documented in surveys from the past two years indicate that deer numbers are beginning to rebound in District 6 in the wake of the extreme fires, severe droughts, and modestly tough winters from the middle part of the last decade. As previously burned winter range continues to recover and mature, this trend is expected to continue.

## WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

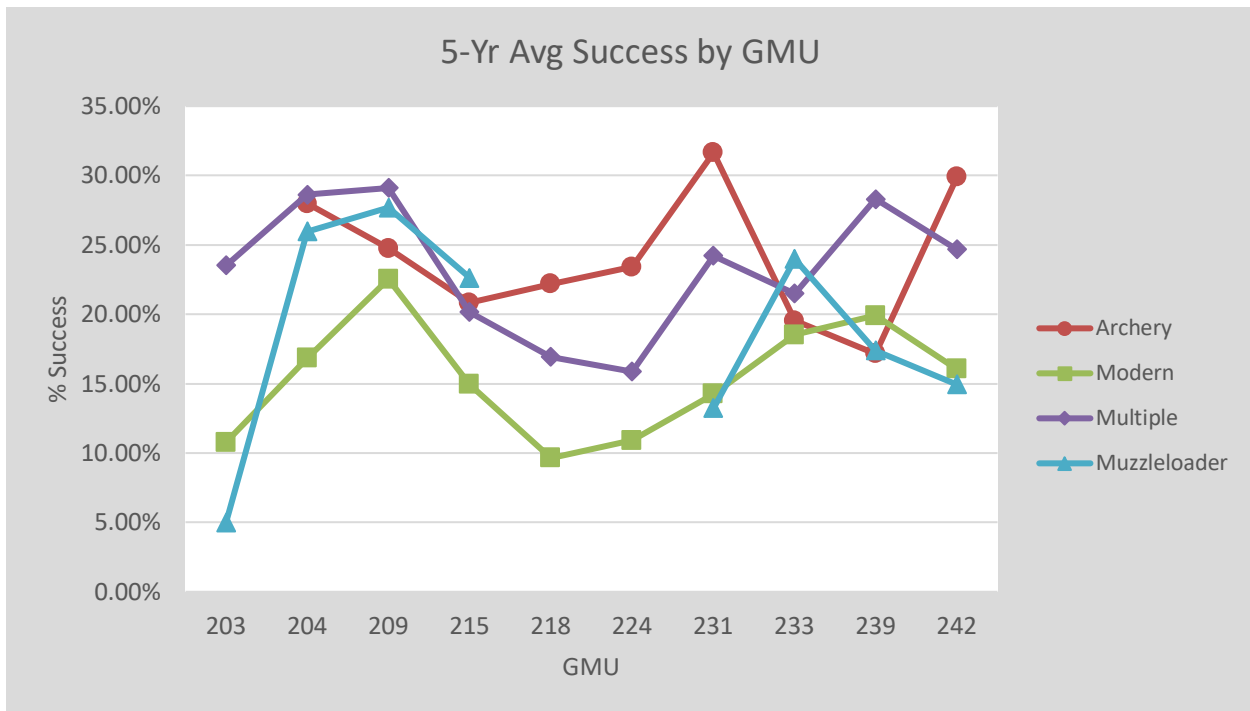
All units in District 6 support significant numbers of deer, include large blocks of accessible public land and offer good to excellent deer hunting opportunity. Mule deer are abundant throughout the county, with the highest densities in the western two-thirds of the district.

Overall, white-tailed deer are less numerous than mule deer in Okanogan County, and in contrast to mule deer, white-tailed deer abundance generally increases as you move east in the district. The largest population is in GMU 204, where white-tailed deer comprise about half of the overall deer population. Although white-tailed deer numbers are less abundant in the western portion of the district, they are still found in most all drainages up to mid-elevations, particularly those with significant riparian vegetation. The highest concentrations in this area are in the Sinlahekin Valley and surrounding drainages. In many areas west of GMU 204 and outside of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, white-tailed deer frequent private lands. Prospective hunters wishing to target white-tailed deer may want to seek permission in advance of the season to access individual private land.

Hunters harvested 2,419 (2,232 bucks, 187 antlerless) deer in District 6 during the 2020 general seasons. This total is up about 17% over last year, and above the five-year average of 2,210. General season success rates remained stable or rose slightly across weapon types, equaling or slightly surpassing their respective five-year averages. The breakdown by weapon is as follows: Modern – 17 %, Muzzleloader – 21 % Archery – 25 %, and Multiple – 28 %.



**Figure 1.** District 6 2020 general season hunter success by weapon type and GMU



**Figure 2.** District 6 5-year average general season hunter success by weapon type and GMU

As expected, GMU 204 (the district’s largest unit) yielded the greatest overall general season harvest of 769 animals. In the western portion of District 6, GMU 215 produced the most harvest with 305 deer.

For specific harvest information see: [District 6 2020 General Season Deer Harvest](#)  
[District 6 2020 Special Permit Harvest](#)

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2020 SEASON

Improving post-season fawn:doe ratios and higher than average estimated fawn recruitment over the last two years likely means a modest increase in 2.5-year-old buck availability in 2021. COVID restrictions precluded effective fall surveys in 2020 so the postseason buck:doe ratio is unknown but was likely somewhere between 15-20 bucks per 100 does. Before the current fires, total general season harvest and success rates were anticipated to be around the 5-year average. At this point it is unknown how fire induced changes to access and/or hunter participation may affect these outcomes. Significant direct mortality of deer due to fire is not expected. Opportunities for older age class bucks during the late permit seasons still look good regardless of fire activity.

The summer 2021 has been the hottest on record, and severe drought conditions that began in the spring have persisted through the summer. As a result, deer are likely to be a bit more concentrated at higher elevations in areas that retain green forage into the early fall. The last few days of the general season could see significant numbers of deer beginning to migrate to winter range, particularly if we get significant October snow in the high country.

**Contrary to popular belief, the fires are not likely to significantly change deer distribution.** Recent data from remote cameras and radio-collared mule deer suggest most animals exhibit either modest short-term displacement from fire or little displacement at all; fidelity of individual deer to their summer range is high. Some exceptions might be noted in areas of extreme fire intensity.

## **HOW TO FIND AND HUNT MULE DEER**

During the early general seasons, deer will generally be widely distributed on the landscape and not yet concentrated in migration areas or on the winter range. Mature bucks are often at high elevations in remote locations if succulent vegetation is available. In general, older, higher elevation burns, including the Tripod, Thirty-mile, Farewell, and Needles Fires, are producing high-quality summer forage and are a good bet for significant deer activity. Although mule deer will use a variety of habitat types, they will often forage well into open environments, particularly at dawn and dusk. As a result, they can often be glassed and stalked from a considerable distance.

During the high hunt, deer will still be spread across the landscape and are found in good numbers throughout the Pasayten Wilderness. Easier access to the higher, more open country for hunters on foot is located at the Harts Pass and Iron Gate trailheads at the western and eastern ends of the wilderness respectively. For those with horses, the Andrews Creek and Billy Goat trailheads offer access to good deer terrain further in. The 30-Mile trailhead is accessible again.

For youth, senior, and disabled hunters holding antlerless tags, does are spread throughout the district during the general season, so permit holders should be able to find antlerless animals anywhere they have legal access.

During the late permit seasons, most deer will have moved to winter range areas at lower elevations, often on more southerly slopes, to participate in the breeding season. In District 6, WDFW wildlife areas and immediately adjacent federal lands are good bets for high deer numbers in late fall, although in low-snow years, some mature bucks may linger at higher elevations. In exceptionally mild years, hunters may have to go a bit higher than usual to find deer concentrations. Some GMU-specific recommendations for late mule deer permit holders are as follows:

**GMU 215:** Look for deer on the south-facing slopes in the Toats Coulee drainage, open portions of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area (SWA), and south-facing slopes of the major drainages to the west of the Sinlahekin, including Cecil, Sarsapkin, and Sinalhekin creeks and their tributaries.

**GMU 218:** The Rendezvous Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area (MWA), and the Cub Creek, Buck Lake, and Lower Boulder Creek area of the Okanogan National Forest (ONF) are good bets.

**GMU 224:** Favorite spots are portions of the MWA and adjacent ONF lands in the southern portion of the unit. This includes more open habitat in drainages such as Pearrygin, Ramsay, Bear, Blue Buck, Beaver, and Frazier creeks.



**GMU 231:** Check out the Big Buck portion of the MWA, as well as the Virginia Ridge, Thompson Ridge, and Little Bridge Creek areas of the ONF.

**GMU 233:** The main unit and Pogue Mountain Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area (SCWA), the Carter Mountain Unit of the SWA, and public land in the Salmon Creek Drainage are good places to start.

**GMU 239:** The Texas Creek Unit of the MWA and the Chiliwist Unit of the SWA along with the adjacent Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land offer good opportunities. Upper portions of Finley, Benson, and Texas creeks on the ONF are also worth a look.

**GMU 242:** Look for deer on the Golden Doe Unit of the MWA and south-facing slopes on public land in the Libby Creek and Gold Creek drainages.



Okanogan District white-tailed deer buck

## **HOW TO FIND AND HUNT WHITE-TAILED DEER**

White-tailed deer typically migrate less than mule deer and generally favor brushier country with denser cover at lower and middle elevations. Look for white-tailed deer along stream drainages and in other areas with riparian vegetation or thick cover. Like mule deer, white-tailed deer are most active at dawn and dusk but often won't venture as far into larger openings unless under the cover of darkness. Look for white-tailed deer in edge habitats where denser cover abruptly transitions into more open meadows. Many white-tailed deer hunters will wait patiently at a



stationary position along an obvious game trail or the forest edge, often employing the use of a blind or tree stand.

During the late permit season, some white-tailed deer summering at modestly high elevations will move a little way downslope, but most will be in the same areas they inhabited during summer. GMU-specific recommendations for late permit holders and late archery season in the western portion of the district are as follows:

**GMU 215:** White-tailed deer are abundant on the SWA and Chopaka Unit of the SCWA.

**GMU 218:** Look for deer in the Eight-mile drainage, along the Chewuch River, and in the lower half of the Rendezvous Unit of the MWA (despite the open habitat).

**GMU 224:** Brushier areas along Bear Creek, Upper Beaver Creek and its tributaries, and basin drained by the West Fork Salmon Creek west of Conconully are good bets.

**GMU 231:** Good possibilities include the huntable portion of the Big Valley Unit of the MWA, and the portion of the unit in the Twisp River Valley (north of the Twisp River Road). White-tailed deer can sometimes be encountered on the south slopes of the Big Buck Unit of the MWA as they move uphill off private land.

**GMU 233:** Despite the open terrain, the Happy Hill area of the SCWA is productive, along with the Buzzard Lake Unit of the SWA and adjacent DNR lands.

**GMU 239:** White-tailed deer can be found on ONF land in the South Summit area between Loup Loup Pass and Leecher Mountain and in wetter areas in the western portion of the Chiliwist Unit of the SWA and adjacent DNR lands.

**GMU 242:** Productive areas include the brushy areas along the river and in the northern half of the Golden Doe Unit of the MWA, as well as the valley bottom of the Twisp River drainage. Public land along Libby and Gold creeks is also a possibility.

Antlerless white-tailed deer permit holders should look for animals in the same areas mentioned above with the added expectation of a few more deer in the higher reaches of areas like the Twisp River and Eight-mile drainages than might be expected during the late season.

## **DEER AREAS**

For those hunters with second deer permits in Deer Areas 2012 - 2016, remember that those permits are good **only on private land**. Permit holders are responsible for contacting private landowners to secure hunting access.

# BLACK BEAR

## GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears are abundant and well-distributed throughout District 6 and are managed for sustainable harvest and diverse age structure. Monitored demographic parameters suggest the local population and associated harvest appeared to be relatively stable through 2018. In 2019, the bag limit was raised to two animals in eastern Washington and harvest increased by around 50% in District 6. It is unknown what effect if any this will have on harvest prospects in 2021.

For hunters pursuing black bear in the northern Cascades, it is critical to positively identify the bear species, as endangered grizzly bears potentially also inhabit these areas. WDFW’s website features some interactive training materials on how to tell the difference between black and grizzly bears. View the Interactive Bear Identification Program and take the Bear Identification Test at [WDFW’s website](#).

## WHICH GMU SHOULD BEAR HUNTERS HUNT?

All GMUs in the Okanogan District provide good black bear hunting opportunities. In 2020, both the success rate (9.2 %) and total harvest (141) in the Okanogan portion of Bear Management Unit 5 remained above the five-year averages following the Eastern WA bag limit increase in 2019. Harvest and success in GMU 204 in the Northeastern BMU remained stable and a little below the five-year averages.

For specific harvest information see: [Okanogan BBMU 2020 Black Bear Harvest](#)  
[Northeastern BBMU 2020 Black Bear Harvest](#)

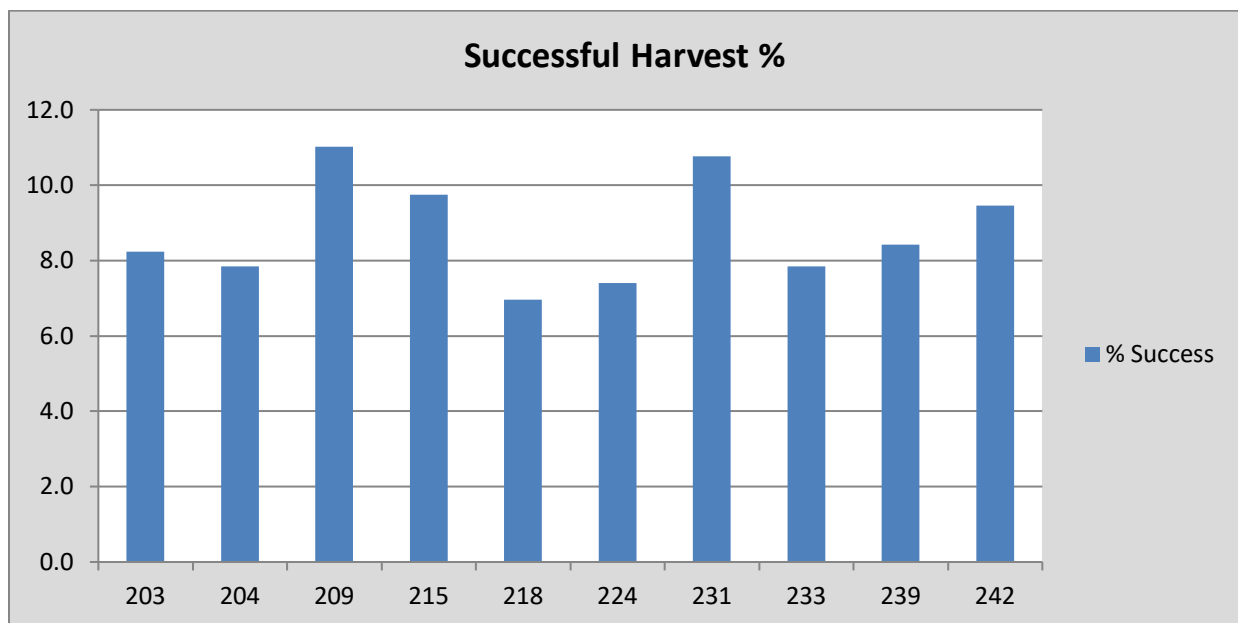


Figure 3. Okanogan District 5-year average black bear harvest success rates by GMU



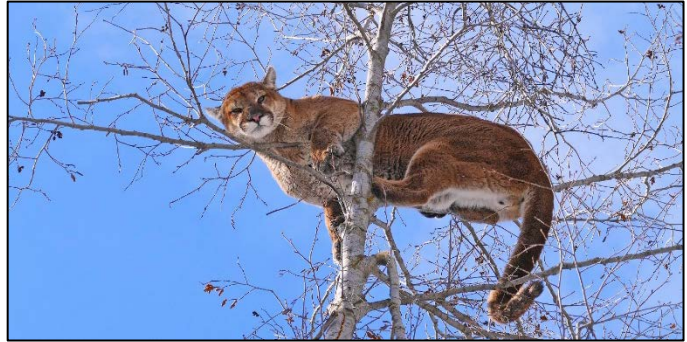
Black bear

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

In general, at the beginning of bear season, animals are likely to be found at middle elevations in areas where berries are peaking. As the season progresses, expect bears to follow the ripening berries to higher elevations. As we move into fall, animals will range over a wider gradient to take advantage of a variety of late-season food sources. This year, after a late onset for service berries, the extreme heat accelerated the development of the later crops and some may be ripening ahead of schedule. Fires have consumed berry crops in some areas; however, in unburned areas most berry crops appear to be average to good this year. **Unlike deer, bears are often significantly displaced by fire and are likely to be ranging widely across the landscape this year looking for alternative food sources in the wake of fire and drought.**

# COUGAR

## GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



The District 6 cougar population is healthy and dispersed throughout the landscape. In the Okanogan District, cougars are managed by a harvest guideline at the scale of one or two GMUs to better promote stable population structure and high-quality sustainable harvest, while also minimizing human-cougar conflicts.

Cougars follow the deer herds, which means they will be spread throughout the district through late October and concentrate more at lower elevations as deer move to winter range. Much cougar foraging activity takes place at night, so the best opportunities to spot the cats on the move are at dawn and dusk.

## WHICH GMU SHOULD COUGAR HUNTERS HUNT?

All Okanogan District GMUs support cougars and are open to hunting. After Jan. 1, individual PMUs (one or more GMUs) close on short notice once the harvest guideline has been reached, and hunters are responsible for knowing if a unit is open or closed. This information is available on the WDFW hotline (1-866-364-4868) or [online](#).

Last season, harvest in District 6 exceeded the guideline in only one PMU (GMUs 209, 215), and control-related mortality was moderate. As a result, cougar numbers should be robust and hunting opportunities in District 6 should be good in 2020-21. See the five-year harvest summary table below.

PMU Hunt Area GMUs	Adult Harvest Guideline	2016-2017 Adult Harvest	2017-2018 Adult Harvest	2018-2019 Adult Harvest	2019-2020 Adult Harvest	2020-2021 Adult Harvest
203	4-5	0	0	0	0	0
204	6-8	1	5	8	4	4
209, 215	3-4	4	5	4	3	6
218, 231	4-5	4	0	2	0	1
224	2	3	1	2	0	0
233,239	4-5	2	1	4	2	2
242,243	5-6	2	1	5	3	2

**Table 1.** District 6 cougar harvest guidelines and 5-year harvest by GMU



## WATERFOWL

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The Okanogan District offers modest waterfowl hunting opportunities as compared to many other areas of the state. The largest concentrations of birds occur at the southern edge of District 6, at the mouth of the Okanogan River and on the Columbia River. The main stem of the Okanogan and Upper Similkameen rivers and the larger lakes and potholes in the Okanogan Watershed are good secondary sites. Good public river access is found at the Washburn Island Unit of the Wells Wildlife Area, the Driscoll-Eyhott Island Unit of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, and the Similkameen-Chopaka Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area.



From top: lesser Scaup pair and Canada geese



Water levels in local potholes remained low, particularly after the extremely dry spring and summer, and many dried up entirely. River levels are currently running below normal, and this is likely to continue going into the hunting season. Aside from water levels, waterfowl hunting opportunities are mostly dependent on the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska, and how long water remains ice-free throughout the district.

For specific harvest information see: [Canada Goose Harvest by County](#)  
[Duck Harvest by County](#)

## FOREST GROUSE

### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

The Okanogan supports strong populations of ruffed, dusky (blue), and spruce grouse found throughout the forested areas of the district. Ruffed grouse are generally associated with deciduous tree cover at lower to middle elevations, particularly in riparian habitats. During hunting season, dusky (blue) grouse are generally encountered in the mid to upper elevation conifer forests, often moving to ridges as snow begins to accumulate. Spruce grouse are found in higher elevation conifer forests throughout the district on a year-round basis. Additional tips on hunting forest grouse can be found at [Forest grouse hunting tips](#).

Forest grouse populations (particularly dusky and spruce grouse) are likely below historical norms within the boundaries of recent large wildfires, including the Carlton Complex, Okanogan Complex, Tunk Block, and Tripod, Diamond Creek, and Crescent Mountain fires. These fires burned in some of the best and most densely occupied forest grouse habitat in the district. However, grouse habitat within the burns is improving annually (particularly in the Tripod Fire area), and bird numbers outside of burned areas appear to be relatively stable.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2020 PROSPECTS

Following a cold spring and a dry summer, the annual mixed harvest of dusky, ruffed, and spruce grouse in 2020 dropped by about 7% in District 6 and remained below the 5-year average. This year's fires have burned considerable forest grouse habitat acreage across a broad elevational gradient. Look for birds in forested areas primarily outside of the new burn perimeters. **Also of note, the forest grouse season now starts Sept. 15 and runs through Jan. 15. This change is designed to bolster grouse numbers by reducing pressure on brood hens in the early fall when they are more vulnerable.**

For specific harvest information see: [Forest Grouse Harvest by County](#)



From left: female spruce grouse and male ruffed grouse.



## PHEASANTS

### SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Pheasants occur at low densities and in a patchy distribution throughout the Okanogan Watershed portion of District 6, with most harvested birds coming from pheasant release sites. This year, pheasants will again be released at the Bureau of Reclamation's Hegdal and Kline sites, and at the Chilliwist Unit of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. What little wild production exists within the county comes mostly from private land. Hunters should seek permission in advance of the season to access private property. Additional hunting tips for pheasants can be found at [Pheasant hunting tips](#).

The release sites are mapped in the Eastern Washington Pheasant Release booklet found here: [Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Program](#). Hunters are reminded that nontoxic shot is required for **all** upland bird hunting on **all** pheasant release sites statewide. Despite a sizable drop in participation, hunters bagged 851 pheasants last year in Okanogan County, which is down significantly from last year but still just above the 5-year average.

For specific harvest information see: [Pheasant Harvest by County](#)



Pheasant release – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

## QUAIL

### **SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS**

Quail are locally abundant and widespread throughout the district's lower elevation shrubsteppe and open pine forest habitats. District 6 Wildlife Areas offer good access to quail habitat. In 2020, hunters took 9,434 quail in Okanogan County, down a bit from 2019 but still above the 5-year average. The effects of the extreme heat and drought this year on upland game birds in general and quail is unknown. Tips for hunting pheasants are available at [Quail hunting tips](#).

For specific harvest information see: [Quail Harvest by County](#)



## TURKEYS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

**The fall turkey season in District 6 is now a general season opportunity in all GMUs from Sept. 1 through Dec. 31.** Turkey numbers are highest in GMUs 204, 215 and 239, but all GMUs except 203 offer good opportunities. Hunters can find turkeys in scattered groups throughout the district where they often concentrate on private land near agriculture areas later in the fall. Prospective hunters should seek permission in advance of the season to access private land.

## CHUKAR AND GRAY PARTRIDGE

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

In general, gray partridge populations are widely distributed and patchy throughout the district's shrubsteppe habitats but appear to be increasing in numbers and distribution over time. Birds are frequently seen on the Indian Dan, Chiliwist, and Methow Wildlife Areas. Scattered groups of chukars are found in the rocky areas in lower elevations of District 6. The steep hills along the Similkameen River in the north part of the Okanogan Valley hold good numbers of birds. See tips for hunting chukar and gray partridge at [Gray-partridge hunting tips](#), [Chukar hunting tips](#).



Gray Partridge

Combined harvest of chukar and gray partridge in 2020 remained stable despite an uptick in participation. Prospects for this year are unknown given the uncertainties surrounding heat and drought stress.

For specific harvest information see: [Gray Partridge Harvest by County](#)  
[Chukar Partridge Harvest by County](#)

## DOVE

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Look for doves in planted food crops in the Sinlahekin and at lower elevations on other public lands. Both dove hunting participation and harvest fell noticeably in 2020, perhaps because of some colder than average early fall weather. Hunting success will depend on warm weather keeping the birds in the area through the season.

For specific harvest information see: [Mourning Dove Harvest by County](#)

2021



EMILY JEFFREYS, District Wildlife Biologist  
DEVON COMSTOCK, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



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. 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.

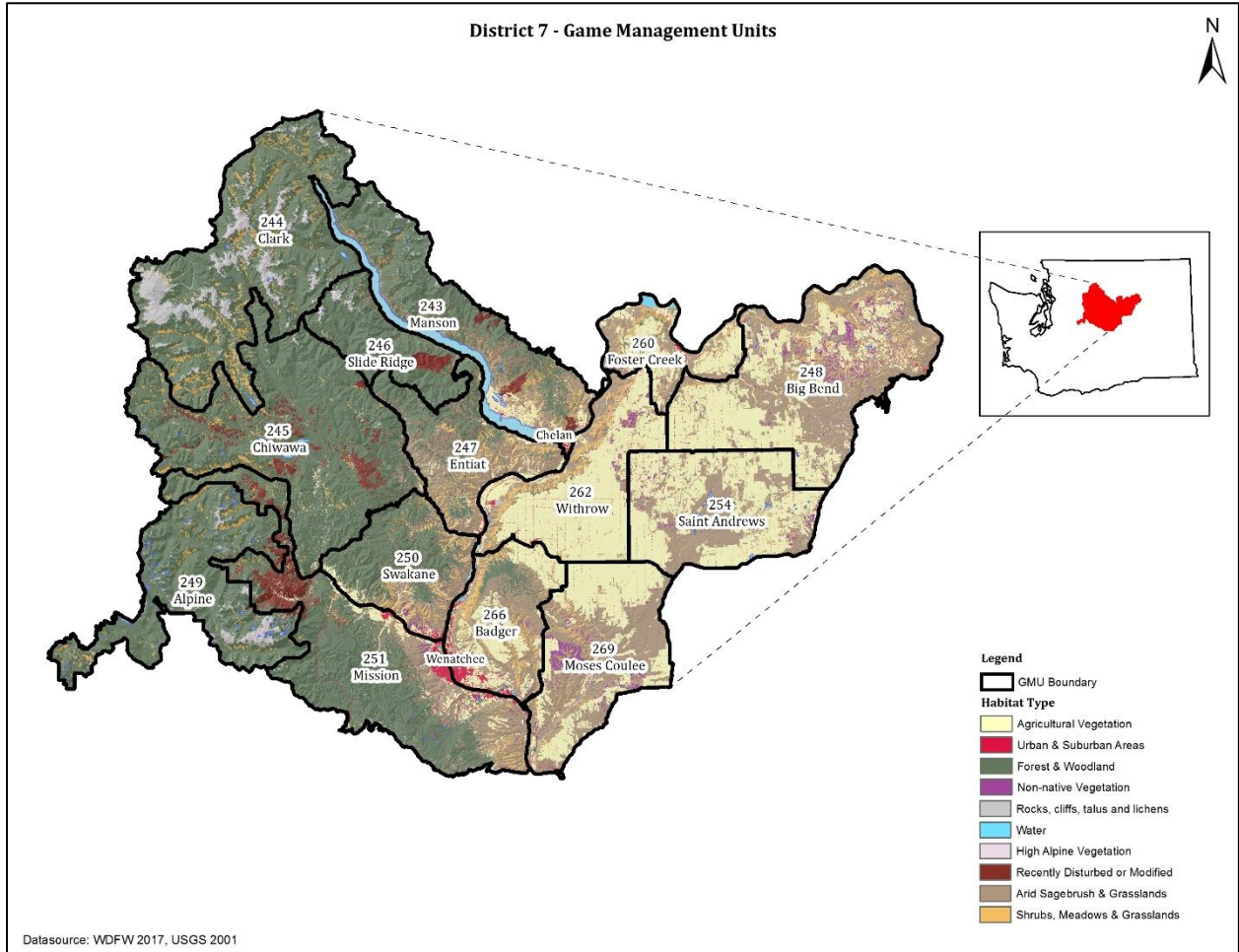
**Upland birds:** Upland bird hunting is available across the district. Turkey hunting occurs mainly in Chelan County, but numbers are growing in northern Douglas County, and some newly acquired wildlife areas are expanding opportunities. Hutable grouse species are in forested environments in both counties. 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 encompasses 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.



Map of District 7 Game Management Units (GMUs).

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 Washington Department 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. However, fires have increased dramatically in frequency, severity, and size over the past decade, largely due to human influence and the changing climate. Summer and fall are our primary fire



seasons and this reoccurring pattern of 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.

Last September, the Pearl Hill fire spread across 224,000 acres of shrubsteppe habitats in northern Douglas County. This impacted both upland and riparian habitats in parts of GMUs 260, 262, 254 and 248. Post-fire recovery and restoration in the burn area has been variable depending on burn severity, resources for active restoration, and precipitation. WDFW wildlife areas implemented habitat recovery efforts on units in GMUs 248, 254, and 260. Those efforts focused on weed suppression, seeding native grasses, rebuilding irrigation systems, installing erosion control materials, fence construction, and planting woody vegetation in creeks. Partner organizations including Foster Creek Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Chelan – Douglas Land Trust, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have conducted similar efforts on private and other public lands. These efforts will continue in the coming years to the extent that current and additional funding allows. New riparian plantings and beaver dam analogs in East Foster Creek are designed to stabilize streambanks, help with soil deposition, and provide woody browse in the future.

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 2021 wildfire season has been very active, with multiple shrubsteppe and forest fires having occurred already. Central and eastern Washington are experiencing severe drought in 2021, with precipitation up to 50 % below average in places. A record-setting heatwave developed in late June and lasted several days, and July temperatures have remained above average. Fuels are very dry and many plants have experienced sun scorching and are showing signs of stress. Wildfires have currently affected over 25,000 acres of shrubsteppe, grassland and low elevation conifer stands in Chelan and Douglas counties. In early July, the Batterman Road fire burned over 14,000 acres in the Badger Mountain area of Douglas County. In mid-July, the Red Apple fire rapidly burned through approximately 12,000 acres in the foothills north of Wenatchee, burning public and private lands, including parts of the Swakane Unit of the Chelan Wildlife Area. This area is home to the Swakane bighorn sheep herd and provides important winter range for mule deer.

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.

## 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 2021 estimated the herd at 4,100 animals. However, elk in Chelan County are not regularly incorporated into these survey efforts, so composition and seasonal distribution of elk is only understood through incidental observations and landowner reports. Elk are known to use Jumpoff Ridge, Tronsen Meadows and areas through upper Mission Creek.

Hunters will note a few changes to elk general seasons and to special permit opportunities for 2021. The most notable change is the reestablishment of the Peshastin Elk Area (EA 2033). This elk area was previously open until 2015. WDFW has noted an increase in elk use in the area which has prompted some concerns from agricultural producers. Elk tend to concentrate in these areas in the winter once sufficient snow has accumulated at higher elevations, driving elk to seek out lower elevation food sources. Access is highly restricted to private lands, so be sure to contact landowners early if you have drawn one of these permits. Permit holders should contact our Wenatchee District Office for additional information.

Other changes of note are some adjustments to general muzzleloader seasons to allow for an early muzzleloader elk season in both GMUs 249 and GMU 251. General season muzzleloader hunters will note that they are no longer restricted to the Tronsen Elk Area (EA 2051). Archery hunters will note that GMU 251 has been opened to early and late general season elk hunts for spike bulls. Hunters harvest roughly 45-55 elk under general seasons in Chelan County each year, and in 2020, 44 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 2020, 168 antlerless permit opportunities resulted in 34 antlerless elk harvested. Success rates between weapon types and overall success varies from year to year. 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 2020, with few elk harvested outside of GMU 251.

Mature bulls use a portion of southern Chelan County as security and wintering habitat. 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 in 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. 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.

Downloadable maps of WDFW Elk Areas in Chelan County, 2032 (Malaga), and 2033 (Peshastin) are available online at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/special-hunts/deer-elk-areas>. 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 (%)

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

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate.

The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and western Lewis County. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area, but **TAHD has not been detected in the Colockum Herd or anywhere in District 7 at this time.** However, hunters are asked to be on the lookout for any signs of this disease.

If you harvest an elk with abnormal looking hooves in eastern Washington (for example, overgrown or broken hoof claws or skin lesions), please report that harvest to your local WDFW regional office. TAHD appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. The hooves of any elk- young or old, male or female- can be affected by TAHD. Tests show TAHD is limited to animals’ hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is



probably safe to eat. Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form (link below).

[Report Elk Observations \(arcgis.com\)](#)

Additionally, anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area. WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.

## 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.

District 7 deer hunting seasons in 2021 remain largely like those in 2020, with one increase to general season muzzleloader opportunity. Hunters in the early muzzleloader season for whitetail are now able to hunt GMUs 254, 262, 266, and 269, which is more consistent with the GMU availability in the modern firearm season than in years past.

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 2020 due to safety concerns regarding COVID-19. Biologists were unable to perform these surveys in 2019, as well, 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 2017 post-season surveys estimating the population at approximately 13,000 mule deer. The 2020 post-hunt buck to doe ratio was estimated to be 29:100, which is well above the management objective of 15:100. Buck:doe ratios in Douglas County have been steadily increasing over the past five years. 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 2,061 deer were harvested from Chelan and Douglas Counties during the general season in 2020, very similar to 2019's estimated harvest of 2,002 deer. In 2020, harvest was composed of 1,876 bucks and 185 antlerless deer, and these numbers are consistent with previous years' harvest ratios. Such consistency is expected, as permit numbers regulate the antlerless component of the deer harvest each year. As ever, the Entiat Unit (GMU 247) in Chelan County continues to produce the highest harvest level in District 7, with 316 deer harvested in the general season alone in 2020. Second only to the Entiat, the Big Bend Unit (GMU 248) in Douglas County saw the harvest of 287 deer.

Deer harvest has increased in both Chelan and Douglas counties in the past several years (Figures 1 & 2). Harvest has trended upward in Chelan County since 2018 and in Douglas County since 2017. Interestingly, hunters participated in similar numbers during this time frame with two notable exceptions: multiple weapons hunters increased in 2019 by almost 22% over the previous year, and modern firearm participation increased in 2020 by approximately 13% over the previous two years (Figure 3). Despite the significant increase in their numbers from 2019 to 2020, modern firearm hunters spent an average of four days in the field in both 2019 and 2020, and hunter success increased by 1% over that time frame (Figures 4 & 5).

The fact that modern firearm hunters did not need to spend more days in the field on average and experienced a slight increase in success from 2019 to 2020 even with the added competition of more hunters last year is an encouraging sign for District 7's mule deer populations. It suggests that the number of deer available to hunters was either similar between 2019 and 2020 or it increased in that time frame. Additionally, the East Slope Cascades and Columbia Plateau areas have experienced relatively mild winters the past three years, which is promising for fawn

survival and the recruitment of more adult deer into District 7’s mule deer populations. Altogether, it appears that the district’s 2021 mule deer season is shaping up to be as good or better than that of 2020.

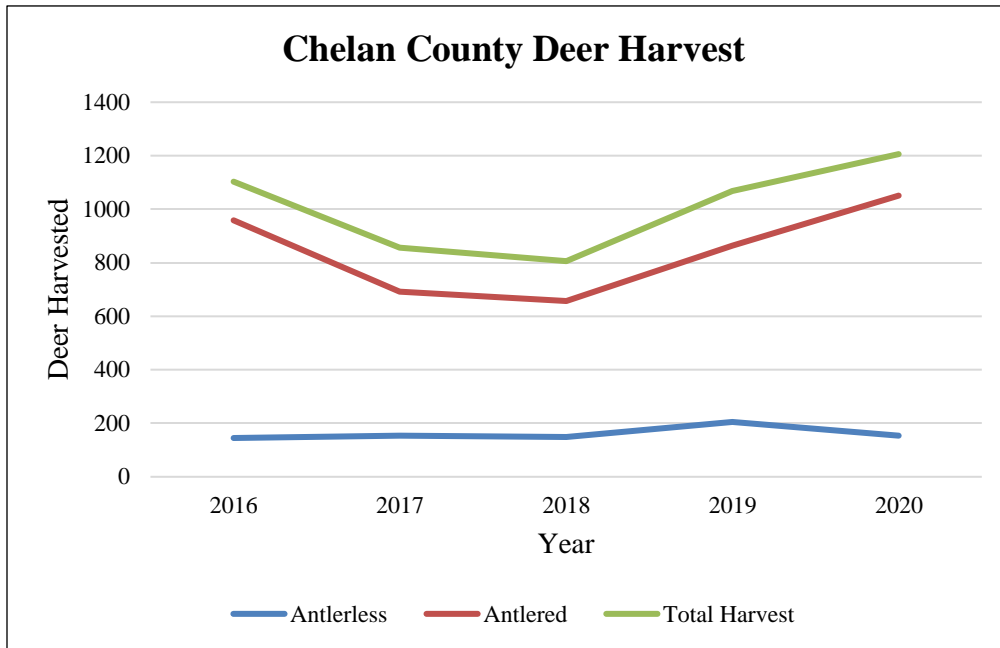


Figure 1. Deer harvest in Chelan County from 2016 to 2020.

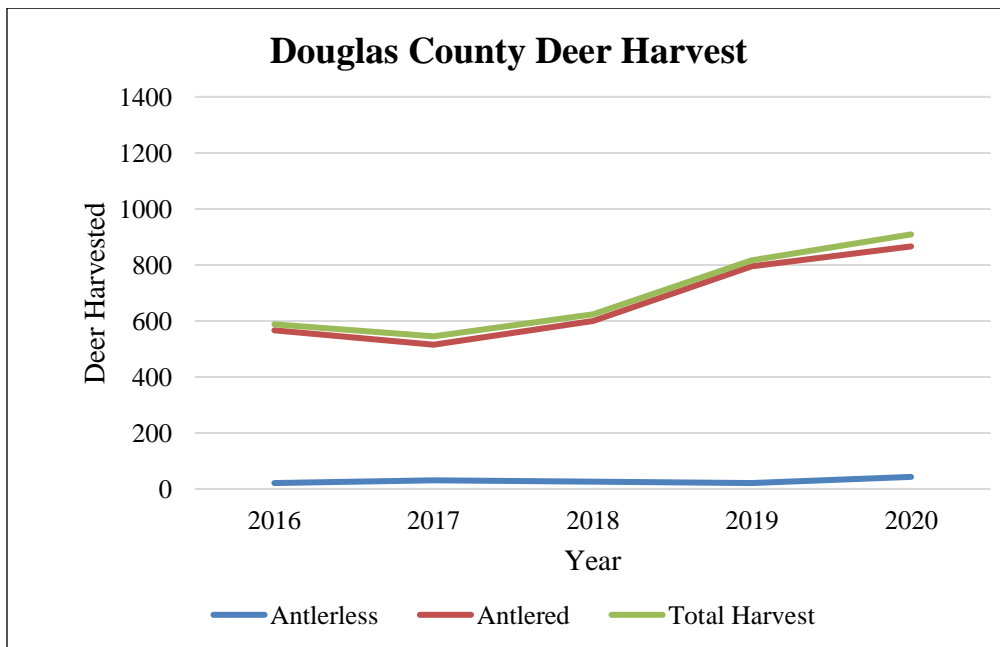


Figure 2. Deer harvest in Douglas County from 2016 to 2020.

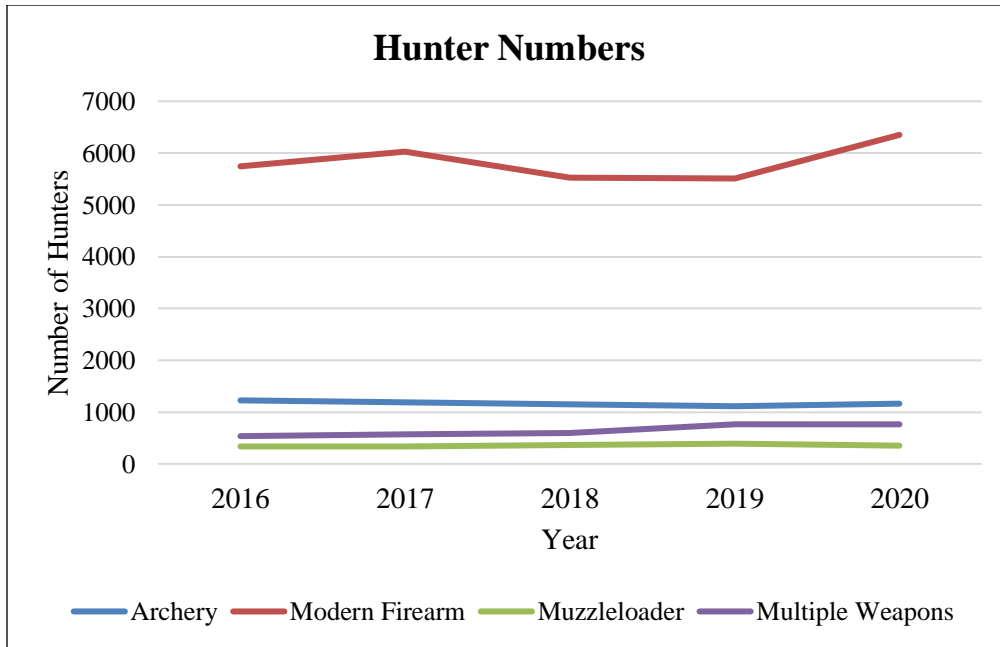


Figure 3. District 7 general season deer hunter numbers from 2016 to 2020.

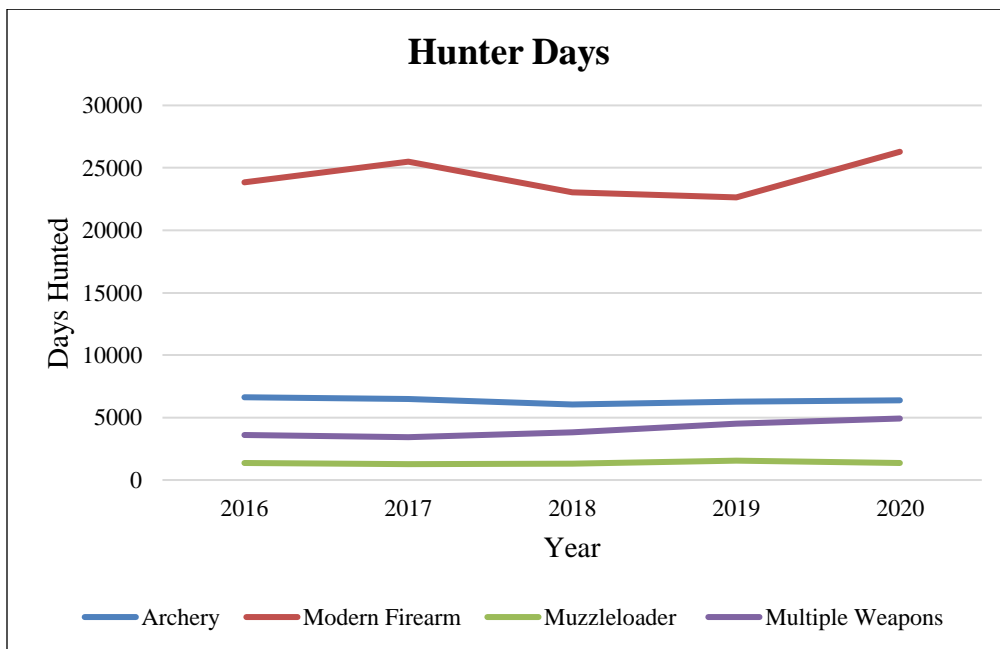


Figure 4. District 7 general season deer hunter days from 2016 to 2020.



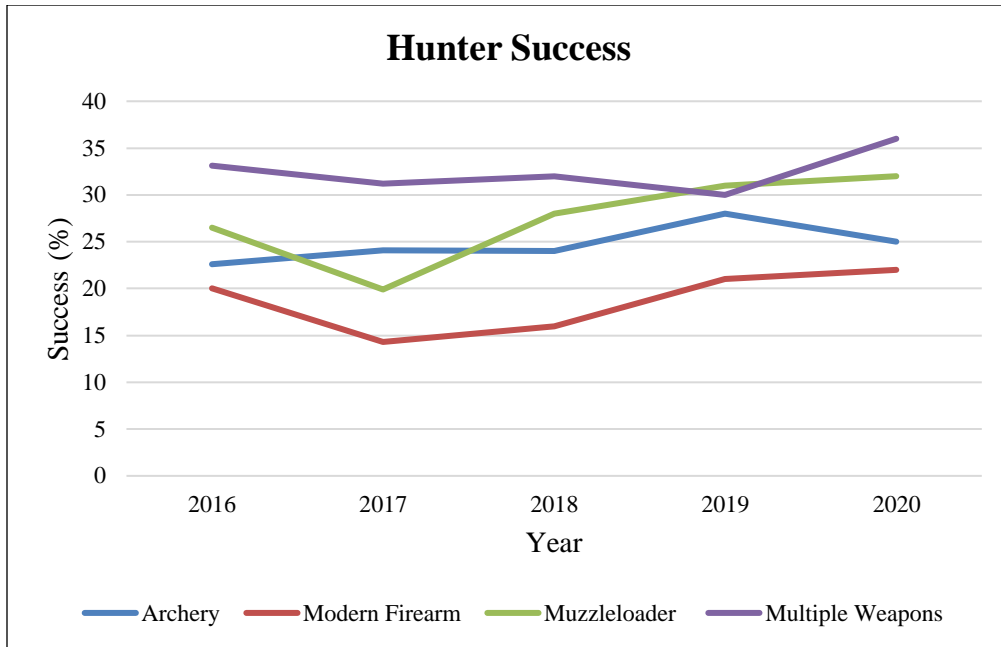


Figure 5. District 7 general season deer hunter success rates from 2016 to 2020.

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 Chelan County mule deer herd spends winters on the breaks along the Columbia River and surrounding foothills but disperses 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. Over the initial two years of this project, data from collared deer have shown that mule deer in Chelan County are largely migratory, with 90% of study animals migrating from the Wenatchee Foothills to higher elevation sub-alpine habitats. Two primary migratory paths seem to be emerging, one that is south of the Wenatchee River which heads west over Highway 97 towards the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, and another corridor, north of the Wenatchee River that heads west and spends summers around the Lake Wenatchee Basin. It's important to note that this does not represent all possible migration corridors for mule deer in Chelan County but represents the patterns of deer collared in the study focal area.

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 Chelan County 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.

By contrast, Douglas County's mule deer are residents, and the landscape here poses a different set of conditions for deer hunters. Because much of the county is comprised of private lands, hunters have less opportunity to pursue deer freely across habitats, as they must pay attention to ownership boundaries. However, as the Douglas County is composed of relatively open habitat with an extensive road network, deer are more vulnerable here than in the rugged, closed canopy, mountainous terrain of the Cascades. 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 imparts 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, more than 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.

Douglas County is a consistent producer of mule deer opportunity, and conditions should be similar in 2021 despite the massive portion of the county that was affected by the Pearl Hill Fire, which burned 224,000 acres of Douglas County in September 2020. Many of these acres have shown regrowth of vegetation, and some of these areas in the initial stages of early succession will likely experience enough fall green-up to provide forage for deer. These areas will increasingly attract more mule deer over the next several years as the revegetation of forbs and grasses and other nutrient-dense forage plants continues to progress.

However, the Pearl Hill Fire burned hot enough to completely denude much of the landscape of large perennials such as sagebrush, bitterbrush, and water birch- plants that provide valuable cover for mule deer. As such, a good strategy for hunting mule deer in Douglas County in 2021 and in the coming years will be to scout the edges of the Pearl Hill burn area, which will provide mule deer with "edge habitat" wherein they have access to both forage and cover. Later into the season, however, expect deer to move away from the burn areas as these lands will provide no forage once fall annuals have died and winter approaches.

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. WDFW provides limited, permit-only opportunities here to harvest antlerless deer to deter mule deer presence and reduce crop damage. See [Washington Hunting Seasons & Rules | eRegulations](#) for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions. A map of Deer Area 2017 is available at the link below:

[https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/webmaps/gohunt/hunt\\_pdf/Deer\\_2017.pdf](https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/webmaps/gohunt/hunt_pdf/Deer_2017.pdf)

### **High buck hunts**

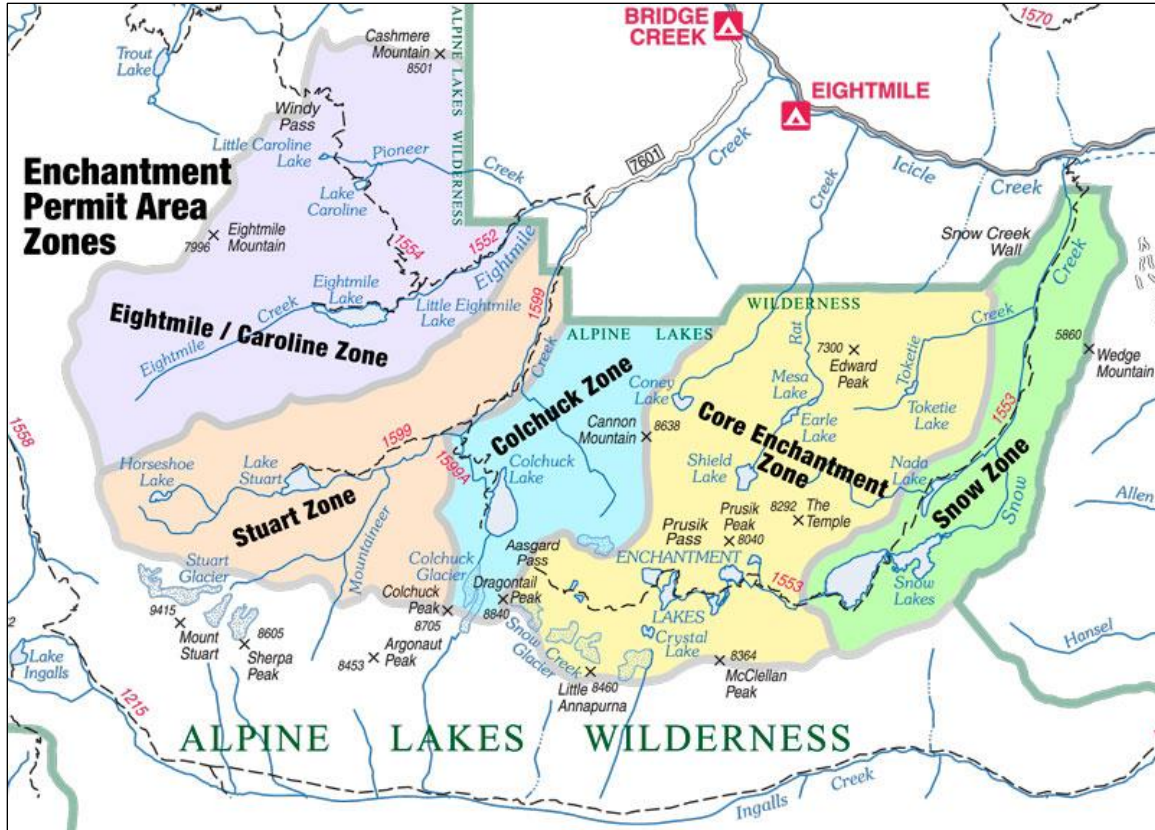
High buck hunts in the Cascade Range are one of the most popular opportunities provided in the district. Each year, hunters don backpacks and ride pack strings into the heart of wilderness areas

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 home 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 USFS directly.



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



## BLACK BEAR



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. GMUs 245 and 251 have consistently produced most of the bears harvested from this district. These units, along with all the other GMUs in Chelan County except for 243 (Manson), are part of the East Cascades Bear Management Unit (BMU 6). In total, 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 within BMU 6 was 138 bears in 2019. An additional 24 bears were harvested in GMU 243, which is included in the Okanogan BMU (BMU 5). This trend continued in 2020, with the

119 bears harvested in Chelan County once again making up nearly 40% of total bear harvest in BMU 6. Additionally, 14 bears were harvested in GMU 243.

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. Black bear harvest in BMU 6 continued to exceed this average in 2020, with 307 bears harvested. 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 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 both 2019 and 2020, seven bears were harvested from Douglas County. Most bears in Douglas County are harvested in GMUs 248 and 260.

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 pg. 68 of the Washington Big Game Regulations pamphlet.

## 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 2021. 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 2021.

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

Hunt Area	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
GMUs 242, 243	3	2	7	5	4
GMUs 244, 246, 247	5	7	5	5	4
GMUs 245, 250	5	2	2	4	4
GMUs 249, 251	6	1	5	0	2
Douglas County*	7	4	5	3	**

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

\*\* 2020/21 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.

The Red Apple fire in July impacted the southern portion of the Swakane sheep unit. Hunters that have drawn the Swakane bighorn sheep tag may need to take heed of any additional road closures or travel restrictions on Burch Mountain Road this season, however the fire was stopped before it reached Swakane Canyon and the fire is not expected to impact hunting conditions. Indeed, post-fire fall green up may serve as an attraction to bighorns this year.

### **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 hang-gliding 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 juvenile rams. **Hunters are requested to avoid harvesting a collared animal.** Both the Swakane and Chelan Butte herds tend to start rutting around mid to 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 2021.**

The Manson Unit hunt season occurs much later than the season for the Swakane and Chelan Butte herds and is timed 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. WDFW plans to census these herds in fall



2021. However there have been no major changes in herd health or habitat, so populations estimates are not significantly changed from 2019.

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 mature 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 the number of annual boat surveys decreased when WDFW began conducting aerial surveys beginning in the summer of 2019. Boat-based surveys are conducted during the winter, as mountain goats occupy lower elevations closer to the lake in the winter months. 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.

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.

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 conducted aerial mountain goat

population surveys in the summer 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. One more attempt was made to comprehensively survey summer range for both the North and South Shore herds in June 2021, and again resulted in the detection of very few goats.

In 2021, special permit levels for both herds will remain the same, but both the North and South Shore herds have been removed from the list of possible locations for the auction and raffle hunts. Dropping these two herds as auction or raffle hunt options is in response to the lack of recent data indicating stable or increasing goat populations on either side of Lake Chelan. WDFW is working diligently to develop an effective solution for surveying the Lake Chelan herds to determine whether these populations can continue to be hunted and if so, at what harvest levels.

Three mountain goat tags were issued for the Wenatchee District under limited entry drawings this year. In 2020, all three mountain goat permit holders were able to fill their tags. Since 2001, 30 drawing permits have been issued for the Chelan North permit hunt, and 22 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. Six 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.

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.

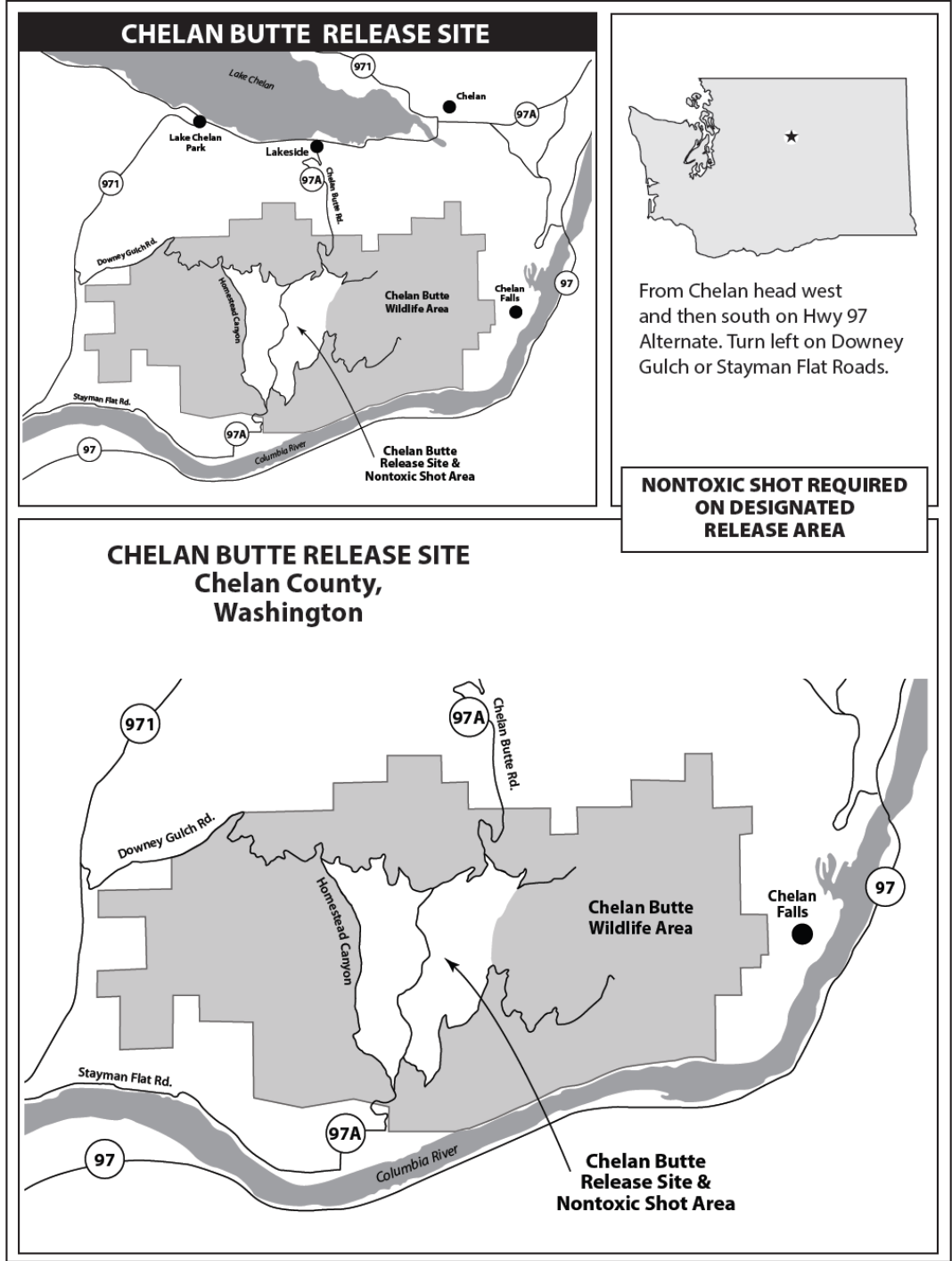
## PHEASANT

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 960 pheasants over five years, from 2015 to 2019. In 2020, District 7 pheasant harvest was consistent with this average, with hunters harvesting 982 pheasants. 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).

In Chelan County, WDFW has released cock pheasants annually at both the Swakane and Chelan Butte wildlife units and will continue to do so in 2021. Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites in these units can visit the WDFW hunting website for more information:

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

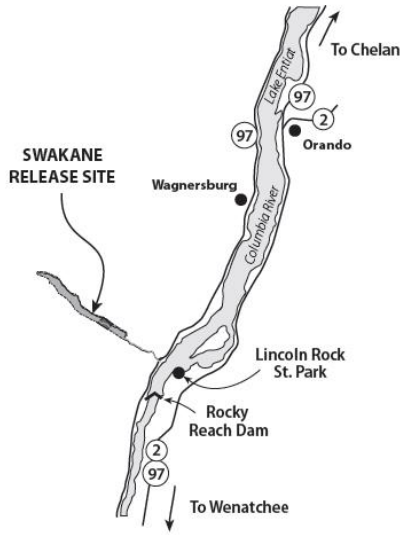
REGION 2





**REGION 2**

**SWAKANE RELEASE SITE**



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**



Pheasant release sites in Chelan County.

## QUAIL

District 7 offers some of the best quail hunting in the state, with a five-year average (2015-2019) of approximately 10,400 quail harvested in Chelan and Douglas Counties. Although hunter participation was slightly above the five-year average in 2020, the harvest of 9,000 quail was below average. Hunter success in 2020 was likely negatively impacted by the Pearl Hill fire, which spread across 224,000 acres of shrubsteppe habitats in northern Douglas County in September, just before the hunting season. This fire impacted both upland and riparian habitats in parts of GMUs 248, 254, 260, and 262.

While fire can benefit quail in the long run by setting back the successional stage of an area and stimulating forb growth and seed production, the immediate aftermath of the Pearl Hill fire left behind vast areas of severely burned landscapes with no forage or cover available for quail or other upland game birds. Now almost a year after this fire, regrowth of vegetation has begun throughout much of the burn area, providing forage for quail in areas that were desolate in fall 2020. This will likely contribute to increased quail harvest in 2021, with a total harvest more in line with the previous five-year average.

Quail 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. Edges of standing corn, wheat, or other grain fields, medium to heavy cover surrounding harvested fields, and other places where weed and grass seed are readily available are prime places to look for quail. Fortunately, areas such as these are plentiful in Douglas County. Quail are also often found in thick tangles of trees and tall brush, especially near stream beds, valley bottoms with patches of Russian olive, oak or high sage, and weather-break tree lines and fence lines. In Chelan County especially, quail will tend to be found in and around orchards and other irrigated crops. Swakane Canyon also provides great quail opportunity in Chelan 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 than in Chelan County, and are 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, as 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.

Hun harvest in 2020 was significantly below the five-year average, with 408 gray partridge harvested in 2020 compared to an average of 822 in the previous five years, 2015-2019. As described above in the quail section, it is likely that this poorer harvest is a direct result of the Pearl Hill Fire, which burned gray partridge habitat in much of Douglas County immediately prior to the season opening, driving birds out of these areas. Although the Columbia Basin continues to experience drought conditions, Hun harvest in 2021 will likely be more in line with the previous five-year average as vegetation regenerates in the burn area.

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 4,300 chukar harvested from 2015-2019, and 4,860 chukar harvested in 2020. 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 2021.

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

## FOREST GROUSE

**In 2021 statewide forest grouse season dates have been shifted back two weeks to Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>-Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>.** This change is designed to reduce harvest of reproductive age females and allow for brood dispersal, which will help sustain a harvestable population over the long run.

Three species of forest grouse occupy the Wenatchee District: blue grouse (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 dusky grouse in Douglas County. Look for coniferous and riparian forests 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 increases 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. 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](#).

Hunters can find ruffed grouse in healthy riparian forests and aspen stands at the margin of timbered habitat, and dusky 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 offer some of the best grouse hunting opportunities in Chelan County.

Forest grouse harvest in 2020 was down from the previous five-year average, with 1,880 forest grouse harvested last season compared to an average of 2,522 from 2015-2019. However, hunter participation was also below average, and it is likely that forest grouse populations remain stable throughout the district with plenty of hunting opportunity in 2021.

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

Most mourning doves harvested in District 7 are taken in Douglas County, but opportunities for dove hunting exist in Chelan County as well, such as in Swakane Canyon. According to Breeding Bird Survey Data, dove count routes have shown declines over time, and in 2019 an unusually low number of doves were harvested in the district and across the state. However, in 2020 dove harvest increased over the previous year in the district and across the state coming closer to the prior 5-year average. In the district, 1,310 mourning doves were harvested in 2020 as compared to 873 in 2019. It is likely that 2021 mourning dove harvest in the district will be comparable to 2020's numbers.

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 the link below for a photo comparison of the two species.

<https://www.eregulations.com/washington/hunting/game-bird/other-migratory-game-bird-species-identification>

## TURKEY



Turkey hunters will be happy to see additional harvest opportunities in District 7 for turkeys this year. The fall season will allow for the harvest of one turkey of either sex in Chelan and Douglas Counties. Spring 2022 will allow for the harvest of two bearded turkeys in Chelan County, where previously the limit had been one.

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 for winter forage, they can show significant survival over winter. In Chelan County, GMUs 245, 250, and 251 produce the greatest turkey harvest.

Hunters should target 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 or 2021 due to COVID-19 health and safety restrictions. However, data indicate that waterfowl harvest has remained stable in District 7; 10,450 ducks were harvested in 2020 compared to the previous five-year average of 10,118 ducks. In 2019, 6,448 ducks were harvested in District 7, so 2020's harvest marked a significant increase. Canada goose harvest in 2020 remained consistent with the five-year average, which has been below 2,000 individuals every year except 2016.

In 2021, 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.

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, 2015-2019, as compared to 2020.

	5 Year Avg. (2015-2019)	2020	5 Year Avg. (2015-2019)	2020
Species	Harvest		Hunters	
Quail	10434	9000	1298	1,376
Chukar	4362	4860	942	1,313
Mourning Dove	1860	1310	195	126
Forest Grouse	2522	1880	1502	1,243
Pheasant	964	982	649	956
Gray Partridge	822	408	322	340
Duck	10118	10450	817	771
Canada Goose	1703	1639	373	452
Sept Canada Goose	106	182	66	100
Cottontail Rabbit	137	48	78	48
Snowshoe Hare	26	91	33	35
Snipe	14	0	5	0



## 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. The Pearl Hill fire in 2020 scorched several private land parcels where landowners had access agreements, some of these properties may not be open to hunting this year or offer reduced opportunities. Please respect all closures and be aware of all fire restrictions during hunting season. 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/](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, the Malaga Elk Area or the Peshastin 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 2021.

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

## 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, they can't replace scouting in the field. Below we present a select list of helpful sites to assist you in planning 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](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](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 are 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](https://www.co.chelan.wa.us/assessor/pages/gis-mapping)

[Douglas County Mapsifter: https://douglaswa-mapsifter.publicaccessnow.com/disclaimer.aspx.](https://douglaswa-mapsifter.publicaccessnow.com/disclaimer.aspx)

2021

JEFF BERNATOWICZ, District Wildlife  
Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



## DISTRICT 8 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Yakima and Kittitas counties

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## DISTRICT 8 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 8 is located in southcentral Washington. Game management units (GMU's) in District 8 include: 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), 330 (West Bar), 334 (Ellensburg), 335 (Teaway), 336 (Taneum), 340 (Manastash), 342 (Umtanum), 346 (Little Naches), 352 (Nile), 356 (Bumping), 360 (Bethel), 364 (Rimrock), 368 (Cowiche), 371 (Alkali), and part of 372 (Rattlesnake Hills). Hunters can choose a variety of habitats, ranging from lowland shrubsteppe and farmland, to high elevation alpine wilderness.

District 8 is dominated by large blocks of public land and provides abundant hunting opportunities. The district is best known for great elk hunting. The Yakima elk herd is one of the largest in the state, with over 8,000 animals roaming over 900,000 acres of public land. There are about 4,000 elk in the Colockum herd, which mostly inhabits public land north of Ellensburg.

There are also plenty of upland bird hunting opportunities in District 8. Yakima County is near the top for harvest of many bird species, ranking #1 for quail, #2 for dove and chukar, #3 for pheasant, #4 for duck, and #5 for goose. Bird hunters wanting to wander over large areas with low hunter densities have many options in District 8. Along the breaks of the Columbia, the Yakima Training Center consists of 327,000 acres south of I-90, while WDFW manages another 154,000 acres north of the highway. There are 9,000 acres on the Wild Horse Wind Farm, which utilizes a Hunt by Reservation system. A motivated upland bird hunter with a good dog could pursue grouse, chukar, partridge, quail, and pheasant on the same day.

Turkeys were introduced over 30 years ago, but populations remained low. In the late 1990s, a more extensive effort was made to augment existing pockets of birds. Post augmentation, the spring harvest increased from 60 in 2001 to 413 in 2010. Harvest has recently hovered around 100 birds. The populations in GMU 335 (Teaway) have become large enough to allow for a fall permit season. Turkey densities may never reach those found in northeast Washington, but many hunters are finding decent turkey hunting closer to home.

District 8 is also home to over 70 percent of the bighorn sheep in Washington. While it is still challenging to draw a permit to hunt sheep, bighorns can certainly add enjoyment to a hunting trip in District 8. Rams are in rut mid-October through November when many hunters are traveling through the area. There are robust populations of bighorns that can often be easily viewed along Highways 821 (Yakima River Canyon) and 410 (Clemans Mountain, north of the junction with Highway 12).

**Important Access Changes:** Due to low elk populations and poor recruitment, early archery antlerless general seasons have largely been eliminated. GMU's 334 and 335 are still open to archery general season but hold few elk. GMU 371 (YTC) was added for 2021 to general archery spike bull and antlerless hunting.

The Wild Horse Wind Farm northeast of Ellensburg recently went to a Hunt by Reservation system. WDFW will be issuing the permits via the Hunt by Reservation system.

The Master Hunter Antlerless elk season in GMU 371 now ends August 31. About 1,000 acres of land that had been open to Master Hunters in the 3911 Park Creek area has changed ownership



and is now closed to access. The new landowner will prosecute trespassers, so it is important to know where you are, and make sure you have permission to be on that property.

Hunters wanting to get a recreation card for accessing YTC should call 509-577-3208 to get current hours of the gym staff members. The gym has not been open on weekends. Procedures may also change with COVID-19 status. A Washington driver's license is still required to drive onto the post, but it is no longer a valid form of proof of identity for accessing YTC or any other military facility. An Enhanced Washington State Driver License or a passport are among the valid forms of identification required.

2021 has seen severe drought with extreme fire danger. Land managers are restricting access. It has become common in recent years for areas to be closed due to fire. The U.S. Forest Service often has closures in place long after wildfires are extinguished. Before heading out, check land manager websites for any closures or restrictions.

Grouse season does not start until September 15. Chukar season has been extended to January 31.

## ELK



District 8 used to be one of the best in the state for elk hunting. However, with that distinction came relatively high hunter densities. Opening weekend is usually crowded. However, a recent trend has been for hunters to pull up camp and head home before the season ends. If you are

looking for a higher quality experience, consider hunting the last two or three days of the modern firearm season or switching to archery or muzzleloader.

The only antlerless archery general seasons are now in GMU's 334, 335, and 371. GMU's 334 and 335 are managed for minimal numbers of elk due to adjacent agriculture. Elk Area 3911 covers all of GMU 334 and the lower portions of GMU 335 where most elk in these units reside. Master Hunters are allowed to harvest antlerless elk using modern firearms from August 1 – January 20 in 3911, so any archery hunters hunting in Elk Area 3911 should be aware they are required to wear hunter orange. In 2020, archers harvested 14 antlerless elk from GMU 335 and no elk in GMU 334. GMU 371 is open terrain but has good numbers of elk. Access to GMU 371 changes with military training.

The reason for the changes is that both the Yakima and Colockum elk herds are below management objectives due to poor recruitment. Surveys this past winter found the Colockum herd numbered around 4,100. Prior to the winter of 2015-16, the Colockum herd was over 6,000 elk during March surveys. The Yakima herd was not surveyed this past year, but calf recruitment was 27 calves per 100 cows on WDFW elk winter feeding areas. That is an improvement over the record low 19 seen in February 2020, but below what is needed to increase herd numbers.

Modern firearm and muzzleloader elk hunting general season success in this district strongly correlates with the number of calves seen in late winter the previous year, as those are the spikes available for harvest in fall. There should be improved harvest in 2021 over 2020, but still below average (Figure 1, Table 1). The lack of recruitment is also impacting both branched bull and antlerless permitting. Figure 2 shows the distribution of collared Yakima elk during September and October, whereas Figure 3 is from a recent study on Colockum elk. Hunters will find more elk at higher elevations and away from roads once seasons begin. The wilderness areas in the Yakima herd range can provide some of the better opportunities in the District for those willing to invest the effort to chase elk in the high country away from roads.

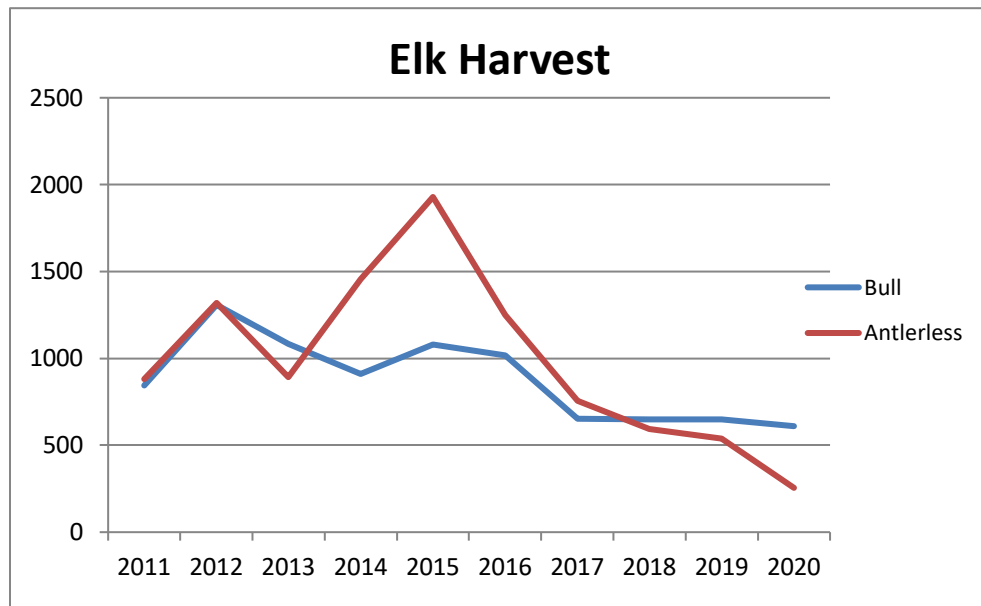
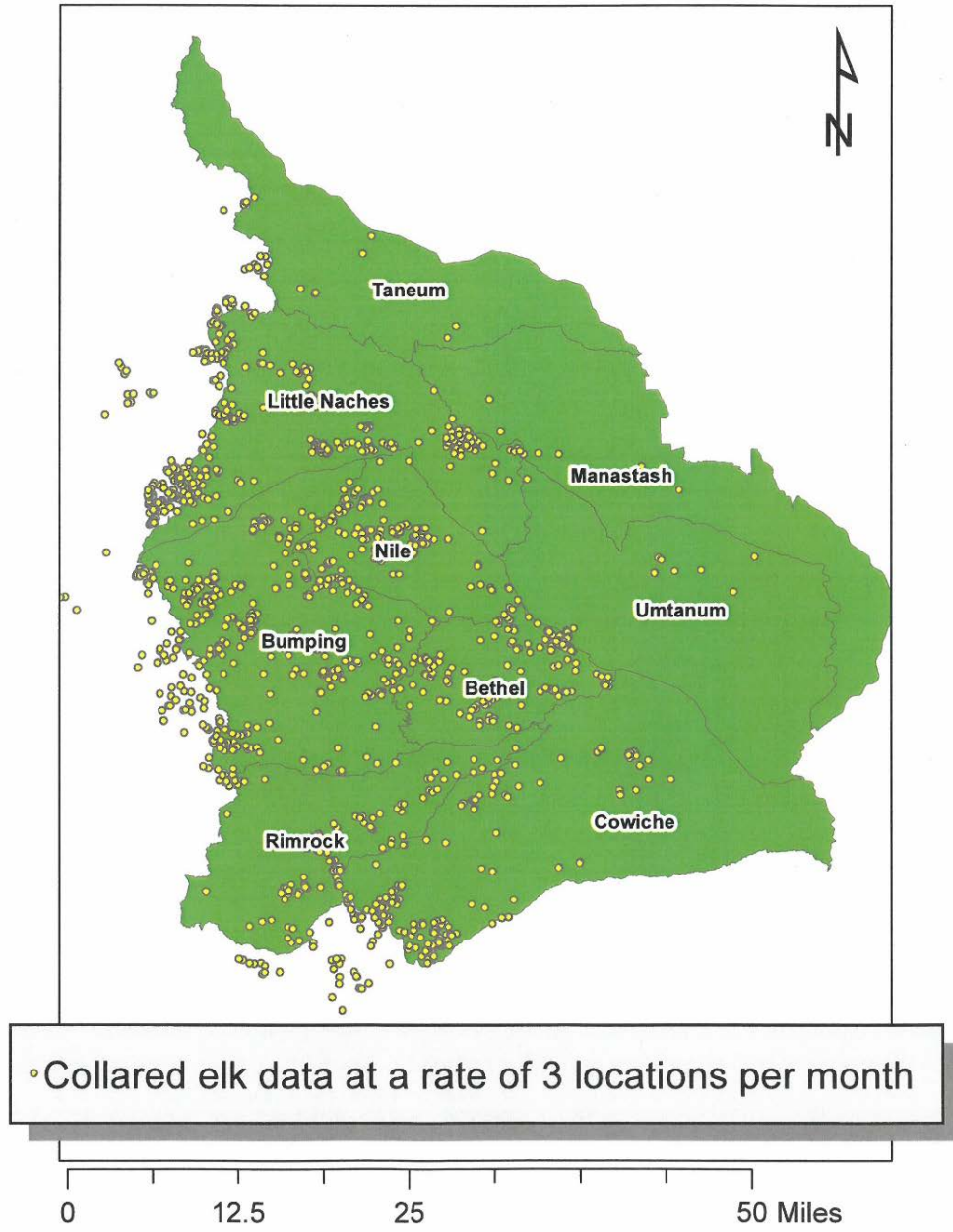


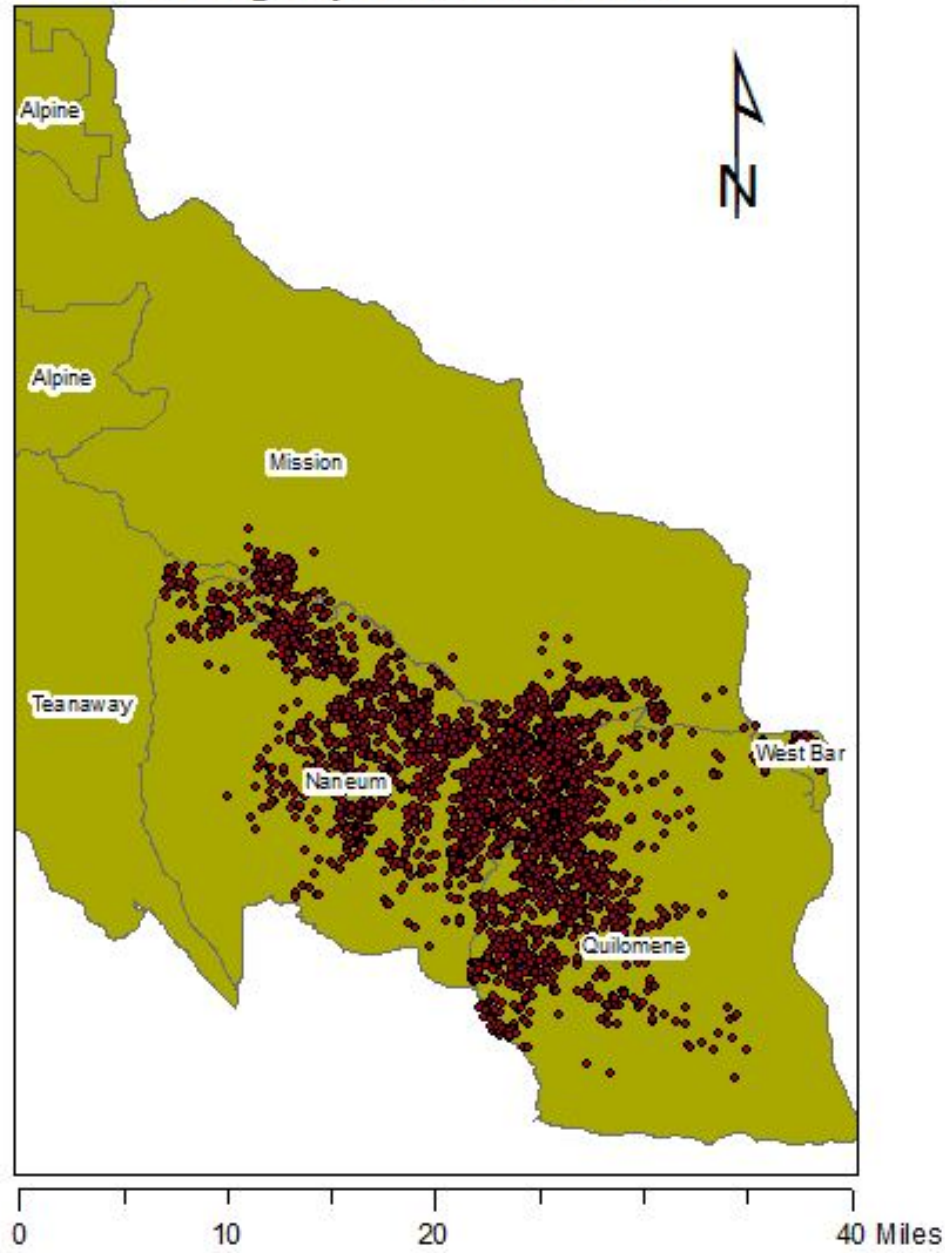
Figure 1. District 8 Elk Harvest

<b>GMU</b>	<b>Antlerless</b>	<b>Spike</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	<b>Success</b>
328	84	82	165	3088	5%
329	24	64	88	1563	6%
334	10	2	11	318	4%
335	18	9	27	823	3%
336	11	23	34	1054	3%
340	7	49	56	1995	3%
342	12	31	43	1324	3%
346	5	50	55	1513	4%
352	30	18	48	1330	4%
356	14	31	46	1105	4%
360	0	37	37	1290	3%
364	13	24	37	1001	4%
368	28	80	108	1692	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>18094</b>	<b>4%</b>

**Table 1.** Elk General Season Average 2018-20



**Figure 2.** A sample of Yakima Elk Herd's Fall Distribution from 140 collared females during Sept. and Oct. 2004-2006



**Figure 3.** Colockum Elk Herd, collared female locations during September and October

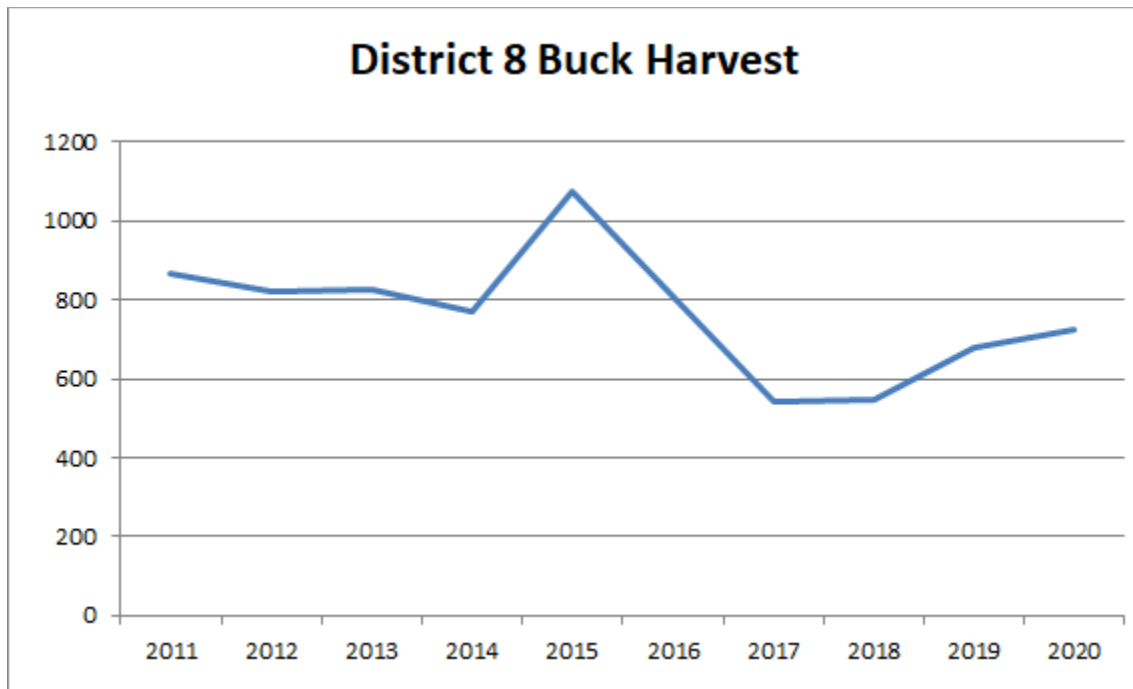


## DEER



Deer harvest in District 8 hit its lowest levels in 2017-2018 and has since rebounded slightly (Figure 4). The average general season hunter's success is about 7% compared to a statewide average of 23%. The 2021 harvest is hard to predict. Last winter was mild, but spring population surveys indicated the deer population may have still declined. A new deer study was started north of I-90 and close to 35% of adult females have died. Such a high mortality rate will cause any deer population to decline. Spring/summer 2021 has been an extreme drought. Harvest and hunter numbers by GMU for the last three years are shown in Table 2.

Hunter numbers have declined with the reduced deer population. Many of the remaining modern firearm hunters now set up camp and claim their favorite spot for elk season. If you are looking for relatively low hunter densities, consider the higher elevations of District 8. Harvest and hunter numbers are typically highest in GMU's 335 (Teaway), 328 (Naneum), 340 (Manastash), and 342 (Umtanum).



**Figure 4.** District 8 buck harvest

<b>GMU</b>	<b>Buck Harvest</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	<b>Success</b>
328	111	1311	8%
330	3	16	19%
334	22	288	8%
335	168	1504	11%
336	40	730	5%
340	83	1161	7%
342	77	936	8%
346	16	664	2%
352	20	479	4%
356	6	296	2%
360	9	407	2%
364	7	371	2%
368	51	1059	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>9224</b>	<b>7%</b>

**Table 2.** District 8 General Season Deer Average 2018-20

## COUGAR

The majority of cougars in the district are harvested by deer and elk hunters who opportunistically cross paths with a cat during general deer/elk seasons and have a cougar tag in their pocket. However, more hunters are finding that cougar hunting is a fun and challenging experience. The early season is open September 1 – December 31. The late season starts January 1 and continues until harvest guidelines are reached (seasons close April 1). Male cougars are territorial and use a broader range when deer and elk are dispersed in summer and early fall. Deer and elk typically migrate back to the winter range by mid-November. Cougars will follow, and the highest cat densities can be found during late fall and winter in lower elevations. One popular cougar hunting technique is to use calls. This is most successful when there is snow on the ground and tracks can be found. Rather than following the cougar hoping to “run it down”, hunters call, trying to get the cat to come to them. A number of calls work. During deer and elk seasons, hunters might consider a fawn bleat call, which typically won’t spook deer or elk. Without snow, it can be difficult to know where to start. Rather than working large blocks of timber, consider timbered stringers. Cougars inhabit open terrain but prefer cover. Cats hunting open shrubsteppe will likely be hiding in timber stringers during the day. Cougars inhabit nearly every portion of the district, but some online hunting groups post where cats have been seen recently. Checking those sites may improve your success.

## WATERFOWL

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) did not fly breeding population surveys in 2020 or 2021. Previous estimates had been above the long-term average, but declining. Ducks need water and the extreme drought throughout the west and prairie potholes is likely to negatively impact flyway populations. Banding attempts and harvest in District 8 have shown declining populations. Harvest peaked around 50,000 birds in 2012 and declined to 20,000 in 2020 (Figure 5). For local hunters, local weather conditions and available food is important for getting and keeping northern migrants in the valley. As row crops like corn are converted to hops, orchard, and vineyard, duck numbers in the district are expected to keep declining in the short-term.

The best waterfowl hunting is in the lower Yakima Valley, especially on Yakama Nation (YN) lands. The Yakama Nation is consistently expanding waterfowl hunting opportunity along the Yakima River. Review their [Feel Free to Hunt map](#) annually, use Google Earth to pre-scout, and don’t be afraid to explore. YN’s Satus Wildlife Area is the most popular and is open to hunting Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, and holidays. The main Satus Wildlife Area is very popular due to relatively easy access. Hunting can be just as good on Mosebar ponds and north Satus.

Public hunting can be found on the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area (SWA) and Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge (TPNWR). The Sunnyside Wildlife Area has continued to manage challenges with dense vegetation and low water in recent years. Harvest and hunters’ days on Sunnyside have been fairly low.

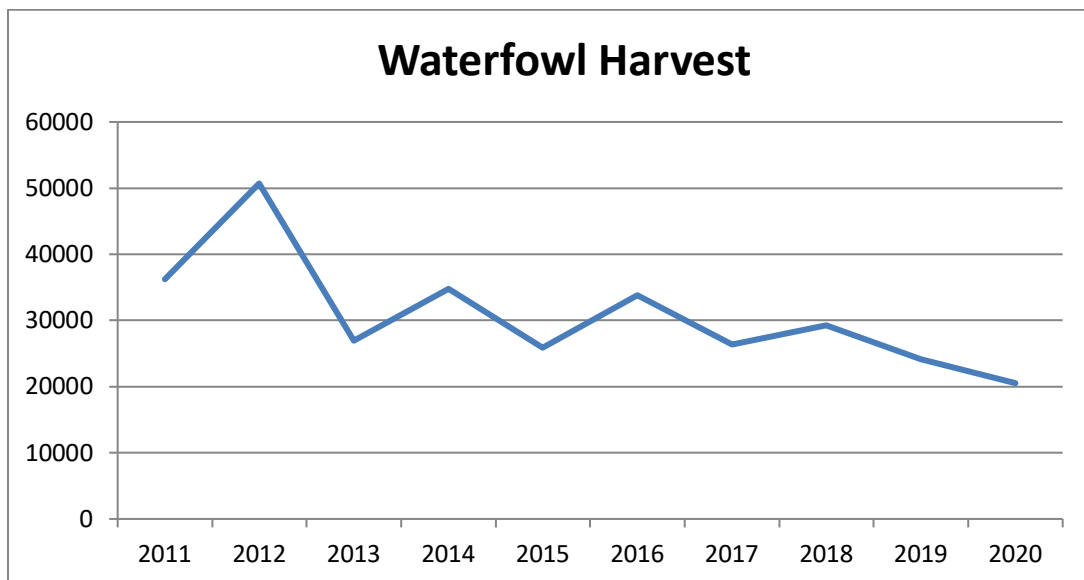
Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge has also had difficulty filling wetlands, especially in October. Water cannot be pumped from Toppenish to fill wetlands in the Robins Unit unless flows are greater than 30 cubic feet per second. The Pumphouse wetlands are dependent on Toppenish Creek side channels to fill at higher creek levels. Flows in those side channels have

been a bit unpredictable in recent years. It appears that at a gauge height of 3 feet, the channels should fill. Hunters can check flow/levels at the [USGS website](#). Summer 2021 has been dry and creek flows are low. If significant rain does not fall, don't expect water in the refuge until sometime in November. Before making a trip to Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge, it would be best to call the refuge at 509-865-2405 for conditions.

Band returns suggest many locally produced ducks are staying in the Yakima Valley. Early season success is likely tied to regional production. This past spring was very dry. Casual observations suggest the hatch was likely below average.

Late season success is probably more dependent on naive northern migrants. The first cold wave is typically around Thanksgiving. Once ponds and sloughs freeze over, the Yakima River can be productive. For the best late-season hunting, watch for significant changes in weather. If there is a quick thaw and rain, new ducks enter the valley and a week or so of good hunting can be had before the birds find the safety of private land and the reserves. A freeze and thaw may also fill wetlands that had been dry earlier in the year.

[An excellent introduction on waterfowl hunting in Washington can be found on the WDFW Let's go waterfowl hunting webpage.](#)



**Figure 5.** District 8 Waterfowl Harvest

## DOVE

Yakima County typically ranks second in the state for dove harvest. Harvest numbers have generally been declining for the past 10 years (Figure 6). Banding indicated poor recruitment over the past 10 years until 2020 when hatch-year birds increased. To date, 2021 appears to be one of the best recruitment years in recent time.

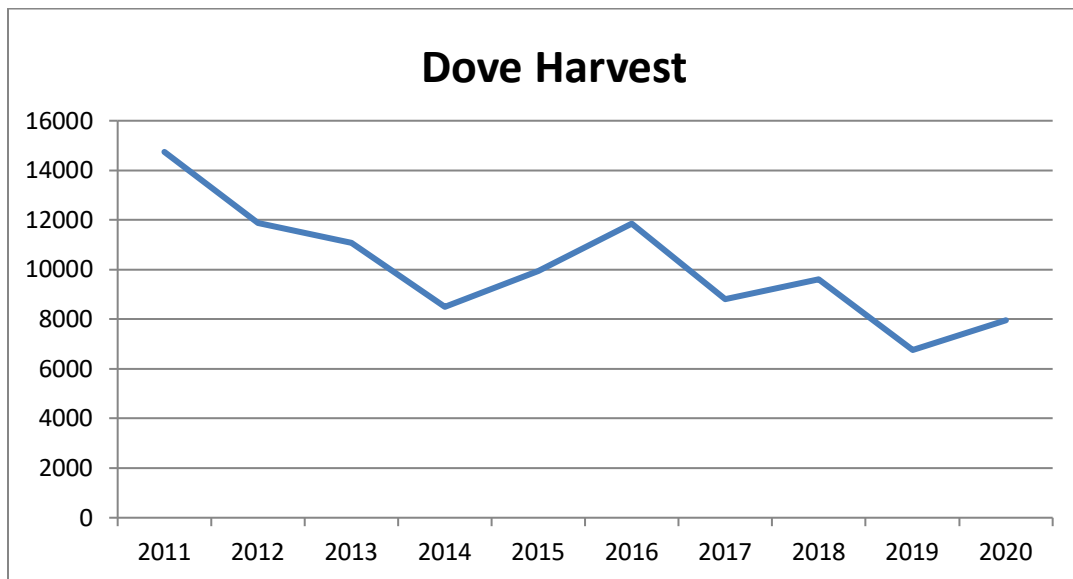
The best hunting success in the lower Yakima Valley is on private land. The better public hunting can be found on the Yakama Nation Reservation. Yakama Nation grows wheat on

portions of their Satus Wildlife Area. Information on hunting on Yakama Nation land is available on their [website](#).

The Sunnyside Wildlife Area has public dove hunting, but registration boxes suggest relatively poor harvest the last three years. Hunters typically average <1 bird per day. Attempts were made to improve hunting in 2017 by mowing weeds and unsuccessful food plots. As soon as doves concentrated, raptors arrived and dispersed the doves. Large dove concentrations quickly dispersing has been seen frequently while banding. This suggests hunters should locate numerous fields and scout only a day or two before the season.

Dove numbers in the area often depend on the weather pattern. Warm weather is needed to keep the majority of birds from migrating out of the valley. Cooler weather often hits the area by late August or early September. Despite a 30-day season, the average dove hunter only spends three days (opening weekend) pursuing doves.

Many hunters ask about Eurasian collared dove hunting opportunities, as the season extends year-round, without bag limits. Eurasian collared dove numbers have increased dramatically, but there was a die-off in 2018-2019, probably due to Avian Paramyxovirus-1. The virus was widespread nationwide in Eurasian collared doves, and populations have not rebounded. No information is collected on collared dove harvest nor are there surveys. The difficulty for hunters is that the majority of collared doves are in urban areas. Collared doves seem to behave more like rock doves (pigeons) than mourning doves. Some hunters occasionally find opportunities at roost sites and in a few fields, but good hunting is rare. Eurasian collared dove harvest is more of a bonus while hunting other birds, rather than a target for most hunters. Making a trip hoping to find Eurasian collared dove opportunity may be frustrating.



**Figure 6.** District 8 Dove Harvest

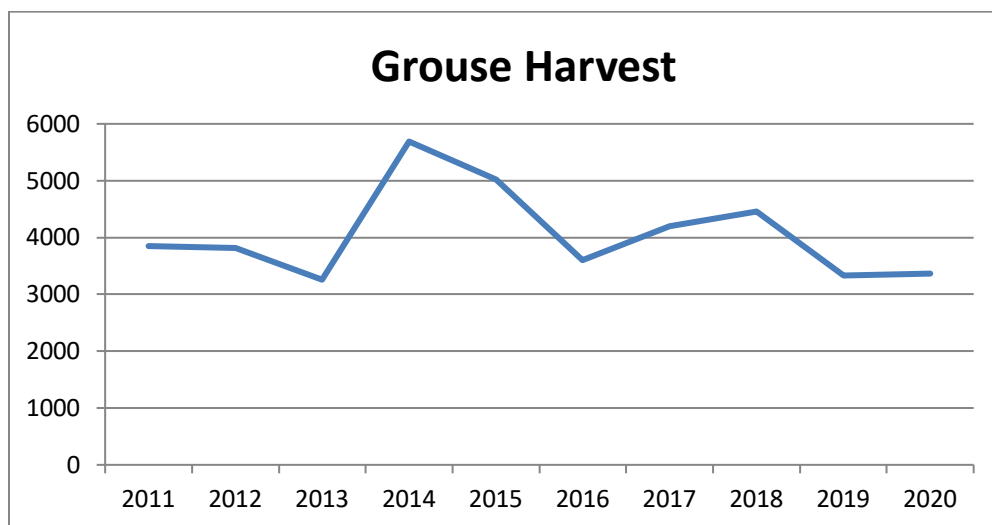


## FOREST GROUSE



Grouse harvest in District 8 has been variable over the last 10 years (Figure 7), varying between 3,200 and 5,700 birds. No data are available on the 2021 hatch. There has been an extreme drought in the valleys in 2021, but snowpack has kept moisture in the mountains much longer.

The majority of harvest in District 8 is on blue grouse. Many grouse hunters drive roads morning and evening, especially when the season first opens. Research suggests brood hens and young are most vulnerable in early September. Hunters serious about finding grouse should look for areas with low densities of open roads and hike.



**Figure 7.** District 8 Grouse Harvest

## PHEASANT

Pheasant harvest in District 8 has declined about 50% over the last ten years and recently leveled out at very low levels (Figure 8). The only place to find huntable numbers of wild birds is on the Yakama Nation Reservation (YN). Pheasant numbers have been declining for decades on YN due to conversion from fallow land to crops. There has been no recent change in this trend. Even if grain prices declined, farmers would switch to crops like hops rather than leave fields idle. A compounding negative factor is the conversion to hops and orchard.

Wild pheasant in District 8 typically have better hatches with high moisture. The year 2020 was one on the driest in history in the Yakima Valley and the drought has worsened in 2021. Irrigation water can make up for dry conditions where it seeps into weed patches, but those areas are becoming rare. Wild pheasant contribute little to the total harvest in the district and have likely declined further the last few years.

No pheasant surveys are conducted in District 8. The Yakama Nation has historically conducted production surveys, but they did not post 2019 results or do surveys in 2020. It is unknown if surveys were completed in 2021. Information on surveys and hunting on the Yakama Nation Reservation is available on their [website](#).

Released pen-raised pheasants are becoming a significant source of recreation for many hunters. About 1,700 roosters will be released in District 8 in 2021. The Cottonwoods site on the Wenas Wildlife Area burned in 2020 and will not be used in 2021. The birds have been reallocated to Sunnyside (1200) and Whiskey Dick (500).

For the youth hunt, birds will only be released at Sunnyside. Historically, turnout in September had been low, and kids have had a difficult time finding released birds. In the last few years, WDFW switched to mentored hunts and releasing birds when kids arrive on Saturday morning. Volunteers from the local chapter of Pheasants Forever run the events. During school breaks, there have been clinics for first-time hunters. Due to evolving COVID-19 restrictions, it is unknown if the clinics will take place this year.

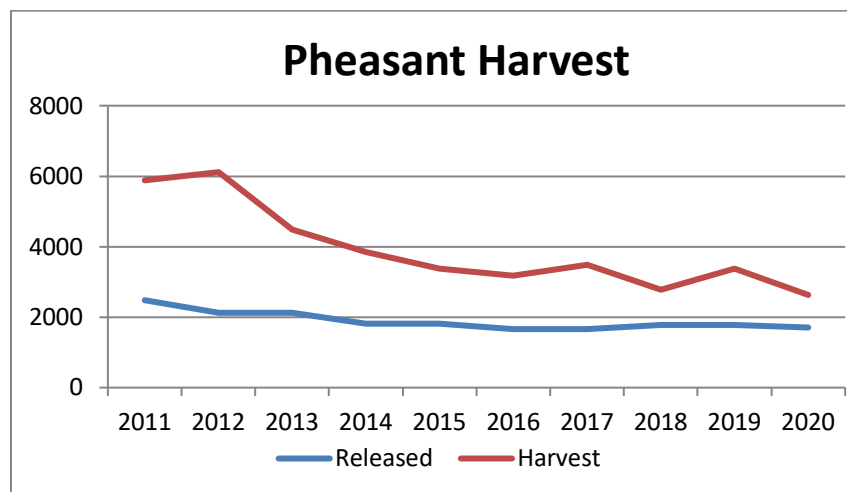


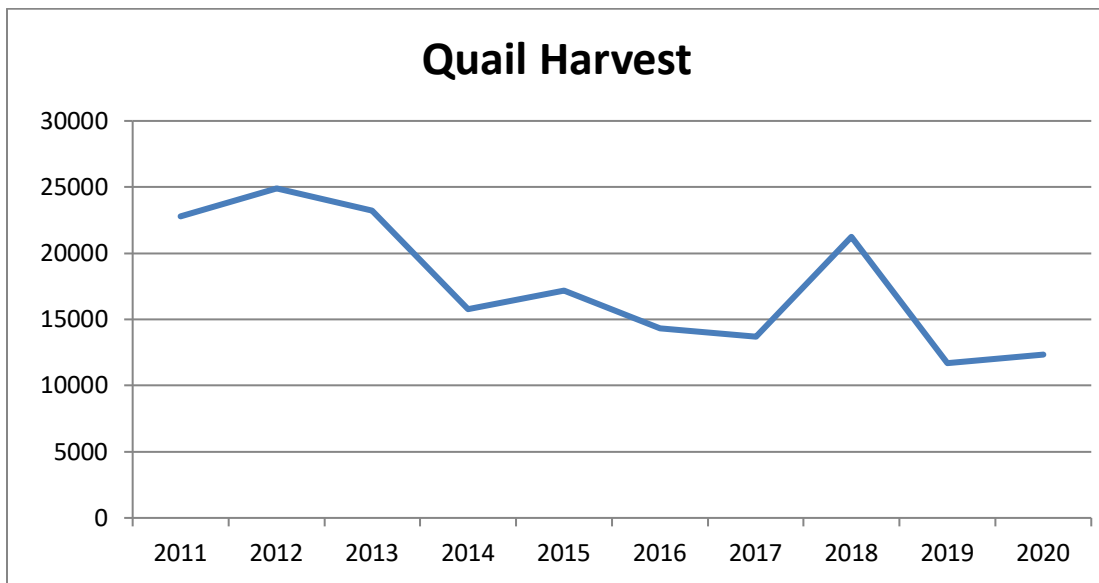
Figure 8. District 8 Pheasant Harvest

## QUAIL

California quail can be found in most non-timbered portions of the district. The best habitat and highest number of quail are typically in the lower Yakima Valley. This is evident in the harvest statistics where Yakima County led the state in quail harvest with an average of 15,000 birds over the last five years. In Kittitas County, the average quail harvest is only 1,900.

The trend has been for declining total quail harvest the last 10 years (Figure 9). A variety of factors from deep snow, drought, and fires have reduced quail populations. Quail in riparian draws surrounded by sagebrush are getting hard to find. Most of the quail habitat on the Wenas Wildlife Area has burned in recent years and the drought will not be good for quail in drier habitats. The best chance of finding good coveys will be near rivers and artificial water sources.

WDFW manages various parcels along the lower Yakima River that hold good numbers of quail that are part of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area. Yakama Nation runs an excellent hunting program and has great quail hunting opportunities. Information on surveys and hunting on Yakama Nation land [is available on their website](#).

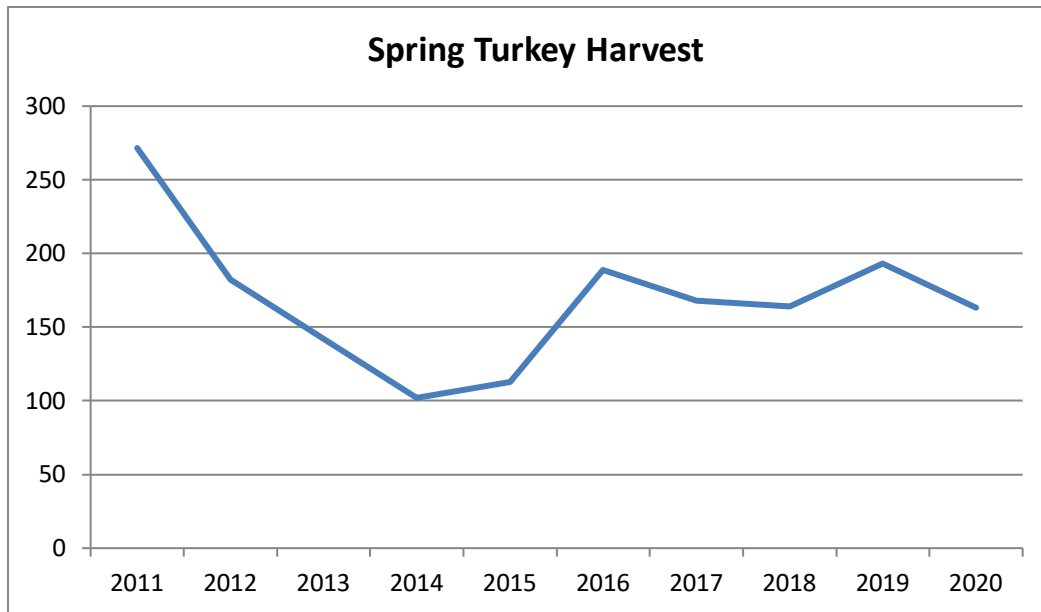


**Figure 9.** District 8 Quail Harvest

## TURKEY



Turkey populations peaked in 2010 following releases in the late 1990s and appear to have settled at lower levels (Figure 10). The majority of the District 8 harvest comes from GMU 335 (Table 3). The best hunting early in the spring is on private lands in the lower elevations of GMU 335. By May, some birds will be moving into higher elevations on the Teanaway Community Forest. The remainder of GMU's produce <25 bird harvest.



**Figure 10.** District 8 Spring Turkey Harvest



GMU	GMU Name	2018	2019	2020	Average
328	NANEUM	29	25	17	24
329	QUILOMENE	21	16	11	16
334	ELLENSBURG	13	17	14	15
335	TEANAWAY	57	70	59	62
336	TANEUM	14	20	26	20
340	MANASTASH	6	16	9	10
342	UMTANUM	18	16	18	17
346	LITTLE NACHES	0	0	0	0
352	NILE	0	3	0	1
356	BUMPING	0	0	3	1
360	BETHEL	1	0	2	1
364	RIMROCK	0	0	0	0
368	COWICHE	5	10	4	6
372	RATTLESNAKE	3	2	2	2
Total		167	195	165	173

**Table 3.** District 8 Spring Turkey Harvest by GMU

## PARTRIDGE (CHUKAR/HUNGARIAN)

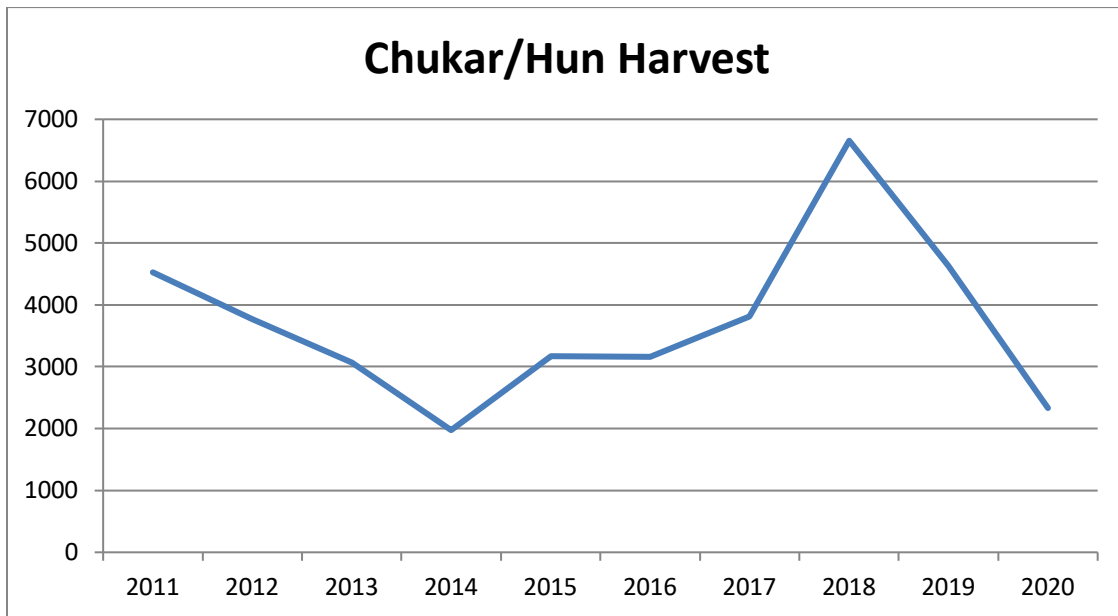




Partridge harvest in the district has been decreasing since 2018 (Figure 11). History has shown that abundant snow and a wet, cold spring produces a lot of vegetation and birds. There are few three-year-old game birds, so the population is composed primarily of hatch-year birds. Even when it seems most birds died in the winter, they rebound very quickly as melting snow improves soil moisture.

Precipitation has been minimal the last few years. 2020 was one of the driest years in history and 2021 is even drier. The hatch is not expected to be very good this year. The best hunting in recent years has been near wet draws on the Quilomene and Colockum Wildlife areas. Look for areas near large patches of good riparian vegetation.

The Yakima Training Center (YTC) is very popular with long-time chukar hunters. Much of YTC has burned in the last decade and 2021 is an extreme drought year for the area. Flights for elk over the installation found very small coveys in 2021. Note the recreation card information in the “Overview” portion of this document.

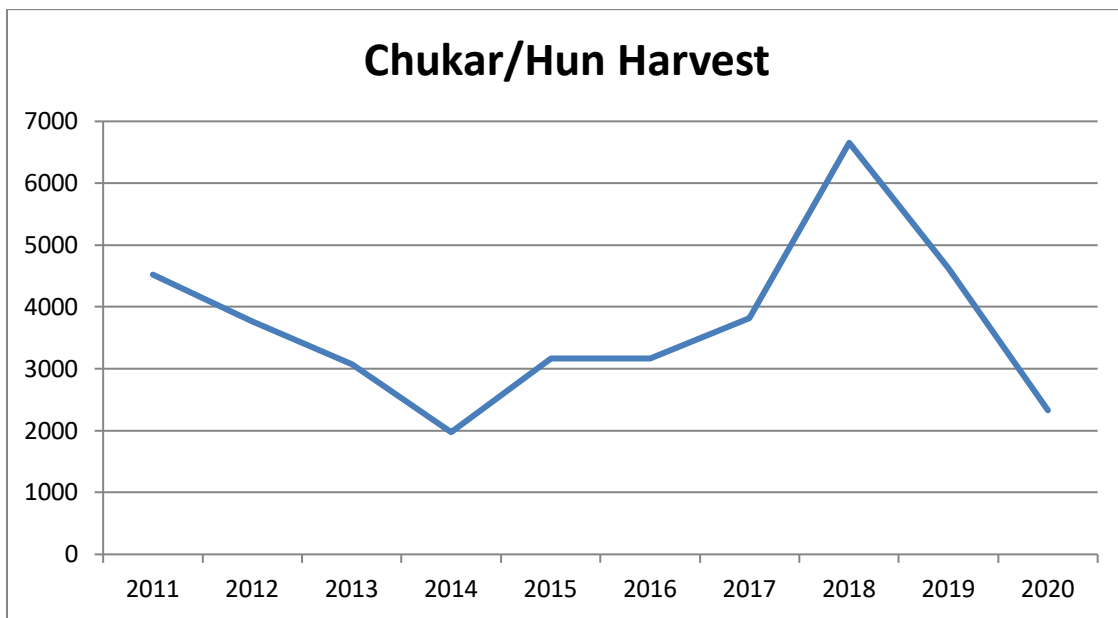


**Figure 11.** District 8 Chukar and Hun Harvest

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**Figure 11.** District 8 Chukar and Hun Harvest

# 2021

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Program Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



Family hunt at Vancouver Lake – Photo courtesy of Michelle Groesbeck

## District 9 Hunting Prospects

Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat counties

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## DISTRICT 9 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 9 is in the southwest/central part of Washington and is the only district in the state that spans the Cascade Crest. Game management units (GMUs) in District 9 include 554 (Yale), 564 (Battle Ground), 568 (Washougal), 560 (Lewis River), 572 (Siouxon), 574 (Wind River), 578 (West Klickitat), 388 (Grayback), and 382 (East Klickitat). Hunters can choose from a variety of habitats, including areas covered by west- and east-side season dates and permit regulations.

The Cascade Mountain Range dominates the geography of District 9, which divides the district into west and east side zones. Topography varies from near sea level along the Columbia River and its lower tributaries to alpine habitats associated with Mount St. Helens and Mt. Adams in the Cascade Range.

Dominant westside river drainages include the Lewis, Washougal, and Wind Rivers. Major eastside watersheds include the White Salmon and Klickitat Rivers. Rock Creek in eastern Klickitat County is the primary watershed in ponderosa pine/oak and shrub-steppe portions of the district. The Columbia River bounds the southern border of the district.

District 9 is one of the most diverse habitat areas of the state and includes westside coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir and western hemlock. These forests give way to Oregon white oak and ponderosa pine as you travel to the east side of the Cascade Mountains. In eastern Klickitat County, pine and oak habitat transition into shrubsteppe dominated by grassland and sagebrush.

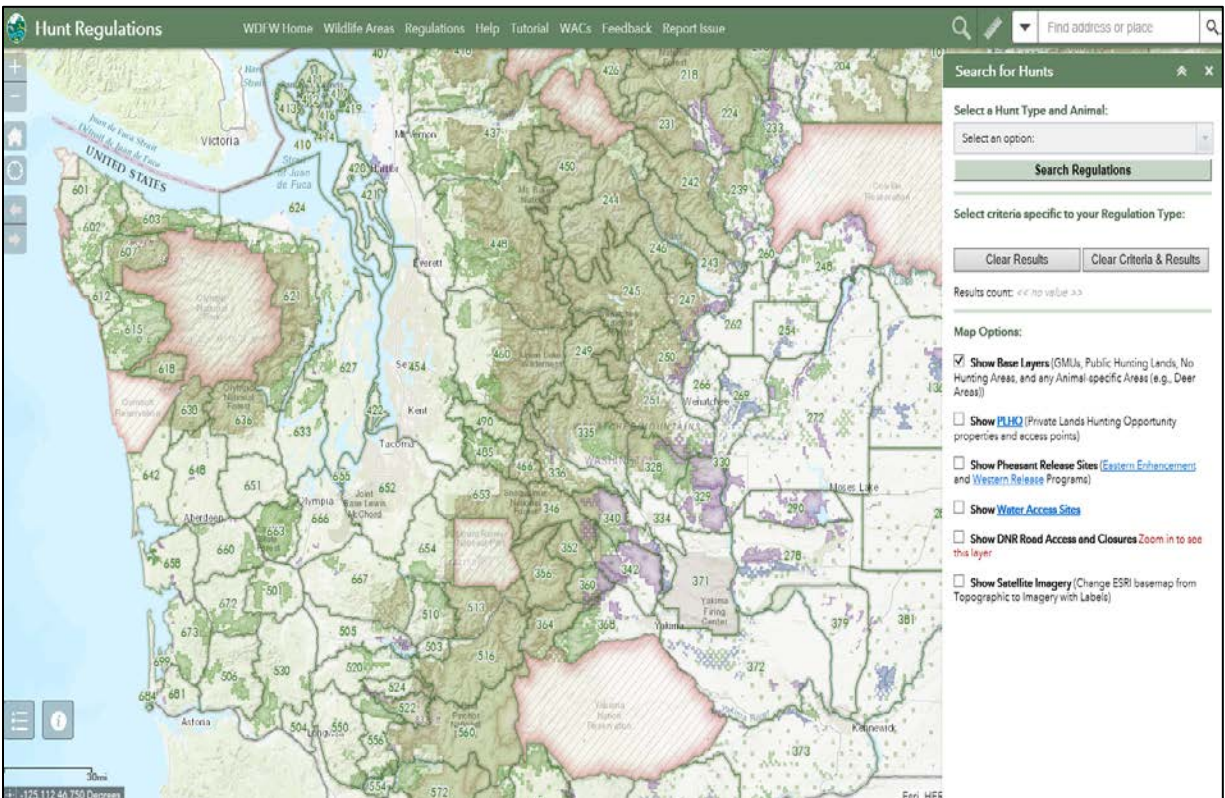
The Gifford Pinchot National Forest and Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands make up the majority of the west side forestland. These lands are open to public access. However, in the late summer and fall 2020 the Big Hollow Fire burned a significant portion of GMU 572. Some roads and trails in the area remain closed and hazardous conditions may still be present. For the latest information on closures, please check with the [Gifford Pinchot National Forest](#) before scouting or hunting and read more about the fire [here](#). Weyerhaeuser owns blocks of land in GMU 568 (Washougal) and scattered lands throughout GMU 578 (West Klickitat). Hunters must have permits or leases to access most of this land and can find more information about recreation on Weyerhaeuser property [here](#). Weyerhaeuser does allow free public access **only** on their lands enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program. To locate those lands, visit [Private Lands Hunting Access | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

Eastside forest and shrubsteppe/grassland habitat is primarily privately owned with limited public access. Most industrial timber company lands are open to public hunting but generally are not open to motorized vehicles. Due to high fire danger during August, September, and October, access to these lands may be restricted. Most of these timber companies maintain recreational access hotlines where hunters can find out if the land is closed before hunting. You can find a list



of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by private industrial timber companies at the end of this document.

Hancock Timberlands in GMU 578 (West Klickitat) are popular for hunting deer, elk, and turkey. You can find more information about hunting on Hancock Klickitat Timberlands at the end of this document. Stevenson Land Company also owns scattered timberlands throughout GMUs 574 (Wind River) and 578, and you can find information about recreation on their land [here](#). WDFW has a Feel Free to Hunt access agreement with Western Pacific Timber in GMU 388 (Grayback). This land is popular for deer hunting. You can find more information about hunting on Western Pacific Timberland and other properties by visiting this link: [WDFW's Private Lands webpage](#). The [WDFW Hunt Planner webpage](#) has useful layers like GMU and elk/deer area boundaries, roads, Wildlife Areas, and different base maps (aerial photos, topography).



## ELK



WDFW manages elk in District 9 as part of the Mount St. Helens (MSH) Herd, described in the [Mount Saint Helens Elk Herd Plan](#) on the WDFW website. You can find more information on elk management in District 9 in the [Game Harvest Statistics](#) and [Game Status and Trend Reports](#).

Elk hunting within District 9 is managed under a variety of seasons, so check regulations closely before going afield. Hunters should be aware that GMUs 388 (Grayback) and 382 (East Klickitat) require Eastern Washington elk tags, while the remainder of District 9 is within the Western Washington elk tag area. Additionally, GMU 564 (Battle Ground) and 554 (Yale) are Firearm Restriction GMUs.

GMU 560 (Lewis River) offers the most opportunity for elk hunting in District 9 in terms of size. Most of this area is public land within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. PacifiCorps also offers non-motorized access to their lands on the north side of Swift Reservoir. Early-season snow levels can affect hunter access and success during the modern firearm season. GMUs 574 (Wind River), 572 (Siouxon), and 578 (West Klickitat) are also all good elk units. GMUs 574 and 572 are primarily public U.S. Forest Service and WA State DNR lands, while GMU 578 is primarily private land with some Washington state DNR land so be sure to have good maps in order to identify ownership in this area.

GMUs 388 and 382 in Klickitat County have very few elk and are generally considered better for deer hunting. GMU 564 in Clark County only has elk in the northern and eastern portions of the GMU. This area has a mix of public and private lands, and it's important to know about ownership before planning your hunt in this area.

Some areas may be closed to both motorized and non-motorized access. Even in familiar areas, we recommend extra scouting because elk distribution may have changed, and normal hunting lands may be closed due to fire danger.

## **ELK POPULATION INFORMATION**

Elk populations in the GMUs comprising the Mount St Helens (MSH) elk herd area are down from historic high levels during the mid-2000s. This population reduction was implemented per the objectives of the [Mount Saint Helens Elk Herd Plan](#). Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity, combined with several years of late winter and spring storms, reduced the elk population in these GMUs. The winter of 2016-17 was unusually severe, with early snowfall and persistent cold, wet conditions throughout the winter. Severe winters have a larger impact when animals are in relatively poor condition entering the winter. Elk within the MSH herd typically lack large fat reserves to help with long, hard winters.

Reflecting on these challenging conditions, the 2017 spring survey of elk in the monitored portions of the MSH herd showed a 30-35% reduction from 2016 numbers. The winters of 2017-18 and 2018-19 were mild, however elk hoof disease continues to impact survival and reproduction in this herd. Survey efforts conducted during the spring of 2018 and 2019 indicate that the MSH elk herd has stabilized at this lower population level (surveys were not conducted in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions). These indicators point toward an elk population that is below objective and well below historic highs. Therefore, hunters should expect a generally less productive elk hunting season during the 2021 hunt. WDFW has reduced antlerless hunting opportunity accordingly.

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

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range, including within the MSH elk herd area. While elk are susceptible to many conditions which result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009-2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where

prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and western Lewis County, but is also found in all three counties of District 9.

All of District 9 falls within the MSH elk herd range. TAHD is most prevalent among elk in the southwestern part of Washington, however the disease was detected outside Trout Lake (GMU 578) in 2018 and has since been confirmed throughout Klickitat and Skamania counties.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### **How hunters can help:**

In 2021, WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program to encourage westside (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. The objective of this program is to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can choose to participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in western Washington. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in western Washington with season dates of Sep. 1 – Dec 31 will be awarded. Additionally, all participants will receive a custom, waterproof license holder.

So, what can hunters do to help?

- **Harvest a limping elk from any 400, 500, 600 series GMUs**
- **Turn in your elk hooves along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in western Washington**
- **Report elk:** Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form.



- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the [Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#).



Example of elk hooves deformed by TAHD



## DEER



Deer in GMU 382 – Photo courtesy of Bob Harvey

Deer populations are generally stable in lower elevation units such as Washougal (568) and Battle Ground (564). Deer harvest in West Klickitat (578), Grayback (388), and East Klickitat (382) was higher in 2020 than in recent years, which is hopefully an indication of a recovery for these populations. Deer populations are generally low in the Cascade Mountain GMUs, including Lewis River (560), Wind River (574), and Siouxon (572). The extreme winter of 2016-17 hurt deer populations throughout District 9 but the recent harvest statistics indicate the start of recovery. December 2019 surveys indicate a slight increase in the population and recent spring surveys show that fawn survival is back to its historic average. Unfortunately, population surveys were not conducted in 2020 because of COVID-19 restrictions, but harvest success rates in fall 2020 increased slightly over recent years, which is another encouraging sign for District 9 deer populations.

Deer harvest and success is remarkably consistent within District 9, where hunters are expected to harvest approximately 2,000 bucks during the 2021 general season, representing a success rate of 20-25 percent. You can find historical information on deer harvest trends in District 9 on the WDFW website under [Game Harvest Statistics](#) and [Game Status and Trend Reports](#).

Successful hunting for black-tailed deer is primarily a function of the effort that hunters put into the hunt. Black-tailed deer thrive in heavily vegetated habitats and are often very nocturnal. Successful black-tailed deer hunters must be in position early in the morning and carefully hunt near sources of food and secure cover.

Bucks travel more during the rut, covering large amounts of territory searching for does in heat. This makes bucks more vulnerable, as they spend less time hiding and you can sometimes find them in open habitats such as clear-cuts and meadows. Not surprisingly, approximately one-third of the annual buck harvest in Region 5 occurs during the four-day late buck hunt held each November.

Within District 9, GMUs 554 (Yale), 560 (Lewis River), 564 (Battle Ground), 568 (Washougal), and 572 (Siouxon) offer an attractive general season hunting opportunity. Hunters should note, however, the firearm restrictions in GMUs 554 and 564 (see page 90 of the [2021 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet](#)).

Those interested in trophy-hunting opportunities for deer might consider any of the Klickitat County units. GMU 578 (West Klickitat), GMU 388 (Grayback), and GMU 382 (East Klickitat) are all managed under a 3-point or greater antler restriction. Collectively, the Klickitat GMUs support an annual harvest of around a thousand three-point or greater bucks. Hunters are advised to carefully review the regulations before going afield, as the rules differ in each unit and none of the Klickitat GMUs allow general season late buck rifle hunting. GMU 382 is mainly private land and deer hunting is by permit only on the Simcoe Mountains Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area (Deer Area 5382). The main units of the Klickitat Wildlife Area are located in GMU 388 and provide good deer hunting opportunities. GMU 578 has some blocks of DNR land as well as private industrial forestlands that are open to non-motorized access.

Some areas may be closed to both motorized and non-motorized access. Hunters are advised to do extra scouting even in familiar areas because deer distribution may have changed, and normal hunting lands may be closed for fire danger.

WDFW is interested in collecting teeth from harvested black-tailed deer bucks. If you are successful, please remove one of the incisor teeth as shown in the diagram on the tooth envelope below. All regional offices will have tooth envelopes to pick up. You can also contact the Region 5 office at 360-696-6211, and they will mail you a tooth envelope. Once the tooth has been analyzed, you can check the WDFW website [here with your WILD ID number](#) to see the age of your deer.

**THIS ENVELOPE FOR DEER AND ELK ONLY**

Species: Mule Deer \_\_\_\_\_ W-T Deer \_\_\_\_\_ B-T Deer \_\_\_\_\_ Elk \_\_\_\_\_ Transport Tag Doc.# \_\_\_\_\_

Kill Type: General Season \_\_\_ Special Permit \_\_\_ Depredation \_\_\_ Landowner \_\_\_ Poached \_\_\_ Roadkill \_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Wild ID# \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Kill (month/day/year) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Hunter's Name (Last, First, Middle Initial): \_\_\_\_\_

Weapon Type: Modern Firearm \_\_\_\_\_ Archery \_\_\_\_\_ Muzzleloader \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

GMU of Kill: \_\_\_\_\_ County of Kill: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Kill: (drainage, road, or other specifics): \_\_\_\_\_

Sex of Kill: Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Age Class of Kill: Fawn/Calf \_\_\_ Yearling \_\_\_ Adult \_\_\_

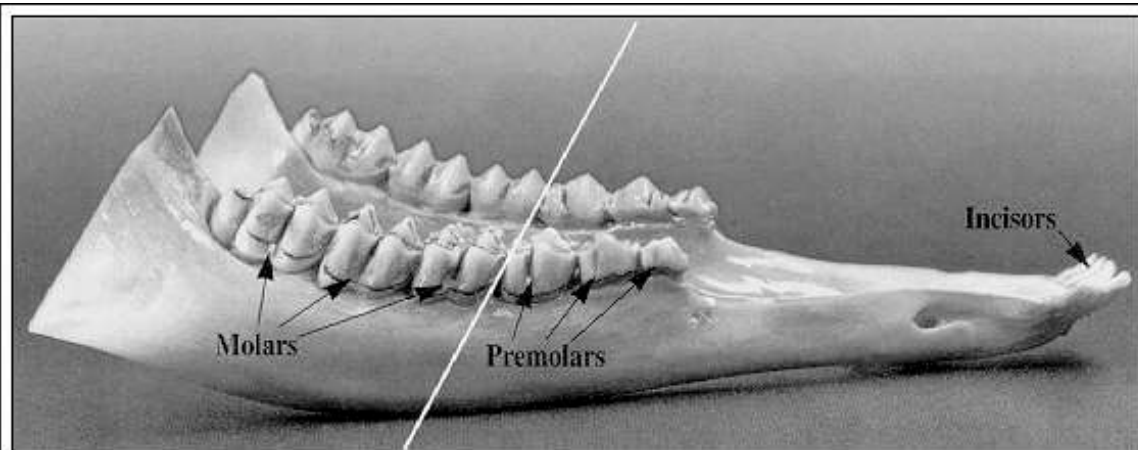
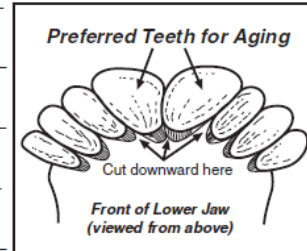
Number of Antler Points (points include eye guards at least 1" long): LEFT \_\_\_ RIGHT \_\_\_ Incisor teeth collected: Yes No

Tissue Sample Collected for DNA Analysis? Yes No Vial Number: \_\_\_\_\_ CWD Sample collected: Yes No Jar Number \_\_\_\_\_

Did the animal have an ear tag (or a hole in the ear)? (please circle one): Yes No Tag Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Tag Color: \_\_\_\_\_

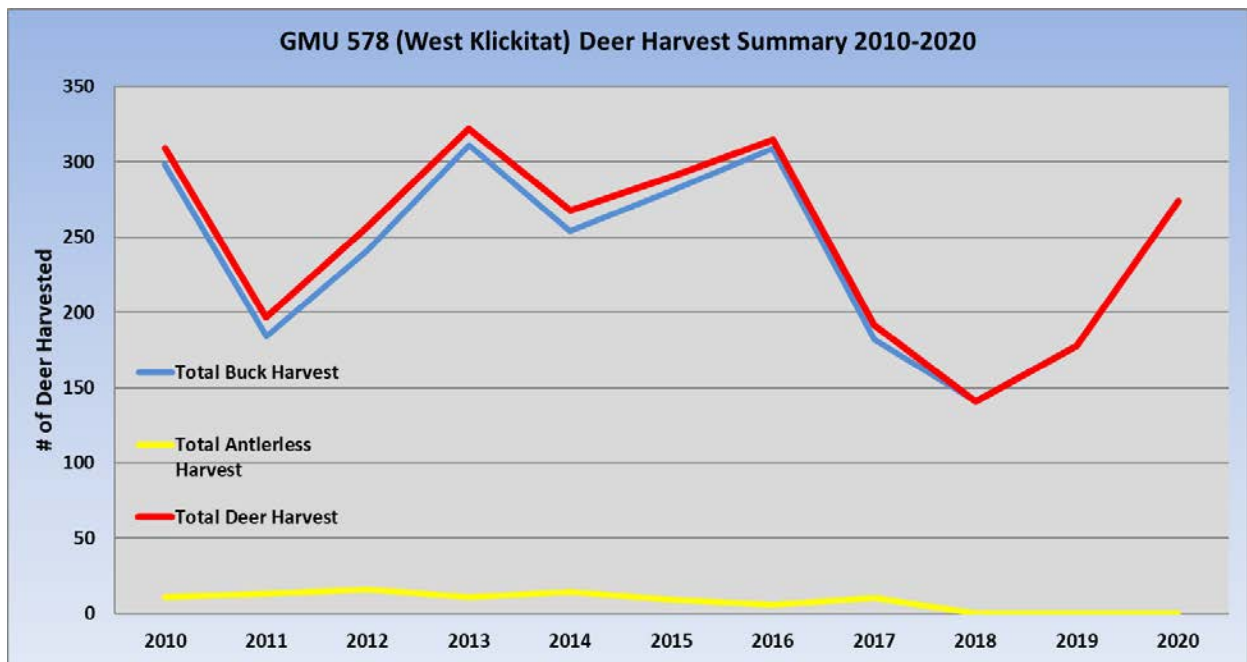
Did the animal have a radio-collar? (please circle one): Yes No Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

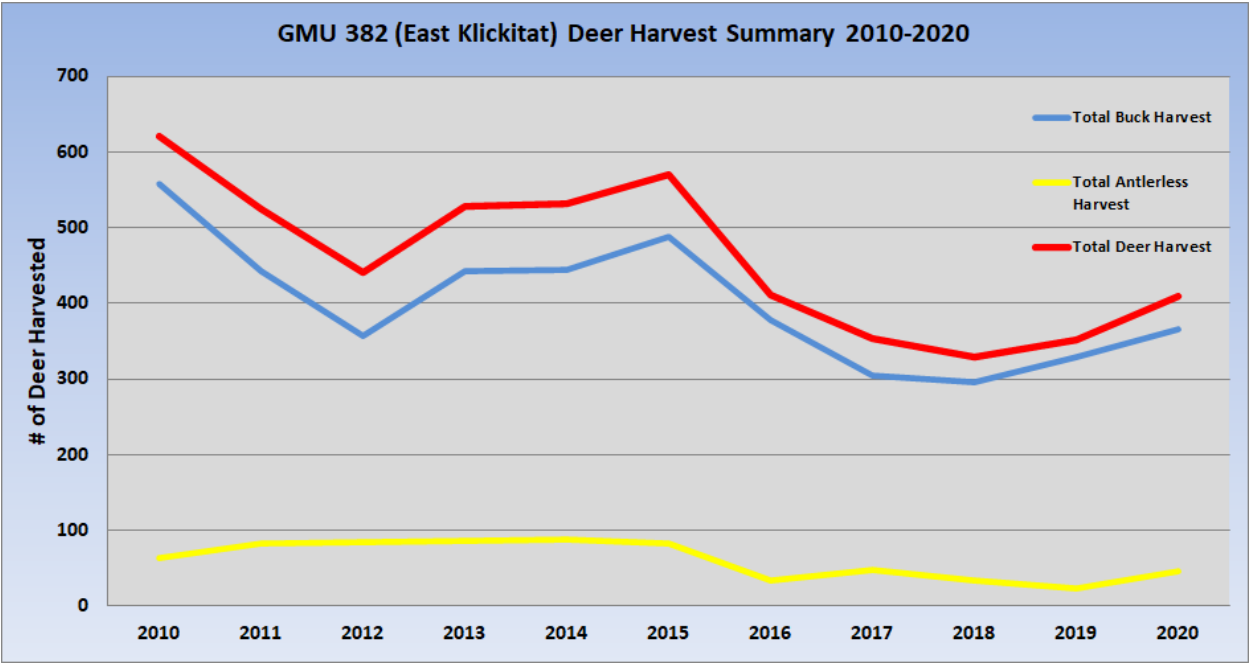
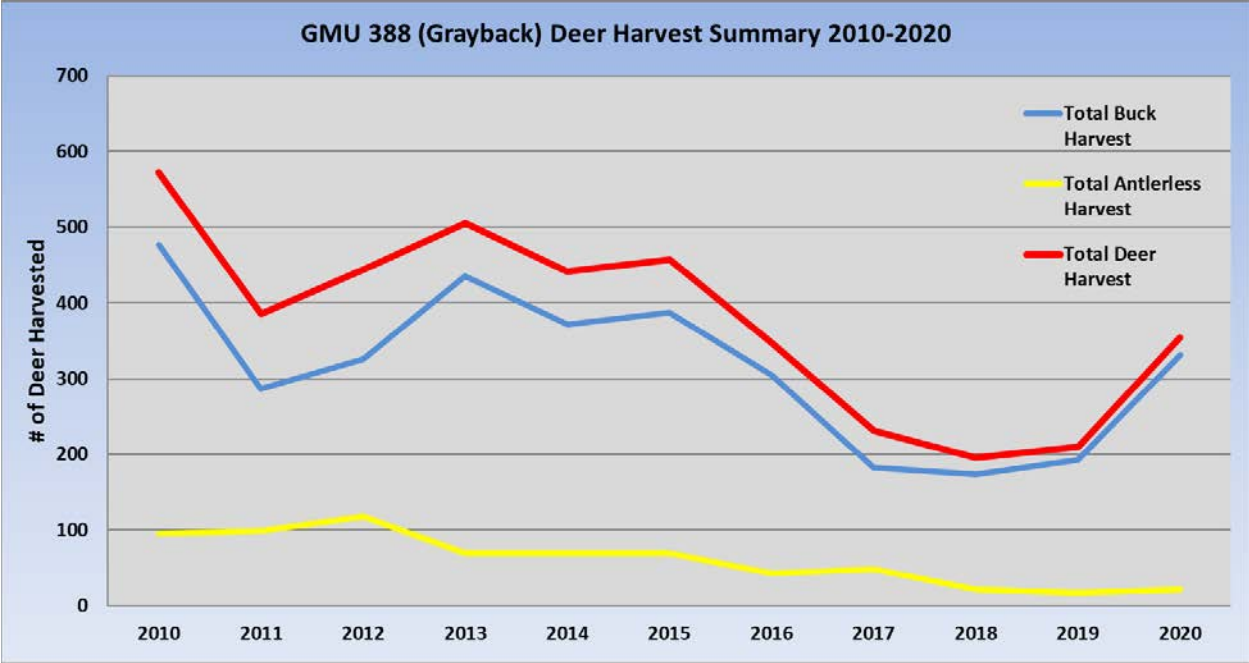
Officer / Biologist \_\_\_\_\_



Your basic deer jaw. Incisors in the front, premolars and molars in the back, and a big space between.









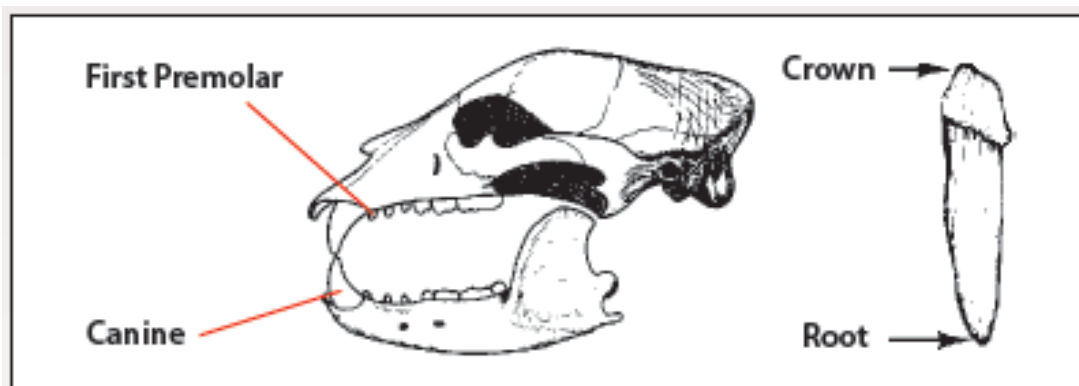
## BEAR



©TOM KOGUT

District 9 makes up part of both the South Cascades and East Cascades black bear hunt zones for the fall bear hunting season. In 2021, both the South Cascades zone (which includes GMUs 574, 572, 568, 564, and 560) and the East Cascades zone (which includes GMUs 578, 388, and 382) are open from Aug. 1-Nov. 15. The bag limit is now two black bears per license year statewide. In 2020, hunters harvested 297 bears in the South Cascades (9.2 percent success rate) and 350 in the East Cascades zone (8.6 percent success rate). These success rates are similar to the 2020 statewide average of 9.2 percent. Currently, no spring black bear hunts are available in District 9.

All successful bear hunters are **required** to submit the premolar tooth in a tooth envelope by Dec. 1, 2021. See page 68 of the [Big Game Hunting](#) pamphlet for details.



## COUGAR



Cougars are difficult to hunt and deer and elk hunters typically harvest them opportunistically. The early cougar hunting season runs from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31. In 2012, a season harvest guideline system was initiated, which closes hunt areas after Jan. 1 if the harvest guidelines have been met or exceeded. The late hunting season is from Jan. 1 to Apr. 30 or when the harvest guideline is reached, whichever comes first. For more information on these guidelines and to check if the area you are interested in hunting is closed, see the [cougar webpage](#). All successful cougar hunters must report their harvest to the hotline (866-364-4868, press 3 after the recording) within 72 hours, and all cougar pelts must be sealed by WDFW within five days of harvest (skull and hide unfrozen with proof of sex attached to the pelt). Contact a [WDFW office](#) to make an appointment to have a cougar pelt sealed.



## WATERFOWL



Goose Hunting in Clark County – Photo courtesy of Derek Kluksdahl

### GOOSE HUNTING

The majority of goose hunting opportunities in District 9 occurs in Clark County, which is a part of Goose Management Area 2 - Inland. Hunters are reminded of the complex goose hunting regulations designed to protect wintering populations of the dusky Canada goose. New hunters and those whose hunting authorization were invalidated for Area 2 (Coast or Inland) during the



previous year, need to pass an exam with a minimum of 80 percent to receive authorization for the current year. Please visit our [Goose Identification](#) page for more information.

Very little goose hunting is available in Skamania County. Goose hunting in Klickitat County is limited and primarily associated with private lands. You must always have permission before accessing these sites. Please note that the daily bag limit has increased to 24 geese per day; which includes up to four Canada geese of any subspecies (except dusky geese), up to ten white geese (Snow and Ross's geese), and up to ten Pacific white-fronted geese. In previous seasons, only six white geese were allowed each day. Check the [2021 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations website](#) for more specific information on season length and bag limits

A successful season in Clark County relies on sufficient precipitation in the fall and early winter to fill the wetlands, and cold weather in the northern portions of the migratory route to push the geese south. Check hunting reports from northwestern Washington and Coastal British Columbia, monitor weather forecasts and scout your hunting areas ahead of time to ensure geese have arrived and are congregating in areas that allow hunting.



Goose hunting in Clark County – Photo Credit Brad Cady

## RECENT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO AREA 2 GOOSE HUNTING

Goose hunting in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties is subject to the additional restrictions of Goose Management Area 2 - Inland. These restrictions are in place to protect the dusky subspecies of the Canada goose. We encourage goose hunters to review the different subspecies of Canada geese in southwest Washington and remind you that the ability to identify the different subspecies is necessary for a productive and enjoyable goose hunting season.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission has approved the following regulations for the 2021-22 southwest Washington goose season in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the states of Oregon and Alaska:

- The season for dusky Canada geese is **closed**. If a hunter takes a dusky Canada goose or does not comply with field check requirements, that hunter's authorization will be invalidated, and the hunter will not be able to hunt geese in Goose Management Area 2 for the rest of the season.
- Goose hunting hours begin 30 minutes after the start of official waterfowl hunting hours to 30 minutes before the end of official waterfowl hunting hours (same as other goose hunting areas of the state).
- Starting in 2019, goose hunters planning to hunt in Goose Management Area 2 – Coast or Inland began receiving a harvest record card when purchasing their licenses. Immediately after taking a goose, you must fill out your harvest card in ink. You are required to report the information on your harvest card to WDFW by using the online reporting system at [fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/](http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/), or by mailing the cards to:  
WDFW, Wildlife Program – Waterfowl Section, PO Box 43141, Olympia WA 98504.  
The reporting deadline is March 20, 2022.
- Goose Management Area 2 is split between the Coast (Pacific County and a portion of Grays Harbor County west of Highway 101) and Inland Areas (Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, and a portion of Grays Harbor County east of Highway 101).
- The goose hunting season will be open every day from Sept. 4-12 as well as Oct. 16-31, and on selected dates (Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays) from Nov. 24, 2021-Jan. 16, 2022 and Feb 12-March 9, 2022.

Hunters are advised to review the revised goose identification [training program](#) before hunting this season and check the [2021 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations website](#) for more information. Wildlife managers are relying on southwest goose hunters to make this season format successful, so goose hunting can remain open in permit zones.

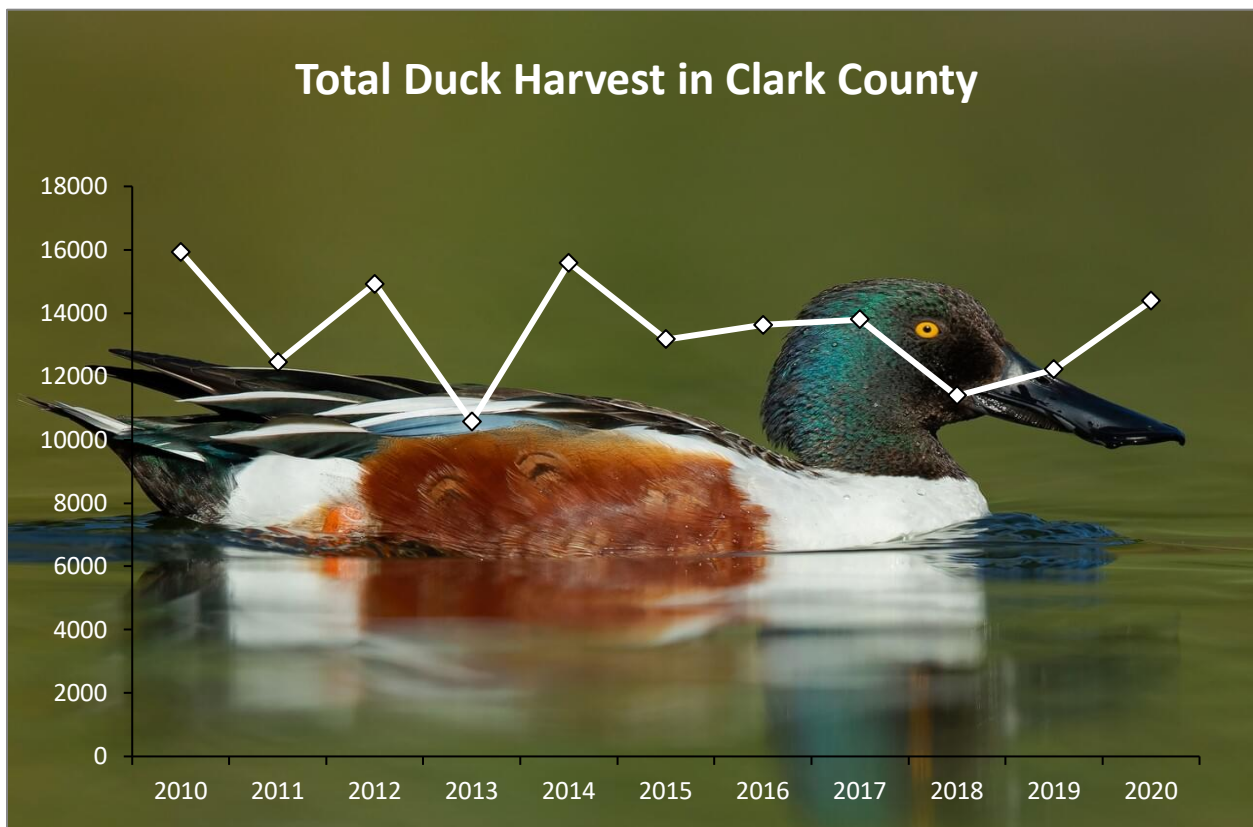
Most public goose hunting in Clark County is in the Vancouver lowlands and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Hunter access to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is by



reservation only. As of the writing of this document, the 2020 goose harvest estimates were not yet available to the public. Once the data is finalized, it will be available [here](#), under the heading “Small Game.”

## DUCK HUNTING

The Fish and Wildlife Commission has approved a liberal duck hunting season of 108 days, which includes two youth hunt days (one in eastern Washington and one in western Washington), a one-day hunt for youth, veterans and active military members, and a 105-day general season. The daily bag limit is seven ducks. Like Canada goose hunting, most public access for duck hunting in Clark County is limited to the Vancouver lowlands and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. As of the writing of this document, the 2020 duck harvest numbers were not available to the public. Once the data is finalized, it will be available [here](#), under the heading “Small Game.”



The following sources provide excellent information on North American waterfowl populations:

<http://flyways.us/>

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/bird-watching/waterfowl-identification.php>

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php>

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species.php>

## DOVE

Dove hunting in District 9 is primarily associated with Clark and Klickitat counties. In Clark County, dove hunting opportunity exists on WDFW lands in the Vancouver lowlands, including the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Most of the hunting opportunity in Klickitat County is associated with private hunt clubs in the eastern part of the county. The majority of Klickitat County is privately owned, so please be sure to secure permission from private landowners before you hunt on private land. As of the writing of this document, the 2020 dove harvest estimates were not available to the public. Once the data is finalized, it will be available [here](#), under the heading “Small Game.”



## FOREST GROUSE



©Tom Kogut

Grouse season in Washington runs from Sept. 1– Jan 15. The change to Sept.<sup>15</sup> was made to protect brood hens with chicks. Skamania County, which is predominately public land, provides hunters with the most opportunity in the district. In District 9, the majority of quality grouse habitat is on USFS lands in Skamania County and certain areas of the Simcoe Mountains west of Highway 97 in Klickitat County.

Most grouse harvest in District 9 is associated with general deer and elk hunting seasons, when birds are hunted opportunistically. Prospective hunters should focus hunting efforts on brushy riparian zones or overgrown abandoned logging roads for the best chance at success, especially for ruffed grouse. Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by scouting areas before their hunt. As of the writing of this document, the 2020 grouse harvest estimates were not available to the public. Once the data is finalized, it will be available [here](#), under the heading “Small Game.”

In 2019, District 9 began collecting the wings and tails of hunter-harvested forest grouse intending to collect more data to help track population trends of each species. Grouse hunters can help by depositing one wing and the tail of grouse harvested into wing collection barrels that are located around the district. Paper collection bags and instructions are available at each barrel location. Please use one bag for each bird and do not deposit wings in a plastic bag. The barrel



locations for each district can be found [here](#). Barrel locations are subject to change before or during the grouse season, so please check the website frequently.



Skamania County Wing Collection Barrel - WDFW



## PHEASANT



Pheasant hunting in Clark County – Photo courtesy of Brad Cady

District 9 has very little, if any wild production of pheasants, especially compared to areas of eastern Washington. Essentially, all hunting opportunities are associated with pen-raised birds that are released at specific locations in Klickitat County (Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Sites) and Clark County (Western Washington Pheasant Release Sites). In Clark County, most pheasant hunting is associated with the Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release areas. In Klickitat County, most pheasant hunting occurs on three release sites near Goldendale or the surrounding private properties (with landowner permission). Please read more about our [Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#) (for Clark and Skamania counties) and [Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Program](#) (for Klickitat County) on our website, which includes maps of the release sites. As of the writing of this document, the 2020 pheasant harvest estimates were not available to the public. Once the data is finalized, it will be available [here](#), under the heading “Small Game.”

You can find details about each of the pheasant hunting sites below.

## **CLARK COUNTY PHEASANT RELEASE SITES**

### **Shillapoo Wildlife Area**

The Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release sites are on WDFW-managed land and comprise approximately 1,450 acres. To reach both the Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo release sites, take the Fourth Plain Blvd. exit (exit #1D) off I-5. Go west on Fourth Plain Blvd. For the Vancouver Lake release site, head north on Fruit Valley Road, then west on La Frombois Road to the site. For the Shillapoo release site, stay on Lower River Road to the site. Keep in mind that these areas are extremely popular on Saturdays, with typically more than 100 vehicles at the Shillapoo release sites.

## **KLICKITAT COUNTY PHEASANT RELEASE SITES**

WDFW releases approximately 350 pheasants at three sites in Klickitat County each year. One site is located on department-owned land and two are on privately-owned lands enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program “Feel Free to Hunt”. Please respect the land, hunting on private lands is a privilege. All sites are day-use only, and no overnight camping is allowed. These sites are relatively undeveloped, with primitive road access. In early fall, there is usually a high fire risk so please take necessary precautions. Roads may become slippery and very muddy after fall rains and snow. Be cautious when choosing parking spots next to roads to avoid getting stuck. Driving off-road or on private land is not allowed, regardless of the season. The use of non-toxic shot is required within designated release areas.

### **Goldendale Hatchery Pheasant Release Site**

WDFW manages this 240-acre site. It is bounded by Hill Road on the west side and Fish Hatchery Road on the north side.

From Goldendale, drive west on Highway 142 approximately four miles to the intersection with Hill Road. Drive about a half-mile north on Hill Road, across the bridge over Spring Creek, then turn east on a dirt road onto WDFW property. This road goes into the center of the property.

A parcel of private land adjacent to the Goldendale Hatchery release site is currently enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program as a “Hunt by Reservation” property called Fish Hatchery Road. To hunt on the land, you must make a reservation online. Please consult the [WDFW Private Lands page](#) to make your reservation, access property details and maps, and temporary closures of these sites.

Note: The hatchery facilities are located along the east boundary of the parcel. Please stay away from the immediate vicinity of the buildings to protect workers and infrastructure.



### **Gun Club Property (Private Lands Access Program) – Feel Free to Hunt**

This 480-acre site is privately owned. It is bounded by Rogers Road on the north and Fenton Lane to the east. This property boasts high quality wildlife habitat and cover with a combination of open grasslands, shrub cover, trees and a small lowland area that seasonally hold water.

From the intersection with Broadway Street in Goldendale, drive east on the Bickleton Highway 5.6 miles to the intersection with Purvine Road. Turn right (south) on Purvine Road and drive 0.9 miles to the T intersection with Rogers Road. Go either left or right on Rogers Road and look for wire gates accessing the property. There are two gates. Both are marked with the WDFW Access Program signage. Park along Rogers Road, outside the fence, and walk in. CAUTION-Purvine Road may be impassable when wet. For the best access, go east another mile on the Bickleton Highway, and turn right (south) on Fenton Lane. Follow Fenton Lane south one mile to its intersection with Rogers Road. Turn right (west) onto Rogers Road and drive about 0.1 miles west to a gate and parking area.

You may hunt this property without a reservation or registering. Please consult the [WDFW Private Lands page](#) for property details and maps, and temporary closures of these sites or visit the property listing directly at: [https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private\\_land/hunt/847/](https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_land/hunt/847/)

### **Finn Ridge Road Property (Private Lands Access Program) – Feel Free to Hunt**

This 160-acre site is privately owned. It is bounded by the Finn Ridge Road along the south property line and Ahola Road to the west. This property consists of gently rolling, open grassland with no shrub cover.

From Centerville, drive two miles west on the Centerville Highway to a 90-degree bend in the highway to the south. Turn right (north) on Erickson Road. Drive 1 mile to the intersection with the Finn Ridge Road. Turn left (west) onto Finn Ridge Road and follow it about 1.5 miles to the first sign marking the corner of the site, on the right. It is marked with green and white WDFW Feel Free to Hunt signs.



Example of Access Program signage, WDFW



Pheasant release in Klickitat County – Photo courtesy of Monique Ferris, WDFW

## QUAIL, GRAY PARTRIDGE, AND CHUKAR



In District 9, upland game birds are almost exclusively hunted within Klickitat County, with quail being the most successfully hunted of the three species by far. Most access for upland bird hunting is restricted to private lands and hunt clubs in eastern Klickitat County. Hunters interested in hunting this area should seek access permission in advance of the season. Most hunt clubs have waiting lists for new members, and access is difficult without membership for those lands. As of the writing of this document, the 2020 upland game bird harvest estimates were not available to the public. Once the data is finalized, it will be available [here](#), under the heading “Small Game.”





## TURKEY



Wild turkey populations in Klickitat County continue to be very healthy, and hunting conditions for fall 2021 should be typical for this area. The 2021 fall season in District 9 is open to general season hunting, which means no special permit is required. Fall hunt dates are Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, and the bag limit is one either sex turkey. This is the first year of a four month long general season, which is an exciting new opportunity! Please refer to page 32 in the [2021 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet](#) for more information.

In fall 2020, 155 turkeys were harvested in the District 9 fall general season (includes GMUs 382, 388, 568-578) with a success rate of 38 percent. That was similar to the 149 turkeys and 40 percent success in fall 2019, which was the second year of a fall general season in District 9.

The majority of quality turkey hunting areas in Klickitat County are below 1,500 feet. Popular hunting areas are generally associated with the White Salmon and Klickitat River drainages. East of the Klickitat River, you can find turkeys on the Klickitat Wildlife Area and also in the Simcoe Mountains to the north and west of Goldendale. Most of the land in and around the Simcoe Mountains is owned by private timber companies. Please refer to the “Private Industrial Forestlands” section below for details on hunting access and be sure to have good maps that correctly identify ownership if you are planning to hunt in these areas. Some landowners in western Klickitat County complain of turkey damage on their property and may be willing to provide access to turkey hunters that ask for permission and practice good hunter ethics.



Turkey in GMU 574– Photo courtesy of Chris Wilson

Outside of Klickitat County, there is less opportunity for turkey hunting within the district. In Skamania County, turkey populations are located primarily in the eastern part of the county between the Wind River and Underwood and below 1,000 feet in elevation, although flocks of turkeys have been reported as far west as Beacon Rock. In most cases, hunters interested in this area will need to contact private landowners. Clark County offers little to no turkey hunting opportunity.

## PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

### **DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)**

601 Bond Road  
PO Box 280  
Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280  
Phone: 360-577-2025  
[pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov)

### **DNR-Southeast Region Office (Klickitat County)**

713 Bowers Road  
Ellensburg, WA 98926-9301  
Phone: 509-925-8510  
[southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov)

Link to purchase DNR quad maps: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/node/506>

### **Gifford Pinchot National Forest**

Mapping Resources: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/giffordpinchot/maps-pubs>

## PRIVATE LAND ACCESS RESOURCES



Fish Hatchery Road Access Property, photo by Monique Ferris, WDFW

### **WDFW PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM**

Public hunting opportunities for different game species are available through the Private Lands Access Program free of charge. The website will list the properties available by county, GMU or type of access allowed such as:

- Feel Free to Hunt
- Register to Hunt
- Hunt by Written Permission
- Hunt by Reservation

**NEW PROPERTIES  
COMING  
SEPTEMBER 2021!**

Each property will designate what species can be hunted. Read each property description carefully and find property maps at: [https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private\\_lands/](https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_lands/)

**\*\* Every year new properties are added or may be removed, frequently check the website for property updates. \*\***

<b>District 9 – Access Program acres as of 7/27/21</b>	<b>73,345 acres</b>
<b>Weyerhaeuser</b> (multiple parcels) - All species allowed, Feel Free to Hunt	<b>6,557 acres</b>
<b>Dillacort Canyon</b> – Deer and Turkey Only, Hunt by Reservation	<b>580 acres</b>
<b>Gun Club</b> – All Species allowed, Feel Free to Hunt	<b>480 acres</b>
<b>Finn Ridge Road</b> - All Species allowed, Feel Free to Hunt	<b>160 acres</b>
<b>Western Pacific Timber</b> - All Species allowed, Feel Free to Hunt	<b>65,400 acres</b>
<b>Fish Hatchery Road</b> – All legal species, Hunt by Reservation	<b>128 acres</b>
<b>Lovers Lane (Disabled only)</b> – Turkey Only, Hunt by Written Permission	<b>40 acres</b>

For Private Lands Access program information within Region 5 contact:

Monique Ferris

(360) 696-6211 ext. 6721

[Monique.ferris@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Monique.ferris@dfw.wa.gov)



Dillacort Canyon Access Program Property in Klickitat County, photo by Monique Ferris, WDFW



## PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

**\*\*NOTES:** Private industrial forestlands are often closed to all recreation from mid-late summer through early fall because of fire danger. Be sure to check on the status of these lands before scouting or hunting. Also, private timberland is often bought-and-sold between timber companies, so be sure to have updated ownership maps. **\*\* As of July 2021, all private forestlands in Klickitat County and eastern Skamania County are CLOSED to all public access due to extreme fire danger.**

### DGS Timber LLC (American Forest Management)

- Generally, allows non-motorized access. Please abide by any signs posted at access points.
- Mainly GMUs 578 and 388.

### Hancock Forest Management (HFM)

- Generally, allows non-motorized access. Please abide by any signs posted at access points.
- Access hotline (509) 364-3331
- Mainly GMUs 578 and 388.

### PacifiCorp

- Own over 15,000 acres within the Lewis River basin that are managed for fish and wildlife and are generally open to non-motorized access.
- See their website for hunting access maps and more information:  
<https://www.pacificorp.com/community/recreation/washington/lewis-river-hunting-access.html>
- Mainly GMUs 554 and 560

### SDS (Stevenson Land Company or Broughton Lumber)

- Generally open to walk-in access, please abide by any posted signs. More information at <http://stevensonlandcompany.com/recreation-opportunities/>
- Mainly GMUs 574 and 578
- Hunters should be aware that certain blocks of SDS lands are now closed to access without written permission from SDS. Additional parcels, particularly around the White Salmon and Snowden areas, are closed to hunting with certain weapon types.

### Weverhaeuser

- Recreational access hotline 866-636-6531 or online: <https://recreation.weverhaeuser.com/> for details and maps.

- Yacolt (Columbia River East)
  - Access is by permit only and permits can be purchased at the website above. Please see the website for details, including maps.
  - GMU 568
- Klickitat County
  - Access is by Recreational Lease only. Please see the website for details, including maps.
  - GMU 578
- 6,557 acres in District 9 are available to hunt without a fee and are listed in the Private Lands Access Program. For details and maps see below.
  - Visit the direct link at:
    - [https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private\\_land/hunt/914/](https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_land/hunt/914/)

### **Western Pacific Timber**

- The majority of these lands are enrolled in WDFW Private Lands Access Program “Feel Free to Hunt”. The lands are open to walk-in access only, except for county roads that run through the property and remain open for motorized access. More information at <http://wptimber.com/about/rules-recreation-policy/>
- Contact the WPT Boise office (208) 343-6074 for closure updates.
- Please refer to the [WDFW Private Lands Access page](#) for more information and maps on hunting the Western Pacific Timber property.
- GMU 388



## Western Pacific Timber



Western Pacific Timber (WPT) maintains more than 65,000 acres of private land open to the public, in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Help us all maintain access to these lands by being a respectful and courteous visitor. Public access to WPT's land is a privilege, not a right. Please treat their lands with respect so this privilege can continue.

### Western Pacific Timber, LLC Rules & Recreation Policy

- All WPT lands in Klickitat County east of Highway 97 are closed to public entry.
- WPT land in Klickitat County, west of Highway 97 is open to non-motorized recreation and snowmobiling. Vehicles are permitted on roads outside of the gated area unless otherwise posted.
- From time to time it is necessary to close areas to public entry due to forest operations; this is for the safety of the public and their contractors/employees. Please respect these temporary closures.
- During periods of extreme fire danger, WPT will close their lands to all public entry. Closures are listed on their website, posted at all gates, and notification is given to the local newspapers.
- Motorized vehicles are not allowed behind any gate, **whether it is open or closed.**
- Do not block gates.
- Camping is allowed for a maximum of 14 consecutive days.
- Please pack out all trash.
- **The following are strictly prohibited:**
  - Fires of any kind
  - Incendiary devices i.e. fireworks, exploding targets, etc.
  - Dumping
  - Commercial gathering of forest products
  - Firewood cutting
  - Damage of any kind to standing timber, existing structures, or roads
  - Mudding

## **Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law**

Help us by reporting vandalism or other violations. The misdeeds of a few may mean loss of access for everyone! For non-emergency poaching/violations call 1-877-933-9847. For poaching in progress and other emergencies, dial 911.

# 2021

ERIC HOLMAN, District Wildlife  
Biologist  
NICHOLLE STEPHENS, Assistant  
District Wildlife Biologist  
MONIQUE FERRIS, Private Lands  
Access Program Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



Elk on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area, submitted by Nicholle Stephens (WDFW)

## **District 10 Hunting Prospects**

Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties

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## DISTRICT 10 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 10 is in southwest Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. Game management units (GMUs) in this district include 501 (Lincoln), 503 (Randle), 504 (Stella), 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 530 (Ryderwood), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). The landscape of this wide area ranges from tidally influenced Columbia River shorelines to Cascade peaks. In the section of this document called “Individual Game Management Unit (gmu) Specifics” you will find details for each GMU including size, the approximate percentage of public land, primary landowners, and access roads.

A high percentage of this district is privately-owned. Private timber companies often limit public access to their lands or sell hunting access permits to a limited number of participants. When planning your hunt, it’s important to understand the recreational access policies of individual timber companies. You can typically find recreational access information on websites or by calling access hotlines. A list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by private industrial timber companies is included at the end of this document.

Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10. Major changes to hunting access in 2015 included a requirement that hunters buy an access permit to hunt on most of Weyerhaeuser land, including the St. Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). Motorized access permits are being sold for between \$250 and \$400, while non-motorized access permits are between \$75 and \$125. Visit their [website](#) for details. Weyerhaeuser does allow free public access on their lands enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program. To locate those lands, visit [Private Lands Hunting Access | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

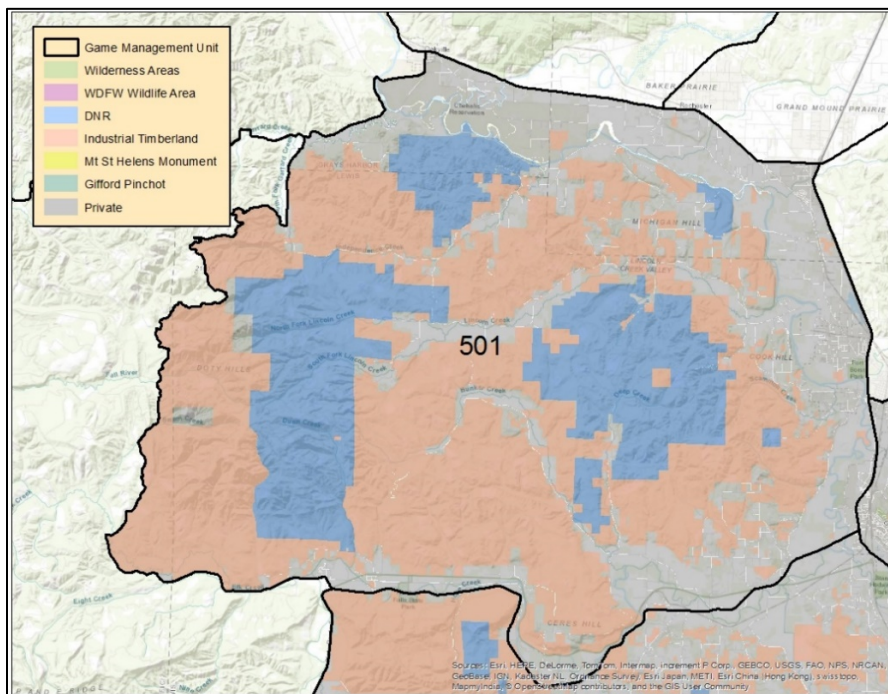
Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting without an access fee, but vehicle access may be limited. Major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Hancock Forest Management, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond (permit fee access), Rayonier (very limited access), and Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management. Access to these lands may be restricted in August, September, and sometimes October due to fire danger. You can find more information about hunting opportunities on private land on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/private-lands>, on page 96 of the [Big Game pamphlet](#), or by using the Mapping Tool at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>

Public land in the district includes WDFW’s Cowlitz and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Areas. You can find details about the Wildlife Areas on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas>. Additionally, there is the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot/> as well as state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) scattered throughout all three counties. Contact this email for more information: [pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov) These state and federal lands are open for public access.

## INDIVIDUAL GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT SPECIFICS

### GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 501 -LINCOLN

GMU 501 is located in the northwestern corner of WDFW Region 5, west of Interstate 5 (I-5), near Chehalis and Centralia, and lies predominantly in Lewis County. The GMU is a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes in the lower elevations and closer to Interstate 5 but transitions quickly into forestlands as elevations increase. The predominant geographic features of GMU 501 are the Chehalis River, Interstate 5, and the Doty Hills. The unit is generally very good for black-tails and poor for elk.

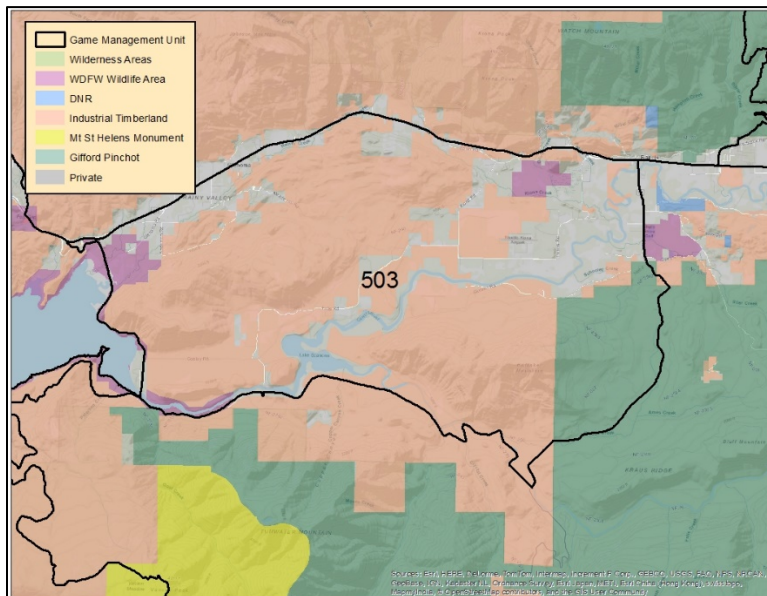


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~35%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~45%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~10%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Small Agricultural Owners</b>
	<b>State and Industrial Forestlands</b>
	<b>Floodplain / Private Agricultural and Residential</b>
	<b>Mix of Flatter Agricultural Areas and Steeper Hills</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Route 6</b>
	<b>Lincoln Creek Road</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Average for ruffed grouse, very good for waterfowl</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 503 -RANDLE

GMU 503 is located east of I-5, near Randle, east of Riffe Lake, South of State Route 12 and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes in the lower elevations, private industrial forestlands, and U.S. Forest Service lands. The Kiona Creek and Kosmos Units of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area also lie within this GMU. The predominant geographic features of GMU 503 are the Cowlitz River, Cispus River, USFS Road 25, and State Route 12. The unit is generally moderately productive for black-tails and elk though its small size and significant amount of private property make access challenging.

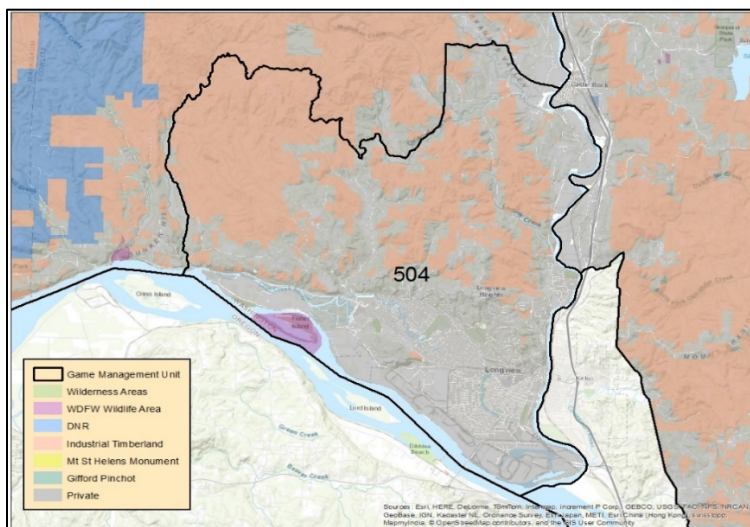


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~20%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~50%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~0%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Small Agricultural Owners</b>
	<b>U.S. Forest Service</b>
	<b>Private Industrial Forestlands</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Floodplain / Private Agricultural and Residential</b>
	<b>U.S. Forest Service Lands</b>
	<b>Forested Hills and Flatter Agricultural Areas</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Route 12</b>
	<b>U.S. Forest Service 25 Road</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Average for ruffed grouse / Low for Waterfowl</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 504 -STELLA

GMU 504 is located west of I-5, lies entirely in Cowlitz County, and includes the city of Longview. The GMU is a mix of urbanized areas, industrialized areas, private agricultural lands, and rural homes in the lower elevations, as well as private industrial forestlands. The Fisher Island Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area also lies within this GMU. The predominant geographic features of GMU 504 are the Columbia River, the City of Longview, and Coal Creek. The unit generally has low productivity for black-tails and elk. Access to the GMU is challenging due to its small size, the predominance of private lands, and urbanized areas. Additionally, the GMU is “Firearm Restricted”, meaning the use of modern firearms for hunting is not allowed. See the annual Big Game Regulations for specific details. Finally, the GMU has a small population of Columbian white-tailed deer in low-elevation areas near the Columbia River. Hunters are reminded that there is no open season for these deer and should check the Big Game Pamphlet for specifics.



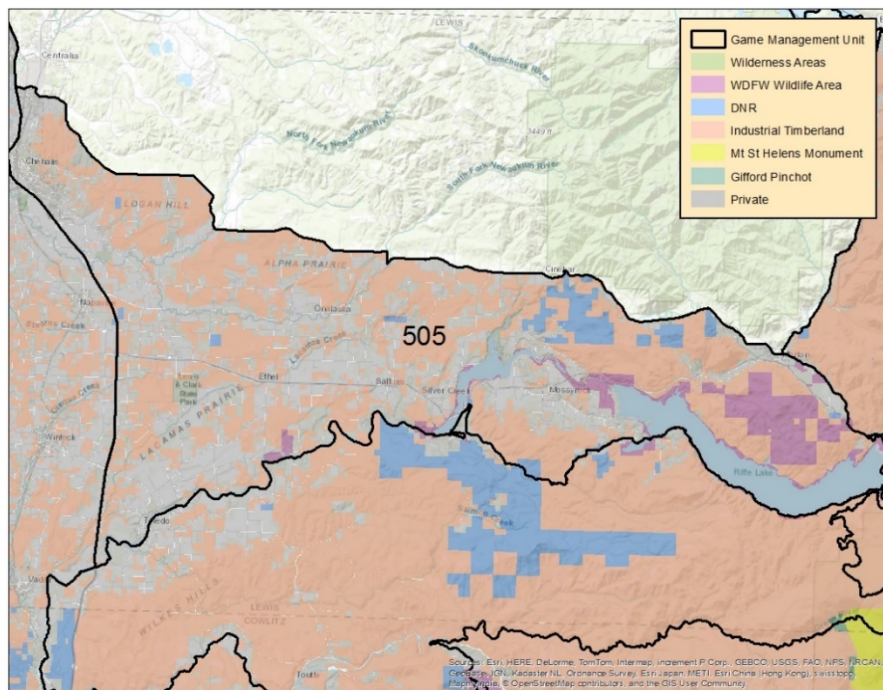
<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~5%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~40%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~35%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Small Agricultural landowners</b>
	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
	<b>Urban/Suburban</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Industrial Forestlands</b>
	<b>Floodplain / Private Agricultural and Urban</b>
	<b>Mix of Forested Hills and Flatter Developed Areas</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Route 4</b>
	<b>Coal Creek Road</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Average for ruffed grouse</b>
	<b>Good for waterfowl</b>



## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 505 -Mossyrock

GMU 505 is located east of I-5, north of the Cowlitz River, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is primarily a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes. The Peterman Hill and Swofford Pond units of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area are also within this GMU. The predominant geographic features of GMU 505 are the Cowlitz River, I-5 and State Route 12, as well as Riffe and Mayfield Lakes. The unit generally has good productivity for black-tailed deer, but only a small elk population. Access to the GMU is challenging due to the predominance of small private landholdings. However, the Peterman Hill Unit of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area does provide access to solid deer hunting opportunities.



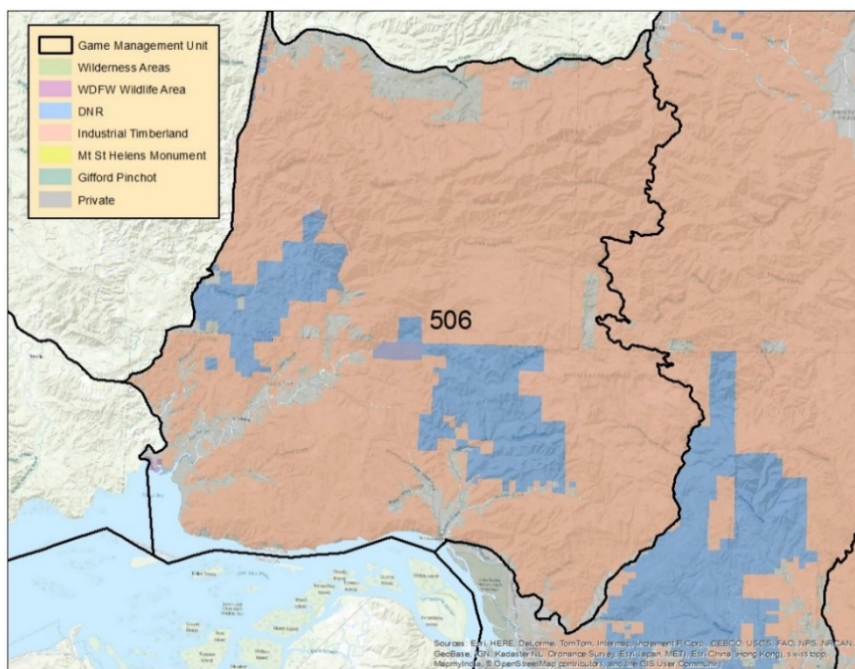
<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~20%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~45%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~5%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Small Agricultural Owners</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Agricultural</b>
	<b>Private Industrial and State Forestlands</b>
	<b>Mostly Flatter or Rolling Topography</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>Some Steeper, Rugged Terrain</b>
	<b>State Route 12</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Peterman Hill Road</b>
	<b>Good for ruffed grouse</b>
	<b>Modest for waterfowl</b>



## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 506 -Willapa Hills

GMU 506 is located west of I-5 at the western margin of WDFW Region 5 and lies in a combination of Wahkiakum, Pacific, and Lewis counties. The GMU is primarily private industrial and DNR forestlands with a small amount of private agricultural lands and rural homes on the valley floors. The predominant geographic features of GMU 506 are the Willapa Hills themselves, the Gray's River / Gray's Bay, the Willapa River, as well as State Routes 4 and 6. The unit has good productivity for blacktailed deer and a strong elk population. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.

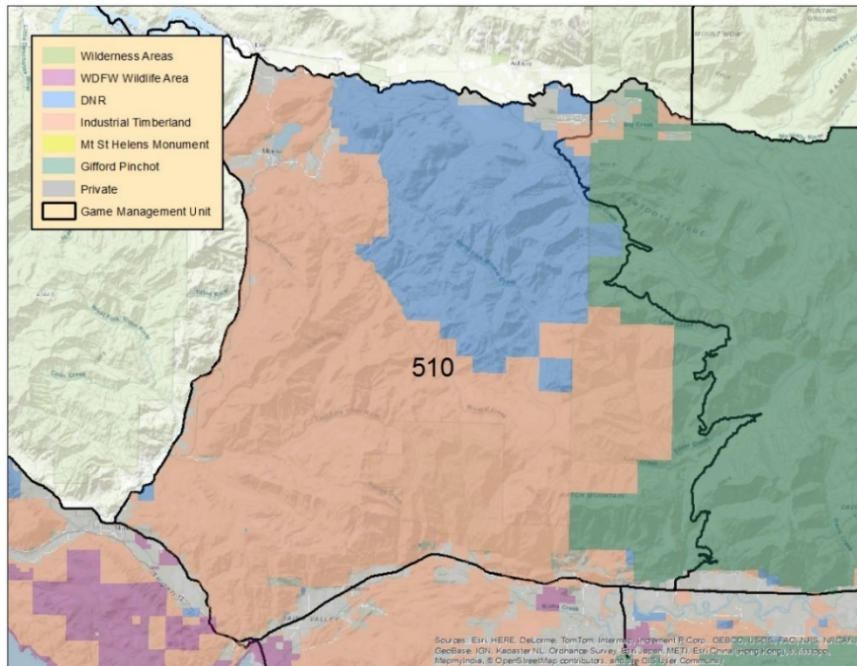


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~30%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~60%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~0%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Hancock</b>
	<b>Rayonier</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Industrial and State Forestlands</b>
	<b>Mostly Rugged Mountainous Terrain</b>
	<b>Limited Flatter, Valley Floor Topography</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Routes 4 and 6</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed grouse</b>
	<b>Good for Waterfowl</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 510 -Stormking

GMU 510 is located in northern WDFW Region 5, north of State Route 12, east of State Route 7, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is primarily a mix of private industrial forestlands, DNR forestlands, and USFS-managed lands. The predominant geographic features of GMU 510 are the Tilton River, Stormking Mountain, and Kiona Peak. The unit is generally low in productivity for blacktailed deer and elk.

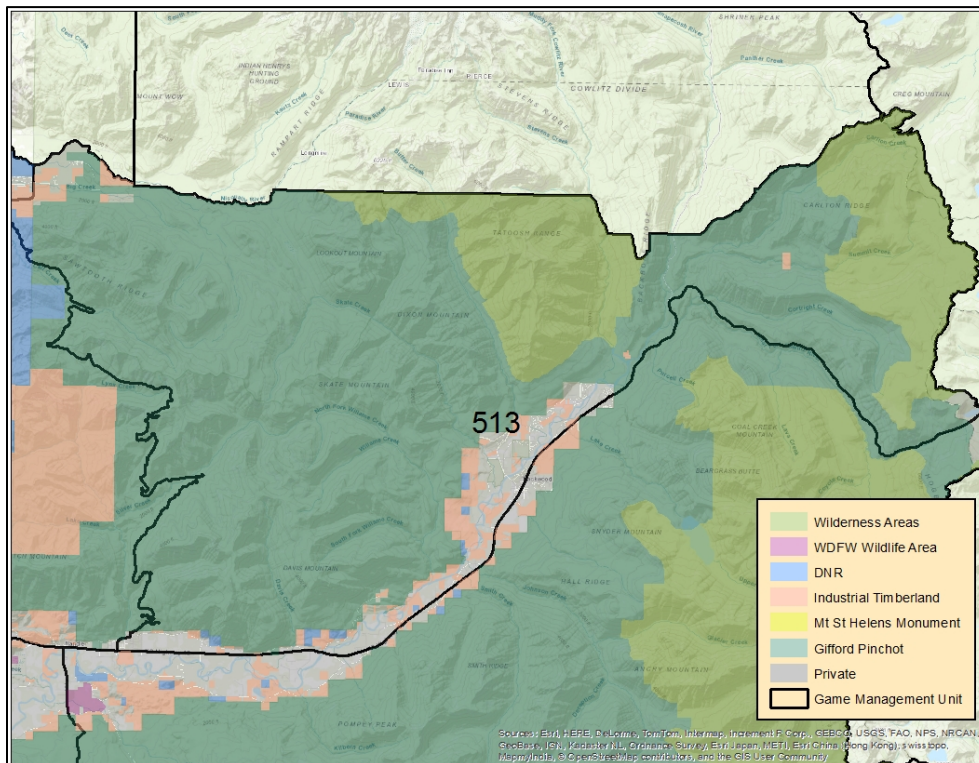


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~50%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~45%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~0%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Hancock</b>
	<b>Sierra Pacific</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Industrial, State, and US Forest Service Forestlands</b>
	<b>Rugged mountainous terrain</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Routes 7 and 12</b>
	<b>USFS Road 47</b>
	<b>DNR Road 1</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed and Sooty Grouse</b>
	<b>Poor for waterfowl</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 513 -South Rainier

GMU 513 is in the northeastern corner of WDFW Region 5, north of State Route 12, south of Mt. Rainier National Park, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is nearly entirely managed by the USFS except for a narrow band of private lands along State Route 12 and the Cowlitz River. The predominant geographic features of GMU 513 are the Cowlitz River, Sawtooth Ridge, Skate Mountain, and Carlton Ridge. Two USFS wilderness areas are found within GMU 513; Tatoosh and William O. Douglas. The unit is generally low in productivity for blacktailed deer and elk.



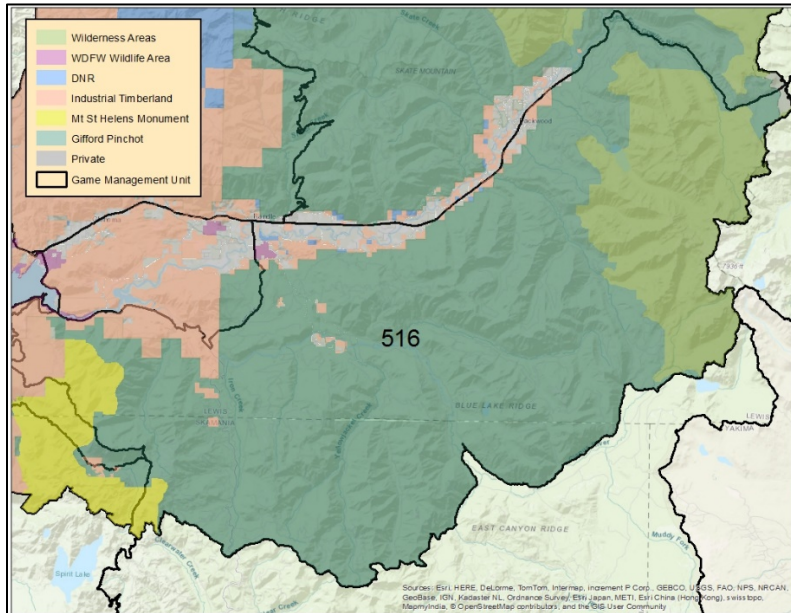
<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~95%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~0%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~0%</b>
<b>Percent Wilderness</b>	<b>~20%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>U.S. Forest Service</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>US Forest Service Forestlands</b>
	<b>Rugged mountainous terrain including wilderness</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Route 12</b>
	<b>USFS Road 47</b>
	<b>Pacific Crest Trail</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed and sooty grouse</b>
	<b>Poor for waterfowl</b>



## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 516 -Packwood

GMU 516 is a very large unit located in the northeastern portion of WDFW Region 5, south of State Route 12, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is nearly entirely managed by the USFS except for a narrow band of private lands along State Route 12. The predominant geographic features of GMU 516 are the Cowlitz River, Cispus River, and Goat Rocks Wilderness. The unit is generally low in productivity for blacktailed deer and elk.

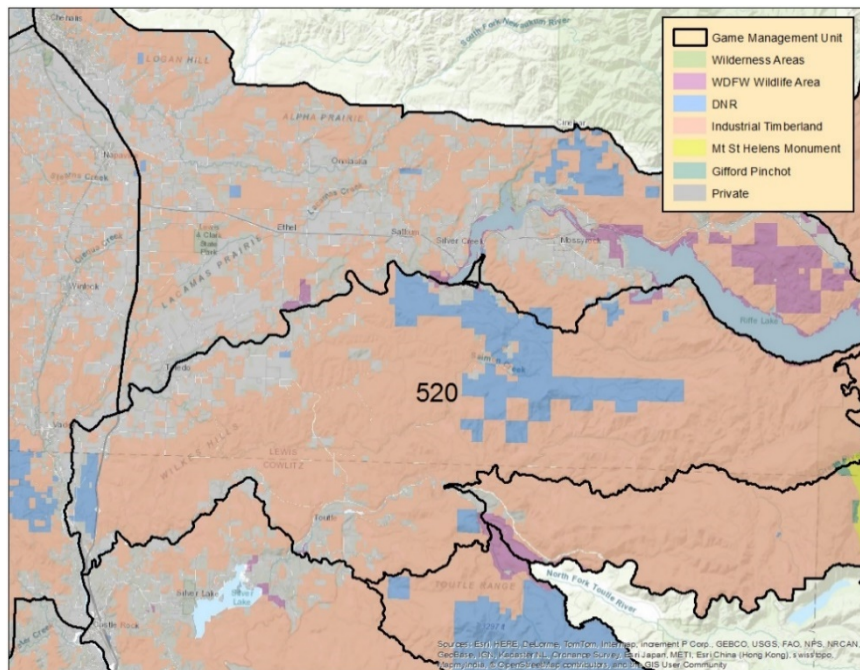


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>538</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~95%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~2%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~0%</b>
<b>Percent Wilderness</b>	<b>~20%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>U.S. Forest Service</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>US Forest Service Forestlands</b>
	<b>Rugged mountainous terrain including wilderness</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Route 12</b>
	<b>USFS Roads 20 and 23</b>
	<b>Pacific Crest Trail</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed and sooty grouse</b>
	<b>Poor for waterfowl</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 520 -Winston

GMU 520 is located east of I-5, lying primarily between the Cowlitz and Toutle/Green Rivers. The unit sits primarily in Lewis County but is partially within both Cowlitz and Skamania counties as well. The GMU is primarily private industrial forestlands with a modest amount of DNR lands, a small area of USFS at its extreme eastern margin, and rural homes and agricultural areas in the northwestern part of the Unit. The predominant geographic features of GMU 520 are the Toutle River, Green River, Cowlitz River/Riffe Lake, as well as Salmon Creek. The unit has good productivity for both blacktailed deer and elk. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.



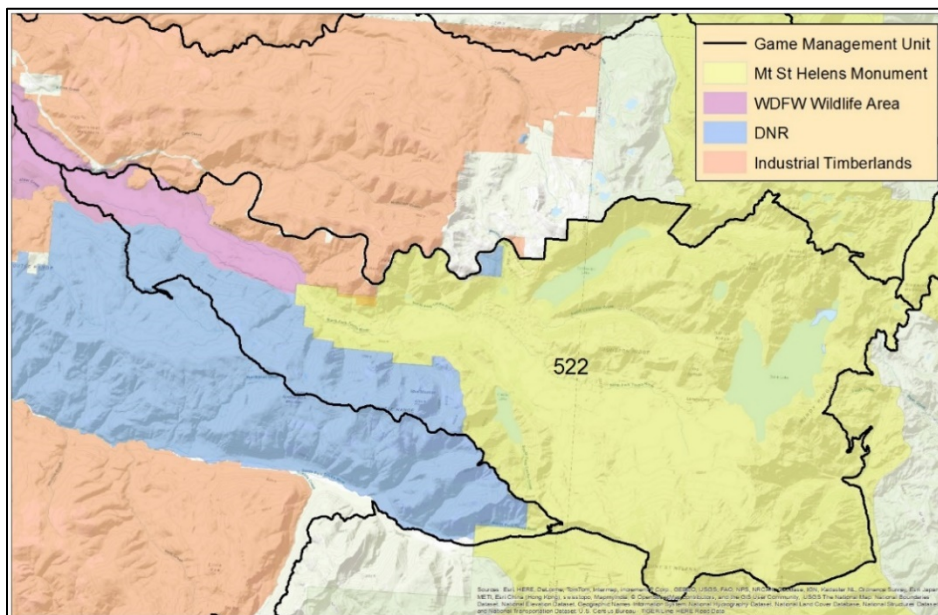
<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~20%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~75%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~2%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
	<b>Olympic Resource Management</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Industrial Forestlands</b>
	<b>mountainous terrain</b>
	<b>Flatter in the western portion of GMU</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Routes 505 and 12</b>
	<b>Winston Creek Road</b>
	<b>Weyerhaeuser 1900</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed grouse</b>
	<b>Poor for waterfowl</b>



## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 522 -Loo-Wit

GMU 522 is a small unit located in the central portion of WDFW Region 5, south of State Route 12, and lies within Skamania and Cowlitz counties. The GMU is dominated by the USFS Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, with much smaller portions owned/managed by DNR, Weyerhaeuser, and WDFW. The Mudflow and Hoffstadt Units of WDFW’s St. Helens Wildlife Area lie partially within GMU 522. The predominant geographic features of GMU 522 are Mt. St. Helens and the North Fork Toutle River. Recreational access to the unit is severely limited by the policies of the Monument, which are in place to protect the valuable ecological features of the recovering Mt. St. Helens landscape. **The unit is closed to hunting with the exceptions of elk and mountain goat hunting on a permit-only basis.**

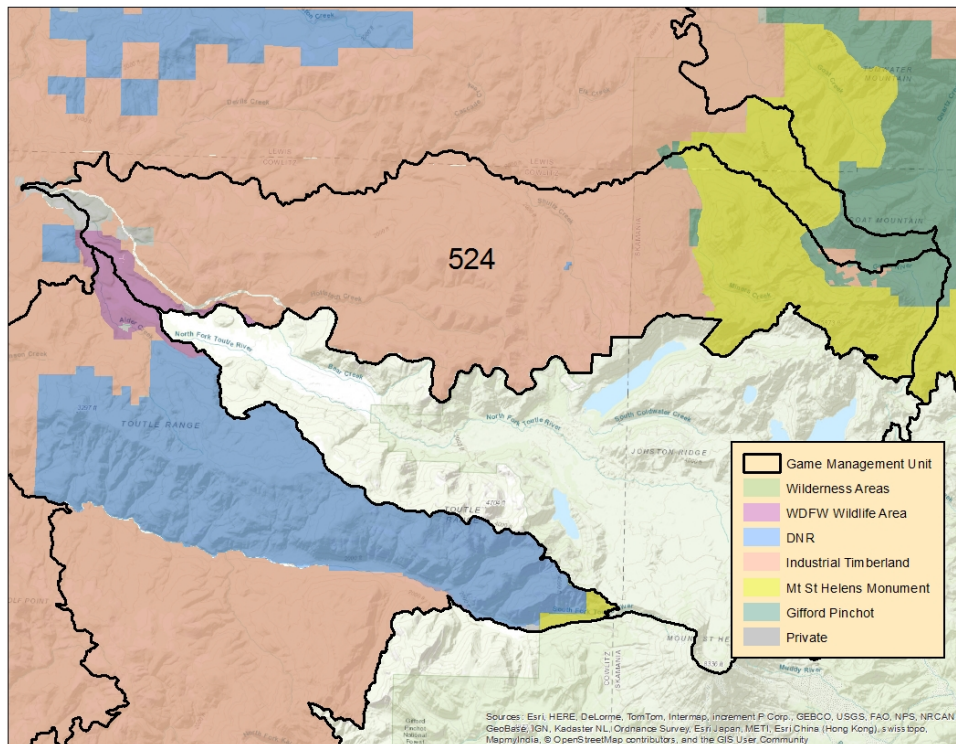


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~95%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~5%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>0%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>U.S. Forest Service St. Helens Monument</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
	<b>WDFW</b>
	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Mt. St. Helens Blast Zone and Mudflow</b>
	<b>DNR / Private Industrial Forestlands</b>
	<b>Remote Mountainous Terrain</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Route 504</b>
	<b>U.S. Forest Service Road 26/99</b>
	<b>DNR 3000 Road</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Closed Season for these Species</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 524 -Margaret

GMU 524 is a small Unit located in the central portion of WDFW Region 5, south of the Green River, and lies primarily within Cowlitz and Skamania counties. GMU ownership is dominated by Weyerhaeuser, the USFS Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, a small area of private industrial forestland, and a small portion of WDFW's St. Helens Wildlife Area. The predominant geographic features of GMU 524 are the Green River and the Mt. Margaret Backcountry. The easternmost portion of the unit (as defined by Elk Area 5066) is closed to general-season elk hunting. Hunting in this portion of the GMU is instead offered on a permit-only basis.

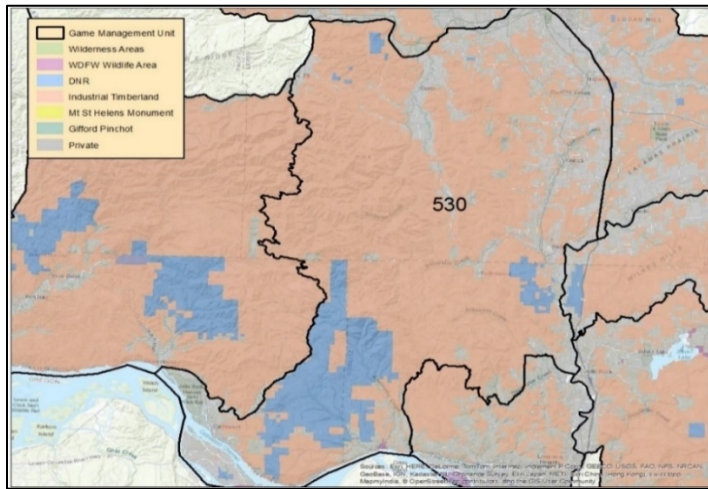


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~20%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~75%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>Zero</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
	<b>U.S. Forest Service St. Helens Monument</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Industrial Forestlands</b>
	<b>Mt. Margaret Backcountry</b>
	<b>Remote Mountainous Terrain</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Route 504</b>
	<b>Weyerhaeuser 1100</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed grouse</b>
	<b>Poor for Waterfowl</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 530 Ryderwood

GMU 530 is located along the western side of I-5 from roughly Castle Rock to Chehalis and lies in a combination of Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. The GMU is primarily private industrial and DNR forestlands but contains private agricultural lands and rural homes on the valley floors and Puget Island. The predominant geographic features of GMU 530 are the Willapa Hills, the Columbia and Chehalis rivers, as well as State Routes 4 and 6. The unit has very good productivity for blacktailed deer and a good elk population. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands. The GMU has a population of Columbian white-tailed deer in low elevation areas near the Columbia River, especially in the vicinity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the deer and on Puget Island. Hunters are reminded that there is no open season for these deer and should check the Big Game Pamphlet for specifics.



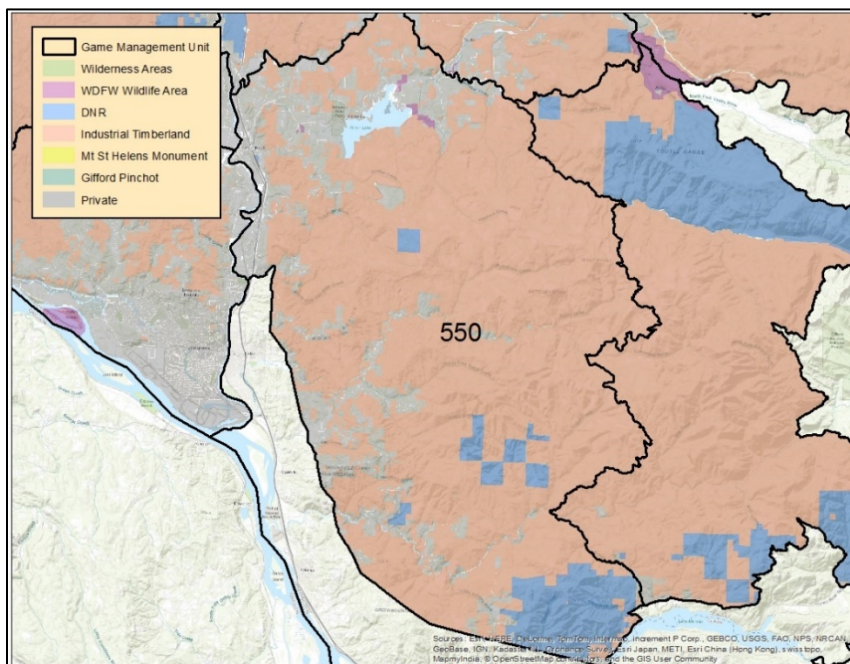
<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>541</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~20%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~70%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~5%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Sierra Pacific</b>
	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
	<b>Small Private / Agricultural</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Industrial and DNR Forestlands</b>
	<b>Floodplain / Private / Agricultural</b>
	<b>Mountainous Terrain</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Routes 4 and 6 and 506</b>
	<b>Boistfort Road</b>
	<b>Germany Creek Road</b>
	<b>Abernathy Creek Road</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed grouse</b>
	<b>Good for waterfowl</b>



## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 550 Coweeman

GMU 550 is located east of I-5, south of State Route 504 in the Cascade Mountain foothills. The unit sits entirely within Cowlitz County. The GMU is primarily private industrial forestlands with a modest amount of DNR lands as well as rural homes and agricultural areas mostly in the northwestern part of the unit. The predominant geographic features of GMU 550 are Silver Lake, the Coweeman and Kalama Rivers, Cowlitz River, as well as Baird Mountain and Georges Peak. The unit has very good productivity for blacktailed deer and good productivity for elk. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.

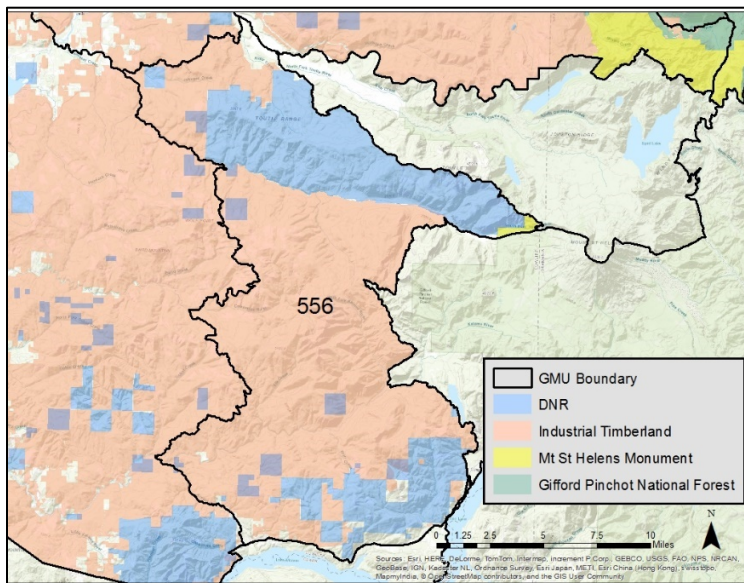


<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>347</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~15%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~80%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>~5%</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
	<b>Small Private / Agricultural</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Industrial and DNR Forestlands</b>
	<b>Floodplain / Private / Agricultural</b>
	<b>Mountainous Terrain</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Routes 504</b>
	<b>Weyerhaeuser 4700, 6100, 6300</b>
	<b>Kalama River Road</b>
	<b>Rose Valley Road</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed grouse</b>
	<b>Modest for waterfowl</b>

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 556 Toutle

GMU 556 is located east of I-5, in the upper watersheds of the Kalama, Coweeman, and South Fork Toutle rivers. The unit sits entirely within Cowlitz County. The GMU is largely private industrial forestlands but does have a meaningful amount of DNR lands in the northern and southern portions of the unit. The predominant geographic features of GMU 556 are The South Fork Toutle, Coweeman, and Kalama Rivers; as well as Lakeview Peak and Elk, Big Bull, and Little Cow Mountains. The unit has modest productivity for black-tails and good productivity for elk. **Hunters should note that all elk hunting in GMU 556 Toutle is by Special Permit Only -- there are no General Seasons for elk.** In 2021, the boundary between the Toutle and Yale GMUS was adjusted to simplify hunting regulations. The new boundary on the southern end of the Toutle GMU now follows Lewis River Road. Access to the Toutle GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.



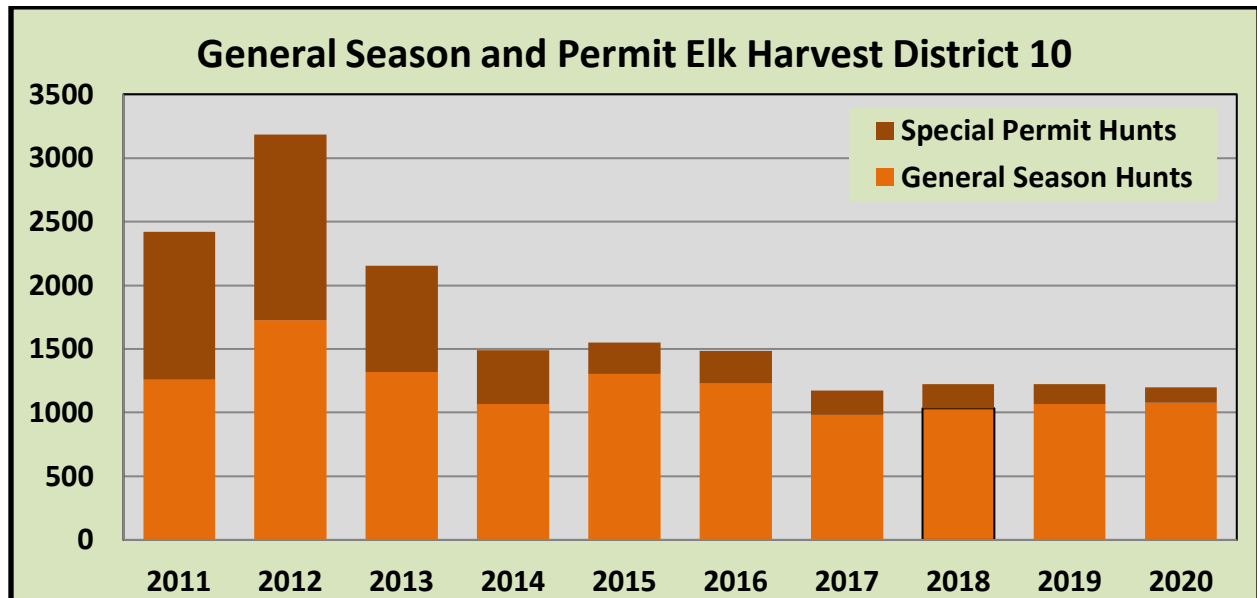
<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Percent Public Land</b>	<b>~35%</b>
<b>Percent Industrial Forestland</b>	<b>~65%</b>
<b>Percent Urban/Sub-Urban</b>	<b>Zero</b>

<b>Primary Landowners</b>	<b>Weyerhaeuser</b>
	<b>DNR</b>
<b>Habitat / Terrain</b>	<b>Private Industrial and DNR Forestlands</b>
	<b>Mountainous Terrain</b>
<b>Primary Access Points</b>	<b>State Routes 503 and 504</b>
	<b>DNR 4200 and 4250 Roads</b>
	<b>Weyerhaeuser 4950, 5500, 7200, 1400 and 6600</b>
	<b>Rock Creek Road</b>
<b>Small Game / Waterfowl</b>	<b>Good for ruffed and sooty grouse</b>
	<b>Poor for waterfowl</b>



## ELK

Historically, District 10 has been among the leaders in statewide elk harvest. The highest general season harvests in 2020 occurred in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills), 530 (Ryderwood), 520 (Winston), and 550 (Coweeman). There are also many permit hunts in District 10, which are offered to manage the elk population, address agricultural damage caused by elk, and provide recreational opportunity. Additionally, two GMUs – 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle) – are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In 2020, 1,079 elk were harvested during the general season in addition to 121 elk harvested by permit in District 10. Elk found west of I- 5 are considered to be of the Roosevelt sub-species, while those in the Cascade Mountain Range are of mixed origin. Specifically, Cascade elk are a genetic combination of native Roosevelt elk and introduced Rocky Mountain elk. The Figure below shows the trend in District 10 elk harvest over the past ten years and how this harvest is divided among general and permit seasons.



Additional metrics help decide where to begin scouting for an elk hunting location. The below table includes elk harvest, percentage success, number of hunters, number of hunters per square mile, elk harvest per square mile, and the percentage of harvest comprised of five-point or larger bulls. The data are listed by GMU and presented for the four-year averages of the 2017-20 hunting seasons. Data represent modern firearm general seasons only.

Elk Hunting Statistics; WDFW District 10						
Modern Firearm General Seasons 2017-20 4-Year Averages						
GMU	Elk Harvest	Percent Success Hunters	Hunters / SQ Mile	Elk Harvest / SQ Mile	Percent of Bulls 5-PT.	
501 (Lincoln) *	19	8.5	212	0.9	0.08	0.67
503 (Randle)	9	4.7	156	2.8	0.16	0.53
504 (Stella) *	7	11.1	77	0.8	0.08	0.25
505 (Mossyrock)	14	6.2	223	0.8	0.05	0.88
506 (Willapa Hills)	121	14.8	819	2.2	0.33	0.41
510 (Stormking)	13	7.6	167	0.8	0.06	0.76
513 (South Rainier)	14	6.9	213	0.9	0.06	0.80
516 (Packwood)	28	4.0	712	1.3	0.05	0.48
520 (Winston)	76	8.8	882	3.0	0.25	0.60
524 (Margaret)	26	8.7	297	3.1	0.27	0.64
530 (Ryderwood)	89	11.4	796	1.5	0.16	0.53
550 (Coweeman)	57	7.0	809	2.3	0.16	0.53
WDFW District 10 **	478	8.7	5263	1.6	0.14	0.52
* = Antlerless Elk Included in Harvest in GMUs 501 and 504, All Others Are Bulls Only						
** GMUs 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle) Not Included; All Elk Hunting in These GMUS is by Special Permit Only						

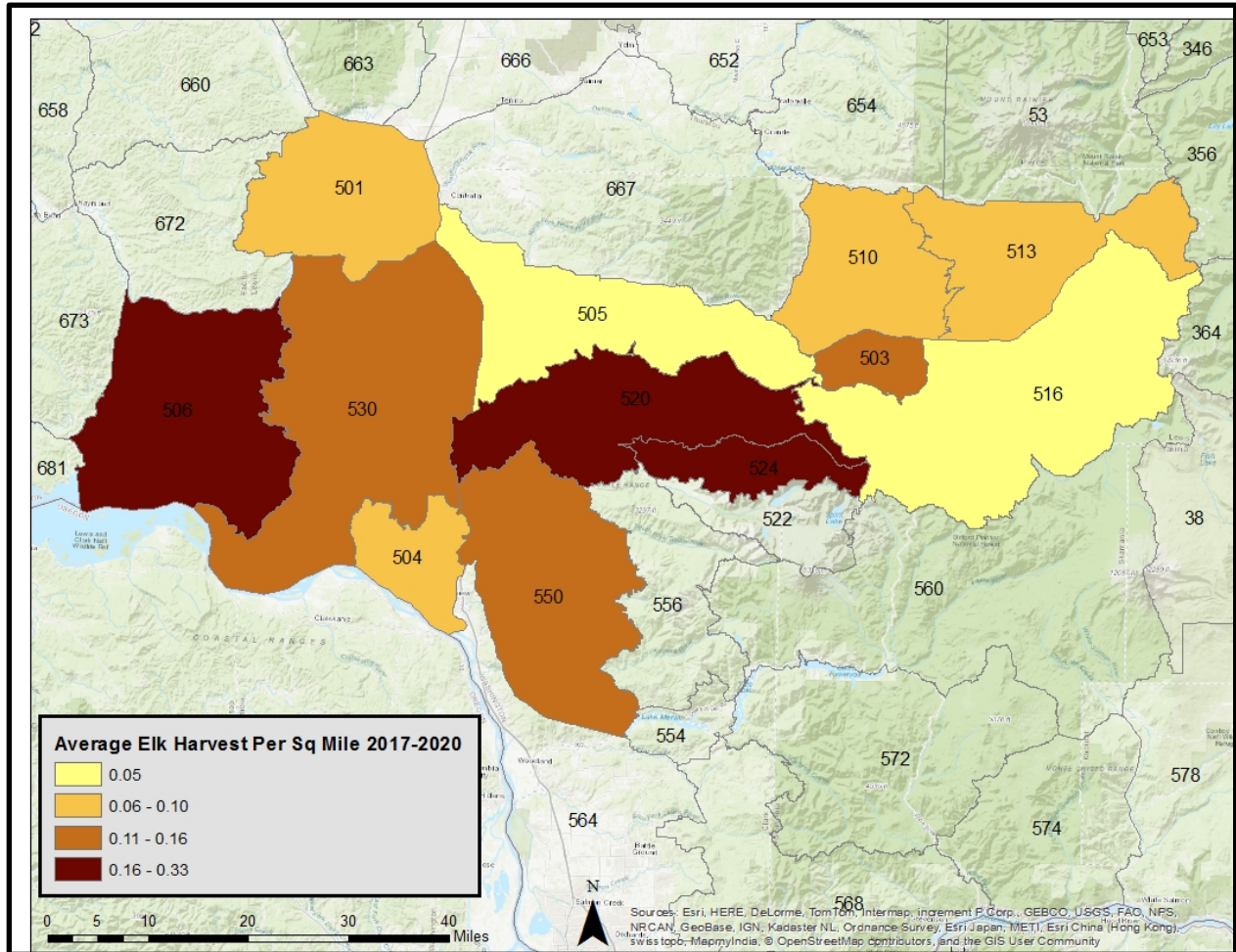
## ELK POPULATION INFORMATION

Elk populations in the game management units including the Mount St. Helens elk herd area are down from historic highs during the mid-2000s. This population reduction was implemented per the objectives of the [St. Helens Elk Herd Plan](#). Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity, combined with several years of late-winter and spring storms, reduced the elk population in these GMUs. Elk within the St. Helens herd typically lack large fat reserves to help with long, hard winters. Additionally, TAHD is common in District 10 elk. Female elk suffering from this debilitating condition have been documented to have lower pregnancy rates, poorer body condition, and lower survival rates than healthy elk in the same landscape (WDFW-Unpublished Data).

Survey efforts conducted during the spring of 2018 and 2019, indicate that the Mount St. Helens elk herd has stabilized at a population level of about 1,000 adult elk in the area used to index the population. Unfortunately, the 2020 and 2021 surveys were canceled due to safety-related work restrictions in association with the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the lack of up-to-date survey information, the most recent data available points toward an elk population that is below objectives and well below historic highs. Therefore, hunters should expect a generally less productive elk hunting season during the 2021 hunt. WDFW has reduced antlerless hunting opportunities accordingly.

Elk population surveys in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills) and 530 (Ryderwood) are conducted on an every-other-year basis and were most recently completed in spring 2020. Surveys conducted in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 indicate stable elk populations in GMUs 506 and 530. Severe winter conditions rarely cause population-level impacts on Willapa elk populations. Hunting opportunities and success rates should be similar to recent years.

The general bull elk season is always challenging, but the District 10 elk population produces a harvest of nearly 1,000 bull elk annually, and those hunters who put in the effort and remain focused may be rewarded with success. See below for an illustration of the average elk harvest per square mile during 2017-20 seasons, by GMU in WDFW District 10 during the modern firearm general season. Note that GMUs 522 and 556 are excluded because all elk hunting in these two units is by special permit only.



### Additional resources for those interested in District 10 elk

You can find annual Harvest Reports for deer and elk based on hunter reporting on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest>. For more information regarding elk management in the Mount St. Helens, Willapa Hills, and South Rainier elk herd areas, review the Elk Status and Trend Reports on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans>.





Photo by Sam Kolb (WDFW)



Photo submitted by Frank Gordon

### Elk scouting strategies

Use the Hunting Regulations Mapping Tool at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/> to look at aerial photos to identify recent clear-cuts and drainages. You can do some preseason scouting on the commercial tree farms by bike or on foot, as most areas will not be open to motorized access yet. Motorized access and camping are available on DNR lands unless there is a high fire danger. Prospective elk hunters should keep in mind that the animals often prefer cooler, wetter areas during times of warmer weather, and are more often active during dawn and dusk.



Bull elk in GMU 556 photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)



Elk taken in GMU 520 photo by Lisa Hallock (WDFW)

## TREPONEME-ASSOCIATED HOOF DISEASE OF ELK

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range. While elk are susceptible to many conditions which result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and western Lewis County. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### How hunters can help:

In 2021, WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program to encourage west-side (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. The objective of this program is to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can choose to participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in western Washington. See the WDFW website for the locations of collection sites. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in western Washington with season dates of Sep. 1 – Dec 31 will be awarded. Additionally, all participants will receive a custom, waterproof license holder.



So, what can hunters do to help?

- **Harvest a limping elk from any 400, 500, 600 series GMUs**
- **Turn in your elk hooves along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in western Washington**
- **Report elk:** Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form.
- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/and Washington State University's website](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/and_Washington_State_University's_website). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.



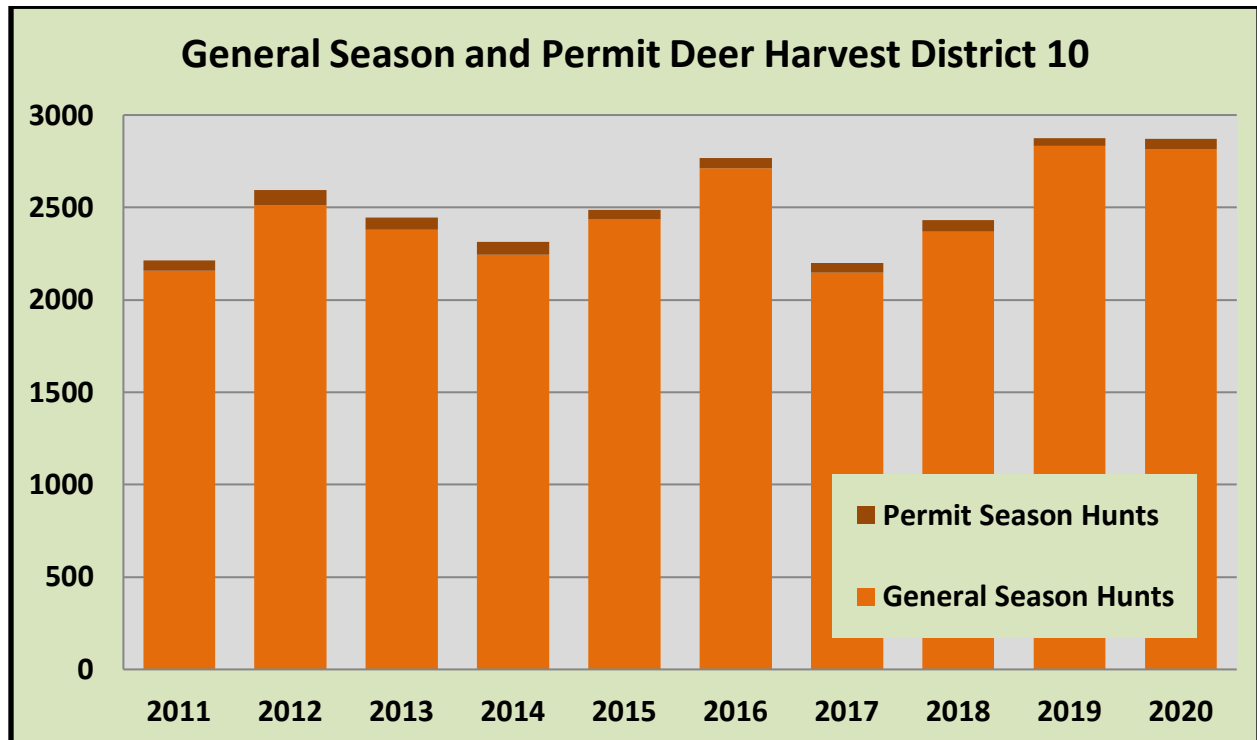
WDFW Research on Hoof Disease photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)



Study elk captured in GMU 550 photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)

## DEER

Several GMUs in District 10 are among the best in the state for black-tailed deer harvest. The highest 2020 general-season buck harvests within District 10 occurred in GMUs 550 (Coweeman), 520 (Winston), 530 (Ryderwood), 501 (Lincoln), 505 (Mossyrock) and 506 (Willapa Hills). The majority of the harvest occurs during general seasons, with a small portion of the harvest occurring during special permit seasons (see figure below). For more information on deer in District 10, see the annual [Game Status and Trend Report](#) on the WDFW website.



Additional metrics help decide where to begin scouting for a deer hunting location. The below table includes buck harvest, percentage success, number of hunters, number of hunters per square mile, buck harvest per square mile, and the percentage of harvest comprised of 3-point or larger bucks. The data are listed by GMU and presented for the four-year averages of the 2017-20 hunting seasons. Data represent modern firearm general seasons only.

Blacktail Buck Hunting Statistics; WDFW District 10						
Modern Firearm General Seasons 2017-20 4-Year Averages						
GMU	Buck Harvest	Percent Success	Hunters	Hunters / SQ MI	Buck Harvest / SQ Mile	Percent Bucks 3 PT. +
501 (Lincoln)	218	24.8	881	3.8	0.94	33%
503 (Randle)	42	15.2	268	4.8	0.75	40%
504 (Stella)	44	29.3	148	1.5	0.46	41%
505 (Mossyrock)	192	25.1	777	2.6	0.65	36%
506 (Willapa Hills)	203	23.8	841	2.3	0.55	28%
510 (Stormking)	44	13.9	314	1.5	0.21	51%
513 (South Rainier)	21	10.6	202	0.8	0.09	45%
516 (Packwood)	57	9.5	596	1.1	0.11	36%
520 (Winston)	295	25.2	1170	3.9	0.99	30%
524 (Margaret)	24	17.1	135	1.4	0.25	42%
530 (Ryderwood)	336	25.1	1331	2.5	0.62	32%
550 (Coweeman)	384	27.4	1436	4.1	1.11	30%
556 (Toutle)	142	20.2	689	3.1	0.63	26%
WDFW District 10	2001	20.5	8788	2.5	0.56	32%

Black-tailed deer populations are stable to increasing in District 10. The annual harvest of more than 2,000 bucks for all user groups combined has been typical for many years. The severe winter of 2016-17 caused some deer mortality and led to a decline in harvest in the 2017 season. The recent winters have been mild, and deer hunting opportunity should again be good in 2021.

Hunting for black-tailed deer is often best near the end of the general season when conditions improve for stalking and moving through the woods in heavily vegetated western Washington. The best opportunity often occurs during the late buck hunt, when favorable stalking and weather conditions combine with the breeding season or rut. The 2021 late buck season runs Nov. 18-21. Black-tailed deer generally favor dense vegetation and have small home ranges. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer.

See below for an illustration of the average buck harvest per square mile during the seasons of 2017-20, by GMU in WDFW District 10 during the modern firearm general season. Note that GMU 522 (Loo-Wit) is not included as this unit closed to deer hunting.



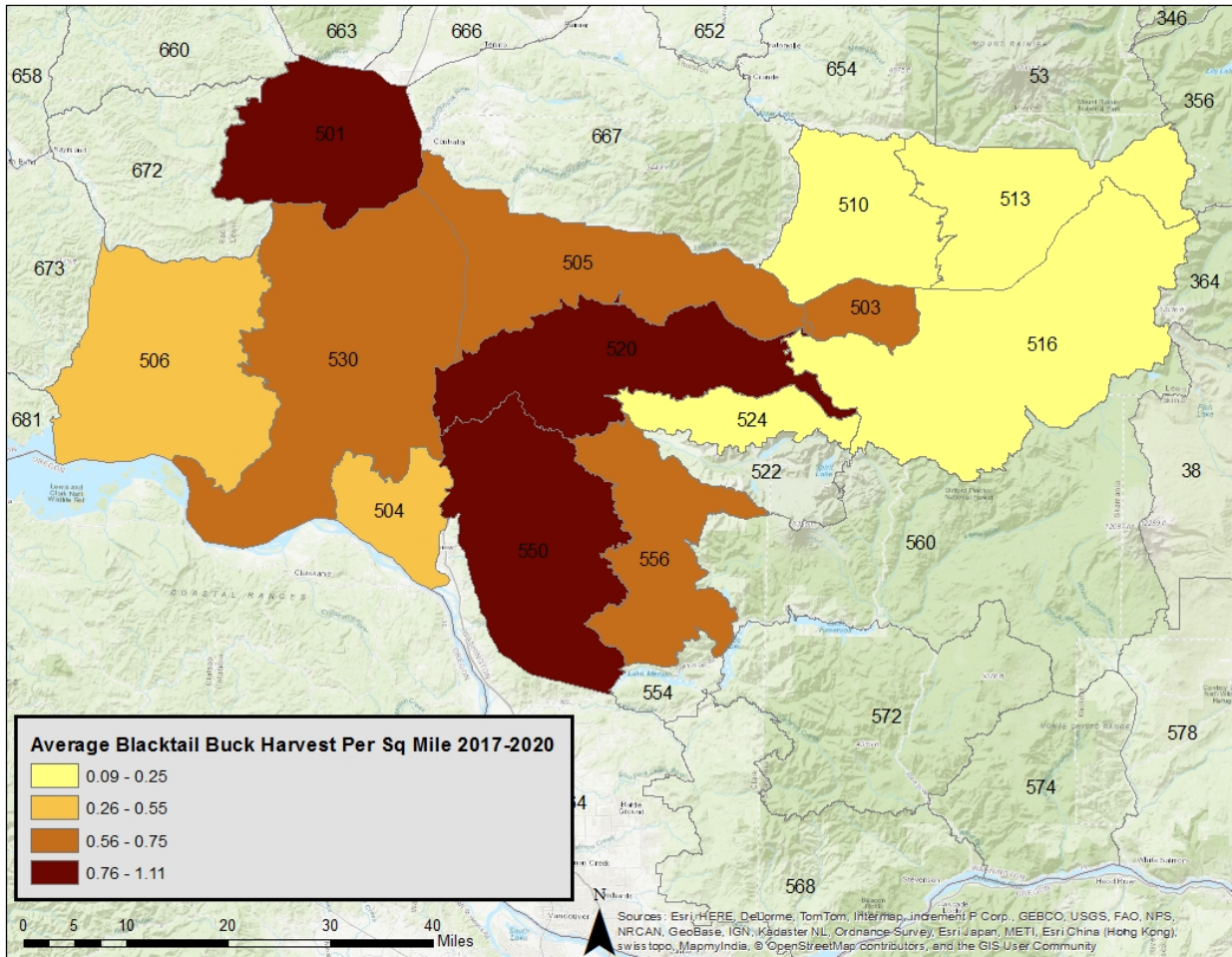


Photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)





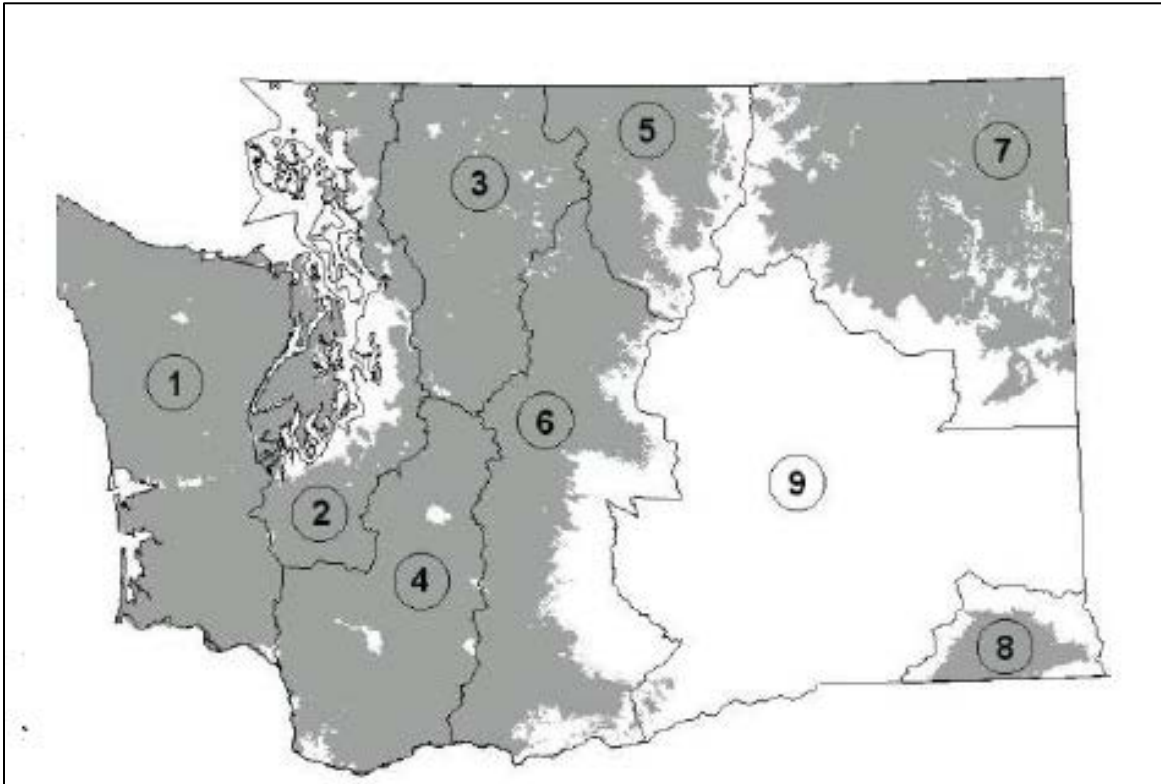
District 10 black-tailed buck submitted by Dan Howell



District 10 black-tailed buck submitted by Tom Rhodes (WDFW)

## BEAR

District 10 makes up part of both the South Cascades and Coastal Bear Management Units (BMU) for the fall bear hunting season which is open from Aug. 1-Nov. 15. There currently are no spring bear hunting opportunities in District 10.



Black bear distribution in gray and 9 Black Bear Management Units in Washington

Harvest numbers and hunter success in 2020 were down from 2019 but were similar to 2018. See table below for harvest numbers and hunter success by GMU. For more information on the management of black bears in Washington, including the Coastal and South Cascades management zones, see the Status and Trend Report on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans>.

Successful bear hunters must submit a premolar tooth to WDFW. See page 68 of the [Big Game pamphlet](#) for details.

Hunting for black bears is challenging, but also can be rewarding. Hunters should try a variety of methods, including targeting areas of favored foods like huckleberries, blackberries, cascara trees, etc. Other methods include glassing clear cuts or alpine areas at dawn and dusk, as well as predator calling.



## Black Bear Harvest in District 10 2018-2020

GMU	2020		2019		2018	
	Total Harvest	Hunter Success	Total Harvest	Hunter Success	Total Harvest	Hunter Success
501 - Lincoln	12	5%	27	15%	16	10%
504 - Stella	7	19%	7	20%	5	19%
506 - Willapa Hills	23	8%	25	8%	19	7%
530 - Ryderwood	26	7%	25	7%	20	6%
503 - Randle	2	2%	6	8%	0	0%
505 - Mossyrock	12	11%	9	8%	11	7%
510 - Stormking	5	6%	6	9%	4	4%
513 - South Rainier	12	8%	22	16%	6	4%
516 - Packwood	9	3%	19	7%	16	5%
520 - Winston	3	1%	32	10%	8	3%
524 - Margaret	7	9%	0	0%	2	3%
550 - Coweeman	12	4%	16	5%	6	3%
556 - Toutle	4	4%	3	2%	0	0%



Black bear in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest near Mt St Helens. Photo by Nicholle Stephens (WDFW)

## COUGAR

In 2020-21, hunters harvested 13 cougars in the GMUs that make up District 10. Cougar hunting in this region is managed under a harvest guideline designed not exceed harvest of 12-16% of the adult population annually. The season consists of an early (Sept. 1-Dec. 31) and late (Jan. 1-April 30) hunt period. The harvest guideline may be achieved during the early hunt period, and prospective hunters should visit the cougar hunting page of the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/big-game/cougar> to assure that the season in their prospective area remains open.

Most cougar hunting in western Washington occurs as an additional opportunity concurrent with deer and elk hunting. Hunters who want to harvest cougars should focus on areas with concentrations of deer and elk. Fresh snow facilitates tracking, and hunters may want to try predator calling.



Photo from Nicholle Stephens, Brooke George, and Eric Holman (WDFW)



## MOUNTAIN GOAT

The southern Washington Cascade Mountains support a robust population of mountain goats. Areas with goat populations span the boundaries of WDFW districts. Specifically, the Goat Rocks population lies in both Districts 8 and 10, while the Mount St. Helens population lies in Districts 9 and 10.

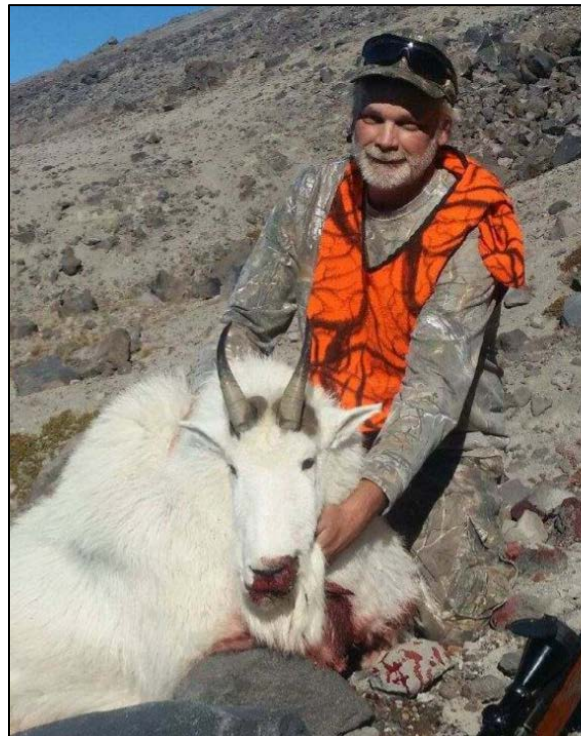
Goat populations in the Goat Rocks area have dipped in recent years and currently stand at roughly 200. Tag numbers have been adjusted downward and hunters fortunate enough to draw these permits should still enjoy a successful hunt. The Goat Rocks area has been divided into two hunt areas. Selected hunters need to review the boundaries of the hunt areas before going afield.

For the first time in many decades, mountain goat permits are available for the Mount St. Helens population. Goats have re-colonized the area following the 1980 eruption and the population is now approximately 250 goats. For hunting management, two hunt areas have been delineated and one tag has been awarded in each area, each year, since 2018.

Successful draw applicants for all hunt areas will receive a letter with additional details regarding hunt areas, mandatory checking requirements, mandatory goat identification training, biological sample collection, and more.



Goat Rocks Mountain Goat photo provided by Kristina Luttrell



Mount St. Helens Mountain Goat photo provided by Jim Rich





Mt. Margaret Backcountry goat provided by Nate Corley



Mt. St. Helens goat provided by Brad Crocco

## PHEASANT



WDFW releases pheasants multiple times throughout the pheasant hunting season at three locations in District 10: In Lewis County at the Kosmos Unit of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area, on DNR property on Lincoln Creek, and in Cowlitz County at Woodland Bottoms on lands enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. For more information about the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, visit the [WDFW website](#) and the property location guide with accompanying maps at [2020 Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#).



Youth hunters and those over 65 years of age should check the regulations for opportunities to hunt earlier in the season.

Hunting hours are from 8 a.m.- 4 p.m.

Woodland Bottoms Pheasant Release Site 2020, photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW)



Releasing pheasants, photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW).

## FOREST GROUSE

District 10 supports substantial forest grouse populations and is one of the top-producing areas for hunters in western Washington for ruffed grouse and sooty grouse. Spruce grouse are also present in the higher elevations of District 10. Grouse hunters will want to take note that the statewide grouse season for forest grouse in 2021 will be Sept. 15-Jan. 15 (the season previously ran from Sept. 1-Dec. 31). This change was implemented after several rounds of public input and was put forward due to the increased vulnerability of breeding females to harvest during the first half of September. After brood break-up in mid-September, females are much less vulnerable to harvest. Since females drive population growth or decline, delaying the season start is a strategy to increase the grouse population. Some good strategies for hunting grouse include hunting riparian areas with mixed forest vegetation and walking closed or abandoned roads.

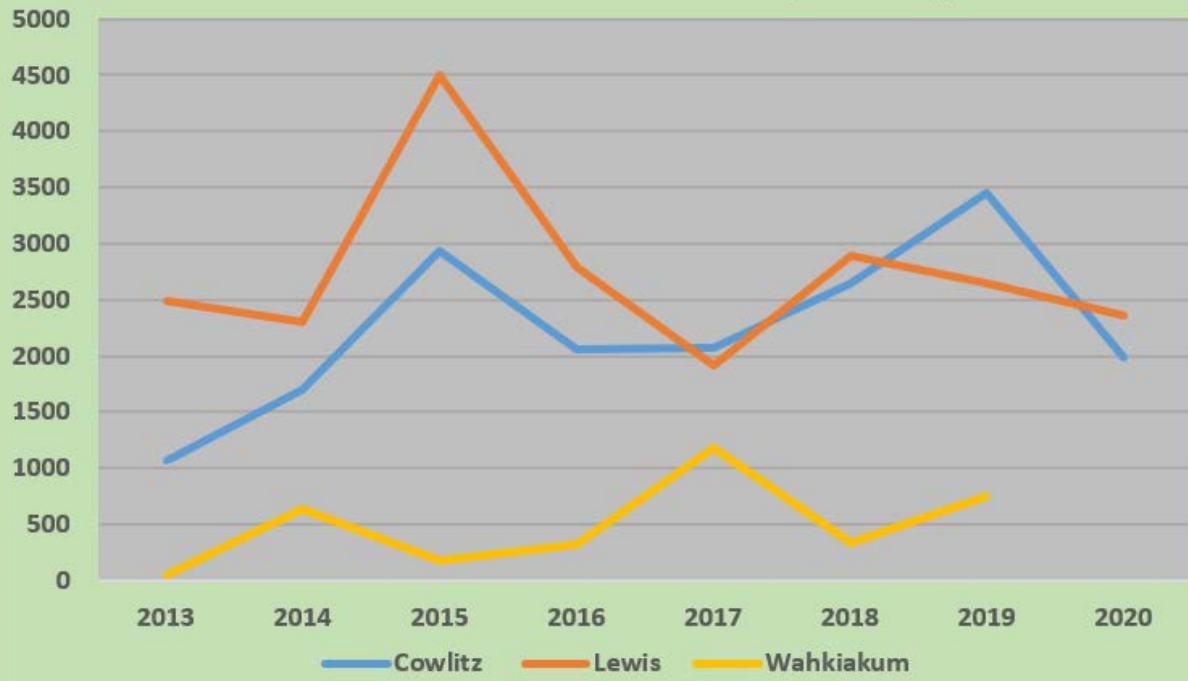
WDFW is collecting wings and tails from hunter-harvested grouse at barrel locations around the state. The submission of wings and tails is voluntary and helps wildlife managers determine the species, age, and sex composition of the grouse harvest locally. Locations where grouse barrels will be placed for the 2021 season can be found here: [Forest grouse wing and tail collection | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)



Grouse Wing and Tail Collection Barrels



### District 10 Grouse Harvest by County



# WATERFOWL

## DUCK HUNTING

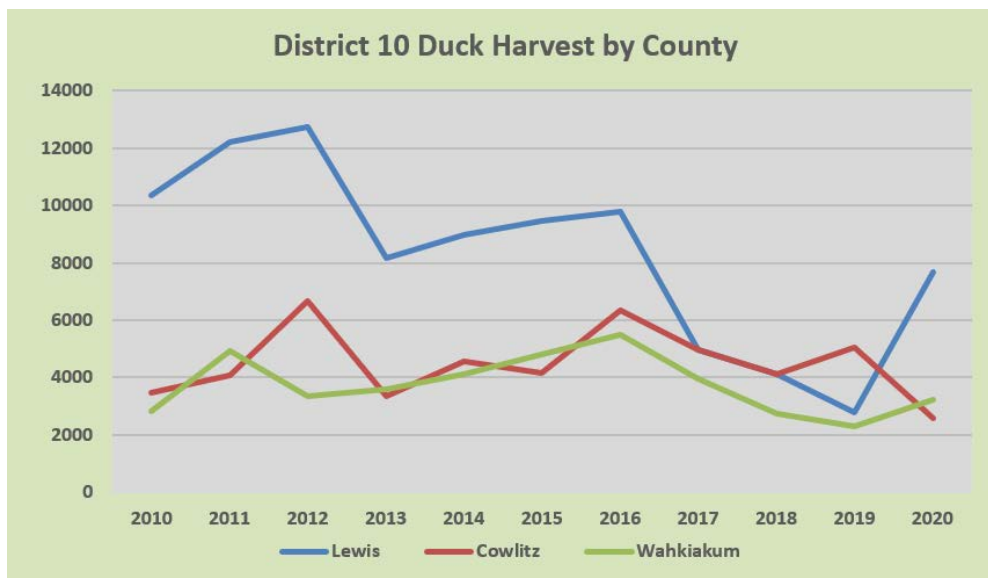
For the first time in its 65-year history, the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat survey was canceled in 2020 and again in 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Therefore, we don't have the data that is normally helpful to predict how many waterfowl will be coming south this fall. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has published the results of its 2019 breeding waterfowl surveys at the link below:

<http://flyways.us/>

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php>

Hunters are reminded to consult the [Migratory Waterfowl Rules](#) pamphlet for details on hunting regulations. Prospective hunters should take special note of the late September season open only to youth hunters. Check the regulations closely for the details on this mentored hunting opportunity for early-season ducks.

Hunting early in the season is often best along the Columbia River and other large, permanent bodies of water. The Columbia River up to the Bonneville Dam is tidally influenced, so it is a good idea to be aware of outgoing tide conditions to avoid getting your boat stuck. Later in the season, high water might disperse birds, and hunters may have more success by targeting flooded farmlands. Prospective hunters should be aware that success often depends on the severity of fall/winter weather, with wet, blustery conditions generally producing better duck hunting in southwest Washington.







Duck Hunting Success in the Lower Columbia River photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)

## GOOSE HUNTING

Hunters are reminded of the complex goose hunting regulations in Goose Management Area 2, designed to protect wintering populations of the dusky Canada goose. New hunters and those whose hunting authorization for Goose Management Area 2 was invalidated the previous year need to pass a goose identification exam with a minimum of 80% to receive their current-year hunting authorization. Goose hunters are encouraged to review the different subspecies of Canada geese in southwest Washington, where the ability to identify those birds is critical for a productive and enjoyable season.

Please review the information regarding goose identification found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/goose-identification-testing> before hunting this season, and see the [WDFW Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet](#) for more information.

While dusky Canada geese remain of concern, several other subspecies are abundant and support large annual harvests.

Goose hunters are also encouraged to take advantage of the early goose season in September. See the waterfowl hunting pamphlet for details on this enjoyable goose hunt for western Canada geese.



Canada geese during a banding effort in southwest Washington – Photo by Brian Davern

## PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

### **DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)**

601 Bond Road

PO Box 280

Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

[WA - DNR](#)

[pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov)

Link to purchase DNR quadrangle maps:

<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/buy-maps-aerial-photos-or-survey-data>

### **Gifford Pinchot National Forest**

#### **Headquarters**

10600 N.E. 51st Circle

Vancouver, WA 98682

(360) 891-5000

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot/>

#### **Cowlitz Valley Ranger District**

10024 US Hwy 12

PO Box 670

Randle, WA 98377

(360) 497-1100

#### **Mt. Adams Ranger District**

2455 Hwy 141

Trout Lake, WA 98650

(509) 395-3402

#### **Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument**

42218 N.E. Yale Bridge Road

Amboy, WA 98601

(360) 449-7800



## PRIVATE LAND RESOURCES

### WDFW PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

Public hunting opportunities are available through the Private Lands Access Program free of charge. The website will list the properties available by county, GMU or type of access allowed such as Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt or Hunt by Reservation. Not all properties allow the same hunting options, landowners can select hunting all legal species or choose to be more restrictive such as deer and elk only, waterfowl only, etc.

Read each property description carefully for property rules, and maps of property locations at:

[https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private\\_land/](https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_land/)

**\*\* Every year new properties are added or may be removed, please frequently check the website for property updates. \*\***

<b>District 10 – Access Program acres as of 7/23/21</b>	<b>13,482 acres</b>
<b>Weyerhaeuser</b> (multiple parcels) - All species allowed, Feel Free to Hunt	<b>6,297 acres</b>
<b>Columbia Land Trust</b> (2 properties) - Waterfowl Only, Register to Hunt	<b>259 acres</b>
<b>Woodland Bottoms</b> (2 properties) - Pheasant Only, Feel Free to Hunt	<b>369 acres</b>

### **NEW PROPERTIES TO BE ADDED SEPTEMBER 2021!**

For Private Lands Access program information within Region 5 contact:

Monique Ferris  
(360) 696-6211 ext. 6721  
[Monique.ferris@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Monique.ferris@dfw.wa.gov)

*Please be respectful, hunting on private land is a privilege.*



Photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW).



Private Lands Access Program, Register to Hunt property in Wahkiakum County, photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW).



## **PRIVATE FORESTLANDS**

### **Green Diamond**

- Recreation permits must be purchased for motorized and non-motorized access.  
<https://greendiamond.com/recreation/rec-program/>

### **Hancock Forest Management (HFM)**

HFM Cathlamet Tree Farm

- Open for non-motorized recreational access

### **Pacificorps**

Generally open for non-motorized recreational access \_NO CAMPING  
[Lewis River Hunting Access \(pacificorp.com\)](#)

### **Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management**

- Was recently acquired by Rayonier

### **Rayonier**

- Hunting access by lease or permit depending on location
- [Rayonier Hunting | Recreation Licenses | Hunting & Recreation Licenses](#)
- 855-729-4868

### **Port Blakely**

- Generally open to public access
- Check website for information on roads that are open to walk-in or motorized access
- <https://www.portblakely.com/pb-tree-farms/public-access-policy/policy>

### **Sierra Pacific**

- Generally open to walk-in, day-use access
- Access hotline 360-623-1299

### **Weyerhaeuser**

- Includes St. Helens Tree Farm, Yacolt (Columbia River East), Vail, Pe Ell, Columbia Timberlands
  - Access is by permit only except on lands enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program (Feel Free to Hunt).
  - Motored and non-motored permits available
- Recreational access webpage: <https://wyrecreationnw.com/permits>
  - Access hotline-866-636-6531

2021

Michelle Tirhi  
District Wildlife Biologist  
Emily Butler  
Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



Hunter L. Scott with his sons hunting the Naches goat unit (October 2020).

## **DISTRICT 11 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Thurston and Pierce counties and GMU 667 of Lewis County

# Your District 11 Wildlife Management Team



Biologist Tirhi collecting black bear hair samples as part of 2020 District 11 bear density monitoring project.



Biologist Butler checking western gray squirrel hair tubes on Joint Base Lewis McChord (2019).



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## DISTRICT OVERVIEW

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



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

Varied hunting opportunity exists within District 11, from waterfowl hunting on waterways of Puget Sound to deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on commercial forest land. WDFW's Scatter Creek (GMU 666), Skookumchuck, and West Rocky Prairie wildlife areas (GMU 667), and Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Capitol State Forest (GMU 663), Elbe Hills State Forest (GMU 654), Tahoma State Forest (GMU 654/667), and additional patchwork ownership in the district provide ample opportunity for small and big game hunting on public land accessed free of charge. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land (federal) surrounding Mount Rainier National Park in the eastern portion of the district is also accessible free of charge.





## **WESTERN DISTRICT 11**

The western GMUs within District 11 include Anderson Island (GMU 655), Puyallup (GMU 652), Deschutes (666), and the western half of Skookumchuck (GMU 667). More urbanization characterizes this side of the District as compared to the eastern half. Because of this, WDFW often uses hunting regulations and management to stabilize rather than increase game populations as well as control wildlife nuisance and damage. For example, WDFW provides hunters more liberal seasons and damage hunts for deer and elk in these western GMUs. However, urbanization also results in more private property in the western half and hunters must seek access permission for most hunting. Anderson Island can only be accessed by private boat or ferry, which can make hunting difficult (in addition to seeking access permission from private landowners). Despite these hurdles, urbanization in the western GMUs also contributes to less hunting pressure and pockets of higher game species density, in particular deer, elk, coyote, beaver, river otter, and waterfowl.

## **EASTERN DISTRICT 11**

The eastern GMUs within District 11 include the White River (GMU 653), Mashel (GMU 654), and the eastern half of Skookumchuck (GMU 667). Eastern District 11 is characterized by expansive forestland, both public and private, and higher elevation mountainous areas as one travels eastward. Most of Mount Rainier National Park lies within District 11 and dominates the southeast corner of the District. The elevational grade as it increases moving eastward across the District has a profound impact on game species. Habitat condition, food availability, and seasonal migration patterns are all dictated by this gradient and resulting weather patterns. Snowpack from September through April in eastern District 11 affects both game availability and road access; these in turn affect hunting opportunity and success. Hunters interested in a more rugged, challenging, and mountainous hunting experience will certainly appreciate the eastern half of District 11. Access can be challenging since most of the eastern District is either national or state forest, tribal forestland (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe), or private timberland. A series of secondary and primitive roads provide access into these forestlands but require hunting by foot or horse away from roads and deep into timber or along river systems.

## FIREARM AND WEAPON RESTRICTIONS

Hunters should be aware of firearm restrictions in certain localities of Pierce and Thurston counties of District 11. Maps of Pierce County firearm restriction areas can be seen on the Pierce County website's [Public GIS tool](#) and the Pierce County firearm regulations can be found at: [www.piercecountywa.gov](http://www.piercecountywa.gov). Maps of no-shooting and controlled shooting zones in Thurston County can be found at: [www.co.thurston.wa](http://www.co.thurston.wa) Note that fire season can result in both public USFS and private industrial timberlands closing for all access. Hunters should check with the local ranger station on closures before setting out. The [Incident Information System](#) is also a great place to check fire status. Anderson Island is mostly private property with some public property and so much of the island would be 'Hunt by Permission.'

## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

District 11 encompasses parts of two national forests: Gifford Pinchot and Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. USFS land is found primarily in the eastern half of District 11 surrounding Mount Rainier National Park on its northern and western sides. This includes the Clearwater Wilderness bordering Mount Rainier on the north. USFS land is free to hunt but much of it is either permanently or seasonally gated and requires access by foot or horse (see Road Closure section).

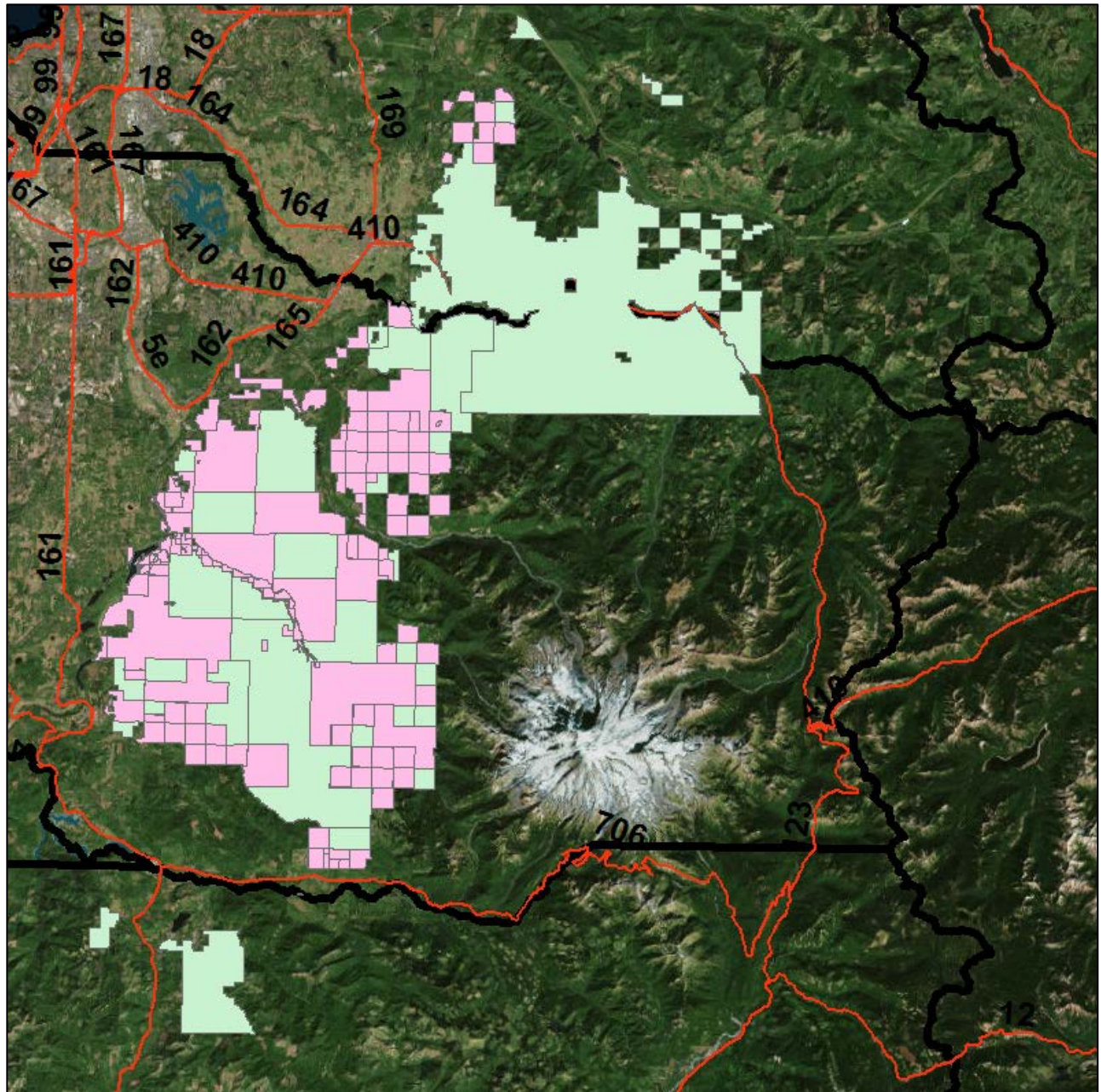
Hunting and parking on Washington State Department of Natural Resource (DNR) managed lands and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) lands requires a Discover Pass, which is issued free with the purchase of any annual hunting or trapping license. Visiting Washington State Parks also requires a Discover Pass although hunting is not allowed in Washington State parks. Additional passes can be purchased at [www.discoverpass.wa.gov](http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov).



## PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

Timberlands throughout the district are owned or managed by various private commercial timber companies, each having their own access regulations, including some with fee access programs. All private timberlands allow hunters free access to enter via foot, horse, or non-motorized vehicle/bike. These lands provide some of the best opportunity for both small and large game hunting in District 11.

Hancock Natural Resource Group (Hancock) has sold significant land to various other companies/tribes in Pierce County although most of those new owners still run their public access through Hancock's Fee Access Program. A Hancock access permit is required for motorized access into the Kapowsin and Eatonville Tree Farm (lands owned by Hancock/Hampton/Rayonier). Access into Kapowsin and Eatonville by horseback, walking, or bicycling is also allowed, but only if you have a motorized access permit, as there is currently not a non-motorized access program for these areas. Non-motorized access is normally allowed through the non-motorized access program into the White River Forest. Permits normally allow access April 1, 2021 – March 30, 2022, with no access the first week of July or during the elk bull season.



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

A limited access recreation program is in effect for Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm in GMU 667 and hunters are required to buy an access permit to access the tree farm. Motorized and non-motorized permits go on sale in May and allow access for one year (August through following July) and typically sell out well in advance of the hunting season. All forestry operations continue during the permit season.



## CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

In eastern Pierce County (GMUs 652, 653 and 654), the following ownership and contact information may be found:

- Hampton Lumber/Mid Valley Resources (access managed under Hancock Access Program): [hamptonlumber.com/our-company/](http://hamptonlumber.com/our-company/).
- Hancock Natural Resource Group [hancockrecreation.com](http://hancockrecreation.com) (800-782-1493)
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (access managed by Hancock Access Program): [muckleshoot.nsn.us/services/culture--wildlife/wildlife-program.aspx](http://muckleshoot.nsn.us/services/culture--wildlife/wildlife-program.aspx)
- Rayonier (formerly Pope Resources and subsidiary Olympic Resource Management; access managed under Hancock Access Program): [rayonier.com/our-businesses/land-resources/hunting-and-recreation/](http://rayonier.com/our-businesses/land-resources/hunting-and-recreation/)

In Thurston County (GMUs 666 and 667):

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

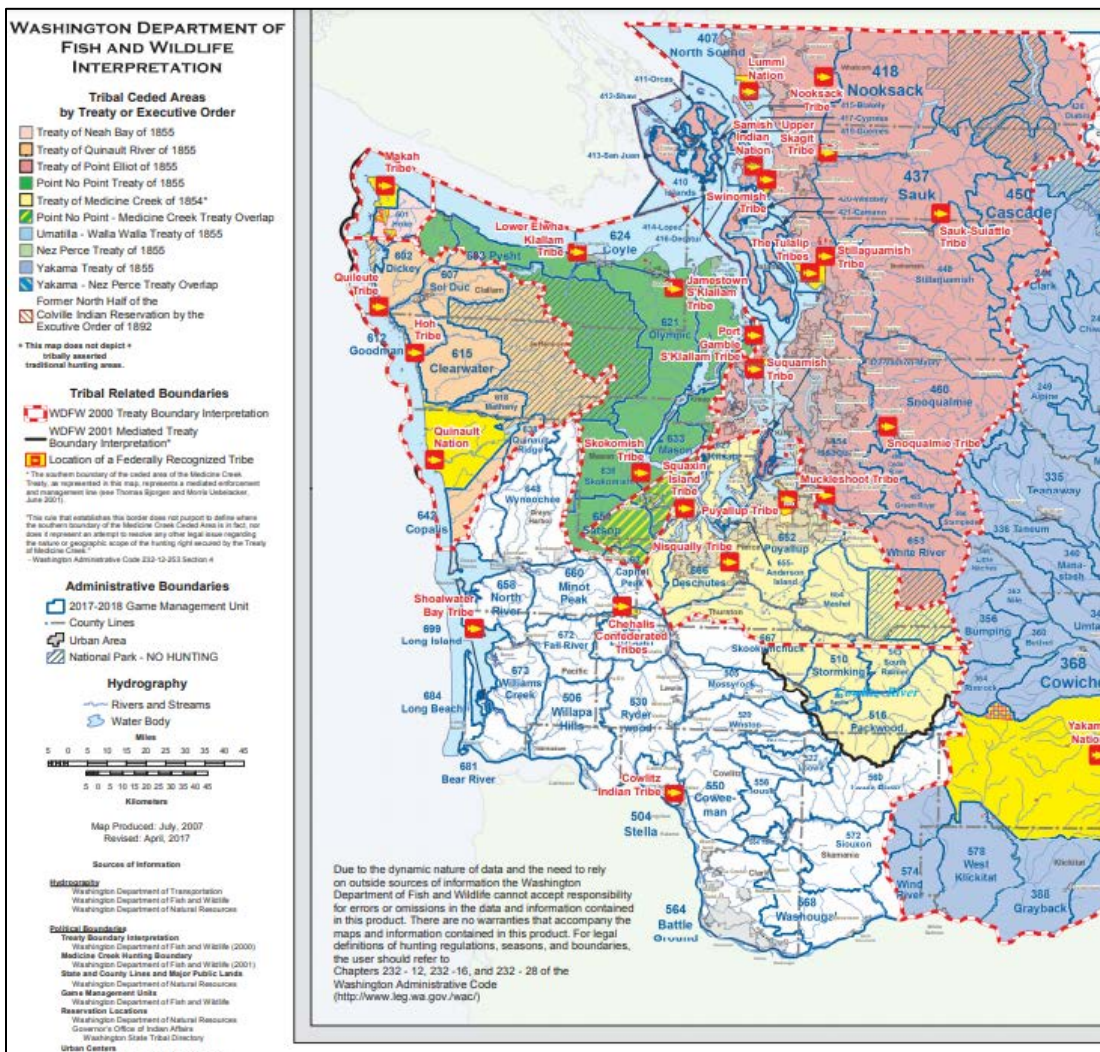
Anderson Island (GMU 655) is almost entirely private ownership with the exception of various small parks managed by either the island or [Pierce County](#).

# TRIBAL HUNTING

District 11 is within the ceded area of the Treaty of Medicine Creek of 1854 and the Treaty of Point Elliot of 1856 (see graphic below). WDFW and tribes cooperatively manage wildlife populations. Treaty tribes with off-reservation hunting rights can hunt within their ceded area or traditional hunting areas. Tribal hunting often occurs concurrent with WDFW hunting seasons. Tribal governments set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal Enforcement personnel are responsible for ensuring tribal hunting regulations are followed, which may differ from state regulations. There are four tribal hunting co-management agreements that include provisions regarding hunting on private industrial timberlands (Point Elliot Agreement, Quileute Agreement, the Skokomish Agreement, and Squaxin Island Agreement).

Current copies of those agreements can be found at:  
[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/tribal/wildlife](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/tribal/wildlife)

Tribal big game harvest reports are available at  
[nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/](http://nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/)





## ROAD CLOSURES

The following road closures are in effect in District 11:

GMU	Name	Roads closed	Purpose	dates
653	Greenwater River/ White River	USFS Roads 7010, 7012, 7013, 7160, 72	Elk Winter Range	Dec. 15-May 1
		USFS Roads 70 (beyond MP 10.3), 7060, 73	Winter Recreation-SnowPark	Dec. 15-May 1
	Greenwater River	USFS Roads 7012-240, 7020, 70-223, 7080-210	Wildlife Closures	Year-Round
654	Mashel	Hancock/ORM/Hampton/Muckleshoot forestlands	Private Industrial Timberland	Year-Round except special permittee access*
		DNR Elbe Hills Road 5	Disabled Hunter Program	Sept. 1-March 1 except special permittee access**
667	Skookumchuck	Portions of Skookumchuck Wildlife Area	Restricted Dam Operation Area with Exception of Disabled Hunter Program	Year Round except special permittee access**

\* Visit Hancock Forest Management website for fee access program for these areas: [www.hancockrecreationnw.com](http://www.hancockrecreationnw.com)

\*\* visit WDFW disabled hunter road access entry program for these areas: [wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/disabled-hunter-road-access-entry-program](http://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/disabled-hunter-road-access-entry-program)

## HUNTING ORGANIZATIONS

### **Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation**

Website: [rmef.org/Washington/OlympicPeninsula.aspx](http://rmef.org/Washington/OlympicPeninsula.aspx) Douglas

Doherty

989-736-4234

[ddoherty@rmef.org](mailto:ddoherty@rmef.org)

### **Washington Waterfowl Association**

Gray's Harbor Chapter (Thurston/Lewis counties)

[washingtonwaterfowl.org/Chapters/Grays-Harbor](http://washingtonwaterfowl.org/Chapters/Grays-Harbor)

Southwest Chapter (Pierce County)

[washingtonwaterfowl.org/Chapters/Southwest](http://washingtonwaterfowl.org/Chapters/Southwest)

### **Washington Mule Deer Fountain**

[muledeer.org/state/washington/](http://muledeer.org/state/washington/)

Puget Sound Blacktail Chapter - WA 0115

Tacoma, WA 98360

Stephanie Cordes

253-232-3133

[cordessj@plu.edu](mailto:cordessj@plu.edu)

Peninsula Chapter - WA 0216

Gig Harbor, WA 98335

Chad Barragan

928-200-6438

[chadbarragan@gmail.com](mailto:chadbarragan@gmail.com)

### **Eyes in the Woods**

[eyesinthewoods.org/index.php/en/?Itemid=419](http://eyesinthewoods.org/index.php/en/?Itemid=419)

P.O. Box 2406, Olympia, WA 98507

### **Washington Backcountry Hunters and Anglers**

[backcountryhunters.org/washington\\_bha](http://backcountryhunters.org/washington_bha)

Max Cole, West Side Co-Chair

[washington@backcountryhunters.org](mailto:washington@backcountryhunters.org)

### **Ducks Unlimited**

[ducks.org/washington/washington-state-contacts/poe/statehomeicon](http://ducks.org/washington/washington-state-contacts/poe/statehomeicon)

### **Izaak Walton League of America Greater Seattle Chapter**

[iwla.org/local-chapters](http://iwla.org/local-chapters)

A. William Way

425-868-4759

[bway@watershedco.com](mailto:bway@watershedco.com)

3451 E. Lake Sammamish Ln. N.E., Sammamish, WA 98074

**Washington Brant Foundation**

[wabrant.org/](http://wabrant.org/) Maynard Axelson

360-445-6681

[info@wabrant.org](mailto:info@wabrant.org)

15929 Fir Island Rd, Mt Vernon, WA 98273

**Washington Outdoor Women**

[washingtonoutdoorwomen.org](http://washingtonoutdoorwomen.org)

[washingtonoutdoorwomen.org/register/](http://washingtonoutdoorwomen.org/register/) - Workshops

P.O. Box 1656, Bellevue, WA 98009-1656

If you know of an organization that should be included in this document, please let us know.

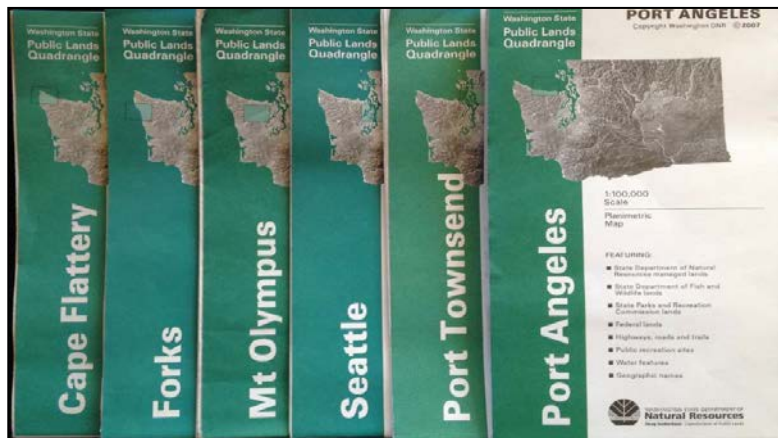
## ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

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

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

DNR maps have some of the best combination of land ownership and current roads. However, be aware of DNR and private forestland ownership exchanges, which may not show up on older maps. To see current DNR ownership, visit [arcgis.com/apps/Embed/index.html?webmap=fa6875f802ee43f4a21d16df47b71cec&extent=-124.6798%2C47.5345%2C-123.334%2C48.3084&zoom=true&scale=false&theme=light](http://arcgis.com/apps/Embed/index.html?webmap=fa6875f802ee43f4a21d16df47b71cec&extent=-124.6798%2C47.5345%2C-123.334%2C48.3084&zoom=true&scale=false&theme=light).

To order DNR maps online, visit [dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/buy-maps-aerial-photos-or-survey-data](http://dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/buy-maps-aerial-photos-or-survey-data).



Maps of the two state forests within District 11, Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forest, as well as other DNR-managed lands can be found at [dnr.wa.gov/ElbeHillsTahoma](http://dnr.wa.gov/ElbeHillsTahoma).

Questions regarding store purchase of maps can be directed to 360-664-4343. Call the DNR office in Enumclaw if you have a question about a road in District 11 at (360-802-7055).

Other maps that can be helpful for select areas include:

**Forest Service Online:**

Many USFS maps can be downloaded for free here [fs.usda.gov/visit/maps](https://fs.usda.gov/visit/maps)

**District 11 USFS Maps:**

Maps of the two national forests found in District 11, the Gifford Pinchot and the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forests can be downloaded or purchased here:

[fs.usda.gov/main/giffordpinchot/maps-pubs](https://fs.usda.gov/main/giffordpinchot/maps-pubs)

[fs.usda.gov/main/mbs/maps-pubs](https://fs.usda.gov/main/mbs/maps-pubs)

**Topographic maps** can be custom built and printed at CalTOPO: [caltopo.com](https://caltopo.com)

**OnX App:** Many hunters use the OnX mobile phone app for on-the-go hunting map application especially since maps can be downloaded for use when cell service is not available.

[onxmaps.com/hunt/app](https://onxmaps.com/hunt/app)

WDFW strongly encourages hunters to read more in-depth WDFW hunting management and planning materials by visiting the following:

WDFW Hunting Website: [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting)

WDFW Game Management materials: [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management)

The 2015-2021 Game Management Plan: [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01676](https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01676)

The 2020 Game Status and Trend Report: [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02217](https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02217)

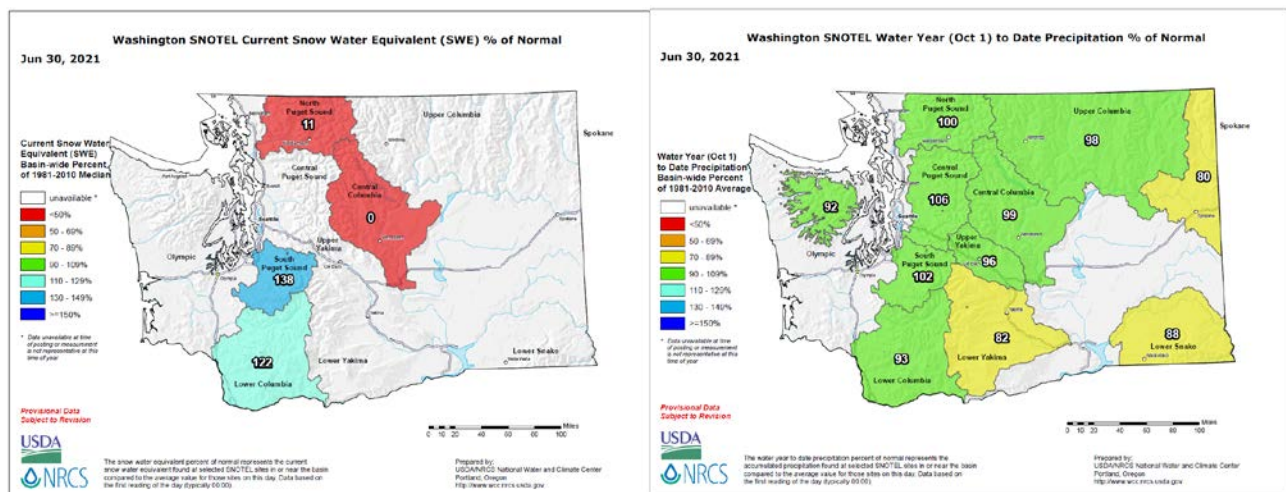
Hunting Seasons and Regulations: [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations)

Places to Hunt: [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations)



## 2021 FORAGE MOISTURE CONDITIONS AND FIRE

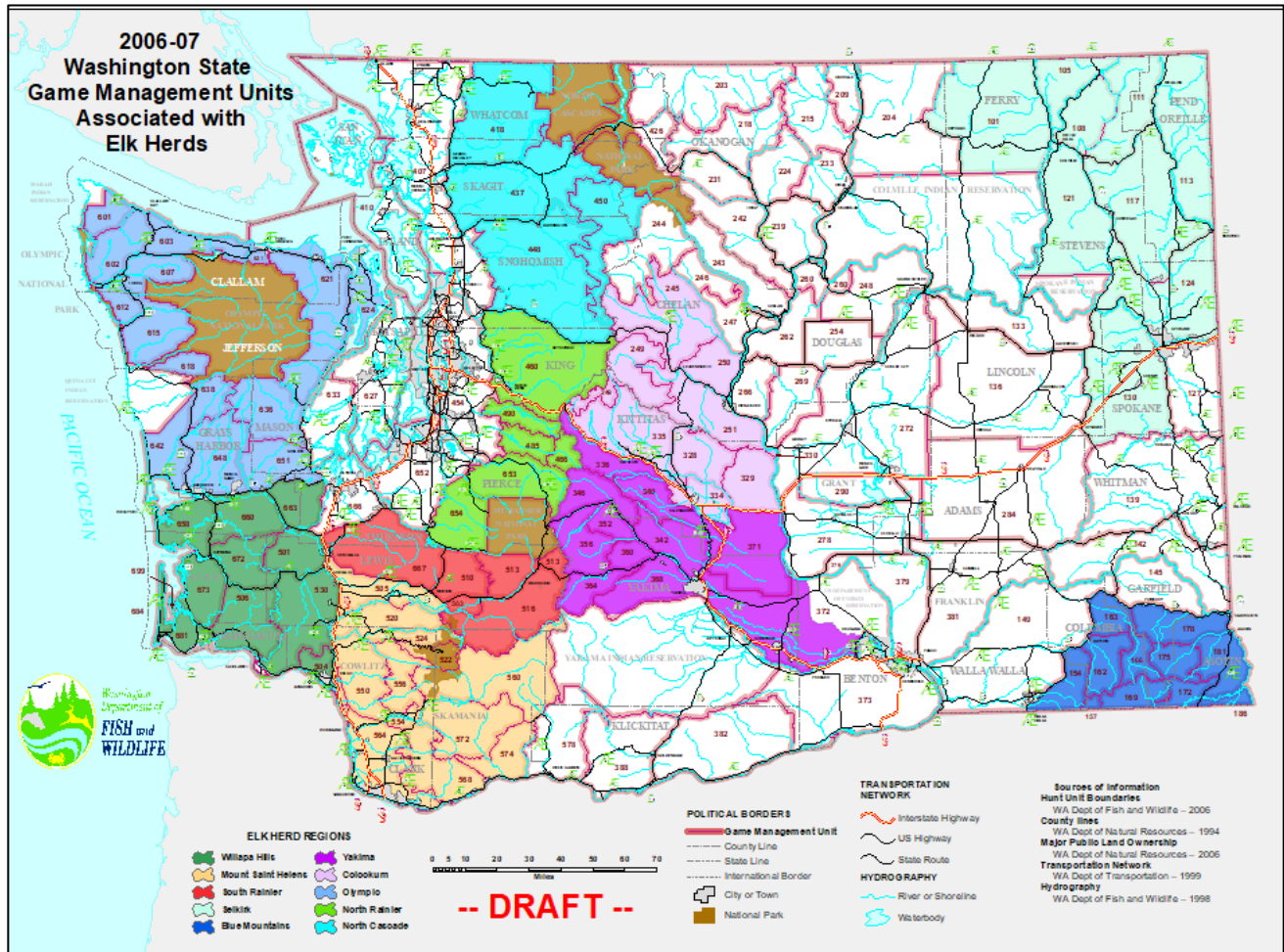
Snowpack moisture is the most reliable indicator of moisture levels that contribute to forage persistence for both large and small game through hunting seasons. This moisture level also affects the rate and intensity of the fire season, which has additional impact to forage persistence. Washington snowpack moisture as percent of median ([1981-2010 median](#)) for 2021 was only available for four regions of the state as of this publication date. Some regions have less than 50% of median while others over 100% of median. Precipitation as a percent of normal was generally good across most of western and northeastern Washington. However, record-breaking high temperatures in June across western Washington resulted in significant evaporation and moisture loss contributing to drier than expected conditions and an early and severe wildfire season. Regions with a high percent of snowpack moisture and precipitation rates may fair better in terms of persistent forage going into the 2021-22 hunting season with game species benefitting accordingly. Two notable wildfires in 2017 occurred within District 11: the Norse Peak and American fires. These fires burned a total of 56,241 acres in eastern Pierce and Yakima counties according to the USFS. The opening of the canopy and added nitrogen to the soil brought about by these fires has benefitted game through increased browse.



Snowpack moisture as percent of median June 2021 and total precipitation 1 October 2020-30 June 2021 (National Resource Conservation Service, NRCS).

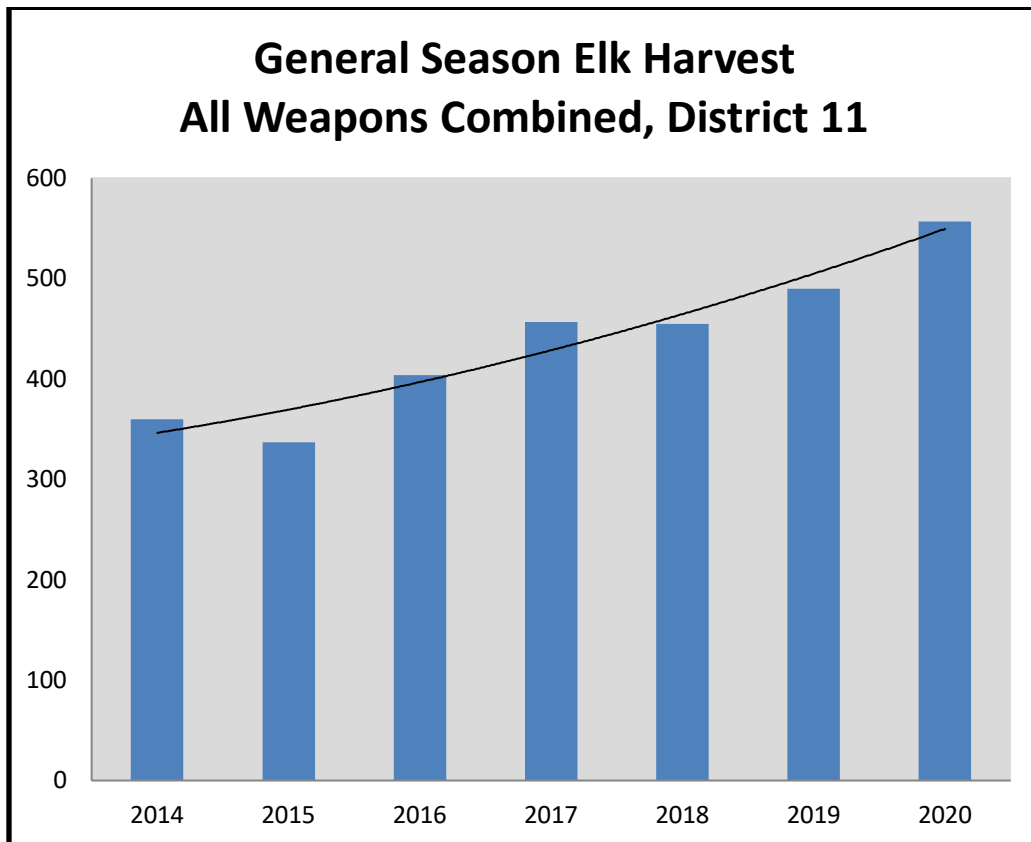
# ELK

Both the North Rainier and South Rainier elk herds are partially contained in District 11, providing an opportunity to harvest elk as they migrate out of Mount Rainier high country and follow river drainages to low elevations during the hunting season. The most complete overview of each of these herds can be found in either the [North Rainier Elk Herd Plan \(2020\)](#) or the [South Rainier Elk Herd Plan \(2002\)](#).



The 10 elk herds of Washington State.

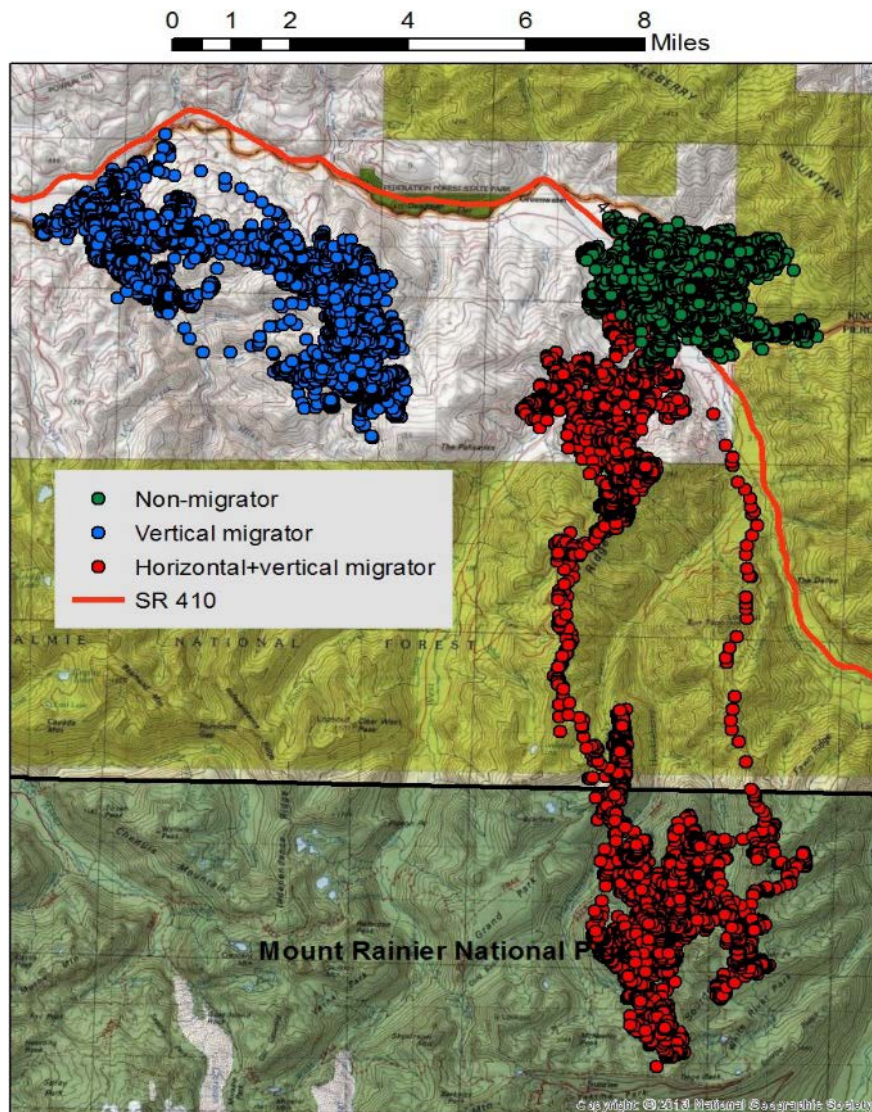
Elk harvest has continued to increase in District 11 and the availability of elk should continue to increase in all GMUs as both the North and South Rainier Elk Herds continue to recover, having met recovery goals over the past 20 years. Antlerless restrictions, winter elk habitat closures, and permit hunt restrictions in GMU 653 continue to benefit herd recovery in the North Rainier herd. Hunters annually report a quality hunting experience and quality bulls for those fortunate enough to be drawn for the GMU 653 bull only permit hunt. The GMU 667 (Skookumchuck) subherd of the South Rainier Elk Herd has also increased over the years primarily due to access closure on the Centralia Mine.



A portion of the elk that summer at mid and high elevations within Mount Rainier National migrate out of the park to lower elevation winter range prior to any snowfall, some at the first snowfall, and some remain until there is deep snow, with the majority migrating when there is less than a foot of snow on the ground (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe unpublished data). Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. WDFW encourages hunters to scout for elk leaving the Mount Rainier National Park and following the Carbon River northwards into the Clearwater Wilderness Area, the White River into the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, and the Nisqually River to the southern part of the District.

USFS-forested areas off Highway 410, including roads 71, 73, and 74, Bullion Basin/Pickhandle Basin, and Big Crow Basins east of Crystal Mountain Ski Resort (outside ski boundaries once ski season officially opens) offer good opportunity for high-elevation, rugged elk hunting with plenty of robust elk. Hunters can also access via the Pacific Crest Trail to the east. Elk begin to come down to the lower elevations bordering H-410 in October when the first higher elevation snows begin, forcing elk to lower elevations. Some resident elk remain at lower elevations year-round but will be joined by the migratory portion of each herd. The White River drainage from Haller Pass west to the White River and both north and south of that area all support high numbers of elk. The timbered areas behind the Greenwater Fire Station along H-410 frequently has elk. Hunters must boot into this area after the gate closes on December 15 (see Road Closure section). High meadows off H-410 such as Grand Park are traditional rut areas for elk and elk may remain in those areas until heavy snows force them lower.



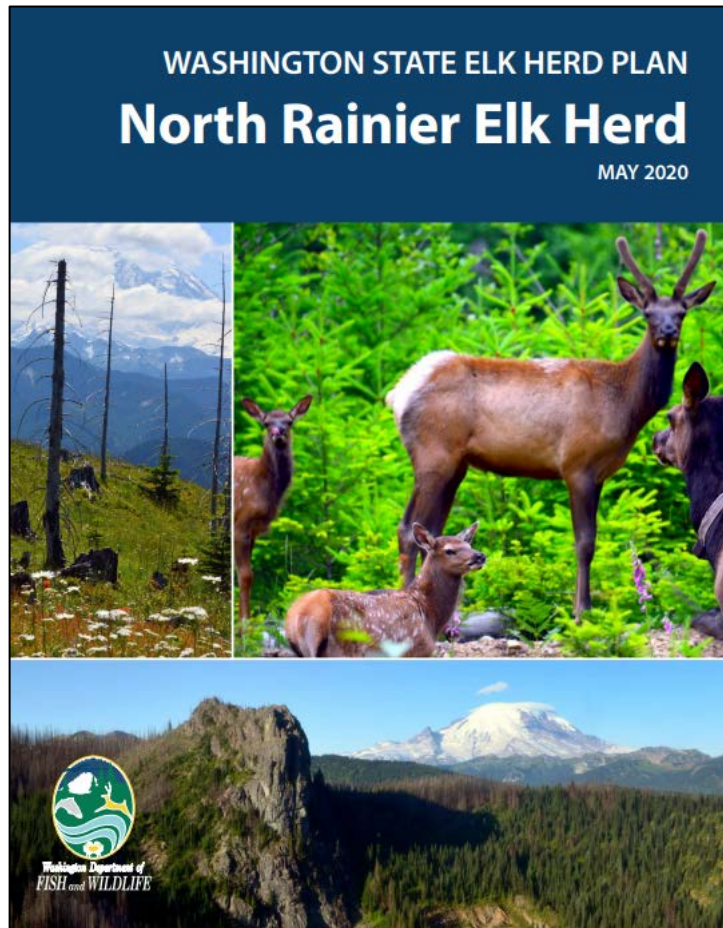


Examples of elk migration for 3 GPS-marked elk in GMU 653, showing non-migrator, vertical migrator, and horizontal+vertical migrator. The horizontal+vertical migrator (57% of study animals) moves to Mount Rainier National Park in summer. The vertical migrator (23%) moves to higher elevation in summer that is adjacent to winter range, but also may use its winter range in summer. The non-migrator (20%) uses the same range year-round. (research provided by Muckleshoot Tribe of Indians unpublished data).

USFS, which permits the Crystal Mountain Ski Resort, wants to remind hunters that service roads built and maintained by the ski resort are not open to the public. Hunters may ask for permission from the resort to haul out a harvested animal. Hunting is allowed in the Clearwater, Glacier View and Norse Peak Wilderness Areas of the district found at: [www.fs.fed.us/ivm/](http://www.fs.fed.us/ivm/), following hunting regulations found at: [www.fs.usda.gov/visit/know-before-you-go/hunting](http://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/know-before-you-go/hunting).

Hunters are also likely to find elk on the west (Carbon River) side of Mount Rainier and accessed via USFS and private commercial timberland roads southeast and south and east of the towns of Wilkenson and Carbonado to the national park boundary. Fewer roads characterize this area but also fewer hunters and recreationists. Be aware that this landscape rises steeply as you travel eastward but also provides a decent road network that may be worth scouting, especially timber harvest timber harvests.

Obey posted signs regarding quarry truck traffic and especially the speed limit. Forestland between Highway 165 and 162 is dominated by private commercial timberlands that Hancock manages that require a fee access permit. The Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forests and University of Washington Charles Lathrop Pack Experimental and Demonstration Forest (Pack Forest) in GMU 654 are good prospects for deer or elk and can be accessed by foot, bike, or horse during the general deer or elk season. Pack Forest managers caution hunters to be aware of students conducting research in the forest any time of the year. The Elbe Hills State Forest has limited vehicle access during the elk season as follows: entire 5 Road is closed, the 8 Road is open from Ashford to Scott Turner Road, and the 6 Road is closed except for hunters with a disabled access permit (see Road Closure section). Much of the Tahoma State Forest is also closed to vehicle access due to the ski hut management program and various road and bridge washouts. Hunters can legally walk, bike, or horse ride behind locked gates for hunting unless otherwise posted.



Subherds of the South Rainier elk herd continue to increase and expand on and around the Centralia Coal Mine and [Skookumchuck Wildlife Area](#) (GMU 667). WDFW encourages Hunters to scout the area from the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area south to the northern boundary of the Centralia Coal Mine (GMU 667). Hunting on the coal mine is only allowed under specialized permits, which require a mining escort. TransAlta, which owns the mine, is once again providing one senior and one disabled permit hunt on the mine for a total of 10 permits over two weekends (see WDFW Hunting Regulations on applying for special permit hunts). Some elk can occasionally be found and hunted on WDFWs [West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area](#) and on [Joint Base Lewis McChord](#) (JBLM) military property in Thurston County near the town of Rainier (GMU 666). Hunters must register to hunt on JBLM through NW Adventure Center (253-967-8282 or 253-967-7744) or through the [JBLM website](#).

In northwestern Thurston County, elk are found off Delphi Road SW and neighboring power lines (GMU 666). Elk cannot be hunted on property owned by USFWS near 123<sup>rd</sup> Ave SW in the Black River refuge of GMU 666 (e.g., former Weeks Dairy) but can be hunted by landowner permission on private lands surrounding the refuge property.





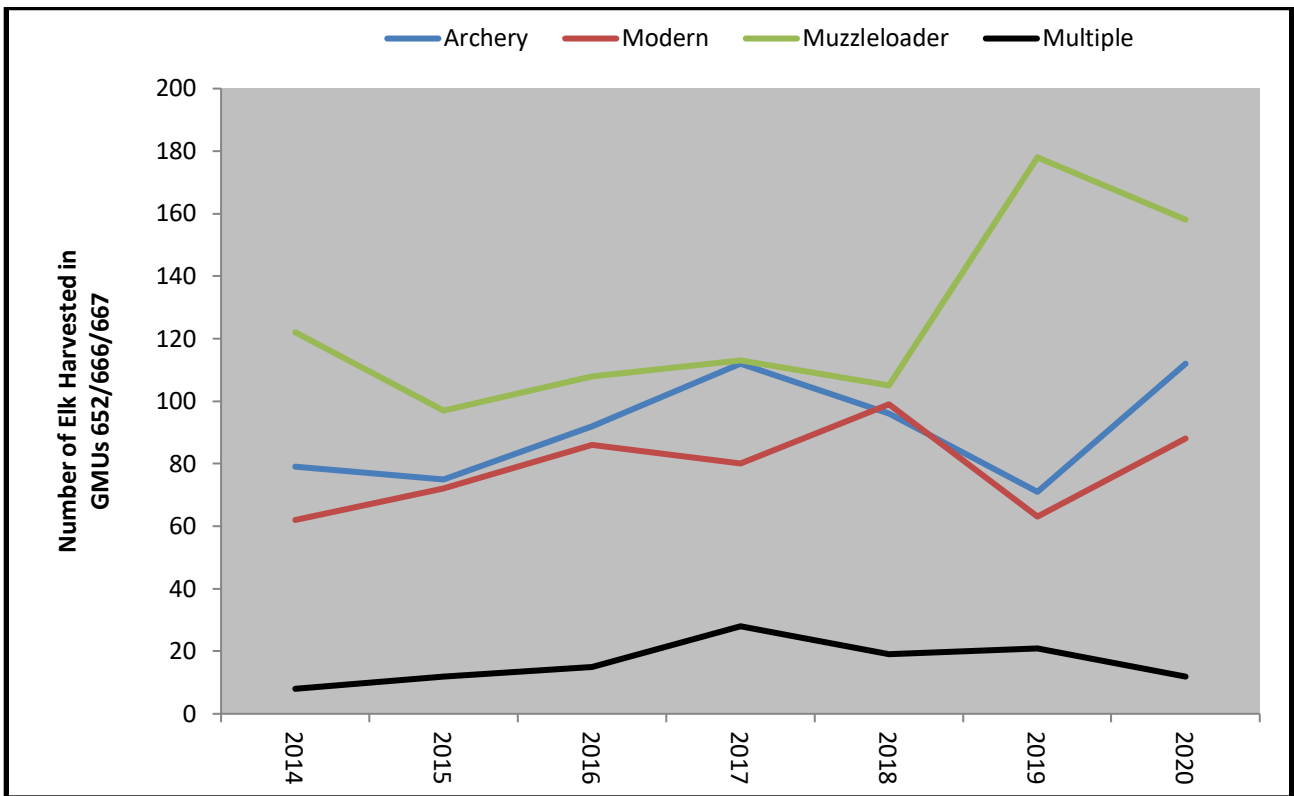
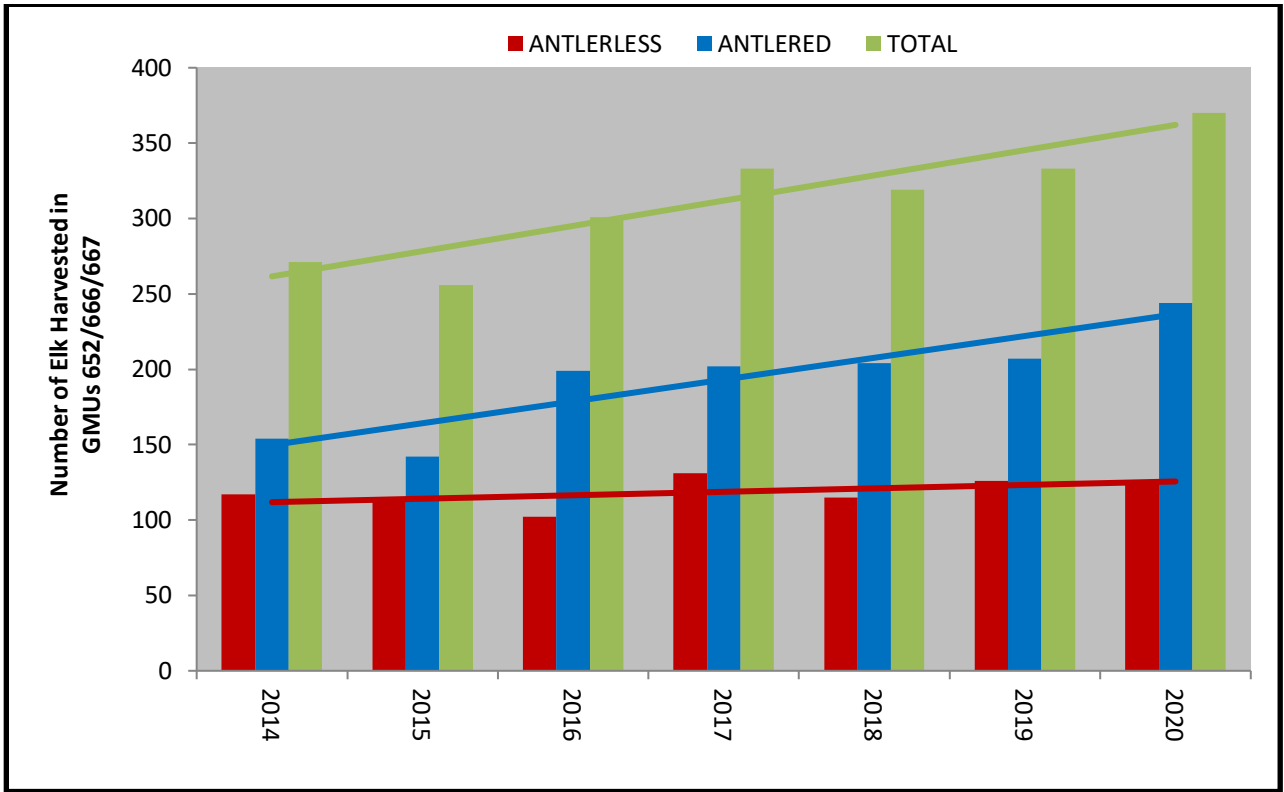
North Rainier elk wintering in the Crystal River Ranch area, District 11.

Elk continue to increase on private farmlands and properties in GMUs 652 (around Graham, Buckley, and Enumclaw), GMU 667 (Yelm and Hanaford area), and GMU 666 (foothills of Capitol State Forest to Delphi Road SW and Waddell Creek Rd SW). Overall, elk are plentiful in these damage areas, with access onto private property being the primary limitation. Hunters must request permission to access private lands and are encouraged to obtain permission weeks in advance of the season from the landowner (e.g., visit property and ask for permission). Elk Area 6013 in GMU 652 has been reduced in size to encompass primarily the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation. There were several new hunting restrictions implemented in 2015 aimed at conserving elk for tribal purposes on the reservation. In response to increasing elk and elk-associated damage off-reservation in Buckley and Enumclaw, Elk Area 6014 was expanded and provides a 3-point minimum or antlerless general modern firearm season; both early and late archery and muzzleloader seasons; and three separate winter antlerless hunts allowing up to 10 elk per hunt. Elk Area

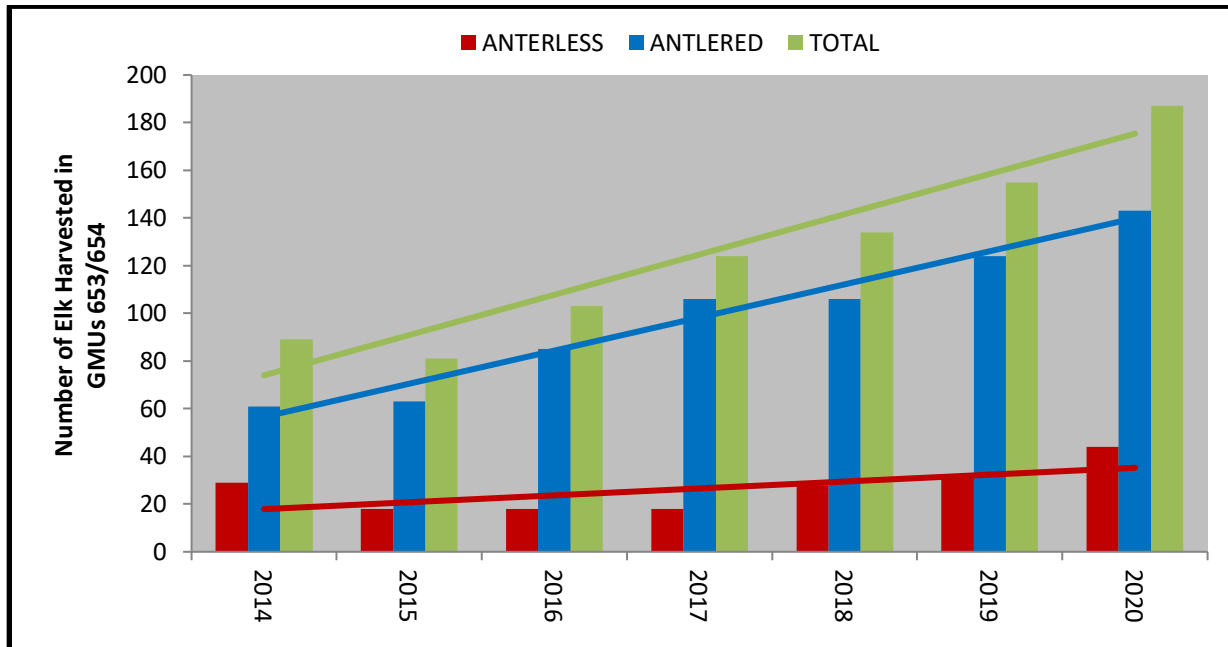
6014 is comprised primarily of agricultural lands, hobby farms, and ranch homes, and supports approximately 150-200 total elk. Access to these properties is limited and hunters interested in these hunts are encouraged to obtain access before applying for these permits. The local WDFW conflict specialist Matt Blankenship (360-986-6209; [Matthew.Blankenship@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Matthew.Blankenship@dfw.wa.gov)) may be able to assist with suggesting access sites.

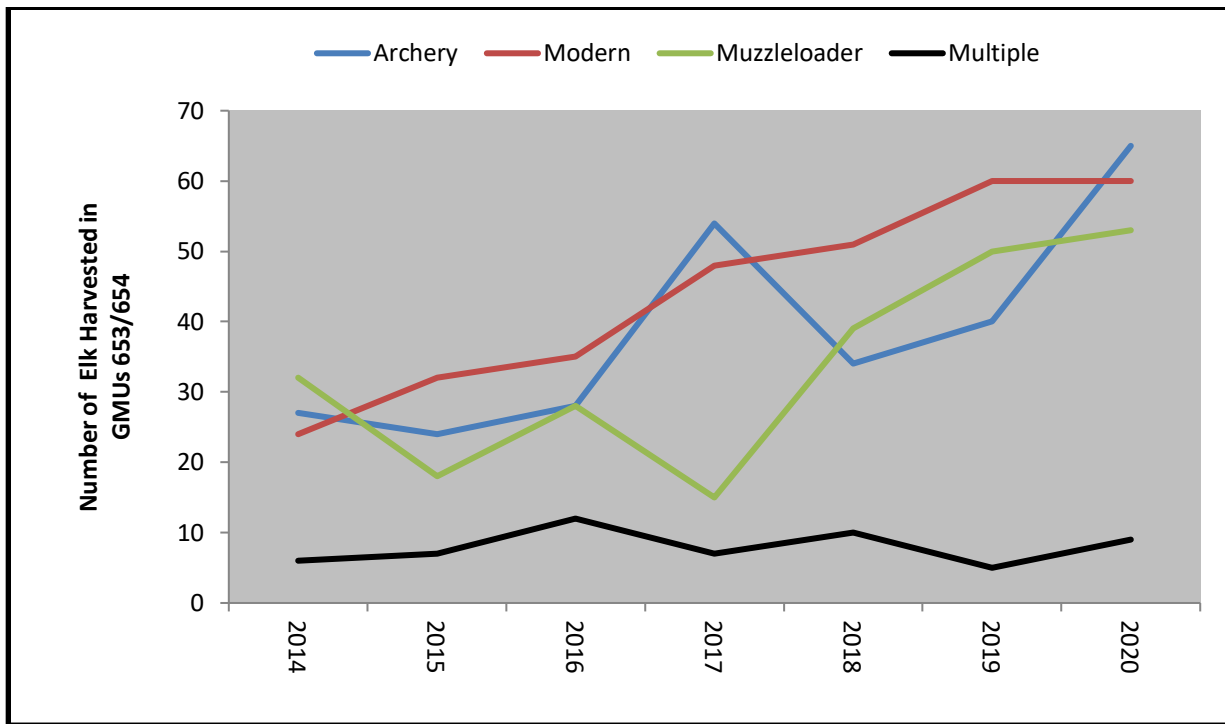
One antlerless elk permit hunt (five permits) and two senior permit elk hunts (10 permits) for controlling private property damage are also provided in the Hanaford Elk Area 6069 of GMU 667. Finally, general Region 6 Master Hunter elk permits are also available. Hunters drawn are often sent to damage properties in both the Buckley/Enumclaw and Hanaford area, as needed, and elsewhere in the region but must be available to hunt on a 24-hour notice.

General season elk harvest has been increasing over the past seven years for all weapons within GMUs 652, 666, and 667 (combined these make up Elk Population Management Unit 62). This makes for good prospects for harvesting an elk in those GMUs in 2021. Muzzleloaders typically have the highest harvest over those years with modern firearm and archery harvest close behind except for 2019 in which harvest declined noticeably for archery and modern firearm users, possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which overlapped the fall hunting season.



Harvest trends have also gradually increased in GMUs 653 and 654 over the past seven years (combined these make up Elk Population Management Unit 67). Interestingly, Population Management Unit (PMU) 62 experienced a noticeable decline in elk harvest for all weapon types in 2019 whereas PMU 67 saw an increase across all weapon types—keeping in mind that the former normally provides twice the harvest as the latter. Antlerless harvest in GMU 654 increased slightly (cow harvest not allowed in GMU 653), spurred by damage removal hunts for elk to abate increasing property damage caused by an increasing elk sub-herd. District 11 changed the boundaries of Elk Damage Hunt Area 6054 in 2019 to focus the hunt on those properties experiencing damage.



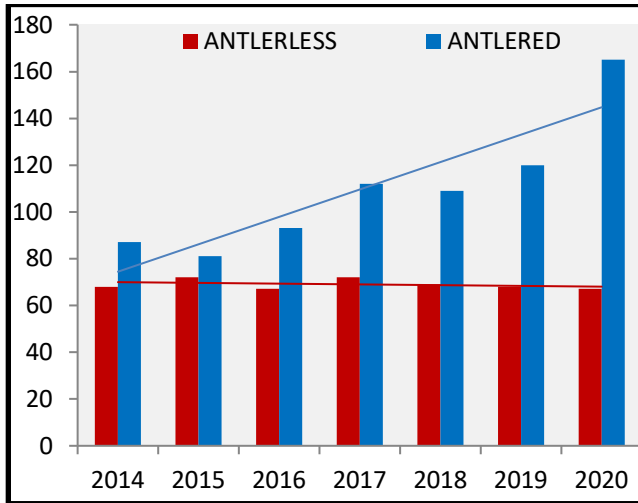


Weyerhaeuser’s Vail Tree Farm in GMU 667 and Hancock Natural Resource Group managed forestland (Kapowsin and Eatonville timberlands in GMU 654, White River and Buckley timberlands in GMU 653) all support elk but require a vehicle access permit from the company directly (see Private Commercial Timberland for information). Each Hancock recreational access permit purchased for Kapowsin or Eatonville timberlands from mid-March through mid-May (see dates on Hancock website each year) automatically enters a drawing to hunt elk during any bull elk season for GMU 654. Eleven (11) recreational access permit holders are drawn to hunt elk on the Kapowsin timberlands, and one recreational access permit holder is drawn to hunt elk on the Eatonville timberlands during the elk seasons in GMU 654. No recreational access is allowed on the Buckley timberlands in GMU 653 during any bull elk season. Hunters must be drawn for a WDFW bull elk permit to hunt elk on the White River timberlands in GMU 653. The Kapowsin and Eatonville drawing occurs in early May and once winners have been notified, names are posted on the Hancock recreation website. Only drawn permittees can hunt elk on the Kapowsin or Eatonville timberlands during elk seasons.

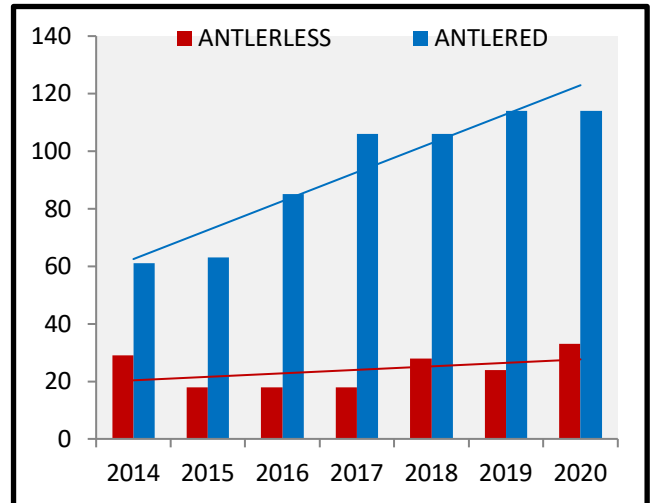
Hunters harvest the greatest number of elk in District 11 in GMUs 652 and 654 with about 115 taken in 652 and just over 100 in 654 over the past few years (see charts below). Harvest spiked in GMU 652 in 2020 increasing from 120 in 2019 to 165 in 2020 possibly because of more hunters in the field in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and maybe due to additions of archery and muzzleloader opportunity in the 6014 elk damage hunt area of GMU 652. GMUs 666 and 667 both have significantly lower harvest because of fewer elk (both GMUs) and difficult access onto private properties (GMU 666).

Hunter success is expressed as both the percentage of hunters that reported successfully harvesting an elk and by the number of days it took to harvest an animal in the following graphs for the five GMUs in District 11 supporting elk (GMU 655, Anderson Island, has no elk; see charts below). Success has been generally increasing in most GMUs over the past 7 years. This is tracking elk

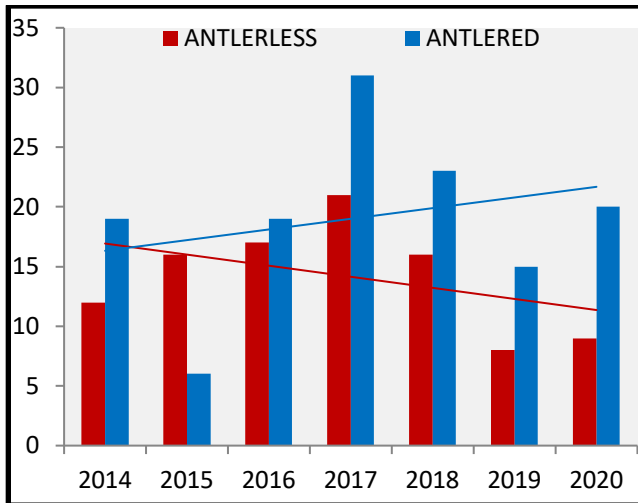
population recovery in both the North Rainier and South Rainier elk herds. The exception is the Deschutes GMU 666, where access to hunting grounds is difficult due to the higher percentage of privately-owned land. Regardless, antlered harvest shows a slight positive trend for hunters that have gained private land access in that GMU and thus prospects are good for those hunters obtaining access in 2021-22. The highest success in the District is the GMU 653 bull only permit hunt, which has averaged 60% over the past four years. This is a rugged, high alpine hunt, but worth the effort for those lucky enough to draw a permit. That is followed by GMU 652 currently around 20%, GMU 654 around 15%, and finally GMUs 666 and 667 both currently around 10%.



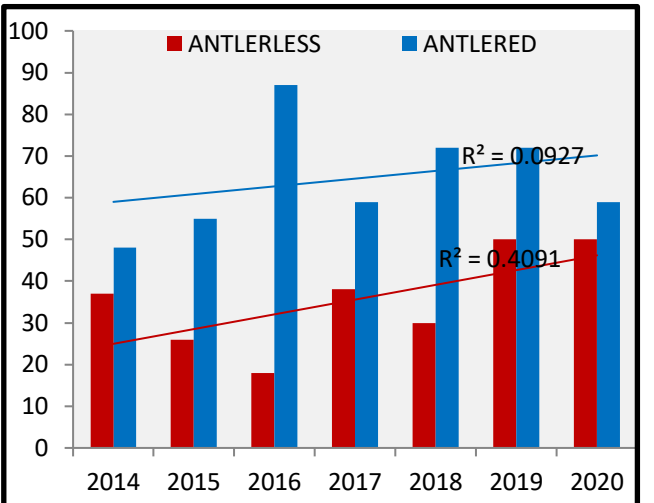
GMU 652 general season harvest (all weapons combined)



GMU 654 general season harvest (all weapons)



GMU 666 general season harvest (all weapons)

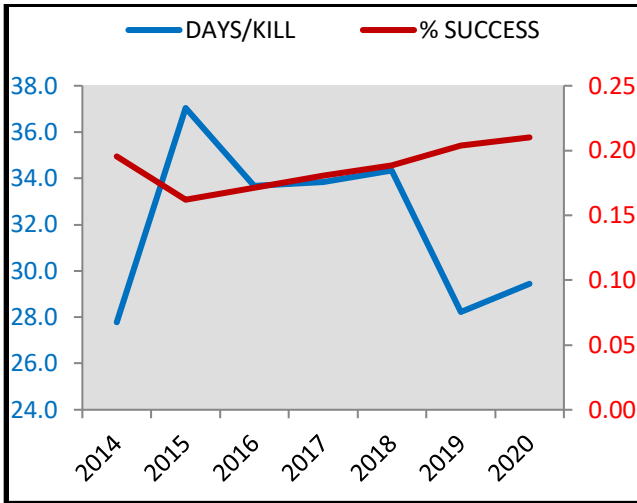


GMU 667 general season harvest (all weapons)

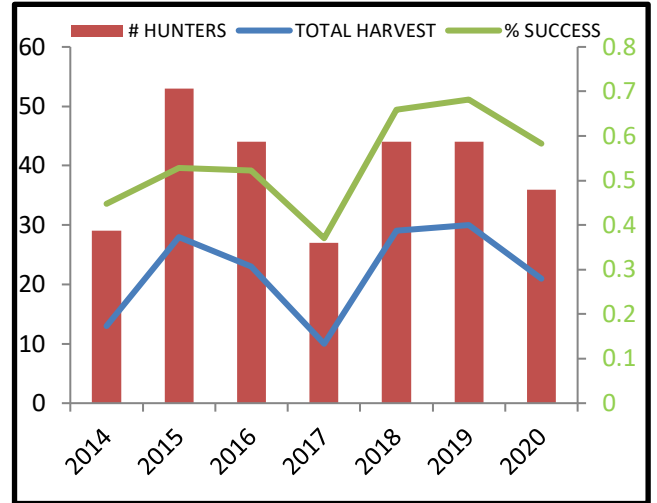
GMU 653 bull only permit harvest in chart below



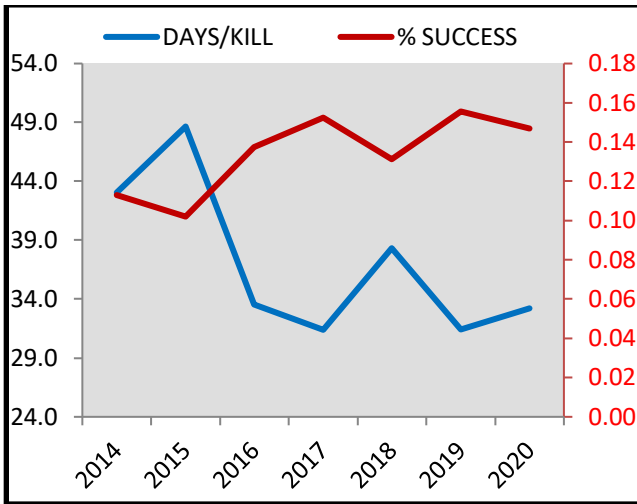




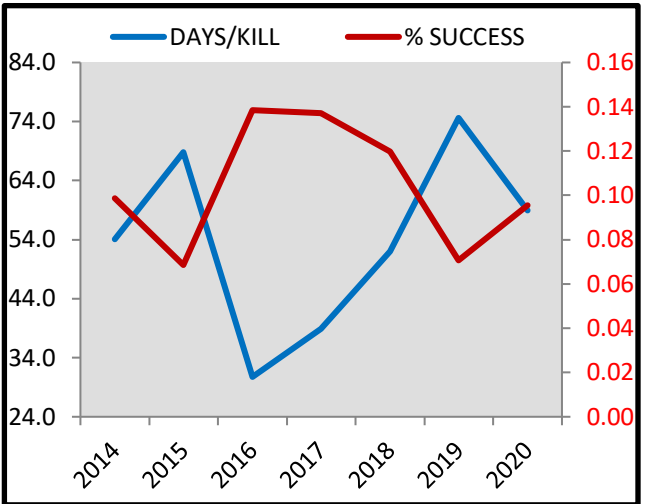
GMU 652 general season (all weapons combined)



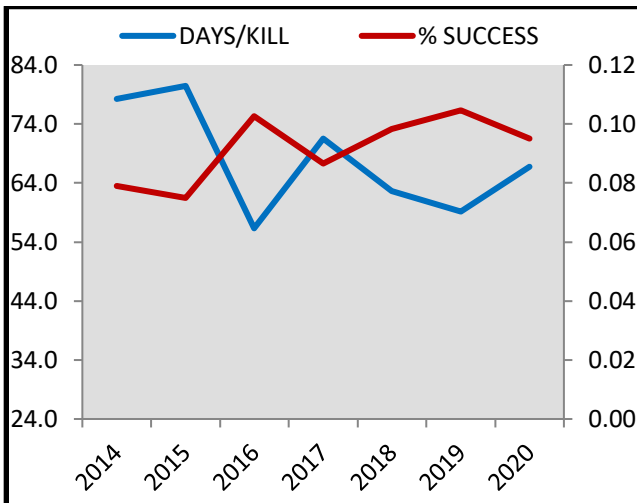
GMU 653 bull only permit hunt (all weapons)



GMU 654 general season (all weapons combined)



GMU 666 general season (all weapons)



GMU 667 general season (all weapons)

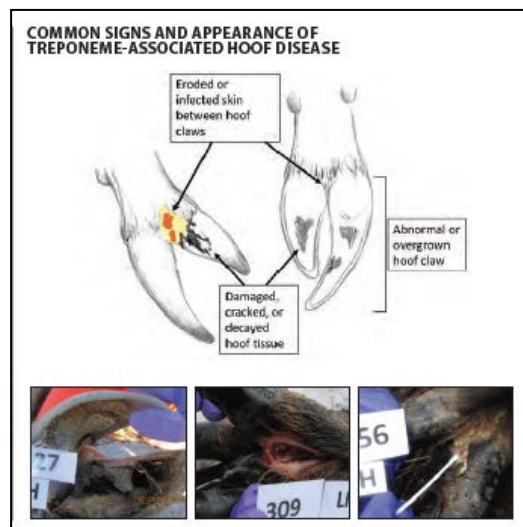
## ELK BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE - TAHD

[Elk Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease](#) (TAHD) was first diagnosed in Washington State in 2014 and has been spreading outwards from its origin in the St. Helens Elk Herd ever since. TAHD causes limping and lameness in elk due to abnormal hoof growth, lesions and, in severe cases, sloughing of the hoof capsule. TAHD is a form of digital dermatitis, a disease strongly associated with a group of bacteria known as treponemes. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, TAHD is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. There are no vaccines or treatments that are practical options for managing TAHD in free ranging elk. WDFW is partnered with Washington State University to research the disease's causes, transmission, and potential solutions. The disease is most prevalent in southwest Washington but is now confirmed in 17 counties in 2021 including all counties/GMUs in District 11. You can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of affected and unaffected elk on the WDFW's online reporting form at the web address above.

WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program in 2021 to encourage west-side (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest elk with TAHD, thereby potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. WDFW is offering an incentive permit opportunity to hunters that harvest a diseased elk during general or special permit seasons. Hunters can participate in the program by submitting the hooves from their elk harvest at one of many drop-off locations to be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit. Additionally, WDFW is offering special permits under the Master Hunter permit category that are intended to target diseased elk. These permits are offered as a second elk opportunity for antlerless elk using any weapon type. See page 62 and 65 of the [2021-22 Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#) for more details.

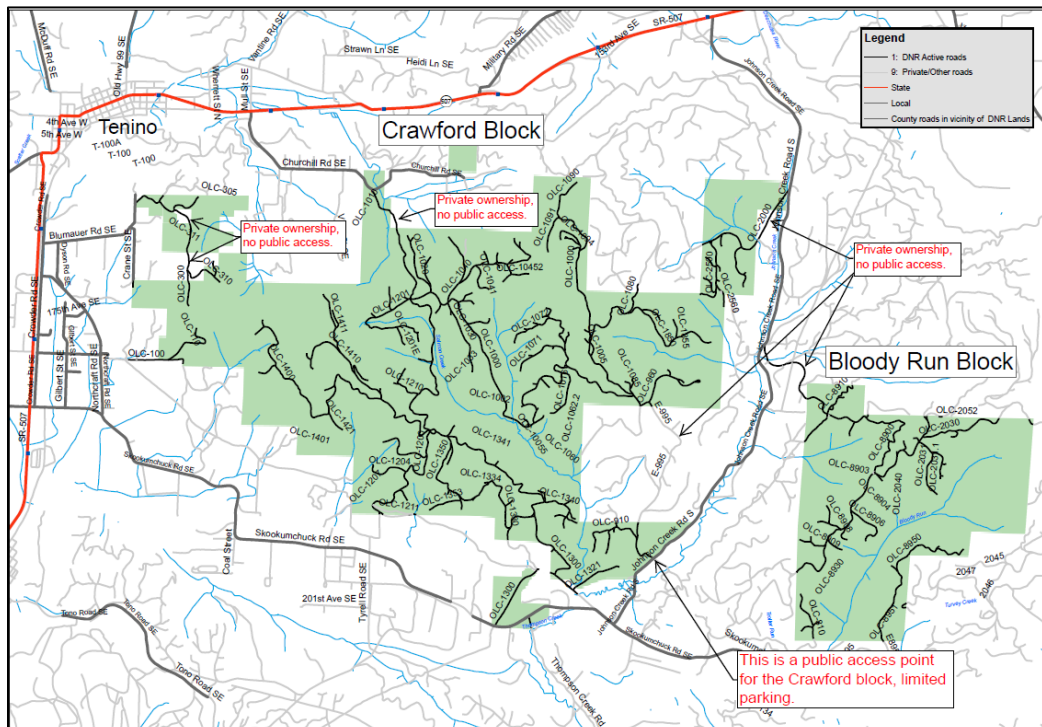
### How hunters can help

- **Leave hooves:** Scientists believe that treponeme bacteria may persist in moist soil and spread to new areas on the hooves of infected elk. For that reason, WDFW encourages hunters in 400, 500, and 600 series game management units (GMUs) to remove the elk's hooves and leave them onsite. If you harvest an elk in a 100, 200, or 300 series GMU, where the disease is uncommon, please keep any abnormal hooves and report your observation to the nearest [WDFW regional office](#). WDFW will work with you to submit the hooves for diagnostic testing.
- **Report elk:** You can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of healthy or limping elk and dead elk with hoof deformities using the reporting tools on this page.
- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the spread the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes or tires before leaving the area.



# DEER

Black-tailed deer population surveys in District 11 are limited. The Department doesn't conduct surveys annually, and when it does, surveys reflect in the highest quality location (Vail Tree Farm). Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best opportunity for deer hunting. WDFW encourages hunters to scout regenerating clear cuts. In particular, timberlands worthy of scouting for both deer and elk include Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm and DNR's Crawford and Bloody Run blocks in GMU 667; Hancock Timber Resources Group managed properties (Kapowsin and Eatonville timberlands in GMU 654, White River and Buckley timberlands in GMU 653); DNR's Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forests (GMUs 654) and DNR and USFS managed lands (scattered across District 11).



DNR's Crawford and Bloody Run Block (top) and Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm (bottom).

Hancock initiated a 2-point minimum buck harvest restriction in 2018 on the Kapowsin and Eatonville timberlands which remains in effect. In 2019, it also eliminated the doe harvest on both areas. Its reasoning is “an effort to increase deer populations over time and ultimately provide a better hunting experience, long term.” There are no additional deer hunting restrictions on the White River Tree Farm, except for the winter motorized access restriction.

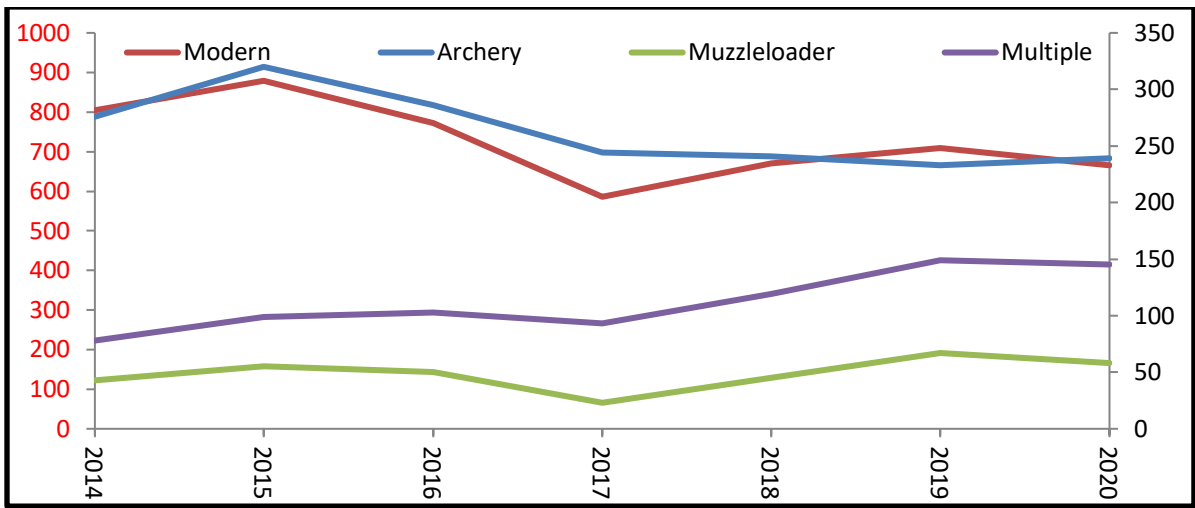
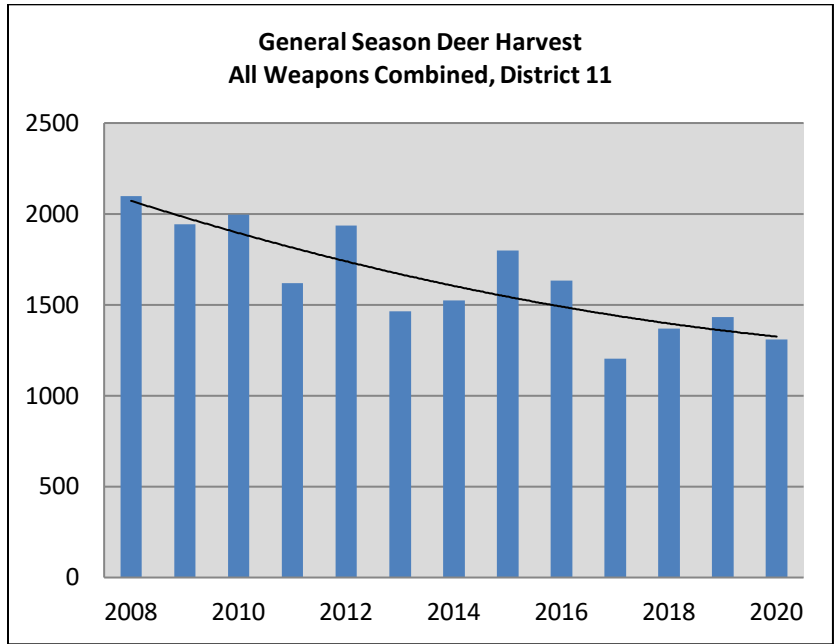


District Biologist Tirhi with successful deer hunter at Vail Tree Farm deer check station in the Skookumchuck Unit 667.

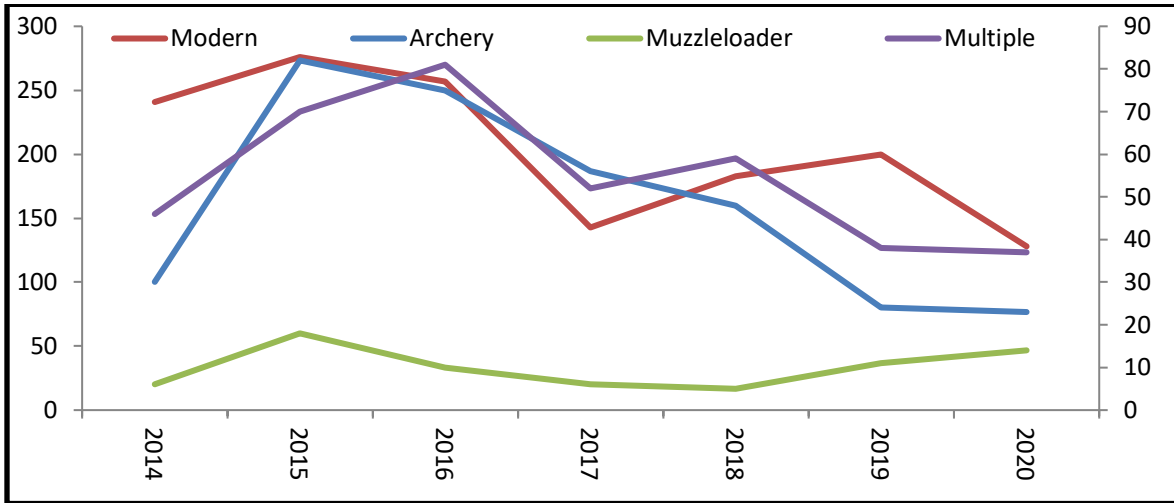
Hunters can find high-elevation trophy black-tail hunting experiences in the eastern portions of GMUs 653 and 654. Hunters can access these areas via USFS road and trail systems that lead to high mountain hunting areas, including portions of the Norse Peak, Clearwater, and Glacier View Wilderness Areas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

Overall deer harvest continues to show a downward trend in District 11 since 2000 (see graphs below). Only GMU 652 is stable and 655 is increasing. Harvest regulations have altered somewhat in District 11 GMUs over the years, which plays a role in harvest trends. Declines occurred primarily in GMUs 653, 654 and 667--all units in which private timberland access permits were initiated. These restrictions have reduced the sheer number of hunters that hunted these lands in the past resulting in lower harvest overall rather than a reduction in deer populations. Limited access combined with antler and doe restrictions may ultimately increase deer numbers over time especially in GMUs 653 and 654 where success is 10-15% compared to roughly 20% in GMU 652. GMU 667 currently has the highest success rate in the District around 33%, suggesting that while the access permit is limiting overall hunters, those that do obtain a permit are doing well. That is occurring despite GMU 667, and Weyerhaeuser’s Vail Tree Farm in particular, hosting over 2000 hunters in 2020 (the most heavily hunted deer area in the District). GMU 652 and 666 are comparable both in number of hunters and hunting success. Anderson Island (GMU 655) was previously Deer Area 6014 and had antlerless permit hunts only. The entire island became GMU 655 in 2013 and has since provided both general seasons (both sex) and antlerless permit hunts. Thus, the increase in harvest is not surprising, keeping in mind that the island has significantly lower harvest of all GMUs in the district. Ferry logistics and property access reduce the actual harvest despite plentiful deer on the island.

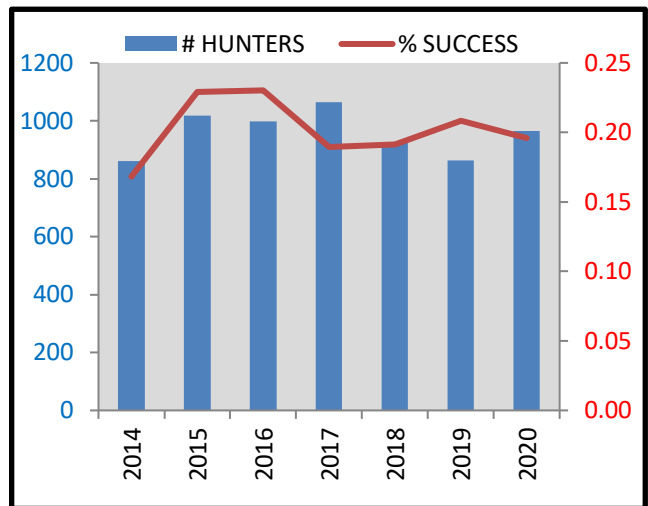
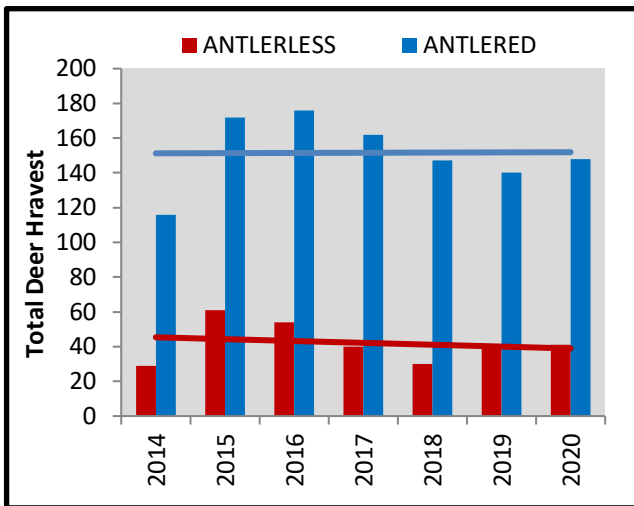




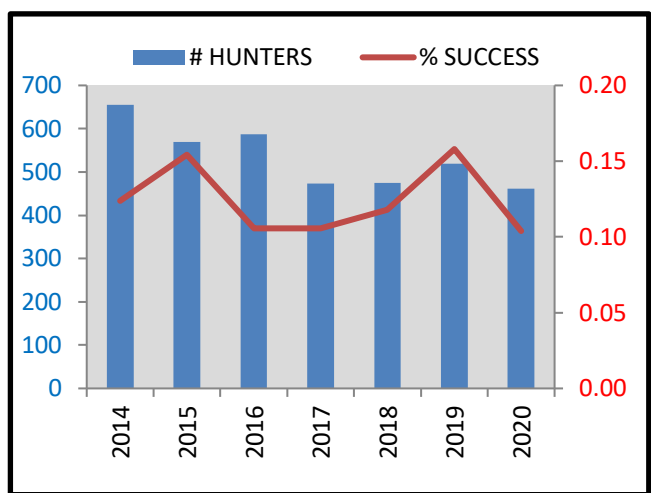
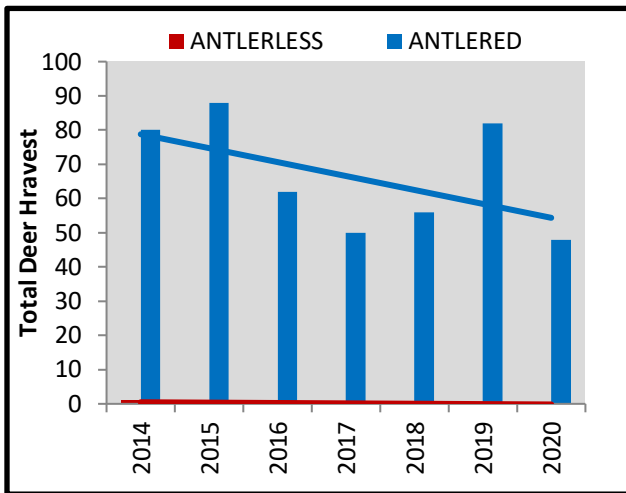
Total deer harvest by weapon type for PMU 62 (comprised of GMUs 652, 655, 666 and 667).  
Modern firearm is scaled on the left and all others scaled on the right.



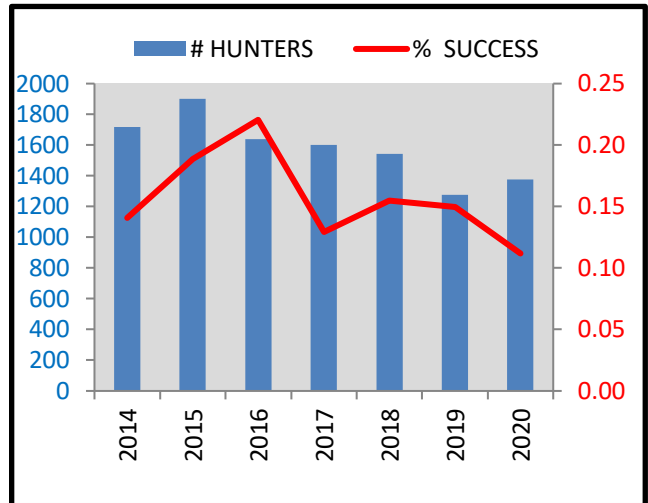
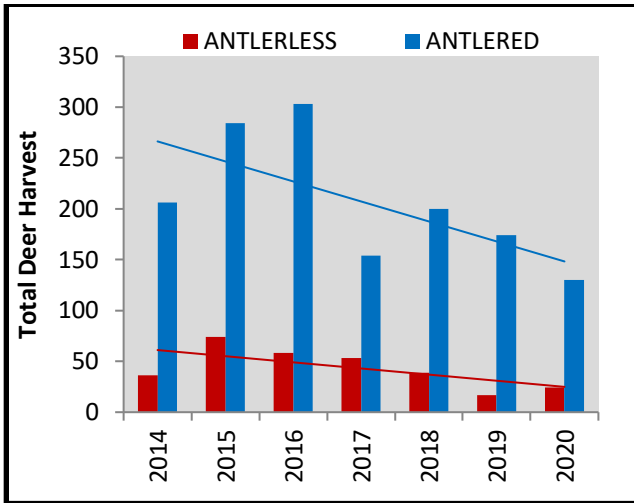
Total deer harvest by weapon type for PMU 67 (comprised of GMUs 653 and 654). Modern firearm is scaled on the left and all others scaled on the right.



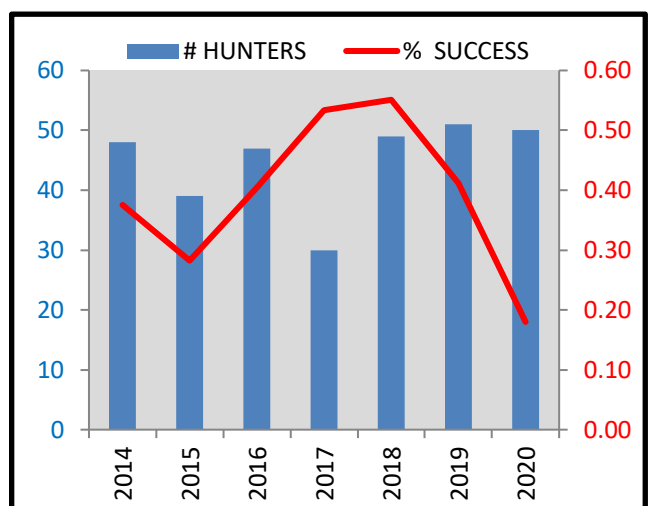
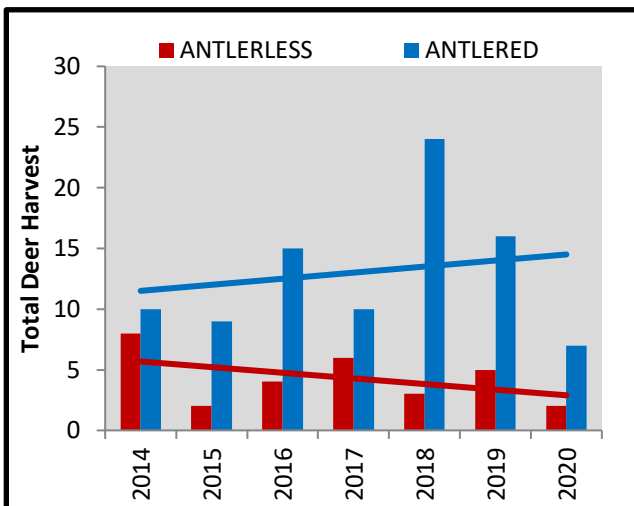
GMU 652 (Puyallup) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



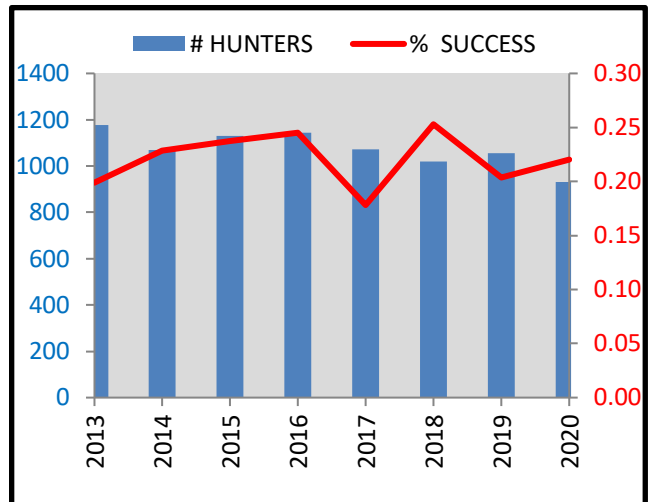
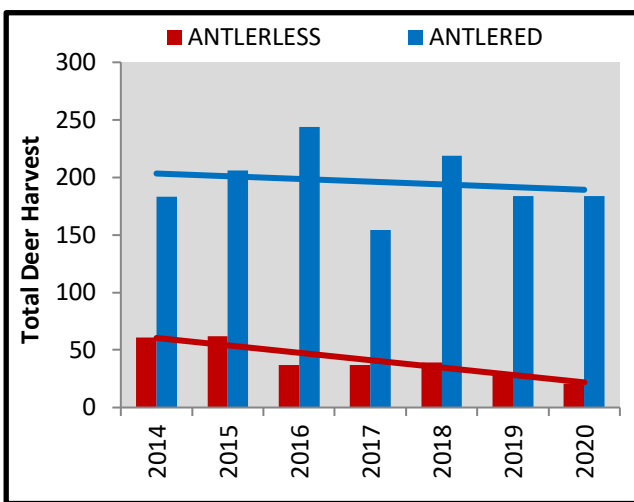
GMU 653 (White River) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



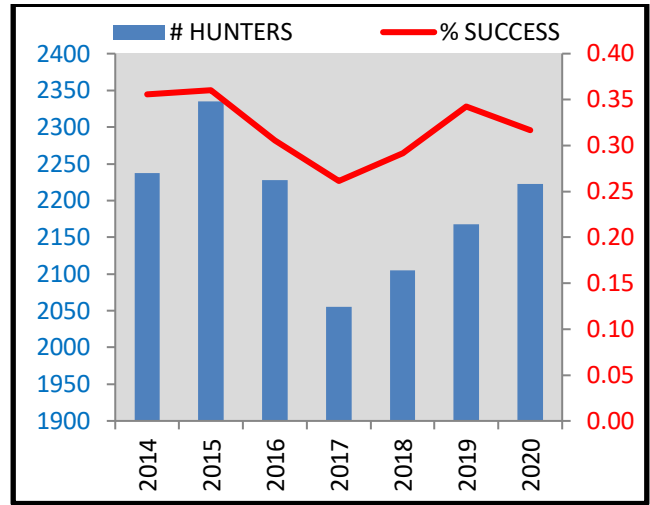
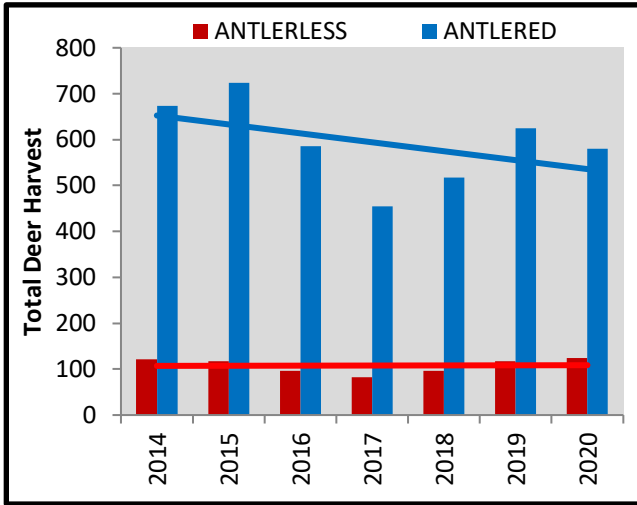
GMU 654 (Mashel) deer harvest, number of hunters, and hunter success rates (all weapons).



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



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



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



K. Hailstone with her first spike (2017)

## BEAR

WDFW's goals for black bear management are to:

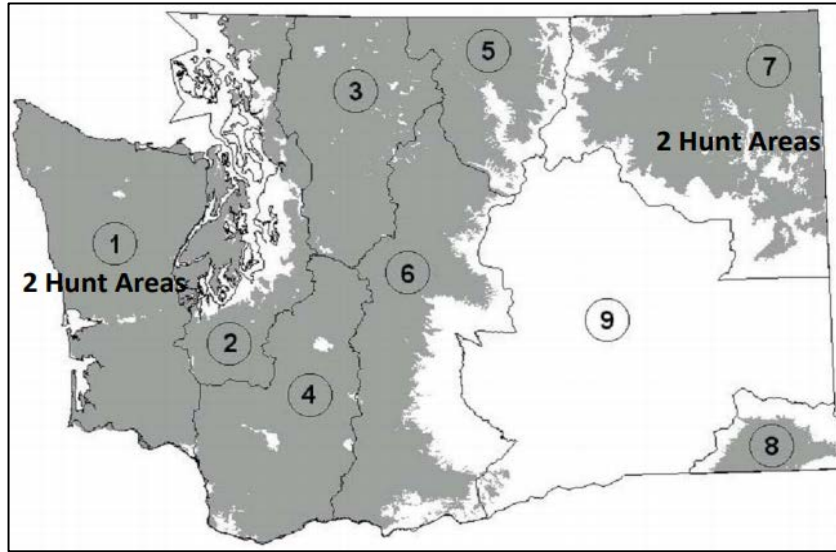
1. Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage black bear and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations;
2. Minimize threats to public safety from black bears, while at the same time maintaining a sustainable and viable bear population;
3. Manage black bear for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by tribal members, wildlife viewing, and photography; and
4. Manage populations statewide for a sustained yield. Wildlife managers use three statistics to assess black bear harvest:
  - Proportion of females harvested (no more than 35-39 percent of harvest)
  - Median age of harvested females (range no younger than 5-6 years)
  - Median age of harvested males (range no younger than 2-4 years)

WDFW does not conduct annual surveys to monitor trends in black bear population size and instead uses harvest data trends for population estimates or indices. Wildlife managers believe black bear populations, which occur across the District but are most prevalent on commercial timberlands in GMUs 653 and 654, are stable in District 11.

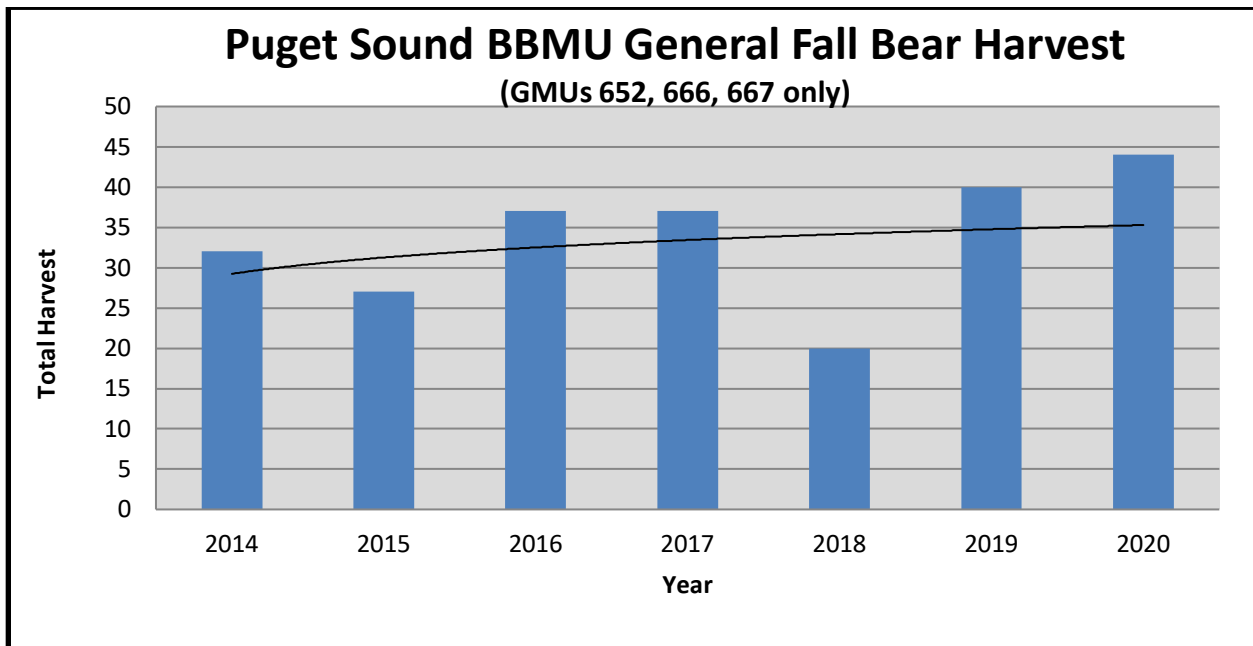
For management purposes, the state is divided into nine Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs). Harvest levels vary between BBMU depending on local population dynamics and environmental conditions. District 11 contains parts of two Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs): South Cascades (BBMU #2 containing GMUs 653 and 654) and Puget Sound (BBMU #4 containing GMUs 652, 666, and 667). Each of these BBMUs also contains additional GMUs outside the boundaries of District 11. A bear season is not provided in GMU 655. There is opportunity across District 11 to hunt bear in the fall general season. A spring special permit hunting seasons previously took place in GMU 654. However, private commercial timber owners currently see no value in continuing that hunt and thus the Kapowsin Spring Bear Hunt has been eliminated.

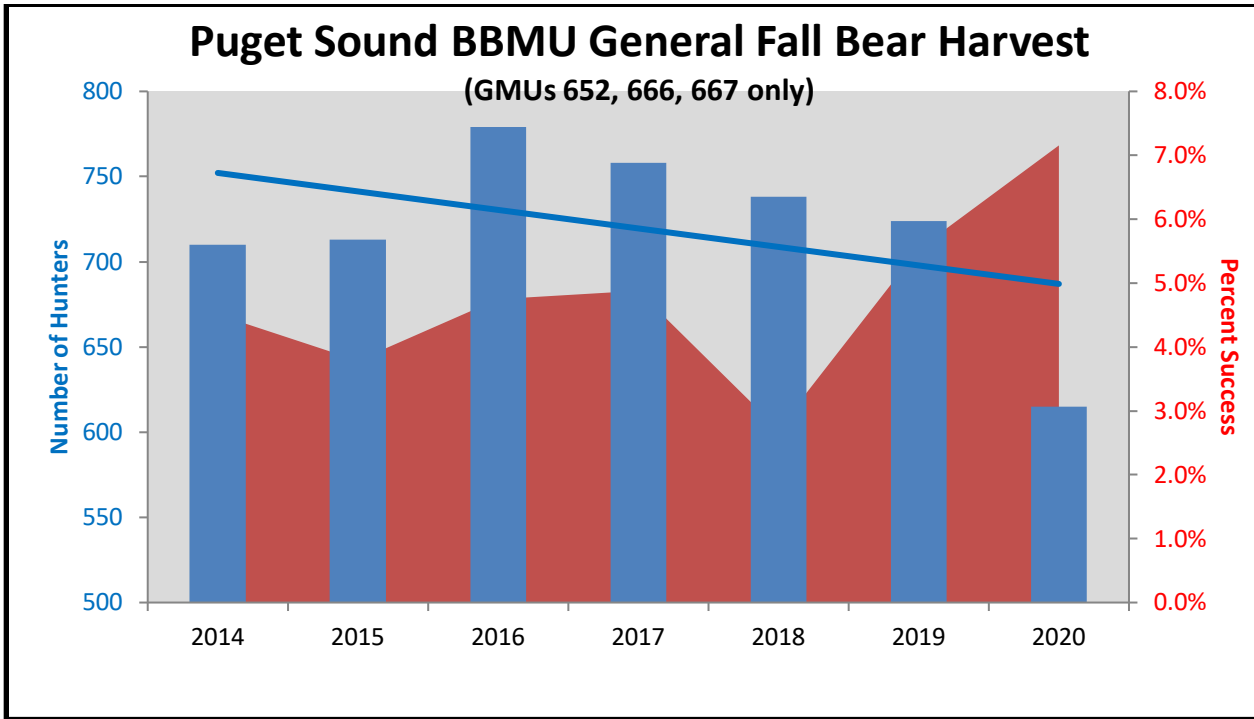


Commercial and state timberlands continue to provide the best availability for bear hunting. WDFW encourages hunters to scout sign (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), Hancock Natural Resource Group-managed lands (Kapowsin and Eatonville timberlands in GMU 654, White River and Buckley timberlands in GMU 653), Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Parks (GMU 654), and Joint Base Lewis McChord offer the best prospects for bear hunters in the district.



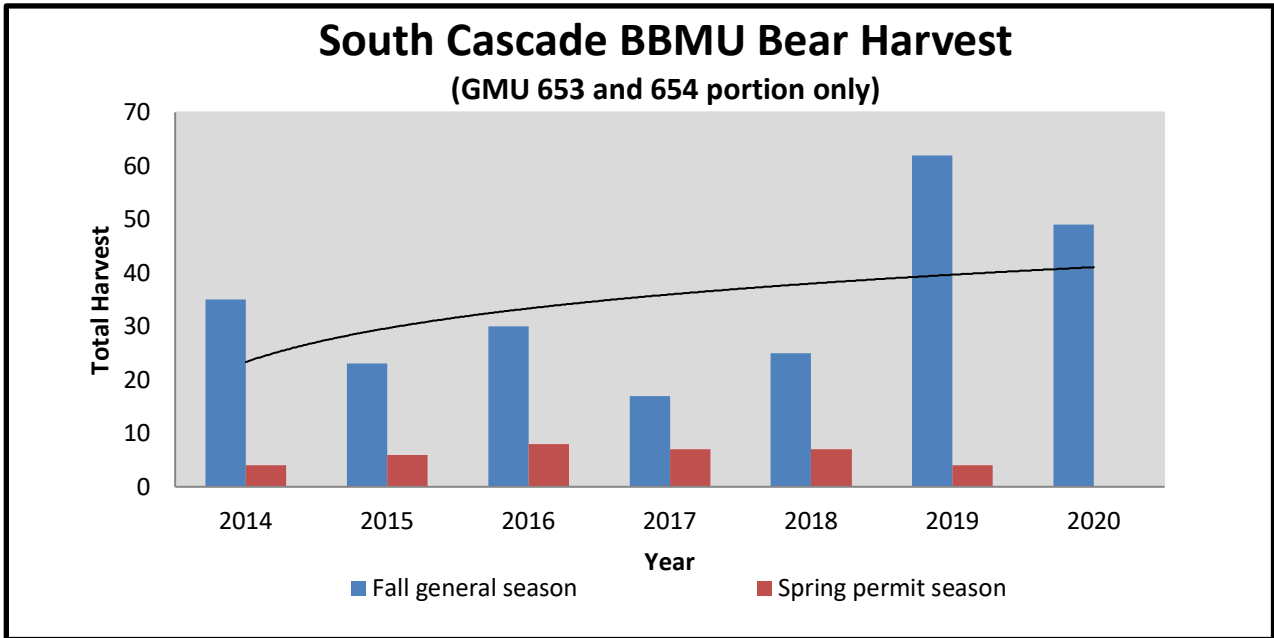
General fall season bear harvest in the GMUs of the Puget Sound BBMU that are within District 11 (GMUs 652, 666, 667) have increased slightly over the past 7 years except for 2018 which saw a one-year significant decline. The number of hunters hunting this BBMU has declined while their success rate has increased slightly since 2014 with success currently at a high of 7%. This trend is being driven primarily by success in GMU 652, which is currently at 14%, one of the highest rates in the state! Prospects for harvesting bear in GMU 652 is good for the 2021 season while in GMUs 666 and 667 much less so. Last winter’s snowpack and the resulting soil moisture levels should result in good berry and mast production this year unless reduced by this springs record heat wave.



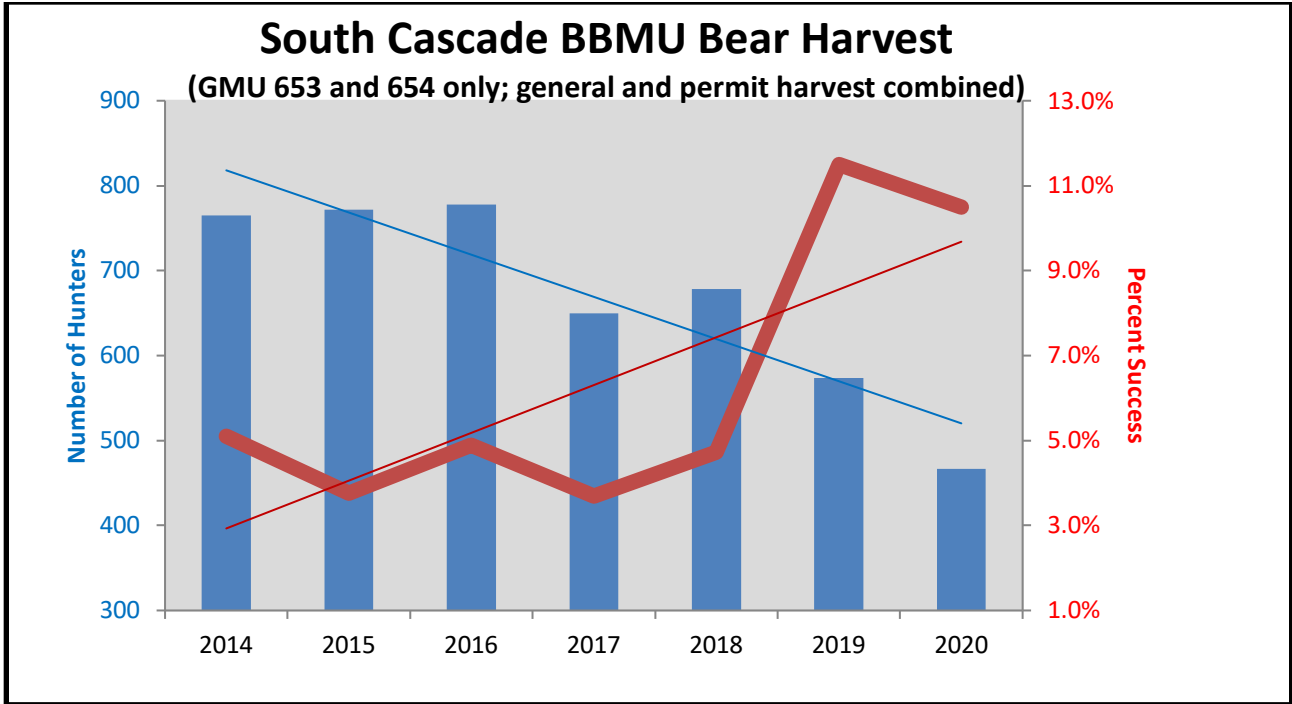


BBMU	GMU	Fall Male Harvest	Fall Female Harvest	Total Harvest	Number Hunters	Hunter Success	Hunter Days	Days/Kill
Coastal #2	652 - Puyallup	16	5	21	153	14%	1,538	73
	666 - Deschutes	5	0	5	101	5%	944	189
	667 - Skookumchuck	15	3	18	361	5%	3,308	184
South Cascades #4	653 - White River	11	5	16	141	11%	1,163	73
	654 - Mashel	21	12	33	326	10%	2,840	86

General fall season bear harvest trends in the District 11 portion of the South Cascades BBMU (e.g., GMUs 653 and 654) remained stable from 2013-2018 and then increased threefold in 2019 in response to an earlier start date (August 1) and a new two-bear bag limit statewide. This high continued in 2020. In response to the new regulations, hunter success rates doubled in 2019 compared to the previous six years despite a decline in the number of hunters. The Kapowsin spring bear season was eliminated in 2020 (previously averaging six bears harvested per year).



*Note: the Kapowsin spring bear permit season was eliminated in 2020.*



In 2019, WDFW developed a rigorous monitoring protocol to estimate black bear population densities on a large scale. Using the results of the North Cascades density analysis (Welfelt et al. 2019), WDFW developed a sampling design that relies on selecting 2-3 project areas annually across the 17 WDFW districts where bears occur. Within each project area, the Department establishes density estimates based on non-invasive DNA collection through bear hair samples. As wildlife managers conduct more surveys, additional capture results will further inform the model, therefore making density estimates more robust. In 2020, District 11 applied this protocol within GMU 654 to obtain a more accurate bear density estimate. The resulting density estimate was 16.9 bears/100 km<sup>2</sup> and the estimated population obtained by extrapolating that density across available habitat in GMU 654 is 142 (with 114 greater than 1-year-old). For GMU 654, the 5-year average harvest was 23 bears (6-spring and 17-fall), which would yield an average harvest rate of 20%; an additional 0-15 bears are taken annually for timber damage removals for a combined mortality rate up to 33% of the estimated population in that unit. The District is eager to conduct the same project in its remaining five GMUs over time to aid bear management and harvest analysis.



## IMPORTANT BEAR HUNTING CONSIDERATIONS

WDFW strongly urges bear hunters not to shoot sows with cubs. Cubs tend to lag behind sows and may not be easily seen. Cubs may also be present in trees or hidden in dense vegetation in the vicinity. Please observe and be patient before shooting. The past few seasons, several orphaned cubs were reported in Region 6. Some were captured and taken to rehabilitation facilities. However, space and funds are limited for rehabilitation and the outcome for bears questionable so hunters should avoid this by NOT shooting sows with cubs.

It is mandatory that hunters who harvest a bear have their bear inspected by an agency representative who will remove a premolar tooth for aging (per [WAC 220-415-090](#)). The use of hounds and/or bait to hunt black bear is prohibited statewide ([RCW 77.15.245](#)).



Photo by S. Holznagel 2014



## COUGAR

Cougar are widespread in the forest lands of District 11. Areas that support high numbers of deer and elk also provide great opportunity for cougar. The statewide goals for cougar are: 1. Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage cougar and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations. 2. Minimize human/cougar conflict. 3. Manage cougar for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, wildlife viewing, and photography. 4. Manage statewide cougar populations for a sustained yield. 5. Improve our understanding of predator-prey relationships.



WDFW changed cougar hunting season design in 2012 by shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougar harvested, and instead using a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines (see [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar)). The intent was to have a longer season, without any hunting implement restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline. The harvest guideline is based on cougar social structure research dynamics. WDFW administers this hunt structure within 50 PMUs. District 11 comprises three PMUs made up of GMUs containing similar habitats and having similar cougar population objectives: GMUs 652/666, GMUs 653/654, and GMU 667. Cougar hunting is not provided in GMU 655.

In response to public pressure regarding cougar populations levels that were perceived as too high in certain areas of the state, a subcommittee of WDFW staff members were tasked in 2019 with providing a variety of options to the WDFW Wildlife Commission for consideration for [cougar management](#). Ultimately, the previous cougar hunting quota system set to harvest 12-16% of the population was eliminated in the 19 GMUs in the state with the highest number of cougars. Within these GMUs, the upper limits of the quota were expanded. This change in management does not affect GMUs in District 11 which remain at the same quota level as previous. Subadult cougars will no longer count toward the cougar harvest guideline.

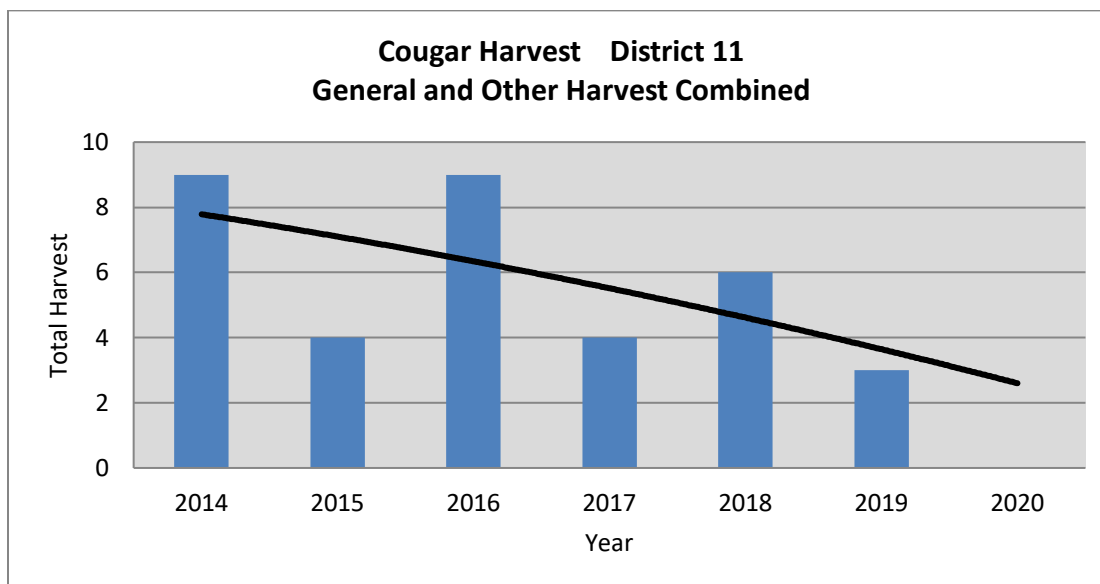
Two general cougar seasons are offered:

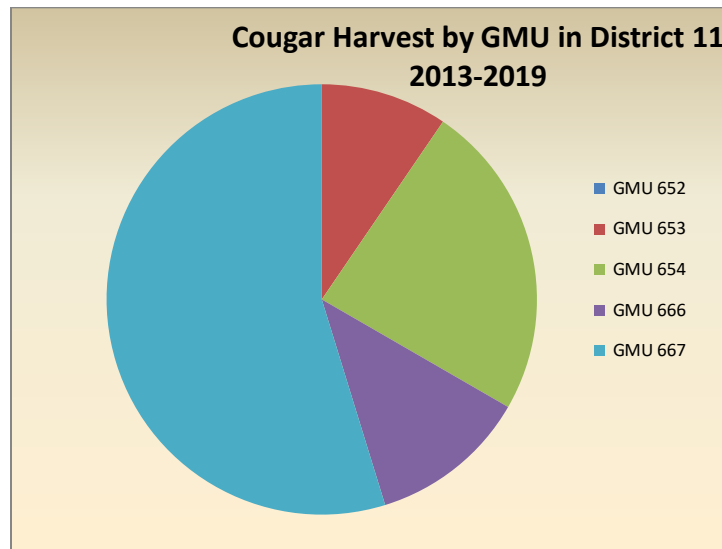
- Early: Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2021
- Late: Jan. 1 - Apr. 30, 2022 OR when the harvest guideline is reached, whichever occurs first.

To hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, **hunters must buy the current year's hunting license and cougar tag for the year they intend to hunt** meaning a valid 2022-23 cougar license and tag is required to hunt cougar in April 2022. WDFW examines harvest numbers starting January 1 can close any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline. WDFW advises anyone planning to hunt cougar after January 1 to confirm the cougar season is open in the desired hunting area by visiting [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/big-game/cougar](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/big-game/cougar). Hunters can call 1-866-364-4868 to determine if a specific hunt area is open after December 31.

GMUs 652 and 666 have no cougar harvest quota limit, GMUs 653 and 654 have a quota of four to five cougars (combined), and GMU 667 has a quota of six to seven cougars. When the lower level of each quota is reached, the District 11 biologist determines if other non-hunting forms of mortality have occurred and whether the GMU should be closed.

Cougar harvest for 2020 was not available at the time of this publication and therefore the last six years data is provided. District 11 harvest has fluctuated annually with spikes in 2014 and 2016 and combined with declines that followed those spikes, the overall trend is downward. Annual harvest is often a reflection of hunter participation and winter conditions; a poor snow year can significantly affect cougar harvest success. Thus, the downward trend may reflect the annual hunting pressure more so that a reduction in the cougar population. A total of three cougar were reported harvested in the district in 2019 not including tribal nor all cougar killed for safety reasons. The Skookumchuck (GMU 667) annually provides the highest cougar harvest in the district. Prospects for hunting cougar in the district remain fair.





**IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

It is unlawful to kill or possess spotted cougar kittens (usually less than 80 pounds) or adult cougars accompanied by spotted kittens. WDFW strongly encourages cougar hunters to search for possible multiple tracks when pursuing an animal. Female cougars may have kittens in trees or in dense vegetation nearby. Please be very observant and patient before shooting. During the 2015 – 2016 season, WDFW enforcement officers and biologists had to capture two orphaned cougar kittens near Joyce. One kitten later died, and the other kitten will remain in captivity at a zoo. Remember, if you harvest a cougar, there are mandatory reporting and sealing requirements. Voter initiative 655 banned the use of hounds to hunt cougars in the state in 1996. Hunting of the aid of hounds is prohibited statewide except during cougar management removals authorized by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.



## MANDATORY REPORTING/SEALING

All successful cougar hunters must report their cougar harvest to the cougar hotline at: 1-866-364-4868 within 72 hours of harvest and have the cougar pelt sealed within 5 days of notification. This is the same hotline hunters can use to check if Cougar Hunt Areas are open or closed. A premolar tooth and tissue sample will be taken. See the [Washington Big Game Hunting Seasons and Rules](#) for more specific details about cougar sealing requirements.



## COUGAR OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

A mountain biker was killed by a young male cougar near North Bend in the spring of 2018. This type of incident is extremely rare and was only the second known human fatality from a cougar in Washington State. Many people in Washington know little about cougar ecology and behavior and are not aware of what steps are necessary to avoid negative encounters. With the increase of human populations, development patterns, and increasing human presence in rural areas, it is essential to raise public awareness and keep both people and cougars safe. Please see WDFW's [Cougar page](#) to learn more about cougar/human interactions.



## Small Game: Bobcat, Fox, Raccoon, Coyote, Rabbit

Bobcats are plentiful in the wooded lands across District 11 and many hunters successfully harvest bobcat each season. Bobcat may be hunted statewide with no bag limit from Sept 1-March 15. A small game license is required to harvest a bobcat. Bobcats are exempt from hunting hour restrictions except it is unlawful to hunt bobcat at night during modern firearm deer or elk general seasons that occur in October and November in both eastern and western Washington. Hunting or pursuing bobcat with dogs is prohibited in Washington. Successful bobcat hunters or trappers must contact a WDFW office to have the bobcat pelt sealed and submit the associated harvest report to the WDFW by April 20 of each year. The bobcat hide must not be frozen so a seal may be attached. No one may possess an open WDFW bobcat seal unless it has been cut by a licensed taxidermist or fur dealer who has received and invoiced the pelt for processing.

Bobcat harvest in Region 6 which includes District 11) has been increasing both for hunting and trapping of bobcat (graphs next page). More bobcat are harvested through hunting than trapping. Harvest rose significantly in 2017; the trapped harvest rate doubled. Pierce and Thurston counties both provide great opportunity for harvesting bobcat.

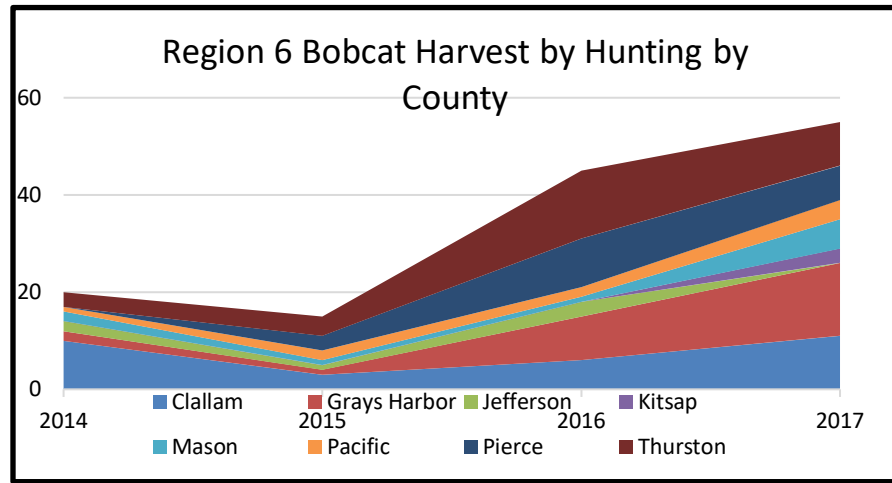
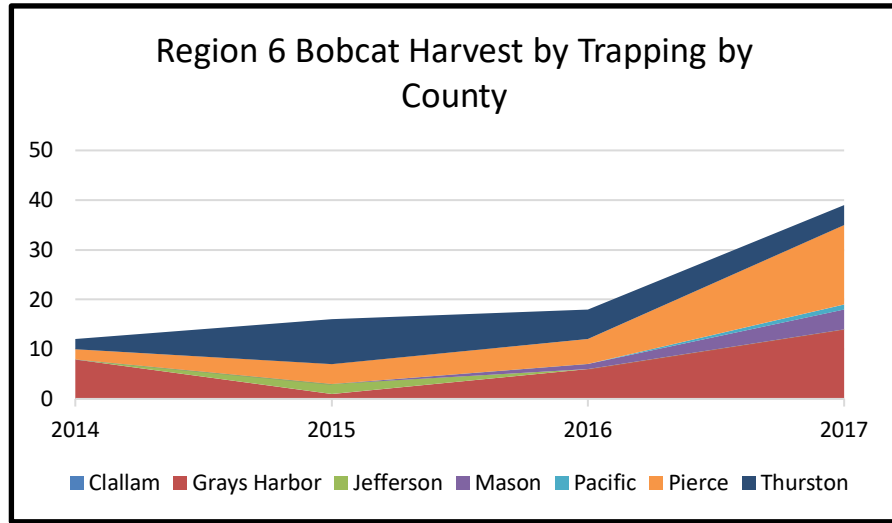
Prospects for hunting or trapping bobcat in 2021 remain steady. Public and private forest remain the best locations for locating and harvesting bobcat.



Bobcat hunter from Carbonado, District 11.



Note: Harvest reports are not available for 2018-2021

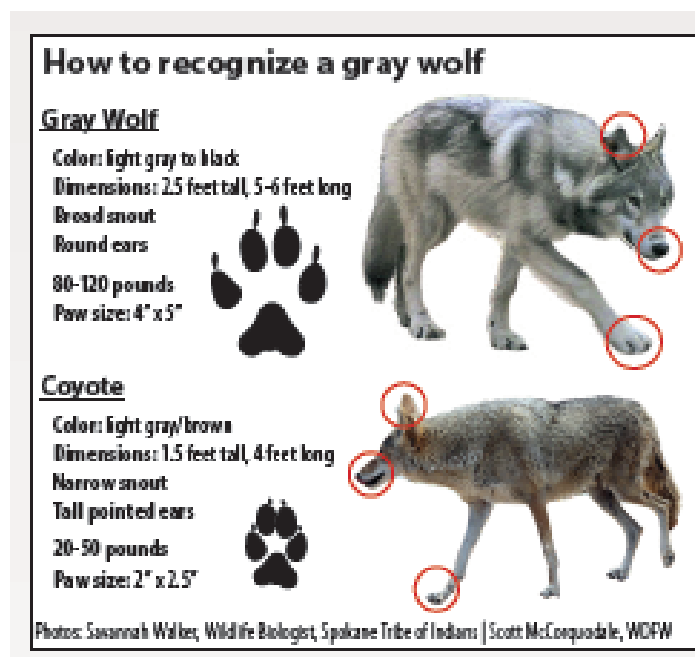


Pierce County hunter with his 2019 bobcat harvested in GMU 666, Deschutes.

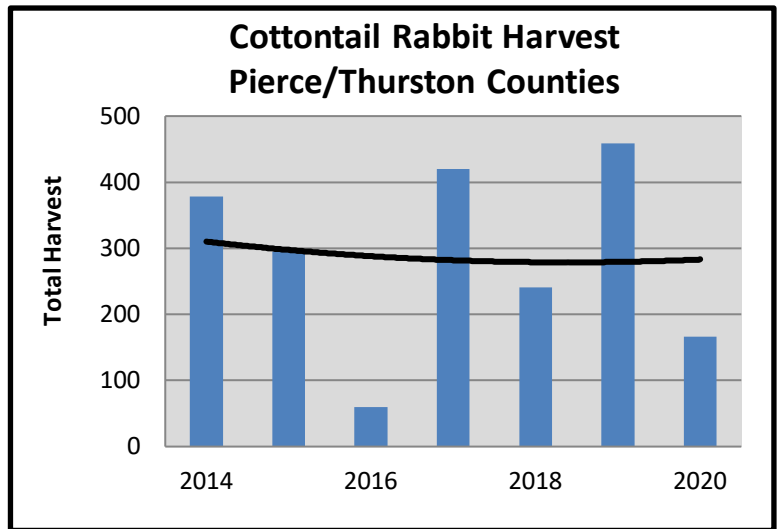
Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) are native to central and eastern Cascades but introduced in the western Cascades. Although not considered abundant, they may be found on farmlands, developed areas and forested areas of District 11. People can hunt them with no bag limit from Sept 1-Mar 15 with a small game license across the District except for the exterior boundaries of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie and Gifford Pinchot national forests. The Cascade red fox (*Vulpes vulpes cascadenis*), an endemic subspecies that occupies alpine and subalpine habitats in the southern Cascade Mountains including Mount Rainer in District 11, is a rare to vulnerable [species of greatest conservation need](#) and a [priority species](#) to WDFW and cannot be hunted.

Raccoons are also very plentiful across District 11, particularly around suburban neighborhoods where they feed on garbage, fallen fruit, dogfood, artificial pond fish, and various other opportunistic food sources. They are helped by a lack of natural predators within these areas. Raccoons are also found in the less developed forests of the eastern District. Raccoons can be hunted across the District with no bag limit from Sept 1-Mar 15 with a small game license. Dogs may be used to hunt raccoon and they may be hunted at night, EXCEPT it is unlawful to hunt with dogs or at night during the months of October or November during the dates established for modern firearm deer and elk general seasons in eastern and western Washington.

Coyotes are another small game animal abundant across District 11, both in the urban and non-urban areas. They have also benefitted from a lack of large predators in the urban and suburban areas. Coyote may be hunted without a bag limit year-round under a small game or big game hunting license. Coyote may be hunted at night with lights year-round, EXCEPT it is unlawful to hunt coyote at night during modern firearm deer or elk general seasons that occur in October and November in eastern and western Washington. The use of dogs to hunt coyote is prohibited. Wolves are back in Washington State and are protected under both federal and state law and MAY NOT be shot or killed. Be sure of identification if you are hunting coyote or bobcat. Report all wolf observations [here](#).



District 11 provides the best cottontail rabbit hunting opportunities in Region 6, and some of the best in western Washington. Rabbits are prolific in the shrub and grassland habitats found throughout Pierce, Thurston, and northcentral Lewis counties. Cottontail rabbit harvest in the district fluctuates depending on hunter annual participation. The average harvest over the past 7 years has been just under 300 annually (Pierce and Thurston counties only). Pierce County has often had one of the highest harvests of all western Washington counties. Thus, prospects for cottontail hunting in District 11, and Pierce County specifically, are good.



## Small Game: Beaver, Weasel, Marten, Mink, Muskrat, River Otter

Beaver, weasels, mink, muskrat, and river otter are all plentiful across Region 6 including District 11. Martens less so. American marten inhabit eastern District 11 as part of the Cascade population, which is considered stable. American martens are difficult to find. Fisher may be misidentified as a marten; fishers are a protected species in Washington under both federal and state law and MAY NOT be trapped or killed. Be sure of identification if you are hunting marten. Report all fisher observations at [Wildlife Observation Tool](#) or email us at [wildlife.data@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:wildlife.data@dfw.wa.gov). Be sure to include a photo of the species for verification and location (latitude/longitude coordinates) of your observation.

### Identification of Fisher and Marten in Washington

Fishers are protected under both federal and state law and may not be trapped or killed.  
[Be sure of identification if you are trapping marten or mink.](#)

**Pelage Colors**  
 Fisher — dark brown with lighter shading on head, back of the neck and back.  
 Marten — light brown to brown (cinnamon, russet), with creamy brown/ beige face and occasionally chest with darker brown legs, feet and end of tail.

**Size**  
 Fishers are bigger, darker and have noticeably longer and fuller tails than marten. Fishers tails average 14-15 inches in length and Martens tails average 6.5-7.5 inches in length.

**Ear Shape**  
 Fishers — rounded "teddy-bear" shaped ears  
 Martens — more pointed ears

**Elevation**  
 Fishers and martens overlap in elevation. Therefore, elevation should not be used as an indicator of species presence.

**FISHER**





Photo by Paul Bannick

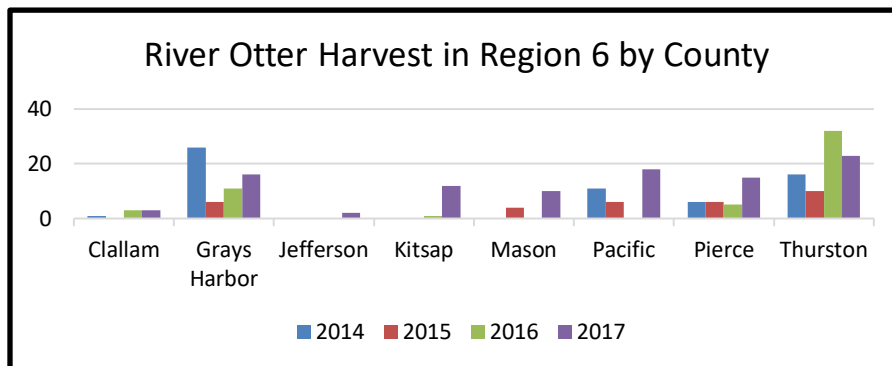
**MARTEN**



WDFW Staff

**Trapping Information**  
 Use cubby boxes, with a closed front and 2.5 inch entrance hole, to avoid catching fishers.

Long-tailed weasels occur District 11 primarily on pasture, cropland, fields, and grasslands. Beaver, mink, muskrat, and river otter are plentiful throughout District 11’s waterways. Hunters may only harvest beaver, weasel, marten, muskrat, and river otter by trapping with a trapping license during the trapping season (Nov1-Mar 31). Successful river otter trappers must contact a WDFW office to have the otter pelt sealed and submit the associated harvest report to the WDFW by April 20 of each year (see [Trapping Regulations](#)). The hide must not be frozen so a seal may be attached. No one may possess an open WDFW river otter seal unless it has been cut by a licensed taxidermist or fur dealer who has received and invoiced the pelt for processing. Pierce and Thurston counties within District 11 consistently provide some of the highest trap rates for river otter within Region 6.



## DUCKS

The majority of [Pacific Flyway](#) waterfowl are born on the prairies of the United States and Canada, primarily Alaska, northwestern Canada, and other western states. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Waterfowl Population Status report for 2020, to support public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, most migratory breeding surveys (e.g., the Breeding Waterfowl Population and Habitat Survey, Breeding Bird Survey, and others) conducted by the USFWS, Canadian Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey, as well as state and provincial agencies were canceled in spring 2020. They therefore present no status information on any duck species as all the estimates or indices for ducks rely on these surveys. The information below represents the 2019 Waterfowl Population Status for reference.



[fws.gov/refuges/RefugeUpdate/MarApr\\_2012/fourflyways.html](https://fws.gov/refuges/RefugeUpdate/MarApr_2012/fourflyways.html)

The western North American survey area habitat conditions in 2018 were similar or declined, with a few exceptions, relative to 2017. Much of the Canadian prairies experienced below-average precipitation from fall 2018 through spring 2019. Fall and winter temperatures were mainly below average. The U.S. prairies experienced average to above-average precipitation over most of the region. Conditions for waterfowl production were good to excellent in the south and poorer farther north. Overall habitat quality remained fair to good over a large portion of the traditional survey area and should lead to average waterfowl production this year, however dry areas, particularly in the Canadian prairies, have expanded since 2018.



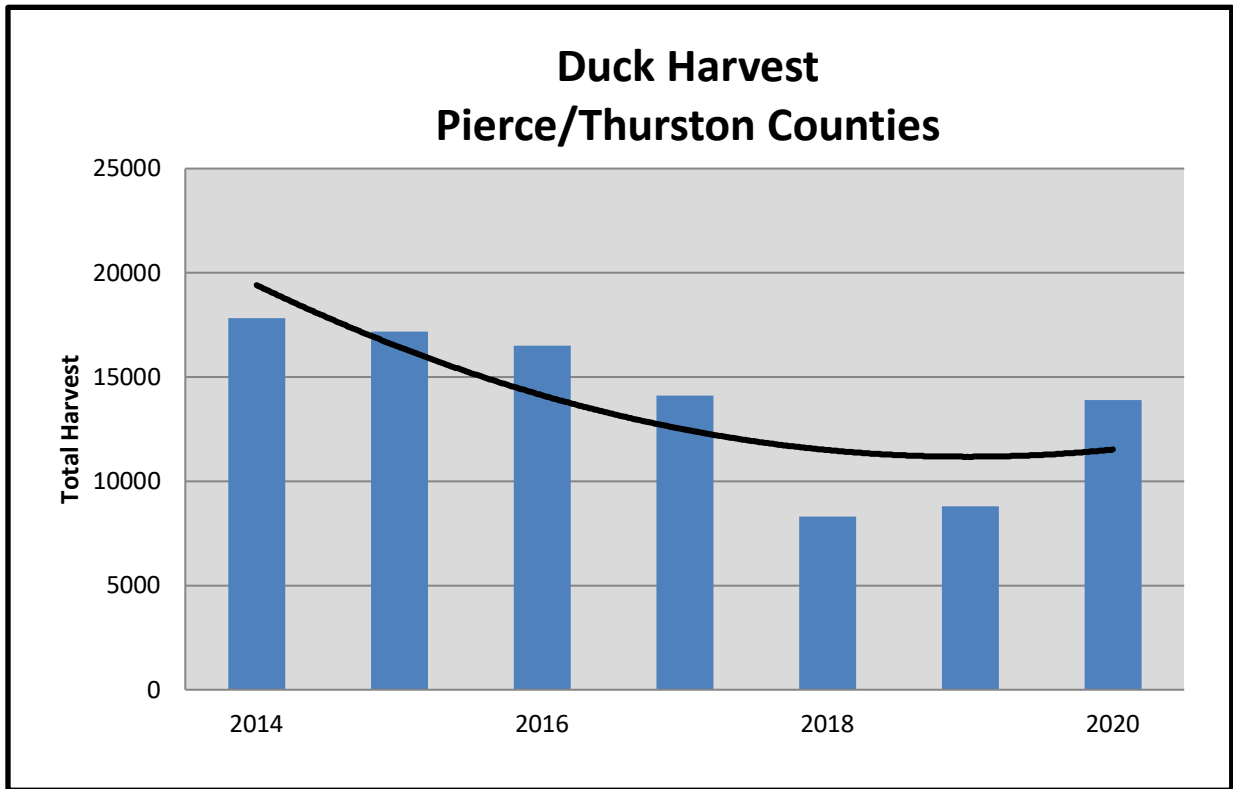
In the traditional survey area, the total duck population was  $38.9 \pm 0.7$  million birds. This estimate was 6% lower than the 2018 estimate of  $41.2 \pm 0.7$  million and 10% higher than the long-term average (1955–2018). The Pacific goose and tundra swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) population count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

Information on the **Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Surveys and the Mid-winter Waterfowl Inventory** can be found at [fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/population-surveys.php](https://fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/population-surveys.php). Population trends for several species of ducks found in District 11 are as follows:

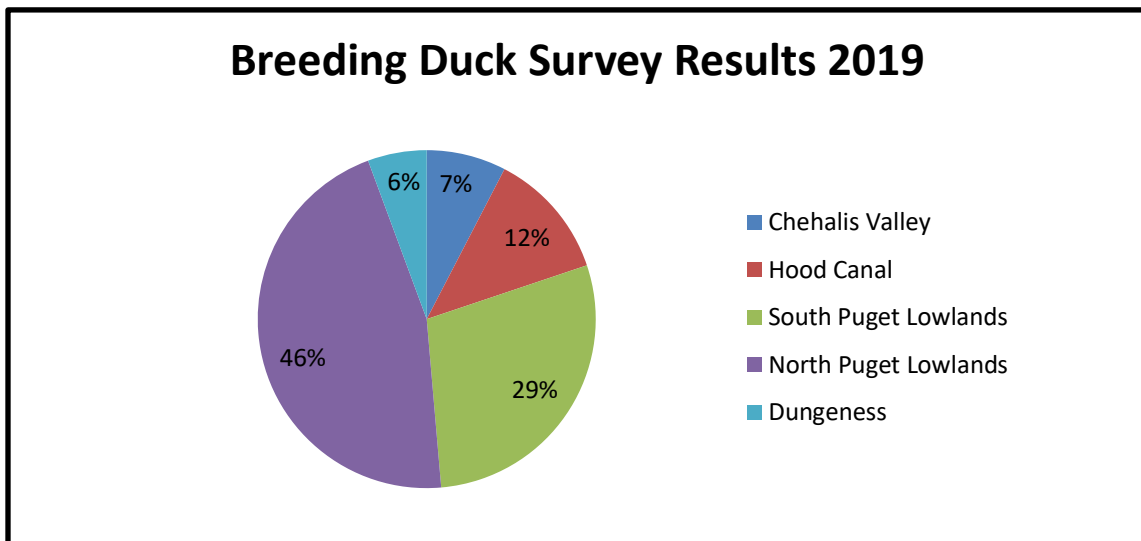
Species	Breeding Population Estimate Trend North America
Mallard	Estimated abundance was $9.4 \pm 0.3$ million, which was similar to the 2018 estimate of $9.3 \pm 0.3$ million but 19% above the long term average of $7.9 \pm 0.04$ million
Green-winged teal	The estimated abundance of green-winged teal was $3.2 \pm 0.2$ million, which was similar to the 2018 estimate of $3.0 \pm 0.2$ million and 47% above the long-term average ( $2.2 \pm 0.02$ million).
Gadwall	Estimated abundance of ( $3.3 \pm 0.2$ million) was similar to the 2018 estimate and 61% above the long-term average.
American widgeon	Abundance estimates for American widgeon ( $2.8 \pm 0.2$ million) were similar to their 2018 estimates and their long-term averages of $2.6 \pm 0.02$ million.
Northern shoveler	The 2019 northern shoveler estimate was 13% below last year and 39% above the long-term average of $2.6 \pm 0.02$ million.
Northern pintails	Northern pintail abundance ( $2.3 \pm 0.1$ million) was similar to the 2018 estimate and 42% below the long-term average of $3.9 \pm 0.03$ million.
Scaup (combined)	The combined estimate of lesser and greater scaup ( $3.6 \pm 0.2$ million) was similar to the 2018 estimate and 28% below the long-term average of $5.0 \pm 0.04$ million.
Canvasbacks	Abundance estimates for canvasbacks ( $0.7 \pm 0.05$ million) were similar to their 2018 estimates and their long-term averages of $0.6 \pm 0.05$ million.

Waterfowl hunting on Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, off Anderson Island (GMU 655), and inland lakes in the district are some of the best opportunities in south Puget Sound.

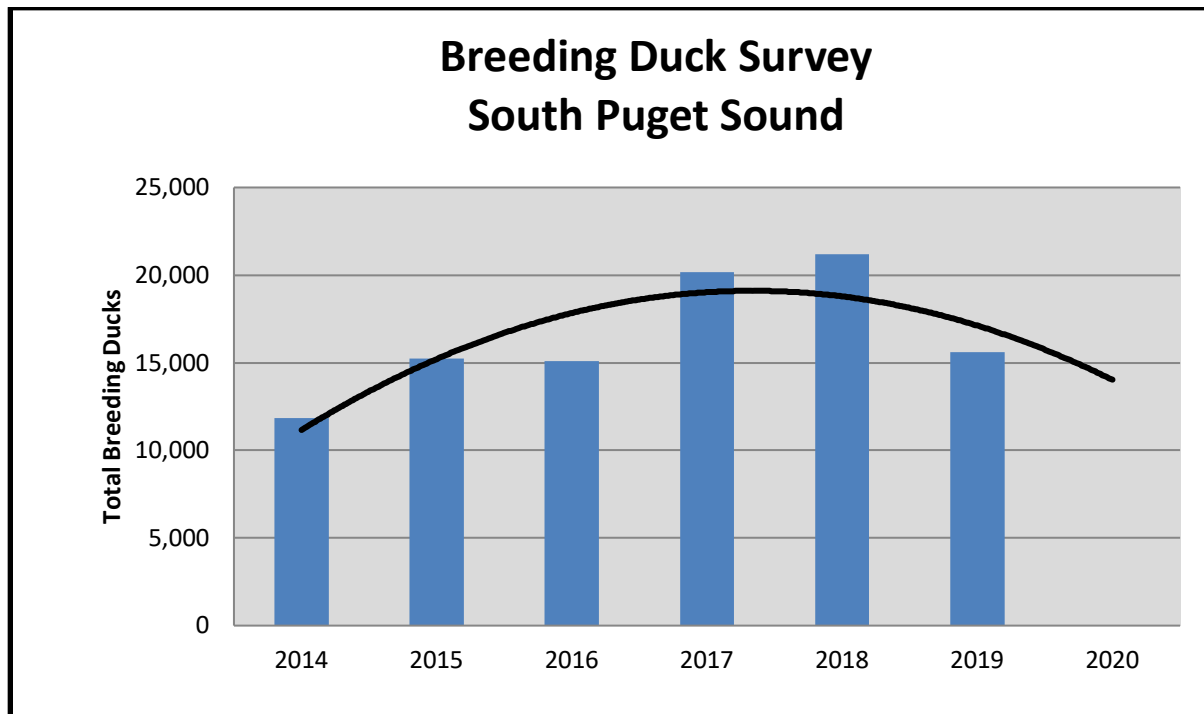
Duck harvest in District 11 has a slightly downward trend over the past seven years caused primarily by declines in 2018 and 2019, rebounding slightly in 2020. A decline in hunter participation may partially explain this decline considering breeding duck surveys show an increase in breeding ducks in the district over the past 7 years. Thurston County supports more waterfowl than Pierce County, primarily because of Nisqually Wildlife Refuge and other Puget Sound inlets. Hunting prospects for waterfowl hunters remain good in the District in 2021 with the best prospects being in Thurston County.



The south Puget Sound lowlands compete with the north Puget Sound lowlands on an annual basis as the area having the highest percent of breeding ducks in western Washington according to WDFW’s annual breeding duck surveys. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, breeding duck surveys conducted by USFWS and WDFW were canceled in spring 2020. 2019 data is provided for reference. In 2019, breeding season duck estimates increased in Hood Canal and the Dungeness area of western Washington compared to 2018 but decreased in the Chehalis Valley, South Puget Lowlands, and North Puget Lowlands.



Breeding duck surveys in the south Puget Sound, which encompasses District 11, show an increasing trend since 2014 with a slight decline in 2019 (duck surveys not conducted in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on flights).

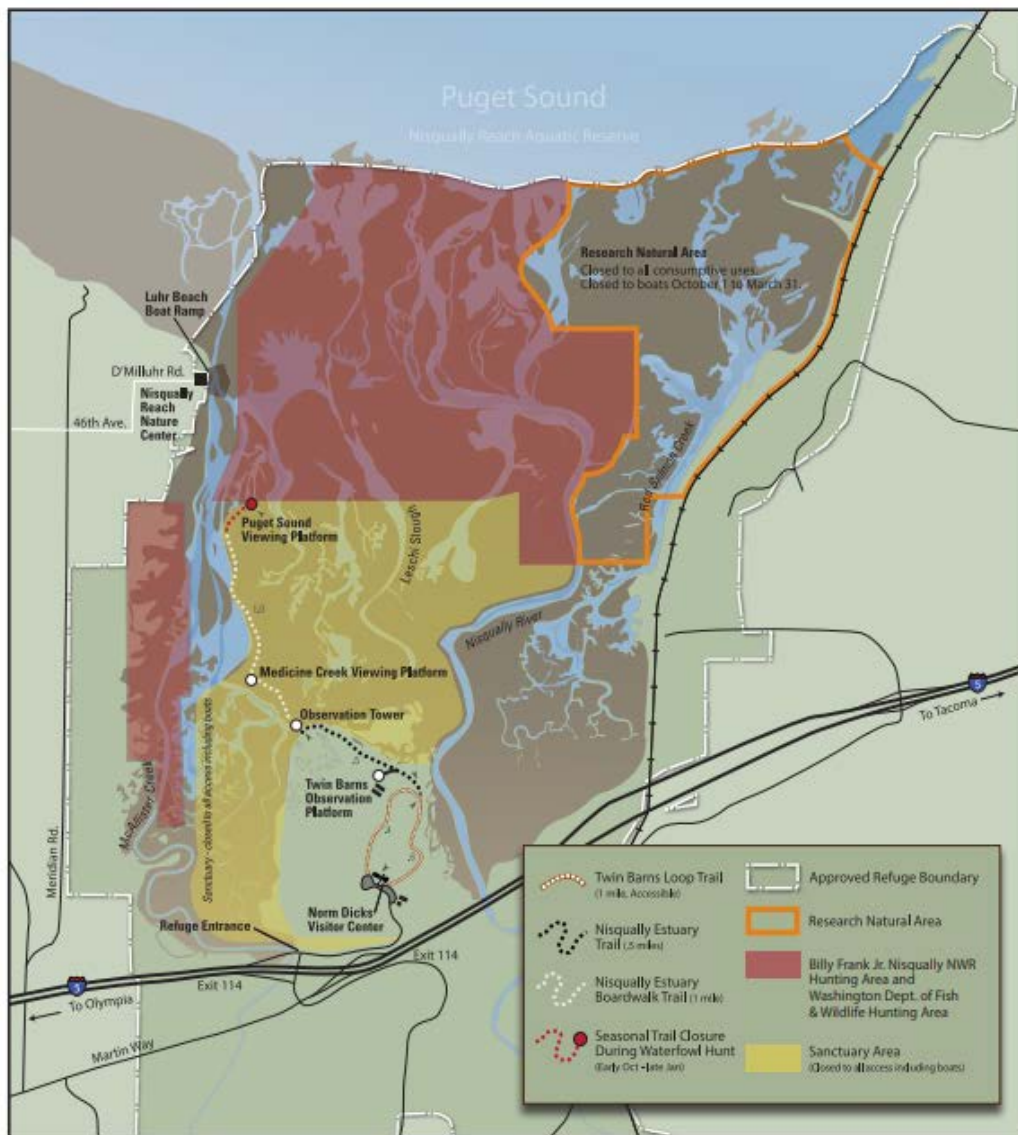


The Washington Duck Breeding Population Survey is the basis for tracking trends in breeding waterfowl and can be read in detail in the annual WDFW Game Status and Trends reports at [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans). The revised survey design for western Washington estimated the total breeding duck population at 54,240 (*SE* 5,163). Mallards numbered 36,568 (*SE* 4,442), followed by wood duck 4,916 (*SE* 678), Green-winged teal (4,374 *SE* 2,060), and Gadwall (2,037 *SE* 1,059). The north Puget Sound lowlands held most breeding ducks in 2019 (45.7%), followed by the south Puget Sound lowlands (28.8%), Hood Canal (12.2%), Chehalis River Valley (7.6%), and Dungeness (5.8%). The greatest factor influencing brood production in the district continues to be habitat loss due to development and increasing human disturbance. Wildlife managers expect waterfowl numbers to remain stable in District 11.

## Where to Hunt Waterfowl in District 11

### Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge

One of the best waterfowl hunting areas in District 11 is the [Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge](#), located on the border between Pierce and Thurston counties. The USFWS has 570 acres of refuge waters and tidelands open to waterfowl hunting at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. This includes an expanded area in 2020 that extends north of and adjacent to the previous hunt area. This provides a total of 1,197 acres of USFWS and WDFW-owned lands within the Refuge boundary that are open to waterfowl hunting. Hunting access is by boat only. The estuary restoration area (Sanctuary) and Research Natural Area (RNA) remain closed to hunting and boating to provide adequate wildlife sanctuary. Full regulations can be found at: [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov) and the refuge hunting brochure can be downloaded and printed at: [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).



### Centralia Mine

Centralia Mine provides limited entry quality hunting opportunity. This limited hunt is managed as a sign-up on a first come basis. In early September, the Mine sends out a notice to all its employees (TransAlta employees) informing them of the date and time the sign-up is opened. Only TransAlta employees are allowed to sign up for the first week the calendar is released, after which the public may sign up for hunting any calendar dates still available. All hunters must sign up in person at the main Centralia Mine security gate shack. Hunting is allowed on Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, and holidays that fall within the waterfowl season. Hunters are required to check in at the security gate on their day of hunting. Hunters cannot sign up for others and are limited to 2 days per person (and towards the end of the season can sign up for additional two days if there are still dates available). Hunters are required to sign a waiver. Hunters are only allowed to hunt on one site located in a hay field immediately east of the mine facilities (see map below). Digging pit blinds is not allowed. Hunters can only hunt waterfowl and not big game. Hunters can send questions to [bill\\_scheer@transalta.com](mailto:bill_scheer@transalta.com).



### Lakes and Flooded Agricultural Fields

The following lakes and agricultural fields have the highest mid-winter waterfowl counts in District 11 and may be good sites to scout for waterfowl hunters (be advised of those in **firearm restriction areas**—see Introduction section):

Pierce County: American Lake, Lake Bay, Flett Dairy, Hylebos Waterway, Kreger Lake, Lake Chalet, various fields around McKenna, Puyallup Valley ag fields, Spanaway Lake, Steilacoom Lake, Waughop Lake.

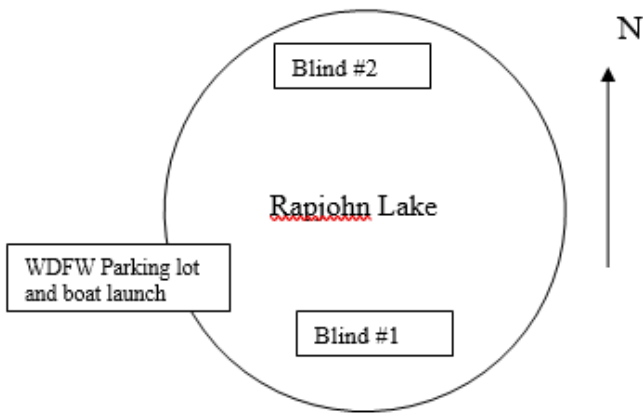
Thurston County: Black Lake, Capitol Lake, Case Road at 113<sup>th</sup>, Evergreen Valley, Lake Lawrence, Long Lake, McIntosh Lake, Pattison Lake, Smith Prairie, Zeller Loop Road.

Puget Sound shorelines: District 11 has abundant marine shorelines both on the mainland and the various islands of the south Puget Sound. The small inlets throughout across those shorelines support high numbers of ducks and seabirds and may be hunted provided they are not within firearm restriction areas.

Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies in the district that are surrounded by



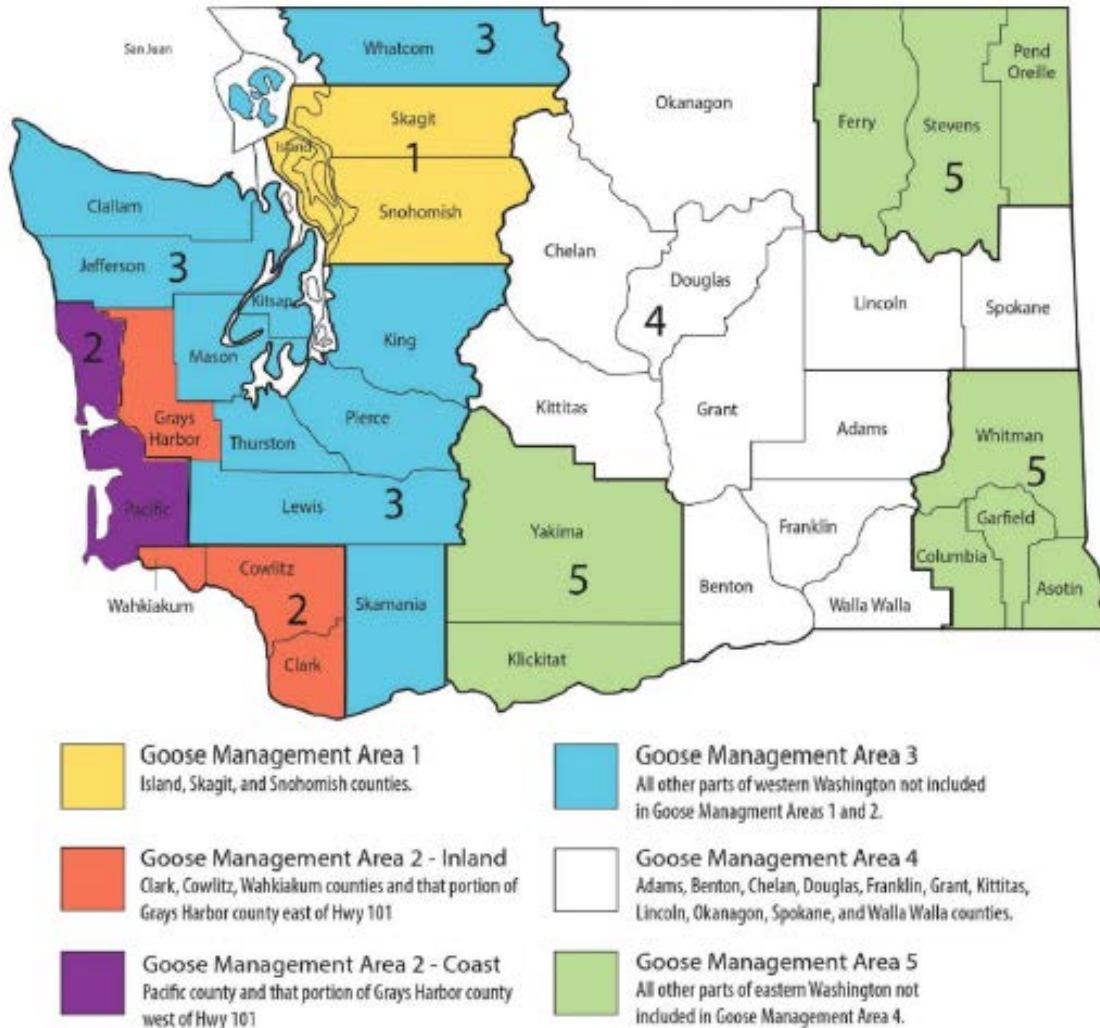
housing. Hunters are urged to obey all hunting regulations at such sites to avoid potential future closures. All bodies of water are open for hunting unless located within a county firearm restriction area (see Introduction). Rapjohn Lake in Pierce County has a Register to Hunt program and requires hunters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



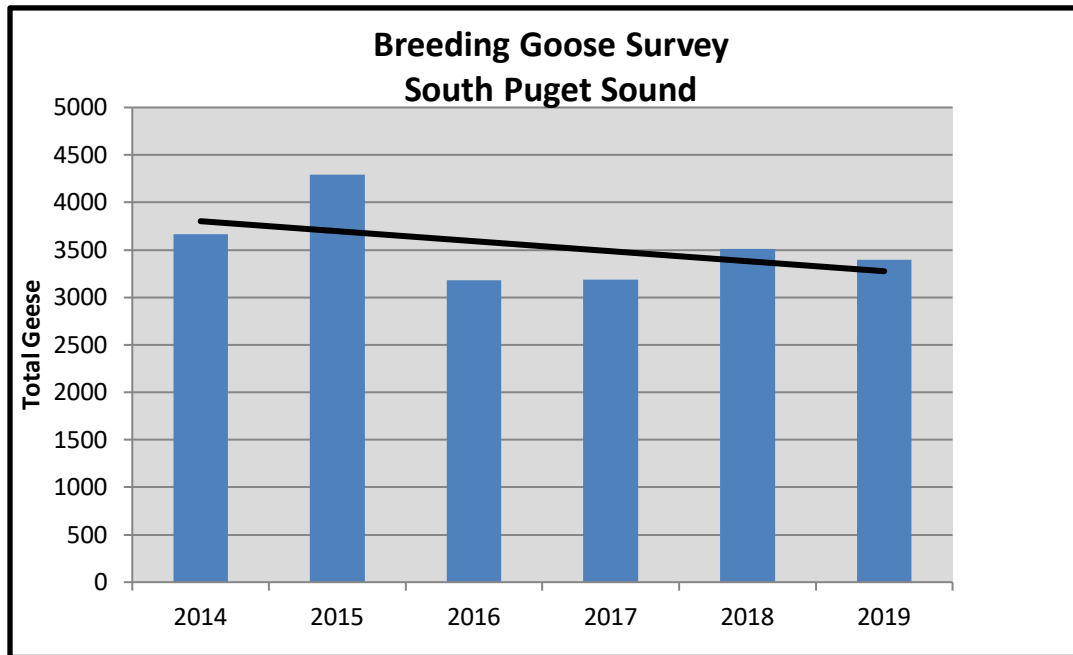
Members of the Washington Waterfowl Association assisting with construction of the Rapjohn Lake duck blinds, 2018.

## GEESE

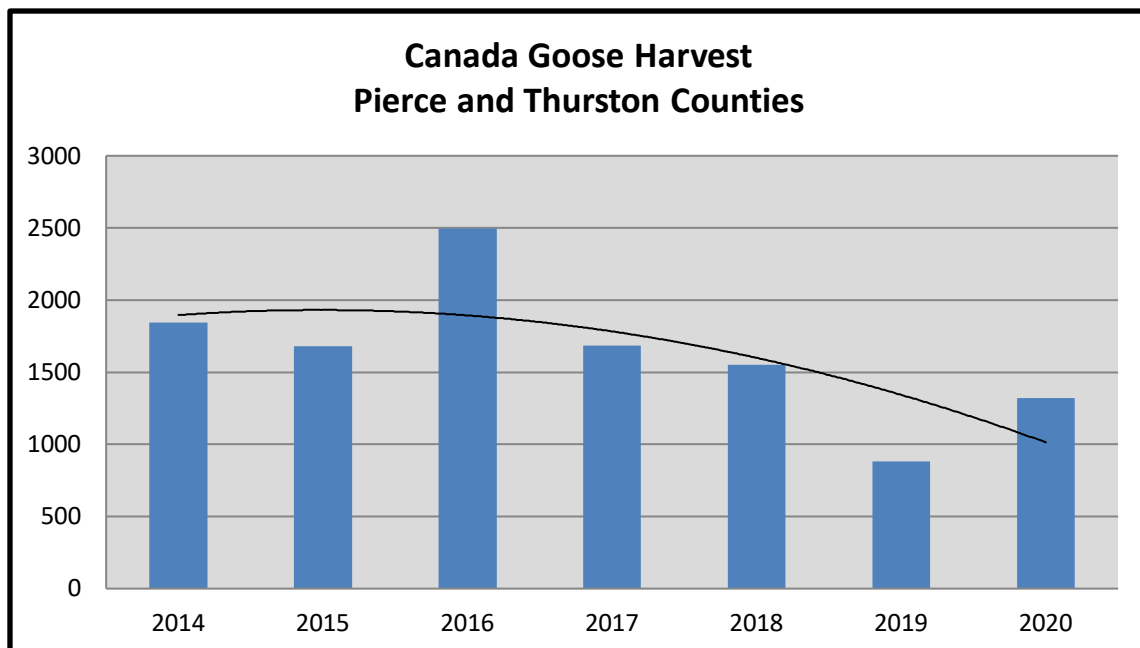
Most goose hunting opportunity in District 11 is for Canada geese. All of District 11 is within the Goose Management Area 3 with an open season September 5-10 with a daily bag limit of 5 and possession limit of 15 Canada geese. Canada Geese are all types of Canada geese including cackling, Taverner's and Aleutian geese. White geese are snow and Ross' geese. Dusky Canada goose season is closed.



Resident geese are increasing in distribution, especially within urban and rural areas. Goose breeding survey trends have generally increased across the south Puget Sound, which includes District 11 over the last 10 years but remained constant since 2014.



Areas reported earlier for good waterfowl hunting include good goose hunting and in particular the inland (e.g., western) agricultural fields of Pierce, Thurston, and Lewis counties. The goose harvest in the district has remained relatively stable since 2014 with the exception of the decline in 2019 likely caused by the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown.



## SWANS

Swans are protected by federal and state laws and are closed to hunting statewide. WDFW encourages all waterfowl hunters to know all identification features for swans as compared to snow geese.

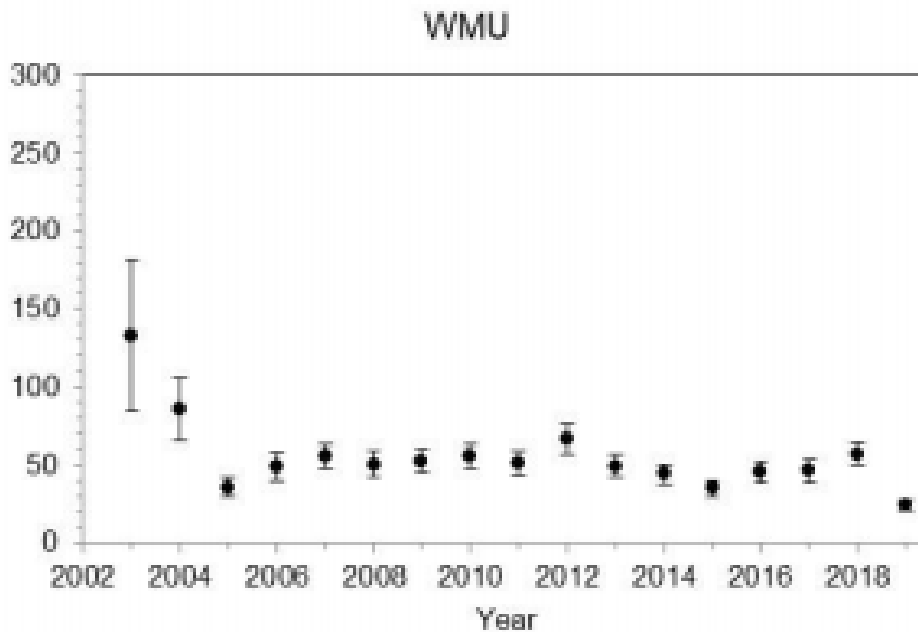


## MOURNING DOVE

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

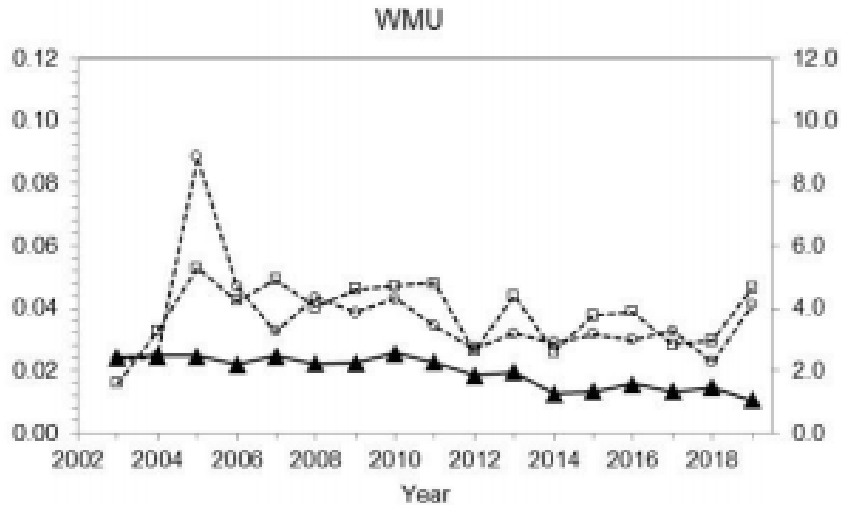
WDFW uses the annual USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status Report to analyze trends in mourning dove populations. The report summarizes trends in the number of doves heard and seen per route from the all-bird Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and provides absolute abundance estimates based on band recovery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

BBS data suggested that the abundance of mourning doves over the last 54 years decreased in the western management units, which is composed of the seven western states, including Washington. Estimates of absolute abundance increased in the western management unit in 2018 and then dropped noticeably in 2019 (note: reports are always two years out). Abundance estimates were lower in all management units in 2019 than 2018, and were the lowest abundances estimated for each unit since the current estimation system was adopted.



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

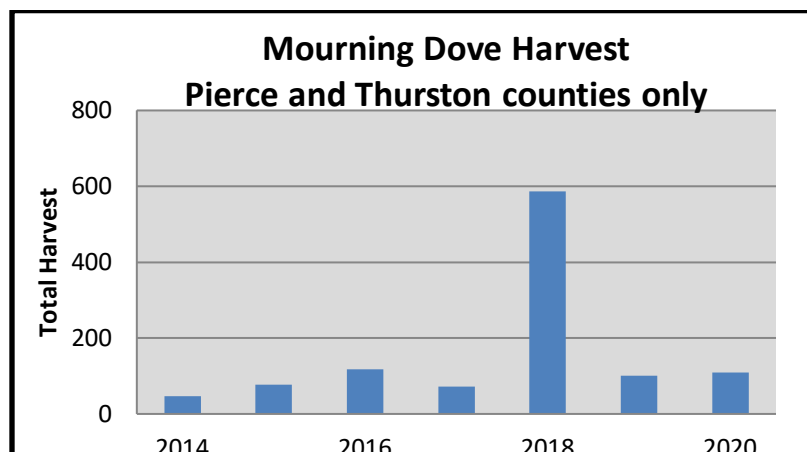




*Estimated harvest (▲) and harvest rates of mourning dove in the western management units combined, 2002–2019. Harvest rates presented separately for hatch-year (□) and after-hatch-year (○; USFWS 2019).*

Approximately  $46,400 \pm 7,000$  mourning doves were harvested by  $4,800 \pm 500$  active hunters in the 2019-20 season in Washington, for an average of  $9.7 \pm 1.8$  doves per hunter (note, data always two years out). This is a decrease over 2018-19 estimates. More information on mourning dove and other migratory bird harvest and data collection can be found at [fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php](https://fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php).

District 11 is not a prime dove hunting area in Washington, averaging 158 doves harvested per year over the past 7 years. Mourning dove harvest exponentially increased in 2018 with no obvious explanation. Lewis County traditionally provides higher harvest numbers in the district, with Thurston and Pierce counties providing far less. However, this depends on hunter participation, which fluctuates year to year. In 2019, the harvest was 82, 101, and 0 for Lewis, Thurston, and Pierce counties respectively, which is a 31% decline in Lewis, 19% decline in Thurston, and 100% decline in Pierce County over 2018 totals. A total of 19 hunters only reported hunting dove in District 11 in 2019. WDFW’s small game hunter survey may also underestimate harvest when participation is low, as it was in 2019.

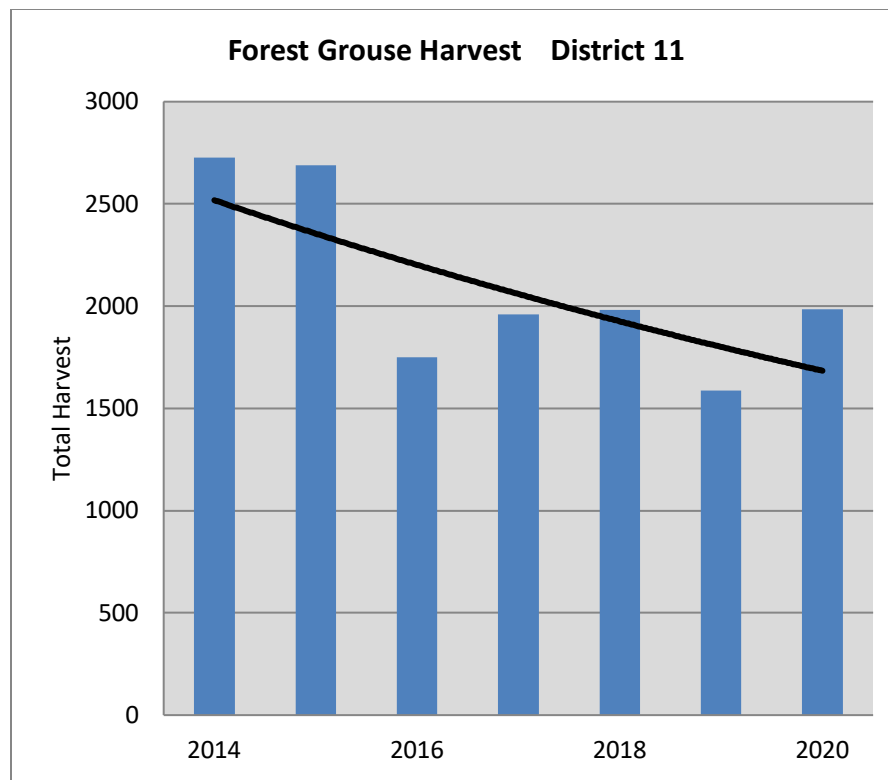


## FOREST GROUSE

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

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

Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500', particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types. Prime forest grouse hunting may be found on JBLM (GMU 652), Elbe Hills and Tahoma State Forests (GMU 654), Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm (GMU 667), and Capitol State Forest (GMU 663). Forest grouse harvest has trended downward in District 11 over the past 7 years but remained stable since 2016, with an average of 2,100 grouse harvested annually in the District. The best prospects for hunting grouse in District 11 are in Lewis County, followed by Pierce and Thurston counties.



A hunter must purchase either a big game license or a small game license to hunt grouse. Grouse

hunting is included in the purchase of any big game license purchase. Forest grouse season in District 11 runs Sept. 15 through Dec. 31, with a daily bag limit of four of any species (to include not more than three of each species) and a possession limit of 12 (to include not more than nine of any one species).

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



Number of Wing Bags Collected in 2020 at District 11 Barrels					
Barrel Name	Collection Month				
	September	October	November	December	Total
North Vail	6	5	1	0	12
Skookumchuck	1	6	0	0	7
West Vail	4	7	11	0	22
<b>Total</b>	11	18	12	0	41

## PHEASANT

Western Washington does not support self-sustaining populations of pheasants primarily due to the wet climate and lack of grain farming. Hunting pheasant in western Washington is dependent upon releases of pheasants in the fall. District 11 is fortunate to contain three of the 24 pheasant release sites in western Washington. For that reason, pheasant hunters continue to have great prospects for harvesting pheasant in this district. In addition, WDFW often releases pheasants into District 11 via the network of collaborators used across the state. The shorter distance means less travel time, stress, and fatigue for the birds prior to release. According to WDFW's pheasant production manager, this equates to more consistency and stronger birds at release, which should improve hunting opportunity for District 11 hunters.



Game farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites which are described and mapped on the [Hunting Regulations](#), the [Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#) and the [Upland Bird Hunting](#) websites. The release program utilizes state (Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck) and federal (JBLM) managed lands in District 11. NOTE THAT [NONTOXIC SHOT](#) IS REQUIRED ON ALL PHEASANT RELEASE SITES STATEWIDE.

The following outlines the pheasant season in western Washington:

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

Western Washington pheasant hunters must choose to hunt only on odd-numbered or even-numbered weekend days from 8 - 10 a.m. at all units of Skookumchuck and Scatter Creek Wildlife Areas with a daily bag limit of two (either sex) and a possession limit of 15 (either sex). Hunters must indicate their choice of odd-numbered or even-numbered weekend days on the Western Washington Pheasant Permit by choosing "odd" or "even." Hunters who select the three-day option, hunters possessing a valid disabled hunter permit, hunters 65 years of age or older, and youth hunters may hunt in the morning on both odd-numbered and even-numbered weekend days. Youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older, and the adult must have an appropriately marked pheasant permit if hunting. An extended pheasant season is also provided in District 11 at the Skookumchuck and Scatter Creek wildlife areas and JBLM release sites from Dec. 1-15 under the same hours and daily/possession limits as the general season. Pheasants are **not** released as part of the extended season. Hunters need a western Washington pheasant license to hunt pheasants. Additional information on hunting pheasants can be found on the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program website noted above.

Pheasant release in western Washington will be like last year, with an estimated 36,000 pheasants to

be released at 24 pheasant release areas in 2021 compared to 38,000 in 2020. Be aware that total production could still be affected by seasonal temperature fluctuations and other mortalities in 2021 and these are estimates only. Approximately 1,800 pheasants (5% of total production) will be released at the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area this season, with 50-75 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays beginning Sept. 18 through Thanksgiving Day morning. Approximately 3,600 pheasants (10% of total production) will be released at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, with 120-135 birds released each day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays. Some areas of Scatter Creek are off limits to hunters due to endangered species recovery work so please *OBEY ALL POSTED SIGNS*.

Approximately 3,800 pheasants (10% of total production compared) will be released on JBLM training areas as those areas become available. Military training and listed species management dictates which fields will be open in any given week for both release and hunting access on JBLM. There were 4,900 pheasants release on JBLM during the 2020 season. We anticipate the same number to be released in 2021 but it will depend on military, recreation, and environmental scheduling. There are special access processes in place for JBLM including:

Hunters must register each year at the Skeet and Trap Range ([3969 2nd Division Range Rd.](#)) at Lewis Main or the [Northwest Adventure Center](#) (8050 NCO Beach Road at Lewis North). Call +1-253-967-7056 for details. [Training Area Maps](#) are available online.

Service fees are:

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

Signing In and Out:

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

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



## **Upland Birds**

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

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

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

## **Special Pheasant Hunt**

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

Youth pheasant hunt dates will be identified in accordance with state regulation. All youth who qualify must also register as all other hunters with Outdoor Recreation. Youth hunters may sign up for the hunt 14 days before the scheduled event. Youth hunters will not use the hunt trac phone system but may sign up in person or call the NAC. A special folder will be available for this special event at the registration desk.

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

For additional information on hunting on JBLM, visit the JBLM website at [jblm.armymwr.com/programs/hunting-fishing](http://jblm.armymwr.com/programs/hunting-fishing).

## QUAIL

For information on hunting quail in general, please visit:

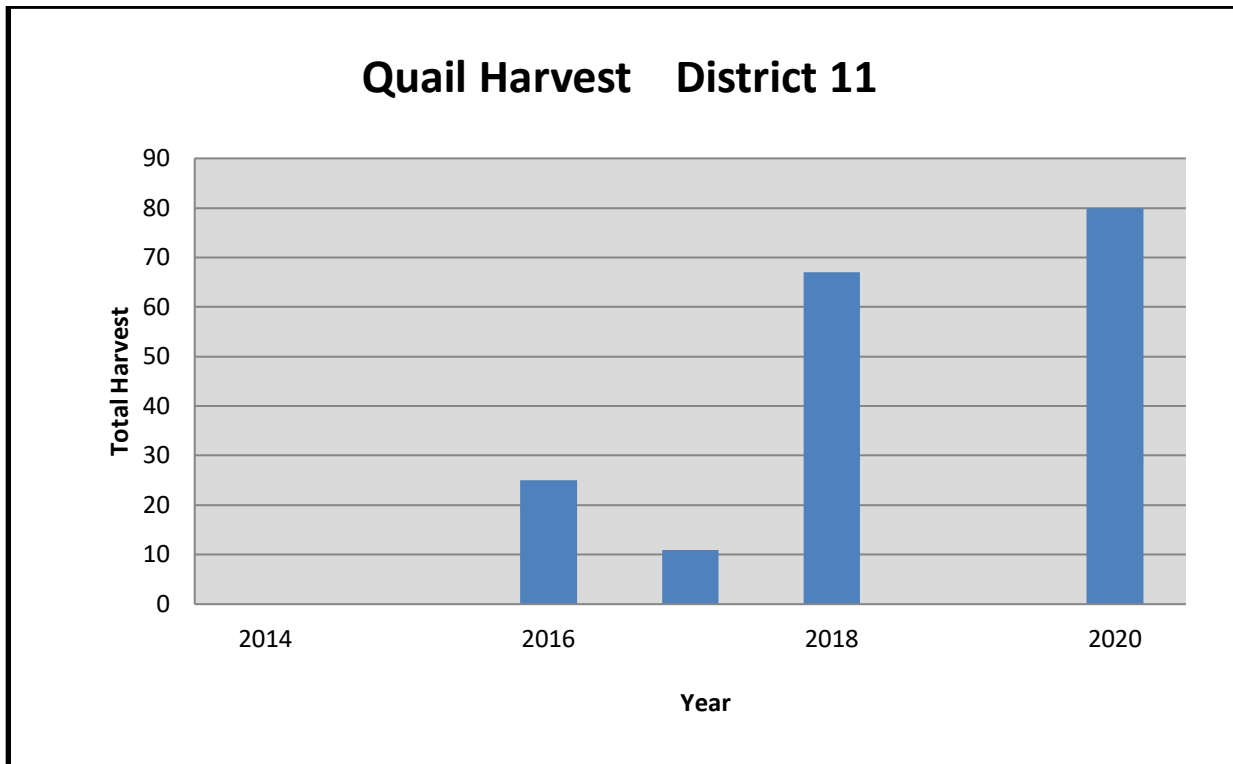
[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/quail](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/quail)

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

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds) and [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01805](https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01805) and

[wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/upland-bird](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/upland-bird)

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

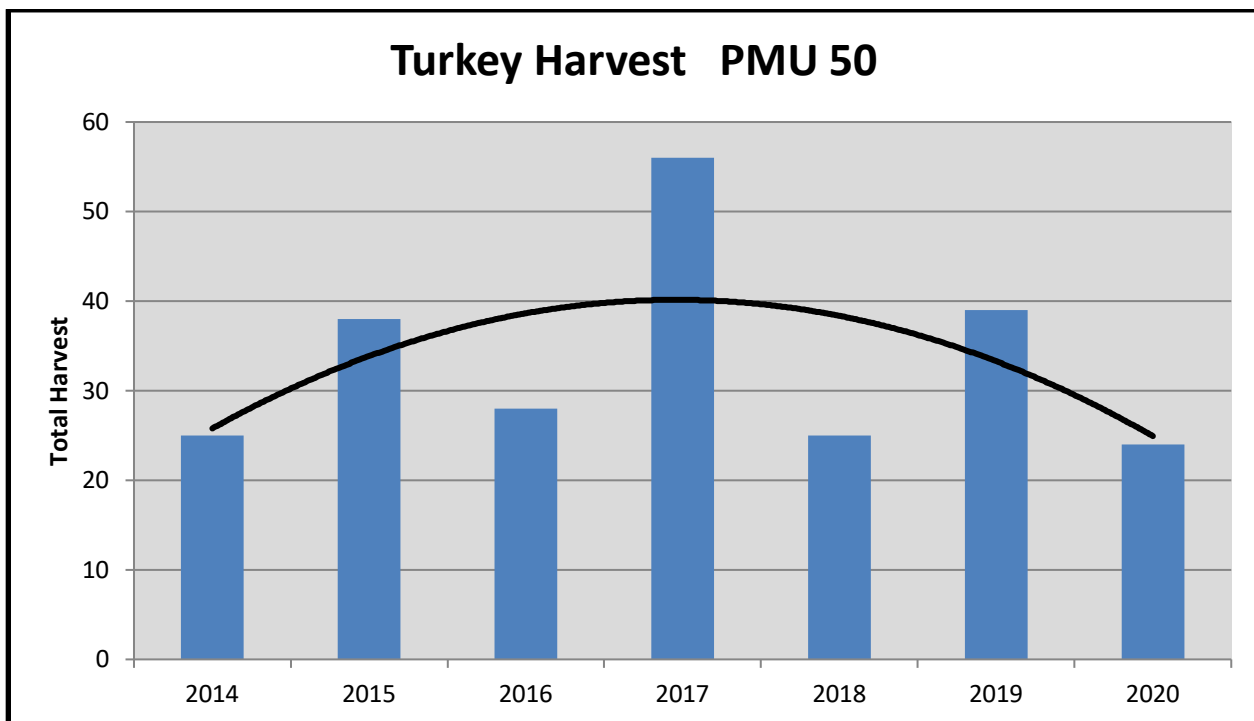


## TURKEYS

Information on hunting turkey in general can be found at [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01803](http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01803) and [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/summary-of-seasons/spring-turkey](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/summary-of-seasons/spring-turkey)

WDFW doesn't manage District 11 for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare. Regardless, there are huntable populations of the eastern sub-species of wild turkey in the district and harvest reflects hunter participation year to year. Turkey harvest for Turkey Population Unit 50, within which District 11 lies, has remained stable since 2014 except for a spike in 2017. Those spikes may reflect higher hunter participation in those years.

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

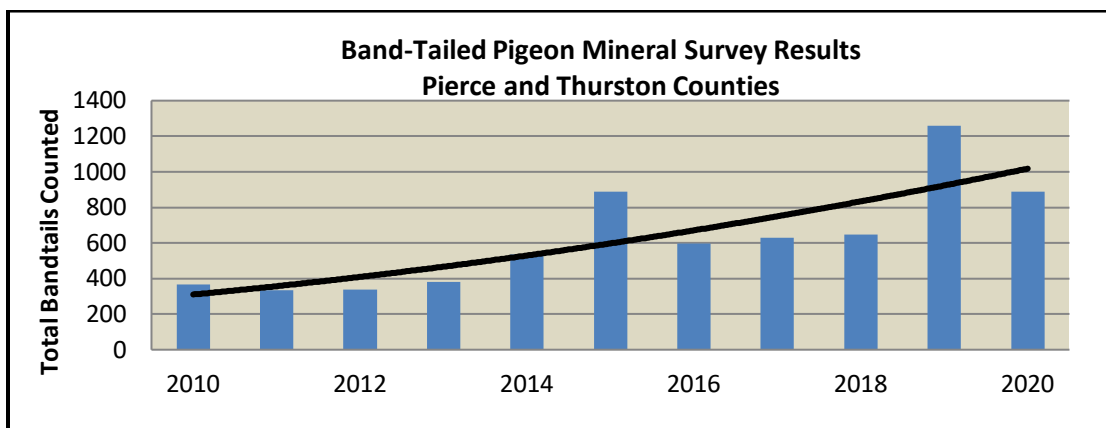


## BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

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

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

WDFW monitors band-tailed pigeon populations using a standardized population index survey. These surveys occur at 16 mineral sites where band-tails are known to congregate. Since WDFW initiated the standardized mineral site survey, the population index indicates band-tail populations have fluctuated through the years but have never declined to levels that would warrant more limited harvest opportunities. Band-tailed pigeon estimates based on mineral site surveys have been trending upwards in District 11 since 2014.



Band-tailed pigeons frequently congregate in areas with red elderberry and cascara. These small trees are most abundant in five to 10-year-old timber harvests where hunting can be exceptionally good. The key to harvesting band-tails is scouting. Identifying specific timber harvests used by band-tails is hard to predict. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites. Upon finding a good site, sit patiently and wait for pass shooting opportunities to occur.

Band-tails often congregate at seeps and mineral sites. They show strong site fidelity to these locations and often return to the same seeps year after year. WDFW conducts annual surveys at such mineral sites to assess changes to the band-tailed population. These mineral sites are not abundant and are hard to find. If a hunter is lucky enough to locate a mineral site where band-tails congregate, it is likely to be a successful season.

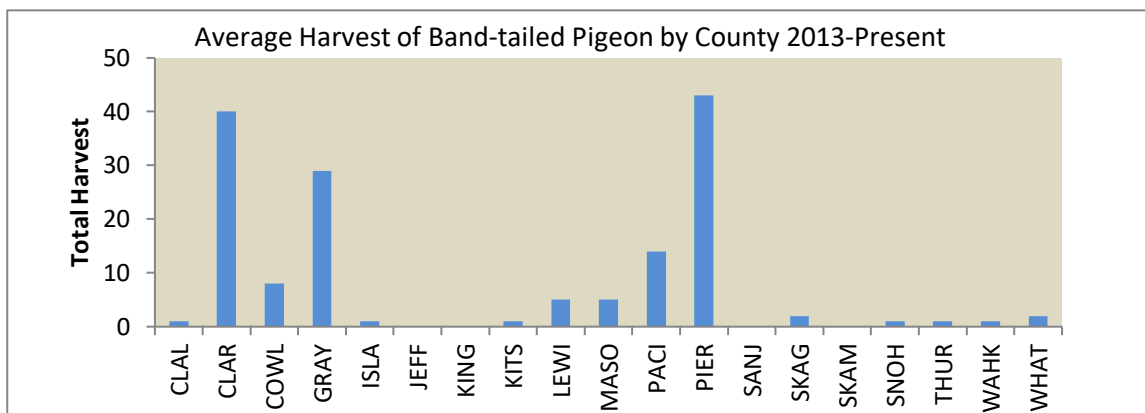
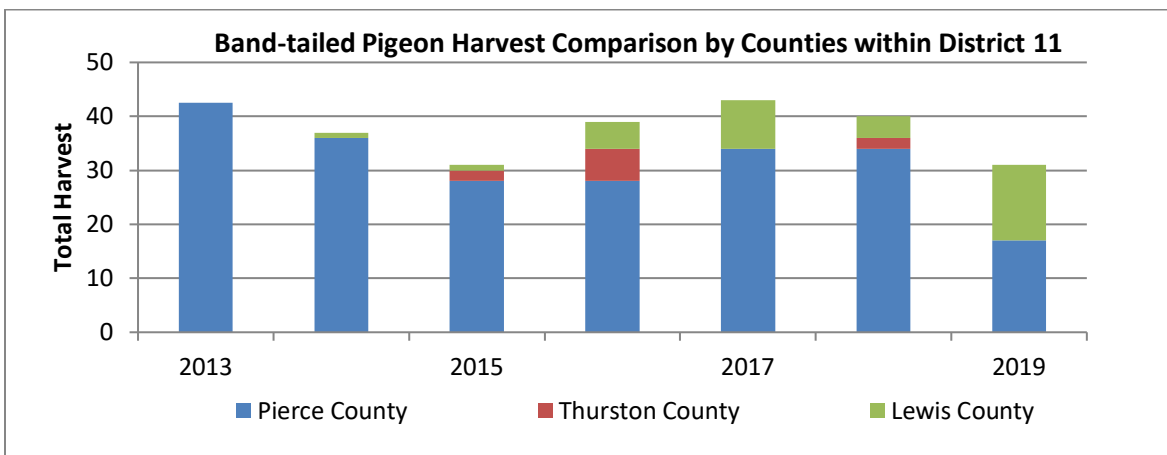
*Please contact WDFW if you know the location of any sites where band-tailed pigeons obtain minerals in Pierce, Thurston, or Lewis counties.*

Band-tailed pigeon harvest across most of their range in western Washington once measured

thousands of birds. Bag limits were 10+ birds per day until 1950, when statewide harvest was estimated at 90,000 birds. However, overharvest and habitat changes caused significant decline in overall numbers. The total statewide harvest has never exceeded 2,100 birds.

Since band-tail seasons were re-opened in 2002, hunters must buy a migratory bird authorization. Harvest must be submitted using harvest cards submitted to WDFW after the season has closed. These regulations will apply in 2021 as well. Hunters should review the 2021 Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet to confirm season dates and any other regulation changes.

Pierce County in District 11 had the highest average harvest in Washington for the past seven years (average harvest of 43 per year) and thus prospects for hunting band-tailed pigeons in the district are good. For comparison, average harvest in Lewis County is 5 bandtails per year and in Thurston County the average is one. The best hunting locations for band-tailed pigeons in District 11 are Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and the Luhr Beach area (Pierce/Thurston county boundary), Mud Bay (Thurston County), Totten Inlet/Oyster Bay (Thurston County), and along marine shorelines of District 11.



## Research

Starting in May 2021, WDFW initiated a project to capture and fit band-tailed pigeons with satellite



telemetry devices in portions of District 16 and 17. WDFW fitted a total of 11 birds with transmitters that it programmed to obtain multiple locations throughout the day and, periodically upload those locations via the cell tower network.

The goal of this project is to conduct research on band-tailed pigeons in areas without identified mineral sites that could allow WDFW to fulfill the following objectives; 1) Identify new mineral sites to allow the agency to more accurately index our statewide population via Mineral site surveys 2) more expertly manage our band-tailed pigeons harvest seasons to potentially allow an expanded hunting opportunity, 3) provide detailed information on resource selection to inform how to manage habitat that would increase the statewide population.

Already in 2021, this research project has led to the discovery of a new mineral site location in Grays Harbor County. Hunters and members of the public are funding this research via the migratory bird stamp and artwork program. The existing project is expected to continue through the year 2025 across various districts within Region 6.



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

2021

CHRIS ANDERSON, District Biologist  
MIKE SMITH, Assistant District Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# DISTRICT 12 HUNTING PROSPECTS

King County

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## DISTRICT 12 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 12 is comprised of six game management units (GMUs), including 422 (Vashon/Maury Islands), 454 (Issaquah), 460 (Snoqualmie), 466 (Stampede), 485 (Green River, open to appropriate deer and elk permit holders only), and 490 (Cedar River, currently closed to state hunters). Land ownership in the district is a checkerboard of private, state, and federal properties. The densest private (urban and suburban) developments are found in the Issaquah Unit (GMU 454), while private agricultural properties are primarily located in the northwestern part of the Snoqualmie Unit (GMU 460).

A great tool for determining property ownership and boundaries can be found using King County [iMap](#).

Tacoma and Seattle each own and operate municipal watersheds in southeast King County, totaling about 250,532 acres that supply drinking water for their cities. One is in the Green River drainage (GMU 485), one is in the Tolt River drainage (GMU 460), and the other is in the Cedar River drainage (GMU 490).

The largest huntable area is U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land, but industrial timber companies also have large properties in the area. Private, state, and federally owned lands are managed primarily to produce timber. USFS lands are managed for multiple uses, including timber, recreation, and wildlife, with a current emphasis on growing and managing old-growth forests.

**Remember to be a good hunting and outdoor recreation steward. Be respectful of others. Don't hunt areas where there is heavy, regular recreation use. Please pick up after yourself and don't leave a gut pile out in the open – cover, bury, or hike it out and dispose of it properly.**

## ELK

Hunters should place greater emphasis on riparian forest habitats and agricultural areas throughout the district. Many of District 12's elk reside on private land, so make sure you have permission before you hunt.

GMU 460 (Snoqualmie) provides good hunting opportunities in areas of the unit. However, hunters are advised to scout their preferred hunting areas well in advance because state and private timberlands are gated with restricted access. Many elk in the GMU are found (at least at times) on private property in valley bottoms. Hunters should network well in advance to gain access to hunt these properties. Please be mindful of residences, domestic animals (pets/livestock), and other non-target objects downrange when hunting these areas. Hunters should plan for safe shooting lanes. A map of [King County no shooting areas](#) is available online and a description of firearm restriction areas can be found on page 90 of the [hunting regulations pamphlet](#).



Elk in GMU 454 (Issaquah) continue to be managed with liberal seasons designed to reduce vehicle/elk collisions and keep damage issues at acceptable levels in highly developed areas. Much of this unit is in private property. Preseason planning and networking may be most important for hunters trying to gain access in this unit. Hunters should also be mindful of safety concerns and firearm restrictions (see above) in this unit. Bowhunters should have an advantage in gaining permission.

GMU 466 (Stampede) is a mix of private, state, and USFS lands (Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest). There are some old-growth stands on USFS lands, with second-growth timber dominating much of the unit. Hunters should be prepared for up to a 2,500-foot elevation change and steep terrain in this unit. Early snowfall in the unit has the potential to strand hunters, but also the potential to aid in success.

GMU 485 (Green River) follows the posted boundary of the controlled-access portion of the Tacoma Water Green River Watershed. Tacoma Water limits public access to protect the water supply. Elk are managed with special permit hunts. During the 2020 season, 10 any bull tags and 12 antlerless elk tags are available for hunters through the draw system.



Elk in GMU 485 – Photo by Mike Smith





Group of elk in GMU 454 – Photo by Mike Smith

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found online here: [Elk Harvest Reports](#).

### **Elk hoof disease in Washington**

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased in southwest Washington, with some observations west of the Cascade Range. While elk are susceptible to many conditions that cause limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction – now known as treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) – suggests something different.

WDFW, with a panel of independent scientists, conducted diagnostic research that found these abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause digital dermatitis in cattle, sheep, and goats. Although this type of disease has plagued the dairy industry for decades, TAHD had never been documented in elk or any other hooved wildlife species.

Since then, WDFW has continued to work with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments, and others through its Hoof Disease Technical Advisory Group and Public Working Group to develop management strategies for TAHD-infected elk.

## Hoof disease observations

WDFW seeks to document and respond to the diseases that affect elk health in our state. You can help by reporting limping elk or dead elk with hoof deformities.

### [Report limping elk or elk with hoof deformities](#)

## About TAHD

Several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Susceptibility:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect hooves of any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process, and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by forcing them to walk through foot baths and cleaning and bandaging their hooves, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

## TAHD in Washington

WDFW has confirmed cases of elk afflicted with TAHD in 17 Washington counties, including King, but primarily in the southwest region of the state. Efforts to formally estimate the prevalence and distribution of TAHD indicate the disease is most prevalent in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and the western half of Lewis counties. In April 2018, WDFW confirmed the presence of the disease in Klickitat County – the first such finding in Washington east of the Cascade Range. WDFW detected TAHD in Walla Walla County in 2019 and in Kittitas County in 2020.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has confirmed TAHD in elk populations in both western and eastern Oregon. The disease has also been confirmed in Idaho and recently in California.

## How hunters and others can help

State wildlife managers are asking for help to monitor and prevent the spread of TAHD in several ways:

- **Leave hooves:** Scientists believe that treponeme bacteria may persist in moist soil and spread to new areas on the hooves of infected elk. For that reason, WDFW encourages hunters in 400, 500, and 600 series game management units (GMUs) to remove the elk's hooves and leave them on site. If you harvest an elk in a 100, 200, or 300 series GMU, where the disease is uncommon, please keep any abnormal hooves and report your

observation to the nearest [WDFW regional office](#). WDFW will work with you to submit the hooves for diagnostic testing.

- **Report elk:** You can help WDFW track TAHD by [reporting observations](#) of healthy or limping elk and dead elk with hoof deformities.
- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the spread of the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes or tires before leaving the area.

## Diagnosing and monitoring TAHD in elk

From 2009 to 2014, WDFW, the USDA National Animal Disease Center, and four other diagnostic laboratories collected hooves and tissue from 43 elk to find the cause of the disease. Biologists collected samples from elk in areas affected and not affected by the disease.

By 2014, all five laboratories identified treponeme bacteria in the diseased elk samples, but not in those from healthy elk. This finding provided evidence of the role of treponeme bacteria in causing the disease. A WDFW technical advisory group, composed of the State Veterinarian's office, state public health officials, university researchers, and other specialists independently reviewed and accepted WDFW's diagnostic research.

Since then, WDFW continues to partner with leading experts to better understand this disease and has initiated a [variety of field studies](#) to assess its distribution and prevalence, along with its effect on elk survival and reproduction. WDFW is also working closely with Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, which was designated by the legislature in 2017 as the state lead in assessing the causes and potential solutions for elk hoof disease.

Several links to more information are available on the [WDFW website](#).

## DEER

WDFW has not conducted population surveys for several years throughout District 12 due to funding and staffing limitations. However, hunting prospects are believed to be quite good on private and public lands where hunting is allowed from anecdotal observations and annual harvest statistics.

GMU 422 covers all of Vashon and Maury islands. Hunting access on Vashon and Maury islands is mostly on private agricultural and hobby farm properties. Hunters must take time to network with communities and property owners for opportunity and access. More opportunities (incorporated in recent years) will continue in the second deer special permit category for GMU 422. Please refer to the current [Big Game pamphlet](#) for updated listings of these opportunities.

WDFW continues to manage deer in GMU 454 (Issaquah) with liberal seasons designed to prevent vehicle/deer collisions and keep damage issues at acceptable levels in highly developed areas. More opportunities were recently added in the second deer special permit category for GMU 454 with the addition of Deer Area 4541 (North Issaquah). Please refer to the current [Big Game pamphlet](#) for updated listings of these opportunities. This unit (and corresponding deer

area) is about 90% private land and hunters continue to have a problem with access. Success in this unit may well depend on getting to know your neighbors and raising the subject of hunting as a means of protecting their fruit trees and vegetables. Firearm restrictions are in place because landowners are concerned about safety. Bowhunters should have an advantage in getting permission.



A black-tailed deer buck in GMU 454, damaging landscape plantings – Photo submitted to WDFW Image Gallery

GMU 460 (Snoqualmie) has good hunting opportunities throughout most of the unit. However, hunters should scout their preferred hunting areas well in advance because state and private timberlands are gated with restricted access. Forest management on these lands is favorable to deer and high-quality opportunities are available for those willing to lace up their boots. Hunters should focus on early seral forests (less than 30 years old) next to mid (40-80 years old) or late-successional (greater than 80 years old) stands. Hunters should focus on riparian forest habitats that supply ample forage and cover.





A doe and fawn in King County – Photo by Mike Smith

GMU 466 (Stampede) is a patchwork of private, state, and USFS lands (Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest). It consists of second-growth timber, with some old growth on USFS lands. This unit has a lot of steep ground, with about 2,500 feet in elevation change. Be prepared for early winter snowfall, which has the potential of stranding hunters, but also the potential to improve success.

GMU 485 (Green River) follows the posted boundary of the controlled access area of the Tacoma Water Green River Watershed. Tacoma Water limits public access to protect the water supply. Deer are managed with special permit hunts. During the 2020 season, five any buck tags in the Quality category and five any buck tags in the Hunters with Disabilities category are available for state hunters through the draw system.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found online here: [Deer Harvest Reports](#).



## BEAR

Bears inhabit areas of District 12, but like elk, many are on private lands. Hunters should ensure they have permission to hunt where they're interested. Berry production throughout the district was good this year. Bears are often at lower elevations early on before they move higher as the season progresses.



A bear in GMU 460 – WDFW photo

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics can be found at [Bear Harvest Reports](#).

## COUGAR

The harvest guideline for GMU 460 is four to six cougars. For GMUs 466, 485, and 490 the guideline is two to three animals (GMU 485 is only open to deer or elk special permit holders and GMU 490 is closed to state hunting). There is no guideline for GMU 454. The Director may close the late cougar hunting season on or after Jan. 1 in either of these units if the cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. Starting Jan. 1, hunters may hunt cougar until the area harvest guideline is reached, or April 30, whichever occurs first. Each cougar hunter must verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in areas with a harvest guideline. Cougar hunters can verify if the season is open or closed by calling the toll free cougar hunting hotline at 1-866-364-4868 or visiting WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>. The hotline and website will be updated weekly beginning Jan. 1, 2021. Hunters must have a 2021-22 cougar license and tag to hunt cougar in April 2021.

## PHEASANT

WDFW will release game farm pheasants this fall on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. Site maps are available in the [Western Washington Pheasant Release Pamphlet](#). Hunters must use the non-toxic shot on all pheasant release sites.

Hunting hours for pheasant and quail in western Washington are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. This includes the Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. For the rest of the hunting season, normal hunting hours (a half-hour before sunrise to half-hour after sunset) will apply.

## QUAIL

There are few quail in District 12.

## FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed and sooty (blue) grouse are found throughout the public and private forests of District 12. The weather experienced this spring combined with anecdotal observations collected this summer suggests healthy grouse populations this year.

Forest management in much of District 12 is still favorable for grouse. Hunters looking to harvest ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500 feet, early seral forests (5-30 years old) with ample berry crops in the understory, and riparian forest habitats. Sooty grouse hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands with abundant huckleberries.



A male sooty grouse displaying on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, GMU 460 – Photo by Chris Anderson

## EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE

While not a managed game species, Eurasian collared doves (an exotic species) are now in District 12. People can hunt Eurasian collared doves year-round with a big or small game license. The best way to hunt them is to seek landowner permission in lowland agricultural areas that have a barnyard setting where birds roost in trees but go to the ground to feed. Hunters should be sure they are hunting in compliance with any firearm restrictions and a manner compatible with existing infrastructure (buildings, farm equipment, or power lines).



## TURKEY

Wild turkeys are rare in District 12, without predictable concentrations of birds. Harvest prospects are low even with considerable effort. Hunters must use #4 shot or smaller to hunt turkey.

## WATERFOWL

Harvest opportunities should be good, dependent on weather conditions through the season. The best waterfowl hunting opportunities continue to be in the lower Snoqualmie Valley, with public access on WDFW's Snoqualmie Wildlife Area (Cherry Valley, Stillwater, and Crescent Lake units). Hunters can only enter and hunt units between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. during the pheasant season. More opportunities are in the Kent Valley. Hunters are encouraged to work with local private landowners to get access to one of District 12's many river and agricultural valleys and improve their waterfowl hunting success. Refer to the [Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Regulations](#) for season dates and hours.

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

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

District 12 is within the ceded area of several Northwest Treaty Tribes and tribal hunting. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal Enforcement personnel ensure tribal members follow hunting regulations, which are sometimes very different from state regulations.

More information about tribal hunting rights and state-tribal co-management is on [WDFW's website](#).

### **Firearms Restriction Areas in King County**

Centerfire and rimfire rifles are not legal for hunting west of Highway 203 (Monroe-Fall City), the Fall City-Preston Road to I-90, I-90 to Highway 18, Highway 18 to I-5, and I-5 to Pierce-King County line. They are also not legal for hunting on Vashon and Maury islands. For more information, see page 90 of the [2020 Big Game Hunting Regulations](#). There aren't many shooting areas in King County per county ordinances. Please contact your local sheriff for specific locations.

2021

MATT HAMER, Acting District Wildlife Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



Photo by Doug Harms

## **2021 DISTRICT 13 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Snohomish, San Juan, and Island counties; Skagit County  
Islands



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## DISTRICT 13 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 13 contains all of Snohomish, Island, and San Juan counties, along with the islands of Skagit County. This includes Game Management Unit (GMU) 448 (Stillaguamish), the southern section of GMU 450 (Cascade), and the southern section of GMU 407 (North Sound) in Snohomish County. The islands of the San Juan Archipelago and Island County are divided into several GMUs, including 411 (Orcas), 412 (Shaw), 413 (San Juan), 414 (Lopez), 415 (Blakely), 416 (Decatur), 417 (Cypress), 419 (Guemes), 420 (Whidbey), and 421 (Camano), 423 (Henry), 424 (Stuart). GMU 410 contains all other San Juan County islands not already listed above.

The hot and dry weather that we have experienced so far this summer may increase the risk of wildfires later this summer and into the fall. Hunters will want to pay close attention to all rules on public lands and watch for any closures that might be implemented at the last minute if fire dangers get too high.

**Remember to be a good hunting and outdoor recreation steward. Be respectful of others. Don't hunt areas where there is heavy, regular recreation use. Please pick up after yourself and don't leave a gut pile out in the open – cover, bury, or hike it out and dispose of properly.**

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting for various species and game management units are available online at [Game Harvest Reports](#).

WDFW's Private Lands Access Program partners with landowners to provide the public with hunting access on private property. District 13 Private Lands Access Program sites are focused on providing waterfowl hunting opportunity through the Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program, and WDFW is also working on providing deer hunting access in District 13. We are negotiating deer hunting access to some private properties in San Juan and Island counties. WDFW will post sites as they become available [online](#). Hunters interested in waterfowl and deer hunting access should check the website regularly for updates.



Map of District 13 in Washington state

## Snohomish County

In Snohomish County, a great online mapping tool called [SCOPI](#) can help hunters determine property ownership and boundaries.

Much of the eastern part of District 13 is public land, managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Two USFS ranger districts will have information on [road and trail conditions](#) for GMUs 448 and 450: the Darrington Ranger District (360-436-1155, north county) and the Skykomish Ranger District (360-677-2414, south county). Many roads have been decommissioned or are not maintained regularly; visitors should check the status of roads before heading to the National Forest. Trail conditions also vary, and information on specific trails, as well as many useful maps, are on the [Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Recreation webpage](#). Due to last year's Downey Creek fire, National Forest road 26 (Suiattle River) will be closed near the Downey Creek bridge until late fall 2021.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northwest Region (360-856-3500) manages the rest of public land open for hunting in Snohomish County. Hunters should be aware that many access roads to DNR lands have gates, and they should contact DNR to get the latest information about gates, available access routes, and road conditions. DNR land at Ebey Hill near the Jim Creek Naval Station is surrounded by private property, and therefore for all practical purposes, is not accessible to the public. Additional contact information is on the [DNR Recreation webpage](#).

Several private industrial timberland owners also manage land in GMU 448 (Stillaguamish). Their ownerships are shown on the Snohomish County Assessor's maps (SCOPI). Many of their roads are closed to motorized vehicle traffic, but some allow free walk-in or bike-in access. Hunters should scout their areas early and be aware that parking at access gates may be very limited. Never block gates or drive beyond any open gate unless certain the gate will stay open when you return. Active logging is happening in some areas, so gates may be open in the morning, but closed and locked later in the day. Some access gates on private industrial timberlands will have signs that specify ownership and the rules that apply to the property. Hunters should follow No Parking signs, as local landowners will tow vehicles found on their property.

Industrial timberlands in Snohomish County previously owned by the Weyerhaeuser Cooperation were sold to Hampton Lumber this year. Hunters should visit the Hampton Lumber [website](#) for more information regarding access to these lands.

Early scouting is always important, particularly in District 13. If fire danger is extraordinarily high, public access may close for all activities. If this happens, notices will be posted at property gates.

Much of the Snohomish County portion of GMU 407 (North Sound) is dominated by homes on small acreages or farms. Hunters should get permission from landowners to hunt on private land and should be very mindful of where houses, livestock, and outbuildings are in relation to where hunting will take place. Portions of the GMU west of Highway 9 and Highway 203 are under firearm restrictions. Hunters should research land ownership and understand firearm limitations prior to hunting. A complete description of firearm restricted areas is on page 90 of Washington's 2021 [Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet](#). A map showing no shooting areas and shotgun only areas within Snohomish County is available [online](#).

### **SAN JUAN AND ISLAND COUNTIES; SKAGIT COUNTY ISLANDS**

Very little public land exists within San Juan or Island counties or the islands of Skagit County, and firearm restrictions are in place in each jurisdiction. Ownership maps for San Juan County are available online from the [county assessor's office](#).

Hunting within San Juan County requires written permission from the landowner by county ordinance. In the San Juan Archipelago, access to islands not served by the Washington State Department of Transportation ferry system is by private boat or commercial water taxi. Private boat owners should check in advance on ownership and rules that may apply to docks and landings within the San Juan Archipelago, as most are privately owned. San Juan County owns and maintains eight docks with floats and eight boat ramps, and leases two outer island moorage docks. The San Juan County Visitor's Bureau provides a variety of road and dock maps [online](#).

Small groups of feral mouflon sheep have moved to Stuart Island. Mouflon are classified as harmful exotic wildlife (WAC 220-640-200). European rabbits occur on Orcas, San Juan, and Lopez islands. European rabbits are feral domestic mammals and thus are not under the authority of WDFW. WDFW does not regulate hunting mouflon or European rabbits. If people get written landowner permission and follow all local ordinances, these species may be hunted at any time, and there is no bag limit; however, firearm restrictions still apply.

Ownership maps for Island County are available through the [Island County assessor's office](#).

Ownership maps for Skagit County islands are available [online](#).



## ELK

District 13 does not have an established elk herd within GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) or GMU 450 (Cascade) boundaries. Individual elk are occasionally in the eastern part of Snohomish County. Small bands occur infrequently along Highway 2 at the south end of GMU 448. These groups typically range between the towns of Baring and Grotto, but sometimes move west as far as Sultan.

Elk also sometimes come south of GMU 437 (Sauk) onto the Sauk Prairie and areas west of Darrington and east of Highway 9 in the north end of GMU 448. Their presence is occasional and unpredictable. Beginning this season, elk harvest in GMU 448 is restricted to three point minimum, bull only.

Forty-seven hunters reported hunting in GMU 448 in 2020, but no elk were harvested. Hunters planning to hunt in GMU 448 should plan on careful scouting and be aware that elk in the unit are presumed to be tied to the North Cascades elk groups to the north and the North Bend groups to the south and are thus only present sporadically in GMU 448.

GMU 450 is not open for elk hunting, although small groups may spend some time at the higher elevations found in the GMU, most likely in summer months.

## DEER



### ADENOVIRUS HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE

District 13 is currently experiencing an outbreak of Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease (AHD) which is impacting black-tailed deer in several of the district's GMUs. AHD is caused by a viral infection and is transmitted by direct contact between deer, either through bodily fluids or possibly airborne routes. This makes it more likely for the virus to spread in areas with high deer concentrations.

AHD was detected on British Columbia's Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island during the fall of 2020. AHD was then detected on Orcas and San Juan Islands during May and June 2021. The disease now appears to be impacting deer on other islands in the San Juan Archipelago, including Blakely, Henry, Lopez, Shaw, and Stuart islands. WDFW has also investigated several deer mortalities on Whidbey Island displaying symptoms consistent with AHD, and lab tests are currently pending to confirm the presence of AHD on Whidbey.

Deer populations in impacted areas are likely to be noticeably lower than in previous years. Deer have historically been overabundant in the San Juan Islands and on Whidbey Islands, and WDFW's goal has thus been to reduce deer abundance. WDFW will therefore be maintaining all scheduled deer hunting seasons in AHD-impacted areas for the 2021 hunting season.

AHD does not pose a risk to livestock, pets, or people – from contact or by consuming the meat. However, the use of disposable gloves is always recommended for handling any wildlife carcass. To reduce the risk of spreading AHD to new areas, hunters should use discretion before harvesting deer in AHD-impacted areas to avoid harvesting AHD-infected deer.

AHD symptoms include rapid or open mouth breathing, foaming or drooling at the mouth, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), weakness, and emaciation. For more information on AHD, please visit the [WDFW website](#).

### **BLACK-TAILED DEER GMUS 407, 448, 450**

District 13 includes GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) and portions of GMU 450 (Cascade) and 407 (North Sound). In 2020, 1,229 people reported hunting during the general deer seasons in GMU 448. They had a 13.3% success rate and harvested 164 animals. Among the 12 late buck permits issued, nine hunters reported hunting during the permit season, and four deer were harvested. Hunters who take the time to scout and learn the area will increase their likelihood of success. Hunters should plan and familiarize themselves with local conditions well in advance of hunting season.

Parking and walk-in access to DNR and private forest land is available at the intersection of Menzel Lake Road and the P-5000 Road. This gate is 4.6 miles south of the intersection of Alder Place and Menzel Lake Road in Granite Falls. Parking may be limited at other gated access areas in this general area. Hunters need to obey No Parking signs, as these signs say private property and owners may tow vehicles found on their property.

At the south end of GMU 448, walk-in access is off the Sultan Basin Road. This area has mixed public and private ownership, and hunters should pay close attention to signs showing areas where discharging firearms is prohibited. Access to DNR lands requires a Discover Pass, as noted on signs and most DNR properties are gated.

Vehicle access is available on USFS roads throughout Snohomish County, but hunters should consult the [USFS website](#) for information on road conditions and closures.



Typical DNR signs

GMU 450 includes portions of Districts 13 and 14. In 2020, 118 people reported hunting in the unit, and two deer were harvested by archery hunters. GMU 407 includes portions of Districts 12, 13, and 14. In 2020, 2,198 hunters harvested 576 deer from GMU 407 resulting in a 26% success rate. Most of the unit is private land and some areas are firearm restricted. In Snohomish County, hunters should consult page 90 of Washington’s 2021 [Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#). [The Snohomish County map](#) shows county ordinance no shooting areas and shotgun-only areas.

**BLACK-TAILED DEER ISLAND UNITS**

Beginning in 2013, WDFW divided GMU 410 into several new units assigned to individual islands to provide more accurate harvest information and assist with the development of management strategies for individual islands. GMU 410 is made up of those few remaining islands that were not assigned to a specific number. Islands in GMU 410 are not accessible by ferry, some do not have deer, and others are privately owned and prohibit public hunting. The correct GMU numbers for each island are as follows.

GMU 411—Orcas Island	GMU 412—Shaw Island
GMU 413—San Juan Island	GMU 414—Lopez Island
GMU 415—Blakely Island	GMU 416—Decatur Island
GMU 417—Cypress Island	GMU 419—Guemes Island
GMU 420—Whidbey Island	GMU 421—Camano Island
GMU 423—Henry Island	GMU 424—Stuart Island

Although accurate reporting for the island GMUs is improving, some hunters continue to misreport their hunt unit. This makes it extremely difficult to assess accurate harvest numbers for each island. We ask that hunters carefully review their harvest reports prior to submitting them. Accurately reporting the correct island GMU will advance our understanding of harvest on each island so that we can improve deer management.



## GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS 410-419



Photo by R. Wingard

Public access on islands within the San Juan Archipelago (San Juan and Skagit counties) is extremely limited. Deer on the islands have historically been plentiful but typically smaller than their mainland cousins. Most hunting occurs on private property. In San Juan County, by county ordinance, written landowner permission is needed to hunt on private property.

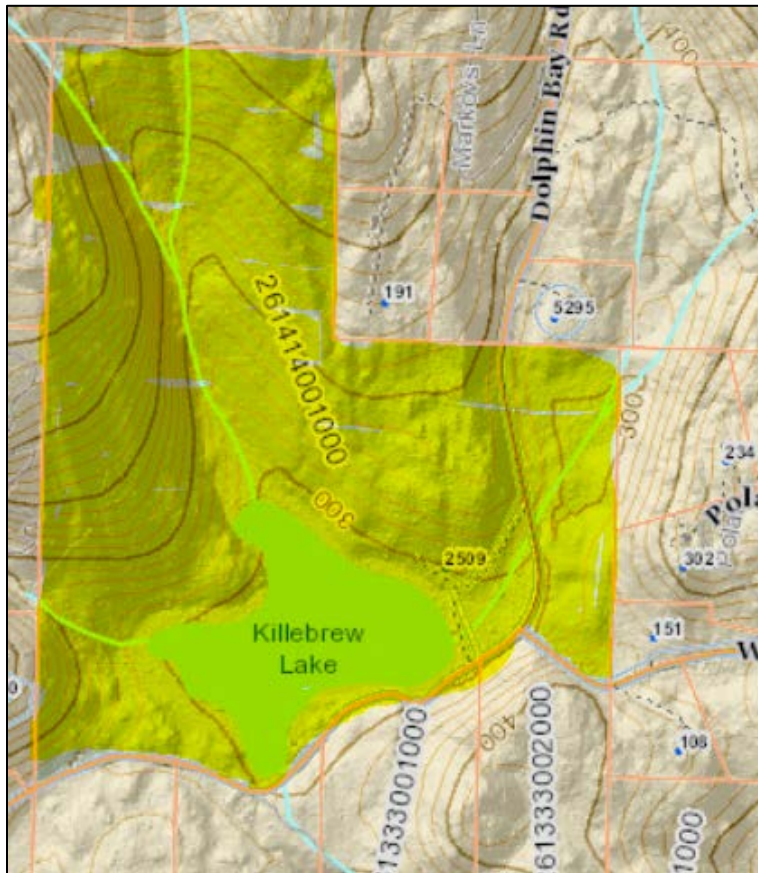
WDFW is negotiating hunting access on some islands and will post properties as they are enrolled. We anticipate having at least seven properties available between Orcas, Lopez, and San Juan islands in 2021. Enrolled properties will be open for the modern firearm season and running through the late muzzleloader and late archery seasons. Available sites will be posted by mid-September. Sites will include Mt. Grant on San Juan Island, owned by the San Juan County Land Bank. All sites except Mt. Grant will be Hunt by Reservation. The Hunt by Reservation system offers a quality hunt experience by limiting the number of days a site is hunted while guaranteeing the site will be available to the reservation holder. To make a reservation and see available sites, visit the [WDFW hunting access link](#), create an account, choose a hunting site that is in the Hunt by Reservation category, and book the reservation. Reservations become available two weeks prior to the hunt day at 8 a.m. A fast internet connection improves the chances of securing a reservation. For questions about the Private Lands Access Program (PLAP), contact Rob Wingard, WDFW Private Lands Access Program biologist, at 360-466-4345, extension 240.



Small parcels of public land are open to hunting on Lopez Island (GMU 414) and Stuart Island (GMU 424) on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands within the San Juan Islands National Monument. Hunters should call Skeet Townley 509-860-3972 for information.

The San Juan County Land Bank manages Lopez Hill on Lopez Island, which continues to allow limited hunting. Lopez Hill will be open for hunting from Sept. 1 through Oct. 31. More information is on the [Lopez Hill website](#) and the [San Juan County Land Bank website](#). For questions and county-required written permission, contact Lopez Steward Amanda Wedow at [amandaw@sjclandbank.org](mailto:amandaw@sjclandbank.org).

WDFW manages about 157 acres around, and including, Killebrew Lake on Orcas Island (GMU 411). Much of the property is made up of the lake itself or associated wetlands. Hunting is allowed on this property, but hunters should be aware of property boundaries and stay within WDFW boundaries. Parking is limited to a small pull-off area on Killebrew Lake Road.



WDFW Killebrew Lake Ownership Highlighted in Yellow

Overnight camping is not allowed in the National Monument or at Lopez Hill or Killebrew Lake. Please check [Washington State Parks](#) and [San Juan County Parks](#) for camping information.

Cypress Island (GMU 417) is mostly owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), but some parcels are privately owned. Deer hunting is permitted on the DNR-owned land but hunting for other species is prohibited. Maps, trails, and access rules are [online](#). Cypress Island is not serviced by a ferry. Boat moorage and camping is available at several DNR maintained sites. Additional information is available on DNR's [website](#). DNR also owns a relatively small parcel at Cattle Point on San Juan Island (GMU 413); hunting is prohibited at this site.

### **GMU 420 (WHIDBEY ISLAND) AND 421 (CAMANO ISLAND)**

Deer are abundant, but very little public land is available for hunting on either Whidbey or Camano islands. Hunters should get permission from landowners before hunting on private property. [The Island County Public Works Department](#) owns a few small parcels that make up most of the public hunting lands on Whidbey and Camano islands. Hunters should contact them directly for maps and restrictions at 360-679-7331.

WDFW partnered with Whidbey Camano Land Trust to allow deer hunting on the Trillium Community Forest property. The Trillium Community Forest is open to hunting for the modern firearm, late modern firearm, late archery, and late muzzleloader seasons. The Trillium Community Forest is closed to other recreational activities when it is open to hunting. Hunters should contact the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#) for additional information regarding maps and more information. A [map](#) that can be filtered to show properties open to hunting is also available on the Whidbey Camano Land Trust website.

Deer hunting at Naval Air Station Whidbey (WNAS) is open for archery only to military personnel. All hunters need to buy the installation hunting permit (\$13) and pass a background check. This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. For more information, contact WNAS Biologist Michael Bianchi at 360-257-4024. Additional information is also available [online](#).

## BEAR

Black bears can be found throughout Snohomish County and hunters can pursue a range of hunting experiences in the district during the long season. WDFW encourages hunters to carefully observe bears prior to shooting to ensure there are no dependent cubs with the targeted bear. Successful bear hunters must submit an upper premolar tooth from the harvested bear to WDFW by Dec. 1, 2021. The Department uses the collected tooth samples to determine the age of harvested bears which helps inform bear harvest management. Hunters can also look up the age of their harvested bear [online](#). Tooth collection envelopes are available at all [WDFW regional offices](#). Additional information on black bear hunting regulations and tooth submission requirements can be found on page 68 of Washington's [2021 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet](#).

Black bears spend most of their time in heavily forested areas, however, most harvests occur in open areas such as clear-cuts and alpine meadows. Harvest opportunities in these open areas are often driven by berry production which can vary annually by location and elevation. In lower elevations, successful hunters often access gated timberlands on foot or by mountain bike where they focus on clear-cuts and decommissioned logging roads. Hunters also find success and memorable experiences pursuing black bears in high elevation alpine meadows by targeting bears feeding on huckleberries.



Black bear harvest and success rates were relatively high during the 2020 season in GMUs 407, 448, and 450. During the 2020 season, 392 hunters harvested 41 bears in GMU 407 (10.4 % success), 483 hunters harvested 70 bears in GMU 448 (14.4% success), and 80 hunters harvested 15 bears in GMU 450 (18.8% success). Males comprised two-thirds to three-quarters of the harvest in the three GMUs. In Region 4 (Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties), WDFW gives special spring black bear permit hunts to help timberland managers lessen tree damage caused by bears peeling

tree bark. In the past, District 13 provided a spring bear hunt in the Monroe area north of State Highway 2. However, bear tree damage has declined so a special permit hunt is not planned for the 2022 spring season.

## COUGAR

GMUs 448 and 450 are hunt areas with a harvest guideline of nine to 13 animals. In these GMUs, the WDFW Director may close the cougar late hunting season after Jan. 1 if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. Cougar hunters may hunt from Jan. 1 until the hunt area harvest guideline is reached and the GMU is closed by the Director, or until April 30, whichever occurs first. Each cougar hunter must verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in GMUs 448 and 450 by calling the toll-free cougar hunting hotline at 1-866-364-4868 or visiting our [website](#). The hotline and website will be updated weekly beginning Jan. 1, 2022. Last year, the cougar harvest did not exceed the guideline and the units remained open throughout the season. Hunters need a 2022 cougar tag to hunt cougars in April 2022.

## MOUNTAIN GOAT

One mountain goat special permit is available in the Boulder River North goat hunt area, which is within the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. The terrain in this unit is steep and rugged. Prospective hunters should contact the trail and recreation specialist at the Darrington Ranger District office at 360-436-1155 to get the most current information on trail conditions and access routes. We recommend consulting with the U.S. Forest Service prior to applying for this hunt to discuss trail and road conditions and alternative access routes. Trails within the Boulder River Wilderness are on the [Mount Baker-Snoqualmie website](#).

All goat permit holders in the seven years the unit has been open have been successful. Although permit holders may legally take a nanny (female) goat, we ask that hunters avoid shooting nannies as mountain goat populations are very sensitive to the removal of adult females. Permit holders will receive materials that describe ways to tell the difference between male and female goats. Hunters should review these materials before scouting and hunting and focus their efforts on harvesting a billy (male) goat. In 2018, 2019, and 2020 hundreds of [mountain goats were moved from Olympic National Park and released into the North Cascades](#). These goats are wearing radio collars, and some may move into the Boulder River North unit. We ask hunters to not shoot a collared animal.

Permittees may receive a request to help WDFW with biological sampling, in which case directions and sampling kits will be sent via mail. Successful hunters must present the head with horns attached for inspection within 10 days to a WDFW regional or district office, or a location chosen by a Department representative. Contact information for WDFW regional offices are on page 6 of the 2021 [Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#) and on the [WDFW website](#). Hunters should be prepared to give their WILD ID number and location and date of kill at the inspection. After inspection, the head and horns of a lawfully harvested mountain goat in Washington may be kept for personal use.



Photo by Greg Green



## PHEASANT

Pen-raised pheasants will be released this fall on release sites, which are mapped in the [Western Washington Pheasant Program booklet](#).

In Snohomish County, public pheasant and waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the [Snoqualmie Wildlife Area](#). There are three access sites on the Ebey Island Unit. The primary access site is off Home Acres Road just off Highway 2 (marked 'Middle Parking Lot' below). The eastern portion of the unit may be accessed through a gate under State Highway 2. Limited parking is allowed near the east gate; follow the dike south to access the unit. The west side of the property can be accessed through the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. Pheasants will be released on both the west and east parcels of the unit. The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road. The Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units will each get 35-45 birds. They will be released on Friday and Saturday evenings, and on a varied schedule for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. All pheasant release sites on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be open and follow the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. hunting hours. The Ebey Island Unit is closed to public access during the non-hunting season and bird dog training is not permitted. Bird dog training is allowed on the Crescent Lake Unit at designated sites.



Parking and pheasant release areas available at Ebey Island

Leque Island was converted to intertidal conditions in 2019. Consequently, pheasant hunting no longer occurs there.

In Island County, pheasant release sites on Whidbey Island include Bayview, Outlying Field (OLF) Coupeville, and Sea Plane Base (SPB) sites. WDFW partners with private landowners to provide pheasant release sites at Bayview, Arnold Farm and Zylstra Road. Hunters should check [online](#) for the location of specific sites. Fifteen to 20 birds will be released on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings, except for Bayview, where releases will be Saturday and Sunday mornings. The Bayview pheasant release site is only open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays.

The SPB (Upper and Lower Game Ranges) and OLF Coupeville on the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station will be open this year. Access to the SPB pheasant release site is open to all hunters. All hunters (military and civilian) need to buy the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Check in at the Torpedo Road gate and sign in and out of the logbook for the Sea Plane Base and at the logbook in the parking lot for OLF Coupeville. Civilian hunters will need to submit to a background check before hunting Navy property. As a result, people should plan well in advance and all hunters should check with WNAS Biologist Michael Bianchi at 360- 257-4024 for updated rules and requirements and to be sure that no sites are closed for safety and security reasons during the pheasant season.

## BAND-TAILED PIGEON

Hunters can harvest band-tailed pigeons in late September. A migratory bird authorization card is required, and the daily bag limit is two birds. The birds are in managed forest lands with mixed conifer age classes that provide feeding areas next to roosting areas. These types of habitat are often on private timberlands or DNR lands, so expect the same gated conditions described above. Band-tailed pigeons have strong affinities for the same areas, so scouting before your hunt is important.

## GROUSE

Ruffed grouse is the most common grouse species in District 13, with sooty (blue) grouse found at higher elevations. Ruffed grouse are found at elevations below 2,500 feet. Both species favor mixed timber habitats, often near water. Hunters should look for mixed conifer and hardwood areas, especially in riparian areas, to find grouse. Abandoned or low use logging roads are good places to look for grouse as well.

In 2019, WDFW's Region 4 (North Puget Sound) began collecting the wings and tail fans of harvested grouse. From the collected wings and tail fans, biologists can infer the sex, age, and species of the harvested grouse. This information will increase our understanding of grouse harvest trends and will be used to inform future grouse management decisions. Hunters are encouraged to voluntarily submit wings and tail fans at collection sites (pictured below). Collection site locations are listed on WDFW's [website](#).

Grouse season dates have been updated for the 2021 season. The season will open 15 days later on Sept. 15 and will remain open until Jan. 15, 2022. This adjustment to season dates was made to limit the harvest of adult female and juvenile grouse which are especially vulnerable during early September.



Ruffed Grouse and Grouse Wing Collection Site



## WATERFOWL



Photo by Greg Green

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, refer to WDFW's Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting webpage. WDFW recently published a [web map application](#) depicting the abundance of marine birds throughout Washington's Salish Sea waters. The application also details abundance trends for game and non-game focal species. Hunters may find the application valuable when planning future outings.

Annual breeding waterfowl surveys did not occur during the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19, however, local breeding conditions were favorable as a result of the cool, wet spring.

As always, weather conditions during the fall and winter will influence where birds congregate and how the waterfowl migration progresses. Waterfowl hunting in District 13 should be productive if weather conditions are favorable. Typically, we see a slow start to the hunting season. During mild winters, ducks tend to stay in more northerly areas of British Columbia. However, as colder fronts move in and conditions become colder and wetter, hunters can expect increasing numbers of waterfowl to arrive in District 13.



## SNOHOMISH COUNTY

Public waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. There are two access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the northeast side of the property. The second access site is off Home Acres Road near Highway 2. Access will be open on the west side of the property in the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. During pheasant hunting season, waterfowl hunters may only enter and hunt the Ebey Island Unit from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road that provide access. The Ebey Island Unit is closed to public access during the non-hunting season and bird dog training is not permitted. Bird dog training is allowed on the Crescent Lake Unit at designated sites.

The Spencer Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will provide boat and walk-in access this year. Parking for the Spencer Island Unit will be a quarter mile back from the bridge to the island near the sewage treatment facility buildings.

Smith Island Estuary Restoration site is owned by Snohomish County who has partnered with WDFW to provide waterfowl hunting access to the intertidal 300 acres. The parking lot has seven spots available, and the site is Register to Hunt to track the amount of use at the property. Please be mindful that the property is tidally influenced, and water levels can change dramatically. A small hand launch is available. Please check the [WDFW Private Lands website](#) for more detailed information about the property.

The Leque Island Tidal [Restoration project](#) was completed during the fall of 2019 and the unit is open again for waterfowl hunting. Hunters with small boats that can be hand-launched should access the unit from the western parking lot south of SR 532 along Davis Slough. There is an additional parking lot and walking path along the eastern edge of the unit, but hunters should not access the unit through this area. Hunters must also observe the No Shooting Safety Area along the eastern walking path. The City of Stanwood plans to build an additional boat launch at Hamilton Landing Park that will provide access to the unit for larger boats.

At this time, we have tentative agreements with landowners for 14 Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program units, located primarily in the Stillaguamish Delta. These sites are all found on private lands enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. Two waterfowl quality hunt units will be Hunt by Reservation and four of these units were planted with barley. More units may be added in the fall. More information about individual sites as they are finalized, including maps and access rules, are on the [WDFW Hunting Access website](#). Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program units on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every unit will be available on opening day.



We expect all units will be open by mid-November. For questions about the Private Lands Access Program (PLAP), contact Rob Wingard, WDFW Private Lands Access Program biologist, at 360-466-4345, extension 240.

The Hunt by Reservation program offers a quality hunt experience by limiting the number of days a site is hunted while guaranteeing the site

will be available to the reservation holder. To make a reservation, visit the [WDFW hunting access link](#), create an account, choose a hunting site that is in the Hunt by Reservation category, and book the reservation. Reservations become available two weeks prior to the hunt day at 8 a.m. A fast internet connection improves the chances of securing a reservation.

Robust numbers of snow geese coming into Washington are likely this winter. In addition to the traditional high concentrations in the Stanwood area, snow geese are expanding in Snohomish County and we expect that at least 5,000 to 10,000 birds will spend some time in the Snohomish River system. The 2021-22 snow goose season is Oct. 16 – Nov. 28; Dec. 11 – Jan. 30; and Feb. 12 – 22. However, Leque Island and that portion of Snohomish County east of Interstate 5 will be closed Feb. 12 – 22, 2022. Hunters should consult page 24 of the [Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game pamphlet](#) for additional closures on state-managed lands and should check the [WDFW Hunting Access website](#) for potential additions to snow goose sites that may be added to the Private Lands Access Program.

The Port Susan Game Reserve, which restricted Canada goose hunting, was eliminated in 2016.

## PORT SUSAN BAY

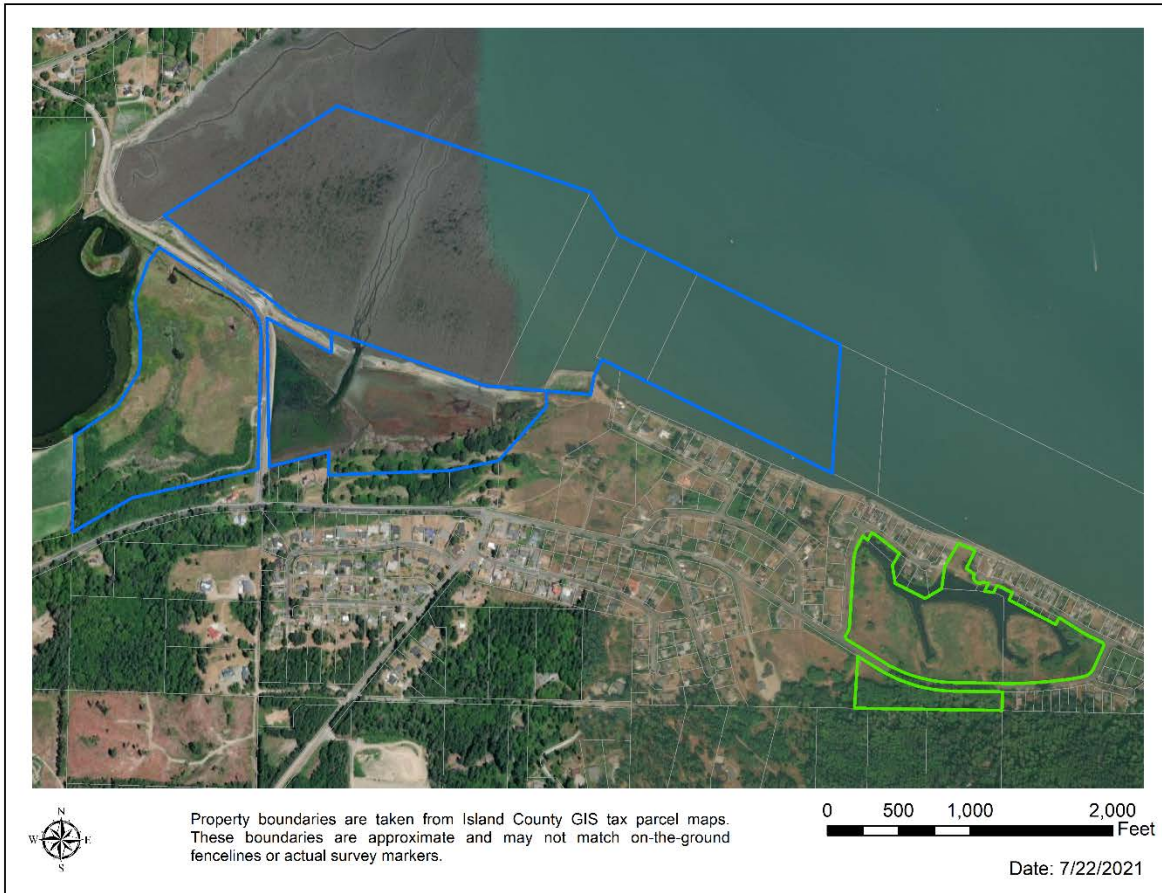
The Nature Conservancy (TNC) allows hunting over tidelands under their ownership at Port Susan Bay. However, the restored area and a 150-yard buffer around it is off-limits to hunting, and there is no hunting access from TNC property (refer to map below). For further information regarding hunting TNC ownership, contact the TNC Puget Sound Stewardship Coordinator at 360-419-3140 or [washington@tnc.org](mailto:washington@tnc.org).



Map of restricted hunting area owned by The Nature Conservancy

## WHIDBEY ISLAND

Access to public lands on Whidbey Island is extremely limited. Hunters should be aware that Deer Lagoon is closed to hunting by a county ordinance that restricts the discharge of firearms. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust owns parcels at Crockett Lake and Dugualla Bay, and their ownerships are closed to hunting. Land Trust Dugualla Bay parcels are shown below. Hunters should contact the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#) with any questions about boundaries and ownership at Crockett Lake.



Whidbey Camano Land Trust (blue) and Dugualla Community (green) parcels closed to hunting at Dugualla Bay

Waterfowl hunting on Naval Air Station Whidbey Island is open to military personnel and their guests. All hunters (military and civilian) need to buy the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Access the duck blinds by entering the Sea Plane Base (SPB) gate. Non-military guests must be in the same vehicle as the military hunter. For more information, contact WNAS Biologist Michael Bianchi at 360-257-4024.



## CAMANO ISLAND

Iverson Spit Preserve is managed by Island County Parks, within the Island County Public Works Department. Hunting is allowed at Iverson Spit outside of the dike in the intertidal area. Questions about the preserve should be directed to the Island County Public Works Department at 360-679-7331.



Iverson Spit Preserve park boundaries

The tidelands near English Boom County Park on the north end of Camano Island include some privately-owned parcels. Hunters wanting to access tidelands in this area must obey all signs showing private ownership, no trespassing, or no hunting. These signs are legitimate and legal and show which parcels are privately owned and therefore not open to the public.



2021

ROBERT WADDELL, District Wildlife Biologist  
CALLIE MOORE, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



Photo by Brad Richard

# 2021 DISTRICT 14 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Skagit & Whatcom Counties

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## DISTRICT 14 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 14, comprised of Skagit and Whatcom counties, is the most northwestern district in state. The district's western extent is associated with marine waters of Puget Sound and features a vibrant and varied agricultural land base. The lowlands support abundant wildlife in the Skagit Flats and the west side of Whatcom County, including diverse and large flocks of resident and overwintering waterfowl species.

The Skagit and Nooksack rivers are the two primary river systems in the district and are fed by the Cascade Mountains and flow into Puget Sound. Most lower elevation forested uplands within these watersheds are owned or managed by private timber companies or the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). These lower-elevation working forests provide reasonable to excellent big game hunting opportunities for elk, black-tailed deer, black bear, and cougar. The Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and North Cascades National Park manage many of the higher elevation forest lands within the district, including the Ross Lake National Recreation Area where hunting is allowed. These federal lands are associated with the North Cascades Mountains and support game species such as mountain goat, black bear, and black-tailed deer.



North Fork Nooksack River in Whatcom County – Photo by Robert Waddell

From north to south, the core game management units (GMUs) that comprise District 14 are Nooksack and Diablo (GMUs 418 and 426), which are mainly in Whatcom County, and Sauk (GMU 437), which is almost entirely within Skagit County. Additionally, portions of North Sound, Stillaguamish, and Cascade (GMUs 407, 448, and 450) are also within the district (Figure 1).



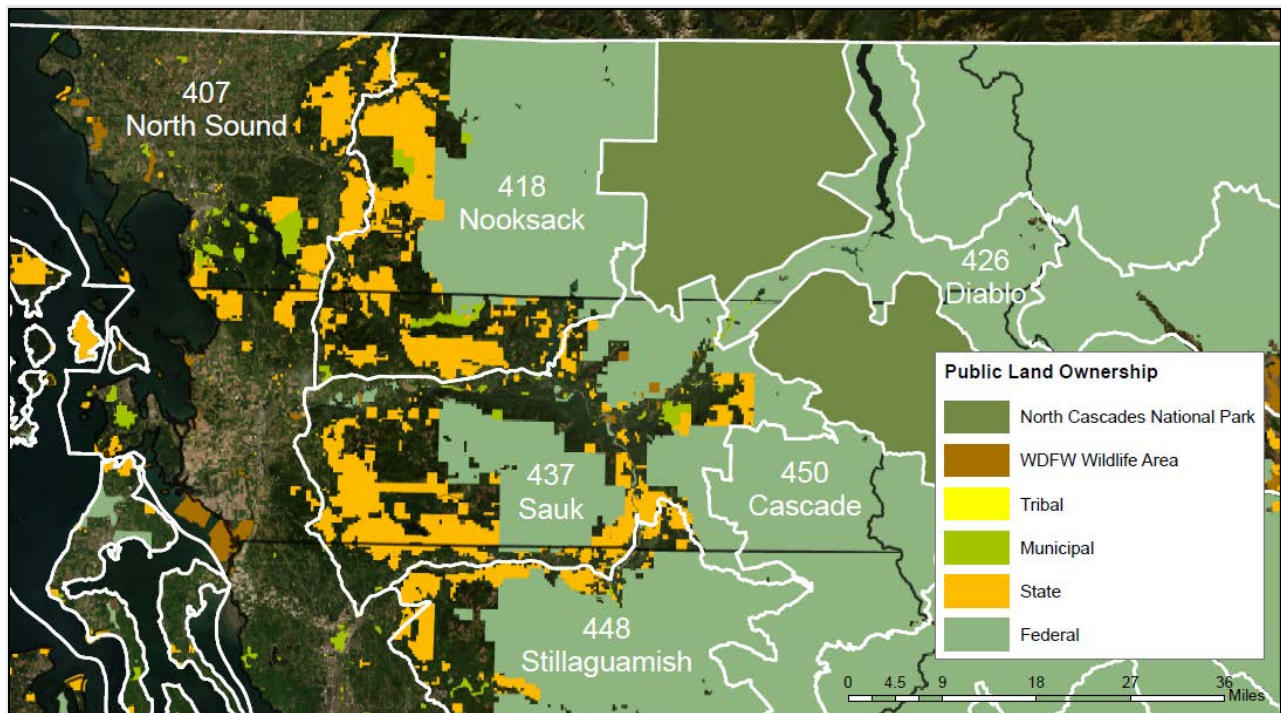


Figure 1. Game Management Units (GMUs) in Skagit and Whatcom counties

Among the many hunting opportunities within this district, perhaps the most notable are:

- Both saltwater and inland waterfowl hunting opportunities with the highest harvest of ducks and geese in Western Washington. Statewide, it boasts the second-highest duck and goose harvest.
- The most diverse waterfowl species hunting opportunities in the state, including lesser snow geese, Canada geese, Pacific black brant, Harlequin ducks, long-tailed ducks, and scoters.
- Extensive walk or bike-in access to public and private forest lands that do not currently charge an access fee for hunting big game and/or forest grouse.
- Special permit only, quality bull elk hunts within the North Cascades elk herd, with trophy quality animals, liberal season dates, and high success rates.
- Once-in-a-lifetime mountain goat harvest opportunities for six permit holders within the Mount Baker Wilderness Area.
- A unique opportunity to hunt black bear in GMU 418 during the spring, with access to extensive land behind private gates where bears are otherwise not disturbed by hunters.



## CURRENT SPECIES STATUS

The primary big game species in District 14 are elk, black-tailed deer, cougar, black bear, and mountain goat. Each species remains open for hunting with restrictions, as outlined in the [Washington 2021 Big Game Hunting Regulations](#) pamphlet. Black-tailed deer, black bear, elk (GMUs 407 and 448 only), and cougar continue to provide over-the-counter tag opportunities in District 14. While elk (GMUs 418 and 437), spring black bear, and mountain goats opportunities are managed as special permit only hunts. This is due to the sensitivity of these populations to hunting, either because they are below population objective (elk), more vulnerable to harvest (spring black bear), or have lower reproductive rates (mountain goats).

Like most of Western Washington, District 14 does not host any native upland game bird populations and is not managed for these species. However, WDFW will continue to implement a pen-raised pheasant release program in Skagit and Whatcom counties in 2021–2022. Other game birds that WDFW manages collectively as forest grouse include the ruffed, dusky, and sooty grouse. Dusky and sooty grouse (formerly referred to as blue grouse) occur in District 14 and continue to have a long season from Sep. 1 – Dec. 31. A daily bag limit of four of any species and no more than three of one species remains the same as previous years.

Due to high overall population sizes and stable reproductive rates of waterfowl, states within the Pacific Flyway will continue to enjoy extremely liberal hunting seasons regarding the number of hunting days and bag limits. The decrease to a one-bird daily bag limit for Northern Pintail will continue into this season because the nationwide change was in response to population estimates below established threshold limits.

In the district, all hunters are required to apply for and possess a special migratory bird authorization when hunting lesser snow geese, Pacific brant, and sea ducks, which include harlequin ducks, surf, white-winged, and black scoters, long-tailed ducks, and common and Barrow's goldeneye. Additionally, a harvest report card must be submitted by each hunter by March 20, 2022, regardless of harvest success. Please reference page 18 in the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) pamphlet for information on these Authorization and Harvest Record cards.

## ELK

The North Cascades (Nooksack) elk herd continues to grow and expand into areas of formerly unoccupied habitat, including agricultural areas where elk-related damage to crops can occur. Based on the post-hunt survey conducted in spring 2020, the estimated population size of the North Cascades herd within the herd's core area is approximately 1,500 animals. The 2020 survey indicated a bull-to-cow ratio of 22 bulls per 100 cows, just above the WDFW objective of 12–20 bulls per 100 cows. The calf-to-cow ratio was estimated at 37 calves per 100 cows. A calf-to-cow ratio of 40 calves or greater per 100 cows is considered excellent calf recruitment.



Hunter stands with the mature bull elk he harvested – Photo by Ernie Garbe

Although the North Cascades elk herd population continues to increase, the WDFW population objective of approximately 2,000 elk has not been met. Since establishing a very limited hunt of this population in 2007, hunting opportunities have been few but are increasing. The current harvest strategy provides some recreational and damage-related harvest while allowing the population to continue to grow.

The North Cascades elk herd offers one of the premier special permit bull elk hunting opportunities in Western Washington. Archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm hunters that are fortunate enough to draw one of 50 available permits have the chance to harvest a bull elk with an “any bull” tag in GMUs 418 and 437 (29 permits in GMU 418 and 21 permits in GMU 437).

The annual harvest success rate since 2007 has been high, ranging up to 100% depending on the hunt method type, due to limited hunting pressure and lengthy seasons. In 2020, the harvest success rate in GMU 418 for all hunt method types combined was 79%, with 23 of 29 permit holders harvesting a bull elk. In Elk Area 4941, 12 of 21 permit holders harvested a bull elk for a 57% success rate. Note that beginning with the 2021 season, all of GMU 437 is available to elk special permit hunters.

The WDFW Private Lands Access program has partnered with Sierra Pacific Industries to provide access to their properties within GMU 418 for all elk special permit holders who draw a tag for GMU 418. This program will provide information about access to these lands to permit holders prior to the 2021 hunts. Within GMU 418, hunters looking for the highest chance of success should focus most of their efforts within the core elk area that includes: a northern boundary from Acme due east to Baker Lake, an eastern boundary along the western shorelines of Baker Lake and Lake Shannon to Highway 20, a southern boundary along Highway 20 to its juncture with Highway 9, and a western boundary of Highway 9 from Sedro-Woolley to Acme. However, hunters may find pockets of elk, including some high-quality bulls, outside this core area.

Hunters who draw a special permit in GMU 437 are no longer restricted to hunting in Skagit Valley within the boundary of the former Elk Area 4941. Though permitted hunters may access the entirety of GMU 437, most elk likely will be in the northern third of the GMU, with many in Skagit Valley on private property. Securing access to private property can increase your chances of success in this GMU.

Master Hunters, youth, seniors, and hunters with disabilities who draw one of the 28 permit opportunities for antlerless elk should consider securing access to private lands within Skagit Valley where opportunities are likely to be best. In 2020, eight of 15 permit holders harvested a cow elk for a 53% success rate. All Special Permit holders for GMU 437 will be mailed a letter with necessary information regarding hunting on private land in Skagit Valley prior to the 2021 hunts.





Photo by Robert Waddell

General season harvest opportunities for any elk in GMU 407 (North Sound) in Skagit and Whatcom counties and that portion of GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) in Skagit County exist on both private and state lands. However, elk densities in these two units are low, and hunting pressure may push elk into adjacent GMUs that remain closed to general harvest. Hunters seeking public lands opportunities for these general season elk hunts should visit the [WDFW Hunt Regulations Web map](#) for more information.

GMU 407 tends to have greater numbers of elk than GMU 448, but access to private property may be key to getting a real opportunity. Most elk in GMU 407 occur in and around Acme Valley, with a few elk found west of the South Fork Nooksack River or north of the community of Van Zandt along Highway 9. The public area most likely to yield success for hunters in GMU 407 is the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Van Zandt Dike property northeast of Acme that borders private property in Acme Valley to the east. Though hunting pressure can be high, hunters who scout, do their homework, and hunt away from roads are more likely to harvest an animal. When hunting Van Zandt Dike, hunters should be aware of the DNR property boundary and not cross onto private property (without permission) or into GMU 418.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found online at [Game Harvest Reports](#). Hunters in District 14 are encouraged to visit the WDFW [Hunt Planner Web map](#), a tool that provides information on Washington's 2021–2022 hunting regulations and hunts based on location, date, weapon choice, and more. Additionally, the web map provides layers showing public and private land hunting opportunities, GMU boundaries, roads, topographical features, and county lines. Be sure to check with the appropriate landowner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

## ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)

Reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington since 2008, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range, including within the North Cascades elk herd area. Though other conditions can result in limping or hoof deformities, WDFW research conducted from 2009–2014, in conjunction with review by a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington, where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and western Lewis County. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds distant from the core affected area, including the North Cascades elk herd. Although TAHD is present in elk in District 14, it does not appear to be as common here as it is in southwest Washington. While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, including young or old or male or female elk.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to an elk's hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process, and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven ways to treat it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but this is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### How hunters can help:

WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program in 2021 to encourage westside (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing the prevalence of the disease over time. This program aims to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can choose to participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in Western Washington. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in Western Washington, with season dates of Sep. 1 – Dec. 31 will be awarded. Additionally, all participants will receive a waterproof license holder.





An elk hoof with elk hoof disease is examined by a biologist

So, what can hunters do to help?

- **Harvest a limping elk** from any 400, 500, or 600 series GMUs
- **Turn in your elk hooves** along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in Western Washington
- **Report elk observations** of both affected and unaffected elk on the Department's [online reporting form](#).
- **Clean shoes and tires** after hiking or driving off-road in a known affected area to help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas. Remove all mud from shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, Tribal governments, and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, visit [WDFW's website](#). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.

## DEER

WDFW is not currently conducting black-tailed deer surveys in District 14, primarily due to the difficulty in accurately surveying deer in dense, Western Washington habitats. However, biologist observations and other anecdotal reports support the general notion that black-tailed deer population numbers and densities are down in GMUs 418 (Nooksack), 426 (Diablo), 437 (Sauk), and 450 (Cascade). In contrast, portions of GMU 407 (North Sound), the most urbanized GMU in the district, have quite high local deer densities that cause damage to private properties.



A female black-tailed deer and her fawn feeding in a field in Skagit County in fall 2020 – Photo by Brent Moran

Hunters reported a total of 870 harvested deer during the 2020 general season in the primary GMUs within District 14 (GMUs 407, 418, 426, and 437), a slight decrease from the 924 deer harvested during the 2019 season. From a hunting perspective, GMU 407 provides the best opportunity for successfully harvesting a deer in District 14. In 2020, 576 deer were harvested in GMU 407 during the general season hunts, similar to the 573 deer harvested in 2019. The next best option for hunters is GMU 437, with 199 deer harvested in 2020. Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found online at [Game Harvest Reports](#).

The drastic difference in harvest rates between GMU 407 and other GMUs within the district is related to the number of hunting days available, deer densities, and ease of access. GMU 407 provides hunting opportunities that the other GMUs do not, and hunters have learned to take advantage of it. Though some public land opportunities exist in GMU 407, the key to a successful harvest in this GMU is securing the appropriate permission to hunt on private land and scouting the area before the hunting season. Hunters who intend to hunt deer in developed areas should review page 90 of the [Washington 2021 Big Game Hunting Regulations](#) pamphlet and check with local jurisdictions regarding firearm restrictions.

Modern firearm hunters in District 14 may apply for a permit only, quality buck hunt during the late season in GMUs 418, 426, and 437. These quality buck tags provide some of the best opportunities for success among deer hunters in the district and allow hunters a chance to hunt a quality buck during the rut. Permit hunter success rates during the 2020 season were 12% (GMU 418), 12% (GMU 437), and 20% (GMU 426) for hunters who participated. Sixty tags were issued, and hunters reported harvesting a total of eight bucks for a 13% success rate overall.



A young black tailed deer – Photo by Stephanie Pelham

WDFW was able to negotiate access to Sierra Pacific properties for six of the 25 permit holders in GMU 418 during the 2020 season and likely will provide the same opportunity for 2021 hunters. Hunters who draw a quality buck tag for GMU 418 will be provided details by mail about how to be included in a lottery-style drawing for one of six available chances to win access to Sierra Pacific properties in the GMU.



For those seeking a more remote and rugged trophy black-tailed deer hunting experience, high elevation areas in the Mount Baker Wilderness in GMU 418 and Glacier Peak Wilderness in GMU 437 are open for the high buck hunt from Sep. 15 – 25. These areas can be accessed by using USFS roads and trail systems.

Within District 14, some hunting opportunities exist on private industrial timberlands and property managed by Washington DNR. However, these areas are mostly gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism, and other problems. Many of these gated areas can be accessed on foot or with mountain bikes, allowing those willing to do the work an opportunity to hunt deer that do not receive as much hunting pressure.

Deer hunters in District 14 are encouraged to visit the WDFW [Hunt Planner Web map](#), a tool that provides information on Washington's 2021–2022 hunting regulations and hunts based on location, date, weapon choice, and more. Additionally, the web map provides layers showing public and private land hunting opportunities, GMU boundaries, roads, topographical features, and county lines. Be sure to check with the appropriate landowner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

## ADENOVIRUS HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE

WDFW has documented an outbreak of Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease (AHD) in black-tailed deer in several island GMUs within District 13. AHD is caused by a viral infection and is transmitted by direct contact between deer, either through bodily fluids or possibly airborne routes. This makes the virus more likely to spread in areas with high deer concentrations.

AHD was detected on British Columbia's Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island during the fall of 2020 and then detected on Orcas and San Juan Islands during May and June 2021. The disease now appears to be impacting deer on other islands in the San Juan Archipelago, including Blakely, Henry, Lopez, Shaw, and Stuart Islands. WDFW also has investigated several deer mortalities on Whidbey Island, with deer displaying symptoms consistent with AHD. However, official lab results from these investigations, which may or may not confirm AHD, are pending. As of July 2021, WDFW has not confirmed AHD in deer in Skagit or Whatcom counties. However, District 14 biologists are actively monitoring for this disease in mainland deer populations.

AHD does not pose a risk to livestock, pets, or people – either from contact or by consuming the meat. However, the use of disposable gloves is always recommended for handling any wildlife carcass. To reduce the risk of spreading AHD to new areas, hunters should try and avoid harvesting AHD-infected deer in AHD-impacted areas. Hunters should note that AHD symptoms in deer include rapid or open mouth breathing, foaming or drooling at the mouth, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), weakness, and emaciation. This disease is fast acting, so a deer that dies from this virus usually does so within three to five days of contracting it.

If you see a deer that is displaying any of these symptoms, please report the location of the sighting on [WDFW's Dead, Sick, or Injured Wildlife reporting page](#). For more information on AHD, please visit the [Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease \(AHD\)](#) section of our website.



## BEAR

Black bears are common in District 14, though a formal estimate of the district's bear population is unavailable. Black bears live in a diverse array of forested habitats throughout the state, from coastal rainforests to the dry woodlands of the Cascades' eastern slopes. In general, black bears are strongly associated with forest cover, but they occasionally use relatively open country, such as clear-cuts and the fringes of other open habitats.

Hunter harvest reports and age data obtained from premolar teeth submitted by successful hunters are used to determine age and sex ratios and infer population size and trends. This information helps WDFW set bear harvest guidelines.

A total of 172 bears were reported harvested during the fall 2020 hunt in GMUs 407, 418, 426, and 437, a slight decrease from the 199 bears harvested during the 2019 season. Over 1,500 hunters experienced an 11% overall success rate in the four GMUs. A harvest of 82 bears in GMU 418 was the highest overall.

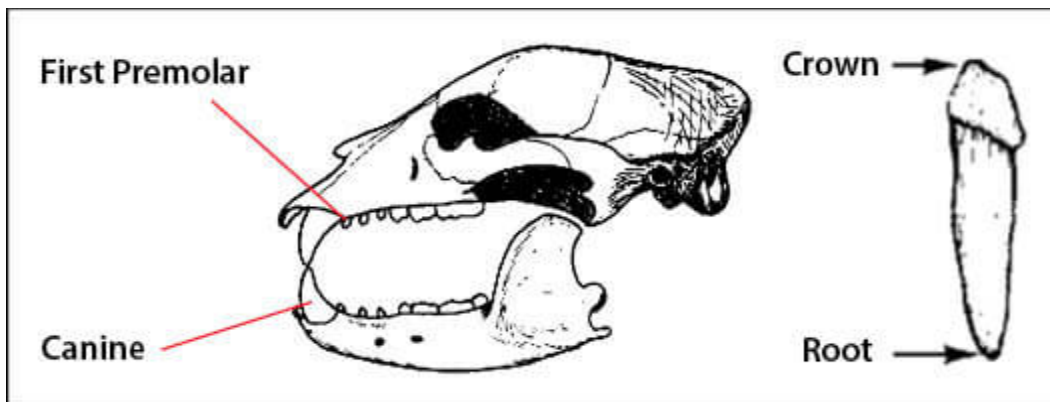
District 14 hunters that choose to hunt in GMUs 418 and 426 will be hunting in a grizzly bear recovery area identified by WDFW. Before hunting, hunters must successfully complete the annual WDFW online bear identification test and pass the exam with a score of 80% or higher. While hunting, people must carry proof that they have passed this test or an equivalent test from another state.



A black bear walks down a forest service road in the spring – Photo by Douglas Boze

Opportunities for harvesting a black bear in District 14 have more to do with access and berry production than does the previous year's harvest. Access behind gated roads is largely available to those willing to walk or mountain bike, and there are ample numbers of clear cuts with younger age class regeneration units that attract bears. Hunters willing to hunt fall bears in the early season and at higher elevations, and who are willing to hike in and pack out, can pursue bears in classic alpine environments where huckleberries, and thus bears, are more abundant and spot-and-stalk opportunities await.

All successful fall black bear hunters statewide **MUST** submit a black bear premolar tooth per WAC 220-415-090 to the Department by Dec. 1, 2021. The premolar tooth is located behind the canine tooth of the upper jaw. Tooth envelopes are available at all WDFW offices.



GMU 418 is one of the few Western Washington GMUs, and the only GMU in District 14 where a spring bear hunt is promoted to address damage caused by bears peeling young trees (primarily Douglas fir) on commercially managed forest lands. WDFW's Private Lands Access Program coordinates access for permit hunters to areas behind private gates where bears are otherwise not disturbed by hunters. In the past five years, hunters have harvested about eight bears per year, for an average annual success rate of 27%. Spring bear hunters are encouraged to be patient when evaluating a bear in the field to avoid shooting a sow with dependent cubs.

Bear hunters in District 14 are encouraged to visit the WDFW [Hunt Planner Web map](#), a tool that provides information on Washington's 2021–2022 hunting regulations and hunts based on location, date, weapon choice, and more. Additionally, the web map provides layers showing public and private land hunting opportunities, GMU boundaries, roads, topographical features, and county lines. Be sure to check with the appropriate landowner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

## COUGAR

Cougar hunting opportunities in District 14 are opportunistic, with most cougars harvested by hunters that happen upon a cougar while pursuing other game. The primary prey for cougars in the district is black-tailed deer, so hunters who spend time in areas with more deer will increase their chances of seeing and harvesting a cougar.

A hunter who wishes to harvest a cougar must possess a valid big game license, including the cougar species option, before harvesting a cat. The use of dogs to recreationally pursue and harvest cougars is illegal statewide. Hunters may harvest cougars during the early (Sep. 1 – Dec. 31) and late (Jan. 1 – April 30) season.

Hunters should note that most GMUs in District 14, except for GMU 407, are covered by a cougar harvest guideline. GMUs 418, 426, and 437 have a harvest guideline of 10 – 13 animals, and GMUs 448 and 450 have a harvest guideline of 8 – 11 animals. In those GMUs covered under a harvest guideline, WDFW may close the late hunting season after Jan. 1, 2022 if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. During the late season, cougar hunters may hunt cougar from Jan. 1 until the hunt area harvest guideline has been met and the GMU is subsequently closed by WDFW, or until the end of the season on April 30, whichever occurs first. It is the hunter's responsibility to verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed by calling the toll-free cougar hunting hotline (1-866-364-4868) or visiting the WDFW webpage for [Cougar Hunting Area Openings and Closures](#). The hotline and webpage will be updated weekly beginning Jan. 1, 2022. During the 2020–21 season, the cougar harvest did not exceed the guideline in these units, and they remained open throughout the season.

Hunters should remember that a 2021 hunting license is valid from April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. Thus, a hunter wishing to hunt cougar in April 2022 will need to purchase a 2022–2023 hunting license/cougar tag (WAC 220-415-100). Additionally, all successful cougar hunters must report cougar harvest to the WDFW hotline (1-866-364-4868) within 72 hours of harvest and must contact a WDFW office to arrange to have the pelt sealed within five (5) days of the notification of kill. Hunters must also report their harvest in the [WDFW Wild System](#).

Cougar hunters in District 14 are encouraged to visit the WDFW [Hunt Planner Web map](#), a tool that provides information on Washington's 2021–2022 hunting regulations and hunts based on location, date, weapon choice, and more.



## MOUNTAIN GOAT

The Mount Baker area continues to have one of the largest concentrations of mountain goats in Washington. Mountain goat hunting in Washington is a once-in-a-lifetime harvest opportunity and is a limited-entry tag that only a few lucky individuals draw in any year.

Drawing a goat tag is a commitment to spend a fair amount of time in rugged, high-elevation terrain that can be as treacherous as it is awe-inspiring. A prospective hunter would be well served to scout the available units thoroughly to see if they are up to the challenge prior to applying for a hunt.

For 2021, six special permits were issued for the three mountain goat hunt areas in District 14: Chowder Ridge, Lincoln Peak, and Avalanche Gorge. A single tag holder will have sole access to the Chowder Ridge hunt area north of Mount Baker. The remaining five permit holders (two in Lincoln Peak and three in the Avalanche Gorge hunt units) may be sharing these units with the winners of the statewide auction and raffle permits.



Photo by Greg Green

Statewide harvest success rates for mountain goats are generally 75% or greater in any year, and the Mount Baker area has produced some mature goats of exceptional quality. During the 2020 season, three males were harvested in Avalanche Gorge and one male was harvested in Chowder Ridge for an overall success rate for all three hunt areas combined of 67%.

WDFW strongly encourages hunters to refrain from shooting female goats (nannies). Although nannies can be legally taken by permit holders, mountain goats are slow to reach sexual maturity and display a slow production rate, thus they are very sensitive to the removal of adult females. Beginning in 2018, mountain goat hunt applicants drawn for a permit may only purchase their license after successfully completing the WDFW online mountain goat gender identification training. Additionally, please review the educational material sent to you if you draw a permit and make all efforts to harvest a male goat (billy).

A hunter who kills a mountain goat in Washington must present the head with horns attached for inspection within 10 days of harvest to a WDFW Regional or District office or a location designated by a WDFW representative. Call a WDFW Regional or District office to schedule an appointment with a biologist for inspection. After inspection, the head/horns of a lawfully harvested mountain goat in Washington may be kept for personal use.



Hunter happily poses with his harvested goat – Photo by Brett Emmons



## UPLAND BIRDS

Upland bird opportunities available to hunters within District 14 include WDFW-released ring-neck pheasant on designated release sites, sooty grouse, ruffed grouse, California quail, band-tailed pigeons, mourning doves, and an ever-growing population of Eurasian collared-doves. Although some of these species are quite similar, each offers a unique opportunity to hunters throughout the state. For more general information on upland bird hunting in Washington, follow these links for a summary of [upland bird seasons](#), find ideas for [where to go upland bird hunting](#) and information on [the basics of upland bird hunting in Washington](#).

### PHEASANT

The [pheasant release program](#) in Western Washington provides upland bird hunting opportunities in areas that cannot sustain naturally reproducing populations due to our cool, wet climate and lack of grain farming. This program encourages participation from new, young, and seasoned hunters. Approximately 35,000 to 40,000 pheasants are released each year at about 27 sites throughout Western Washington. Like past seasons, pheasant releases will occur at four sites in District 14 this fall.

Whatcom County boasts three pheasant release sites located at WDFW Lake Terrell Wildlife Area, Alcoa Intalco Works, and British Petroleum Refinery. Releases are performed by volunteers on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday of each week during the season, with a total of 450–500 birds released each week between the three sites.

The fourth site in District 14 is in Skagit County at the Samish Unit. Releases will occur once before the youth hunt (Sep. 18–19) and the other before the senior hunt (Sep. 20–24). No further releases will occur after this. However, hunters may pursue the remaining on-site pheasants until the opening of the statewide waterfowl season (October 16; see page 19 of the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) pamphlet). This site is closed after this date to minimize conflicts between pheasant and waterfowl hunters since the unit is managed and used primarily for waterfowl hunting.

To hunt at these sites in District 14 or other pheasant release sites in Western Washington, hunters must purchase a Western Washington pheasant license, but a small game license is not required to participate. Additional requirements to hunt pheasants and other upland birds include:

- Must wear a minimum of 400 square inches of hunter orange or fluorescent hunter pink clothing
- Use and carry only non-toxic shot for all upland bird hunting on all pheasant release sites statewide

Please refer to the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) pamphlet and [WDFW's Pheasant Hunting webpage](#) for more detailed information.

## FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed grouse and sooty (blue) grouse are found on public and private forest lands throughout District 14. Ruffed grouse are the most widespread species of grouse in the district, as well as statewide. They are most abundant in lowland secondary succession coniferous and deciduous forests under 2,000 feet of elevation. Hunters should seek higher elevation sites along trails and ridgelines above 2,000–3,000 feet within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands when targeting sooty grouse. Also, areas with berry-bearing plants like huckleberry, grouse whortleberry should be sought when hunting this species. To find more information, check out the [hunting forest grouse](#) page.

During the 2021-2023 season setting rulemaking process, the decision to delay the forest grouse season two weeks from the original opening date of Sep. 1 to the new season dates of **Sep. 15 – Jan. 15** was adopted by the WDFW Commission. The rule was recommended and subsequently adopted based on harvest data and catch-per-unit effort, indicating that Washington's forest grouse populations are declining. In addition, the decision to set the season back was because brood hens are disproportionately vulnerable to harvest during this time, which this conservative strategy will alleviate.



A male ruffed grouse walking on the side of a road – Photo by Michael Schroeder

During the 2020 hunting season, hunters reported successfully harvesting 1,705 grouse in Skagit County and 1,038 in Whatcom County. Harvest increased 12% in Whatcom County compared to the five-year long-term average, which is probably a result of a 23% increase in hunter participation. However, in Skagit County, harvest decreased by 33% based on the same long-term average, despite a 10% increase in hunter participation. This makes it difficult to determine the potential causes of the decrease. For the 2021 season, hunters should expect the same reliable hunting conditions, just with a later start.

### **WDFW Forest Grouse Wing & Tail Collection:**

Biologists collect wings and tails of hunter-harvested forest grouse throughout the season using designated collection sites. This collection effort contributes to a long-term statewide dataset that allows for a better evaluation of population trends and age-ratio data important for local management of forest grouse species. Grouse hunters in District 14 can help with this effort by depositing one wing and the tail of each grouse they harvest into one of our wing collection barrel sites:

- Whatcom County - SE corner of the Welcome Grocery Store building (5565 Mt Baker Hwy, Deming)
- Skagit County – TBA (location will be along Hwy. 20 west of Baker Lake Rd, Concrete, WA 98237)

Please be sure to use the provided bags at the site and to fill out all necessary information. If these locations are not convenient for hunters, we suggest looking through the statewide wing barrel site list on our website's [Forest grouse wing and tail collection](#) webpage or calling your local [regional office](#) for information.

### **DOVE: MOURNING & EURASIAN COLLARED**

To hunt mourning doves, hunters must possess a small game license and a state migratory bird permit. The season runs from Sep. 1 – Oct. 30, with a daily bag limit of 15 and a possession limit of 45. Dove hunting in District 14 is low, with a little more than 100 birds harvested in each county last season and showing declines in catch per unit effort despite increased hunter numbers and the number of hunter days afield. To maximize success, we recommend that hunters take the time to scout cut grain fields that will attract doves.

While hunting mourning doves, hunters can harvest an infinite number of Eurasian collared-doves, which are a non-native species. Also, because of its non-native status, hunters may pursue this species year round. Compared to mourning doves, this species tends to occupy more developed areas. Therefore, we recommend that hunters take the time to properly scout and acquire landowner permission in lowland agricultural areas with barnyard settings.



Hunters should take the time to learn how to correctly identify Eurasian collared doves from mourning doves on the ground and in flight as they can often confuse inexperienced birders/hunters. Eurasian collared doves are much larger than mourning doves, but size can be difficult to gauge when only one species is present. Eurasian collared doves are larger than mourning doves and slightly lighter in color. Aside from the diagnostic black collar on the backs of their necks, they also have a squared tail, while mourning doves have a pointed tail. Identification is especially crucial when hunting Eurasian collared doves outside of the mourning dove season to prevent accidental take of a species out of season.

Only a small game or big game license is required to hunt Eurasian collared doves. As for all hunting activities, hunters should confirm the area they plan to hunt has no firearm restrictions and be mindful of people, buildings, farm equipment, or power lines while hunting.

### **BAND-TAILED PIGEON**

Band-tailed pigeons are the largest of Washington's pigeons and doves and are native to the state. Harvest trends for this species have been declining for quite some time and are thought to be linked to decreases in hunter interest and participation. Hunting this species requires a little more tact than hunting other species in the pigeon/dove family. Finding areas that the birds pass over, what sites they use for grit, and any mineral springs can increase success. They have a fruit and seed diet, and are fond of elderberries, cherries, and other fruiting trees. Finding where they feed and pass shooting as they come and go is a commonly used tactic. Another solid hunting strategy is to target managed forest lands with mixed stand age classes that provide feeding areas with adjacent roosting areas. Band-tailed pigeons have a strong attraction for the same areas, so scouting before your hunt will increase your chances of success. Additionally, the birds are also more difficult to bring down compared to mourning and Eurasian collared doves, so staying well hidden and reducing your movement when hunting is important to getting them in range and getting a good shot.





Adult band-tailed pigeon perched in a bird bath – Photo by Creative Commons

Every year, district biologists perform mineral site surveys in mid-July at historic mineral sites throughout the state. In District 14, there are currently two sites that are monitored in Skagit and Whatcom counties. Biologists use these surveys to monitor changes in the local breeding population which allow them to anticipate trends in the regional population. However, the open season (Sep. 15 – 23) usually corresponds with fall migration, when northern birds move into this area, making predictions about the quality of hunting this species difficult.

A small game license, state migratory bird permit, and migratory bird authorization card with band-tailed pigeon harvest report card are required, and the daily limit is two (2) birds with a six (6) bird possession limit. The mandatory harvest reporting deadline for this species is Sep. 30, 2021.



## WATERFOWL

**YOUTH HUNT DATES:** Open species include Canada geese, white-fronted geese, ducks (including scaup), and coots. White geese, brant, and snipe are not open during this hunt. Youth hunts will be held on Sep. 25, 2021, in Western Washington, and Oct. 2, 2021, in Eastern Washington. Authorization and Harvest Record Cards are required for certain species during this hunt. Please refer to page 10 of the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Regulations](#) pamphlet.

**COMBINED YOUTH, VETERANS & ACTIVE MILITARY HUNT DAY:** Open species include Canada geese, white-fronted geese, white geese, brant, ducks (including scaup), and coots. These hunts will be held statewide on Feb. 5, 2022. Authorization and Harvest Record Cards are required for certain species during this hunt. Please refer to pages 19 and 25 of the Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Regulations pamphlet for bag limit details for this hunt.

### DABBLING DUCKS

Based on 10-year average data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual [National Migratory Bird Harvest Survey](#), Skagit County boasts the second-best harvest in the state and 36<sup>th</sup> out of the 3,115 surveyed U.S. counties, while Whatcom County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the state and 137<sup>th</sup> nationwide for waterfowl harvest. During last season, Skagit County remained the state's second-best duck harvest county (following Grant County), with a harvest of 50,735 birds, which is up 10% from the five-year average. However, we assume this is because of an almost 20% increase in hunter numbers and a 25% increase in days afield and not overall duck numbers. The Whatcom County harvest was 27,679 birds, up 11% from the five-year average and 47% higher than the previous season, equating to 10,320 more birds harvested! The increase is also attributed to the 21% increase in hunter numbers and 34% increase in days afield.

Hunters have several resources to help them get started if they want to hunt waterfowl in District 14. If you are new to hunting waterfowl, please visit the WDFW webpage [Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting](#) for an excellent introduction to the sport. Hunters are also encouraged to visit the WDFW [Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program](#) webpage and [Hunt Planner Web map](#). The web map is a tool that provides information on Washington's hunting regulations and hunts based on location, date, weapon choice, and more. Additionally, the web map provides layers showing public and private land hunting opportunities, GMU boundaries, roads, topographical features, and county lines. Be sure to check with the appropriate landowner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

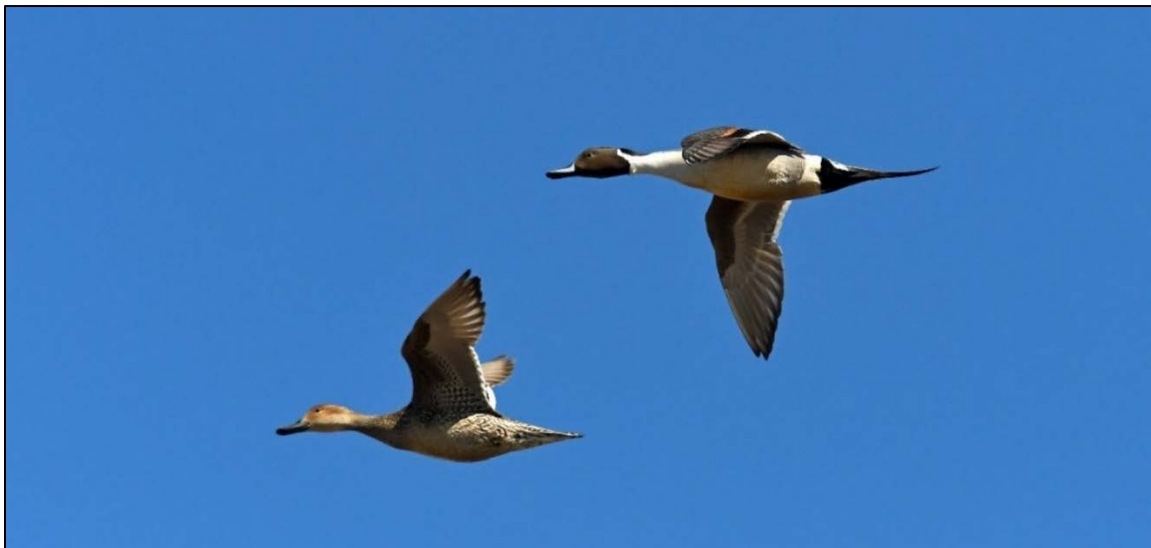


Adult male American wigeon flying to feed  
– Photo by Ryan Askren

For the second year in a row, agency staff members and most other state/provincial and federal entities could not perform breeding surveys due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, weather conditions during early spring point toward suitable to great local production, but the lack of precipitation locally in June and July could negatively impact the survival of young into the hunting season.

Early season hunting opportunities in District 14 are generally more successful on the saltwater marshes. On opening day, hunters can expect a mixed bag of species, including blue-winged teal and wood duck, since they do not typically leave for their southern wintering grounds until later in the season. Large numbers of northern breeding ducks start to arrive in late October and November.

Bag and possession limits for Northern pintail were decreased last season from a two-bird daily limit to a one-bird daily limit. This change was made nationwide and is in response to lower than average population estimates. Although this district supports a large Northern pintail population, this is not typical in many other areas. This bag limit will continue for the 2021–22 season.



An adult female and male Northern pintail midflight on a clear day at the Island Unity – Photo by Alan Bauer

General season this year will run Oct. 16-24 and Oct. 27 – Jan. 30, 2022, except for scaup, which is only open from Nov. 6 – Jan. 30, 2022. Bag limits are restricted to seven ducks, to include no more than two (2) hen mallard, one (1) pintail, two (2) scaup (when open), two (2) canvasback, and two (2) redhead statewide. For sea ducks, bag limits should not include more than one (1) harlequin (only one (1) per a season), six (6) scoter, 6)(six long-tailed duck, and six (6) goldeneye.

Please be sure to acquire all the appropriate authorizations and harvest record cards required for the species/areas you are pursuing. For more information, refer to the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Regulations](#) pamphlet. In addition, authorizations and harvest record cards are available at WDFW license dealers or online using [WDFW's Wild System](#). Hunters must select each of the required harvest record cards for the species they intend to hunt.

## SEA DUCKS

When pursuing intertidal and saltwater areas for sea ducks and diving ducks in Skagit County, hunters can use public boat ramps in Conway, the Skagit Wildlife Area Headquarters Unit on Freshwater Slough, or under the twin bridges that cross over the Swinomish Channel on Highway 20. In Whatcom County, public boat ramps are at most harbors, including Blaine, Squalicum, and Fairhaven. Birch Bay State Park is also another popular access point for sea ducks and brant hunting. Boat access can improve hunting options and success greatly.



Adult male surf scoter swimming in Puget Sound – Photo by Ryan Askren

Like some dabbling ducks, all sea ducks have their own species-specific daily bag limit which can make up the total seven (7) bird bag limit. In Western Washington, the daily bag limit is one (1) Harlequin (and only one Harlequin per person per season), two (2) scaup, two (2) scoter, two (2) long-tailed duck, two (2) canvasback, two (2) redhead, and two (2) goldeneye. Refer to page 19 in the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Regulations](#) pamphlet for more details.

Immediately after taking a scoter, long-tailed duck, harlequin, or a goldeneye in Western Washington, a hunter must fill out their harvest card information in ink. The mandatory harvest reporting deadline for sea ducks is March 20, 2022.

### **PACIFIC BRANT**

Skagit County has a historic and well-known tradition of Pacific brant (includes Black brant) hunting. Brant wintering in Padilla and Samish bays mostly belong to a race that nests in a small area in the western Canadian high arctic and are referred to as gray-bellies. Because of their limited nesting and wintering grounds, this population is vulnerable to excessive harvest. To prevent overharvest, aerial surveys of the wintering population are flown to determine a wintering population estimate. In the past, this estimate dictated whether there was a six-day season (if more than 6,000 birds were counted), a three-day season (between 3,000 – 6,000 birds), or no season at all (under 3,000 birds).



Brant loafing on a gravel bar in Puget Sound (Photo credit: Ryan Askren)



In 2019, the agency established a guaranteed two-day season for Skagit County to make it more predictable for hunters. Last year this strategy was used again, but the dates were split to optimize the potential for favorable weather. The Skagit County brant season will take place on Jan. 15 and 22. Additional season dates will be determined by the aerial survey results. Season updates will be provided by a WDFW news release. Hunters can subscribe to the [WDFW email list](#) to receive news releases and other Department information.

In Whatcom County, the population is made up of mostly black brant which are more abundant and less vulnerable to over harvest, much like the population in Clallam County. Therefore, the two have been grouped together and season dates have been set for Jan. 15, 19, and 22.

Both counties in District 14 are open for brant hunting on the special Youth, Veterans, and Active Military hunt day on Feb. 9, 2022. A special migratory bird authorization card is required to hunt both brant during general and special seasons. Lastly, the mandatory harvest reporting deadline for brant is March 20, 2022. Data obtained from these reports are important for managing this species.

## CANADA GEESE

Mixed flock of cacklers and Canada geese getting up after feeding – Photo by Ryan Askren



Skagit County boasts the second-highest Canada goose harvest in Washington. This year, the early Canada goose season will occur Sep. 5–10 and offers early season hunting opportunities for hunters in both Skagit (Goose Management Area 1) and Whatcom (Goose Management Area 3; refer to page 24 of the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Regulations](#) pamphlet

for more detailed information about Goose Management Areas). During this early season, bag limits are five (5) per day, with a possession limit of 15. Higher limits are in place because early seasons are used to target and decrease the population of resident birds, while later seasons see an influx of migrant geese.



Regular goose season dates are different for Skagit and Whatcom counties and are based on their respective Goose Management Zone (refer to page 24 of the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Regulations](#) pamphlet). Possession bag limits during this season decrease to four (4) per day, with a possession limit of 12 birds.

The mandatory harvest reporting deadline for Canada geese harvested in Washington is March 20, 2022.

## **LESSER SNOW GEESE**

Snow goose hunting is another mainstay of waterfowl hunting in District 14 and provides a very different alternative to hunting dabbling ducks. New this year is the addition of Whatcom County to Goose Management Area (GMA) 1 and a liberal bag limit of 10 white geese per day and a 30-bird possession limit. This change was made because the population is healthy and stable, which is evaluated using data collected on the breeding grounds and during wintering aerial surveys of the Skagit-Fraser River Delta.

Harvest of snow geese in this area last year increased and is predicted to do so this season. This increase is predicted to continue because recruitment in 2019 was very high, and that cohort is now sexually mature, which might result in another bumper year for juvenile birds in the 2021–22 season. However, this prediction will be heavily influenced by weather conditions and predator abundance on the breeding grounds.



A flock of snow geese erupting from a field in Skagit Valley – Photo by Ryan Askren

Hunters interested in harvesting snow geese should seek to gain access to multiple properties before the season. The early season is the best time to lure geese, particularly juveniles, with decoys. In this area, flocks tend to stay within a several mile home range but will not necessarily return to the same field they were feeding in the previous day. Due to their large numbers and aggressive feeding, they tend to exhaust a food source very quickly. During the beginning of the hunting season, hunting in corn stubble is a popular technique. As the season progresses, snow goose diets diversify, and geese begin to feed in a variety of crop fields, including winter wheat, hay or silage, and potatoes. Snow geese are most abundant on public and private land on Fir Island in District 14. However, geese continue to spend time in areas on either side of Interstate 5, north of Burlington, and the Edison area.

No changes have been made to this year's season structure for white geese (lesser snow, Ross', and blue geese) in GMA 1 except for the addition of Whatcom County to the GMA. Like last year, the 2021–22 season will include a late hunting season for white goose only from Feb. 12–22, 2022. One closure will be observed during the season from Nov. 29 – Dec. 10, to allow for the February hunt.

Hunters will need a federal migratory bird stamp (if over 16 years of age), a small game license, state migratory bird permit, and a special migratory bird authorization with GMA 1 snow goose harvest record card. These must be reported online at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/login> before March 20, 2022.



A flock of snow geese using a Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program site in District 14 – Photo by Rob Wingard

Hunters should note that many WDFW-managed lands will be closed to goose hunting during this late season opportunity (refer to page 24 in the [Washington 2021 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations](#)). All normal regulations regarding plugged shotguns, non-motorized decoys, and bag limits apply during both seasons. The bag limit for the late white geese season is 20 birds, with a possession limit of 60.

Whatcom and Skagit counties hold many waterfowl species that could be confused with snow geese. Several thousand trumpeter and tundra swans reside throughout western parts of District 14 from mid-fall through spring. Waterfowl hunters must be able to tell the difference between mature or juvenile swans and their snow goose counterparts, which can be a challenge for inexperienced hunters. With proper species identification and patience, there should be little confusion between the species. Hunters should review waterfowl identification materials to sharpen their skills before the season begins. Under both state and federal laws, it is illegal to harm swans in Washington state under any circumstances.



## HUNTER ACCESS

Access on private lands for big game hunting opportunities remains limited. Because of experience with theft, vandalism, dumping, and other problems, private industrial timber companies generally do not allow vehicular access. Many limit access to walk-in only, while some do not allow access of any kind. With less hunting pressure, this can result in good hunting opportunities for those willing to use bicycles or hike behind locked gates when access of this type is allowed.

One exception to this is Sierra Pacific Industries, which owns significant private industrial timberlands in Skagit and Whatcom counties. For the 2020–21 season, WDFW has facilitated access on Sierra Pacific properties in GMU 418 for special permit bull elk, some quality black-tailed buck permit holders, and spring bear permit holders.

Weyerhaeuser-Columbia Timberlands Corporation (Weyerhaeuser) has recently sold properties throughout northwest Washington to Hampton Lumber, and at the time of publishing the recreational access policies have not been finalized. This includes inholdings in Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Because much of the land in District 14 is private property, hunters should obtain permission to hunt from landowners and be mindful of where houses, livestock, and outbuildings are situated in relation to the areas where hunting will take place. Portions of District 14 GMUs are under firearm restrictions. Hunters should research land ownership and understand local firearm limitations prior to hunting.

The Private Lands Access Program has negotiated access for hunters on dozens of private properties throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties. For 2021, WDFW staff members have enrolled several sites for deer and elk general season hunting in GMU 407 and are pursuing more access opportunities. The program currently has over 60 sites available on private lands for the upcoming waterfowl season (30 in Skagit County and 29 in Whatcom). These sites offer either open field or blind only hunting, primarily targeting dabbling ducks. While most of these sites are Register to Hunt (note that sites are first-come, first-served), several will be enrolled in the Hunt by Reservation system. The use of a Register to Hunt site is very similar to a Feel Free to Hunt site (first-come, first-served), but you must complete a registration card when you use a site. Properties Enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program become available for public hunting once the agricultural practices are completed for the year. Many sites will not be open for opening day of waterfowl season. More sites may be added to the program before the season starts. Information on hunting access and these new sites will be available online via the [WDFW Hunting Access webpage](#).





A prolific Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program site – Photo by Brad Otto

The Hunt by Reservation program offers a quality hunting experience by limiting the number of days a site is hunted, while guaranteeing the site will be available to whomever books the reservation. To make a reservation on a Hunt by Reservation site, visit the [WDFW Hunting Access Webpage](#), create an account, choose a hunting site in the Hunt by Reservation category, and book your reservation. Reservations can be made beginning at 8 a.m., two weeks prior to the hunt day. A fast internet connection improves your chances of securing a reservation.

Private Lands personnel have worked with landowners to grow forage for wintering waterfowl at some sites to provide additional feed for waterfowl. For those lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, this can generate some excellent hunting.

More information about individual sites, including maps and access rules, as well as the program in general, may be found on the WDFW [Places to go hunting](#) webpage. Waterfowl hunt units on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every unit will be available on opening day.

In addition, the WDFW Private Lands program has developed and enhanced hunting opportunities on WDFW-managed lands. This includes five sites on the South Padilla Bay



(Bayview 1, 2, and 3) and Samish River (Edison East and West) parcels managed by the Skagit Wildlife Area.

## PUBLIC LANDS

Vehicle access by big game hunters to certain Washington Department of Natural Resource (DNR) lands in Skagit and Whatcom counties may be impacted by logging activities during the upcoming hunting season. Access to Van Zandt Dike and Alger Hill Road via Skarrup Road at Parson Creek Road may be restricted by the DNR to manage access during times of active logging. Even if potential closures prohibit the use of vehicles, hunters are allowed access to these areas on foot, mountain bike, or by horse.

USFS lands offer some vehicular access throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties. Many road systems have been closed due to flood-related damage, and some roads are subject to seasonal road closures. USFS is currently in a planning process to decommission or abandon a significant portion of its managed road network on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Ultimately, this will further restrict vehicular access to upper elevation habitats for big game and forest grouse hunting.

Among the WDFW-managed lands in District 14, waterfowl hunters should consider the Headquarters, Island, Samish (also known as the Welts property), and Johnson/Debay's Slough units in Skagit County, and Tennant Lake, BP, Nooksack, and Lake Terrell wildlife area units in Whatcom County. All these sites are managed for waterfowl and provide walk-in and/or boat access, with some blinds available. Hunters can visit the WDFW [Wildlife Areas](#) webpage and search WDFW wildlife areas and units by name, county, and region for more information on each location.

## SKAGIT COUNTY



A standing corn field on the Island Unit – Photo by Alan Bauer

### **ISLAND UNIT**

The Island Unit totals 268 acres, with approximately 140 acres managed for wintering waterfowl forage, including corn, fava beans, millet, mowed areas, and moist-soil plants such as smartweed and yellow nutsedge. Depending on the conditions, over half of the area may be flooded with sheet water, which enhances the area for foraging waterfowl and decoy hunting. Though accessible by boat only, the area is a very popular site for waterfowl hunting. Hunters typically launch from the Skagit Wildlife Area Headquarters Unit boat launch or the Skagit County Parks boat launch under the Conway bridge.

Hunters should be aware that the tide gate has failed at the southern end of the eastern lobe. Efforts are underway to conduct an emergency repair, but it is unclear at this time when it will be completed. This tide gate failure has impacted our standard management and plantings in this zone, and if the repair is not completed before the hunting season, it is possible that water levels will be more variable than hunters have seen in past years. Thus, the ability to control the water levels will not exist and will be more driven by river flows and tidal variations.

### **SAMISH UNIT**

The Samish Unit consists of 410 acres of grass, seasonal wetlands, and agricultural fields. Approximately 193 acres of barley, fava beans, and corn are planted on the site. Funding for the agricultural enhancements on this unit is provided through the Washington State Duck Stamp program. There are 23 shallow ponds and swales, which were developed in partnership with Ducks Unlimited. Water control structures also allow a high percentage of the area to be flooded with sheet water during the hunting season. The Samish Unit is north of Highway 20 and is accessed from the parking lot located on Samish Island Road.



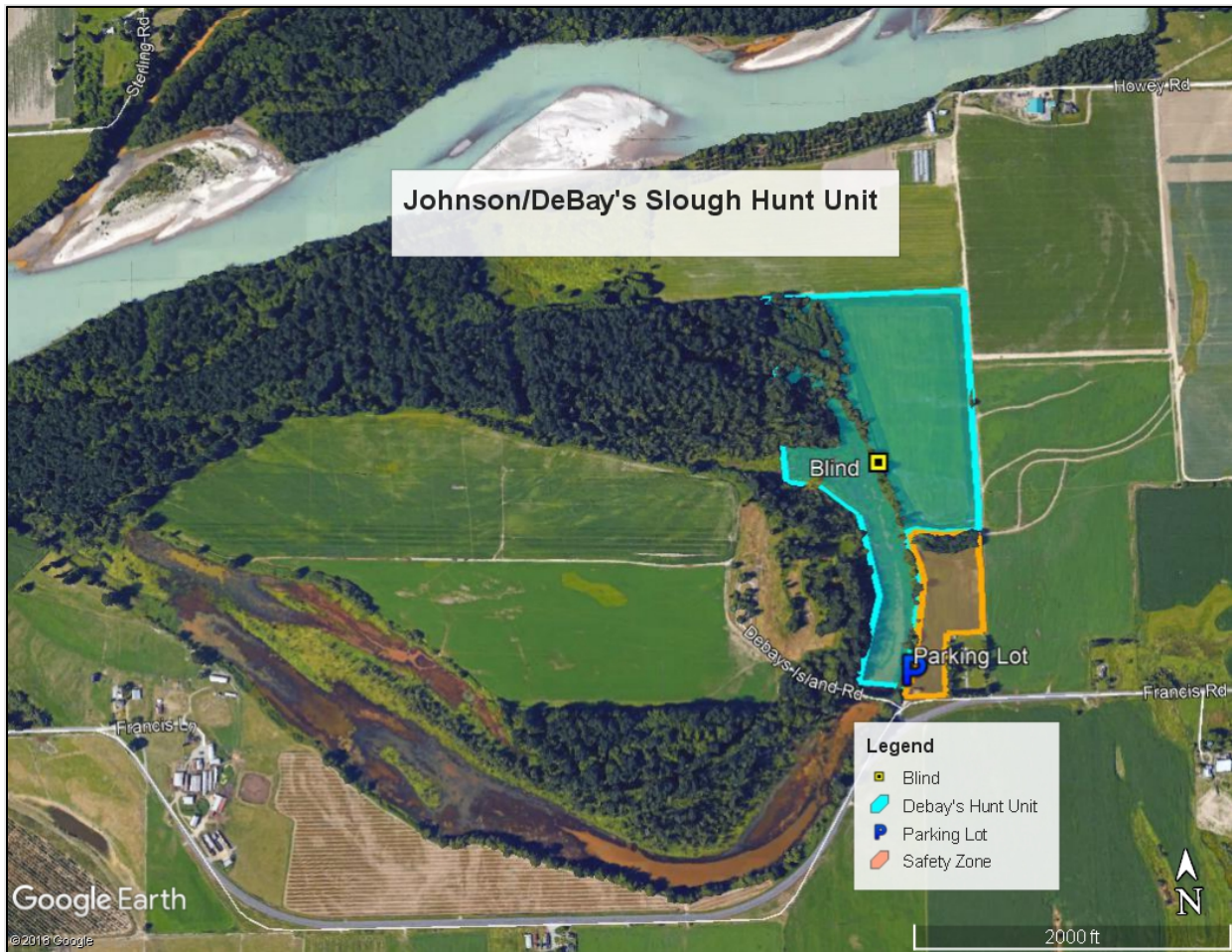
An empty blind at the Samish Unit on a nice fall day – Photo by Alan Bauer

This is a very popular site for waterfowl hunting, and all blinds are available on a first-come, first-served basis. This summer, WDFW will be working with the Northwest chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association to update and install new blinds. In addition to the existing permanent blinds, temporary blinds will be installed that vary from year to year depending on crop plantings and water conditions. Be sure to check the map on site for the most updated information.

### **JOHNSON/DEBAY'S SLOUGH HUNT UNIT**

The Johnson/Debay's Slough Hunt Unit is 23 acres and can be a very productive hunting site. The unit is planted with a mix of barley and corn depending on the year. Due to its small size, the unit can only accommodate four to five hunting parties. Because this is a field hunting site, it should be hunted with decoys. Temporary blinds are installed in various locations depending on the plantings and water conditions. The blinds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.





## SKAGIT BAY ESTUARY

The Skagit Bay estuary starts at the bayfront edge of the delta of the Skagit River (North to South Forks) and extends south towards Stanwood along the north shore of Camano Island or the South Bay area. A large portion of the first-class and second-class tidelands in this area are owned by WDFW (approximately 16,000 acres), with private ownerships interspersed. The property provides prime waterfowl hunting from a boat or by foot during low tides. WDFW manages two Game Reserves in this area, Skagit Bay Delta and Fir Island Farm Reserves.



Fir Island Farm Reserve – Photo by Robert Waddell

The Skagit Bay topography is quite diverse and includes open saltwater, mudflats, low marsh (grass), and a high marsh of cattails, brush, and taller woody vegetation. The entire area is a maze of channels, cut by both tidal action and currents from the various sloughs of the Skagit River delta. Most bay front hunters set up on the edge of the vegetation line, and in the higher marsh, channels, and backwaters. Some prefer to hunt the open water on Skagit Bay.

The entire bay front can offer good shooting, but the most heavily used sites are on the South and North Forks of the Skagit River, downstream from the more popular boat launch access of Skagit Headquarters (WDFW) and Conway Launch (Skagit County). For information about walk in access options, refer to the [Skagit Wildlife Area webpage](#) for more details.





## WHATCOM COUNTY

### **LAKE TERRELL UNIT**

Lake Terrel Unit blinds –  
Photo by Richard Kessler

The Lake Terrell Unit of the Whatcom Wildlife Area is an important and productive waterfowl hunting site. This unit has over 15 permanently constructed hunting blinds on the lake which are all on a first-come, first-served basis.



One ADA-accessible hunting blind (photo below) was constructed by the Whatcom County Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association and is available by calling the Whatcom Wildlife Area Manager, Richard Kessler, at 360-739-3404.

### **TENNANT LAKE UNIT**

The Tennant Lake Unit of the Whatcom Wildlife Area has three waterfowl hunting blinds that are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Hunters can sign in on the day of the hunt at the sign-in box located at the top boat launch to let others know which blind they will be using. This site is reliably productive throughout the hunting season.



A view out of one of the three blinds at Tennant Lake – Photo by Richard Kessler

## **NOOKSACK UNIT**



The Nooksack Unit is located south of Slater Road at the Nooksack River and is heavily used during the waterfowl hunting season. At the north end of the unit is a 120-acre agricultural field that is usually planted in corn and potatoes during the spring. Upon harvest, 10% of the corn crop is left standing to provide winter forage for waterfowl, providing for a high-quality hunting area. Instead of a corn and potato crop, barley was planted this year and will be left standing for waterfowl feed. About

10 acres of corn was planted in strips within the barley. There are several permanent hunting blinds and temporary stand-up blinds located within the farm field, with all blinds on a first-come, first-served basis. New this year is an ADA-accessible blind within a huge constructed pond on the unit. This blind will be available by calling the Whatcom Wildlife Area Manager, Richard Kessler, at 360-739-3404.

## **BP UNIT**

The BP Unit is located north of the BP Refinery off Grandview Road. It has a couple of constructed blinds for waterfowl hunting which are first come, first served with no reservations. Some sheet water hunting in fields are also available after the pheasant hunting season is over.



Photos by Richard Kessler



2021

BRYAN L. MURPHIE, Wildlife Biologist



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



# **DISTRICT 15 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Mason, Kitsap, and East Jefferson counties

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## DISTRICT 15 GENERAL OVERVIEW

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

The most hunted landscape in District 15 is industrial forestland, commonly characterized by multi-aged forests consisting primarily of Douglas fir and red alder. However, hunting opportunities exist from alpine meadows and mountain tops above timberline to marine estuaries at sea level in Hood Canal and Puget Sound.

A range of hunting opportunities are available in District 15, including elk, deer, bear, cougar, waterfowl, and grouse. A variety of small game species like rabbit, quail, coyote, and bobcat are also present. Table 1 shows estimates of harvest for most game species in District 15 during the 2020 hunting season and compares those estimates to the 2019 season and the five-year average. Find specific information on harvest trends in the appropriate species section of this document.

Species	Harvest		
	5-year avg.	2019	2020
Elk	40	41	32
Deer	1,820	1,612	1,845
Bear	77	117	97
Cougar	8	7	n/a
Ducks	4,588	3,134	n/a
Canada Goose	241	196	n/a
Snipe	81	11	n/a
Grouse	2,725	2,326	n/a
Mourning Dove	37	51	n/a
Quail	144	0	n/a
Snowshoe Hare	5	0	n/a
Cottontail Rabbit	65	110	n/a

**Table 1.** Estimates of the 2019, 2020\*, and 5-year average annual harvest for most game species hunted in District 15 are shown. Waterfowl and small-game harvest totals were tabulated from all of Mason, Kitsap, and Jefferson counties. For cougar, only general hunting season harvest is shown. \*2020 harvest data was not available for some species at time of printing this report.

## ELK

## GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS



All elk in District 15 are Roosevelt elk. Only three GMUs, 621, 636, and 651, offer reliable elk hunting opportunities. There are no known elk herds currently in GMUs 627 or 633, but WDFW occasionally receives reports of elk sightings in these units. Elk in GMU 624 occur mostly near the town of Sequim, where harvest is conducted through the conflict section and by master hunter permit. Periodically, WDFW receives reports of an elk or two elsewhere in this unit, but nothing that suggests a reliable elk hunting opportunity exists away from the Sequim herd.

As for GMUs, 621, 636, and 651, the quality of elk hunting is fair to good. These units are usually within the targeted range for bull to cow ratios but are below population objectives in all three GMUs. There are at least 250 elk in GMU 621 and 200 elk in GMU 636. GMU 651 has more than 300 elk. Although WDFW is currently below objectives in the number of elk across these GMUs, individual herds that primarily occupy private agricultural lands are likely at or above thresholds for elk damage/conflict.

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

### WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

It depends. If you are looking for a general season hunt and have the resources to buy a timberland access permit, then GMU 651 is your choice in District 15. If you are looking for a special permit bull hunt and don't mind navigating the intricacies of hunting around small private land pieces, you might select GMU 621. If you are looking for a special permit bull elk hunt that has only a few permits and decent public land hunting, then you might choose GMU 636.

Elk hunting in GMU 621 is by special bull permit only. In 2021, there are eight rifle permits, four archery permits, and three muzzleloader permits available. Each permit season provides additional days to hunt compared to the general season. Hunters should look for elk along the main river drainages that flow into Hood Canal, including the Dosewallips, Duckabush, Hamma

Hamma, and North Fork Skokomish Rivers. The Lilliwaup Swamp area of Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed land provides decent public land hunting. Elk in the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers remain in the lower river valleys and on adjacent valley ridges year-round or will migrate to summer range in Olympic National Park. Recently, some elk from the Duckabush herd have been moving southward to new areas between the Hamma Hamma and Duckabush Rivers. The Hamma Hamma group spends most of the year on land that the Hama Hama Company owns.. Elk in the Lilliwaup are generally non-migratory and spend the year in and around Lilliwaup Swamp. In the past, WDFW has observed elk movement from Lilliwaup Swamp northward into the North Fork Skokomish drainage, where a different group of elk is known to reside. This group uses the North Fork Skokomish River valley in Olympic National Park above Lake Cushman, often wintering near the northern end of the lake before migrating to summer range in the Mount Skokomish Wilderness. Elk also move between the upper Wynoochee River drainage and the North Fork Skokomish, which brings us to GMU 636.

GMU 636 is open to hunting by special bull permit only. In 2021, there are four rifle permits, three archery permits, and one muzzleloader permit available. Each permit season provides additional days to hunt compared to the general season. Elk in GMU 636 reside in the upper Wynoochee River valley around Lake Wynoochee, the Skokomish River valley, and near the town of Matlock. Elk around Matlock and on the lower stretch of the South Fork Skokomish are primarily non-migratory. In the upper Wynoochee Valley, we've recorded elk movements into Olympic National Park during the summer, and occasionally elk over-winter in the North or South Fork Skokomish River valleys. WDFW has observed from this area moving as far south as the WDFW forage fields along the Wynoochee River.

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

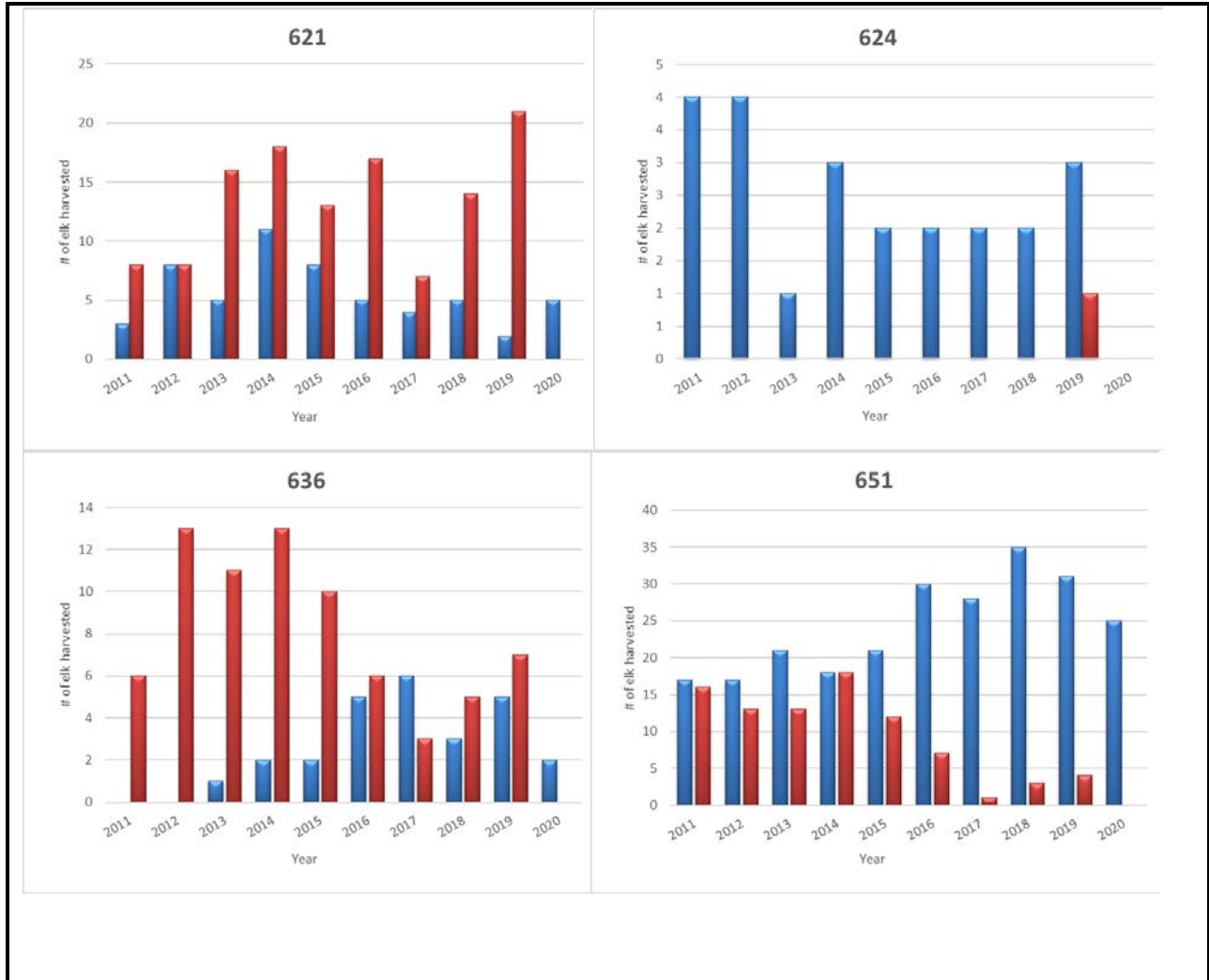
Tribal hunting occurs in District 15; often accounting for 50% or more of the total elk harvest in District 15 (see Figure 1 below). Thus, actual hunting pressure in these units is greater and hunters looking for an elk in any of these GMUs could encounter tribal hunters.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

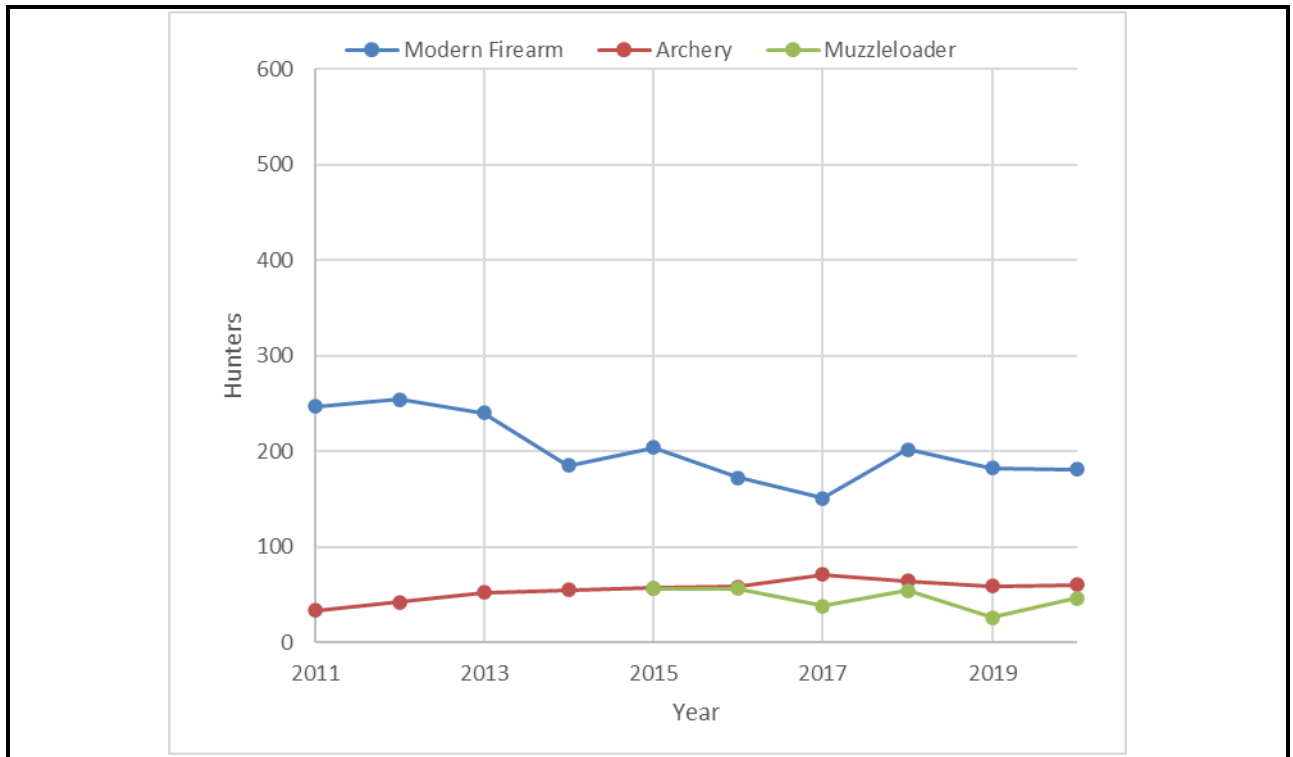
Elk and hunter numbers are not likely to fluctuate dramatically between years. Hunter success data for GMUs 621 and 636 can be a little misleading because of the small number of permits available. Five-year averages by weapon type in GMU 621 are 50% for archery, 45% for muzzleloaders, and 58% for modern firearm hunters. In GMU 636, muzzleloader hunters report the highest success at 80%, followed by rifle hunters at 57%, and archery hunters at 48%.

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

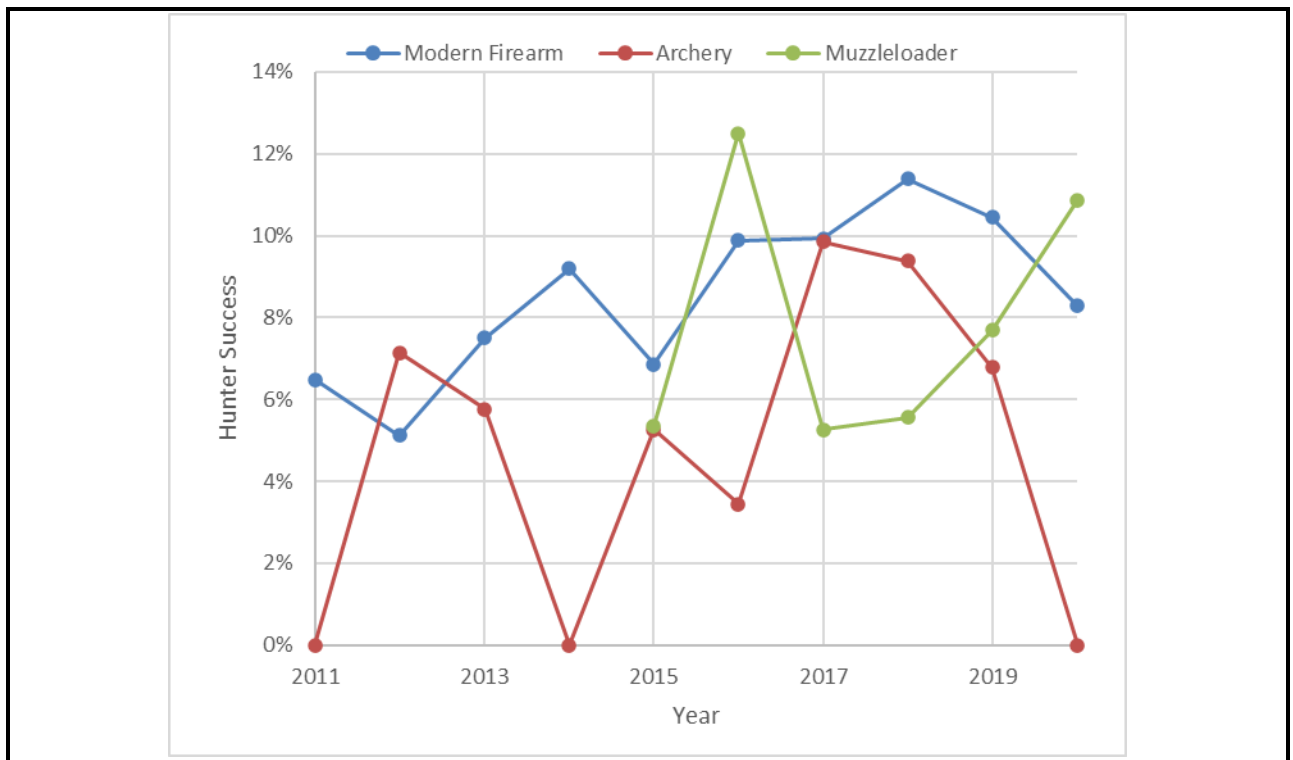
The number of elk harvested in GMUs 621, 624, 636, and 651 is shown in Figure 1, while general season trend data for hunter numbers and success in GMU 651 is presented in Figures 2 and 3. Cow harvest totals include master hunter permit harvest conducted to reduce elk damage to agricultural crops, but not other elk removals that may occur to reduce damage.



**Figure 1.** Total State (blue) and Tribal (red) elk harvest in GMUs 621, 624, 636, and 651 during 2011–2020. Tribal harvest data for 2020 was not available at time of writing this report.



**Figure 2.** Elk hunter numbers during the general hunting seasons in GMU 651, 2011–2020.



**Figure 3.** Elk Hunter success rates during general hunting seasons in GMU 651, 2011–2020.



## **ELK AREAS**

There are two elk areas in District 15: Elk Area 6061 (Twin Satsop) and Elk Area 6071 (Dungeness). WDFW established Elk Area 6061 primarily to help address chronic elk damage issues and created Elk Area 6071 to limit elk hunting for safety reasons.

Current hunting regulations allow the harvest of three-point minimum bull or antlerless elk during the general early archery season in Elk Area 6061, while elk hunting in Elk Area 6071 is through the master hunter program on a limited basis.

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

Since 2008, WDFW has received increased reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range, including within the Olympic elk herd area. While elk are susceptible to many conditions that result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and western Lewis counties. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area.

All of District 15 falls within the Olympic elk herd range. TAHD is most prevalent among elk on the southern end of the Olympic Peninsula, however recent detections on the northern end confirm the disease is spreading to other portions of the Olympic elk herd range. WDFW has confirmed the presence of TAHD from elk sampled in GMUs 603, 607, 621, 624, 636, 638, 648, and 651.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

## HOW HUNTERS CAN HELP:

In 2021, WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program to encourage westside (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. This program aims to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in western Washington. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in western Washington with season dates of Sept. 1 – Dec. 31 will be awarded. Additionally, all participants will receive a custom, waterproof license holder.

- Harvest a limping elk from any 400, 500, 600 series GMUs
- Turn in your elk hooves along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in western Washington
- Report elk: Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form.
- Clean shoes and tires: Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information see WDFW's webpage on [TAHD](#). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.

## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

The number of hunting permits in GMUs 621 and 636 went up slightly in 2021 compared to 2020. All of these permit hunts include additional days for each weapon type. General season dates in 2021 will be similar to 2020.

## DEER

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

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



Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 15. Instead, the Department uses trends in harvest, hunter success, and harvest per unit effort as surrogates to a formal index or estimate of population size. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size and the agency is currently evaluating new approaches to monitoring black-tailed deer populations independent of harvest data.

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

### WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

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

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

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

It is uncommon for deer populations to fluctuate dramatically from year to year, especially in District 15, where severe winter weather resulting in large die-offs rarely occurs. Hunter numbers also typically do not change dramatically from one year to the next, unless there is a dramatic shift in hunting regulations or access. Consequently, the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons available are recent trends in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success.

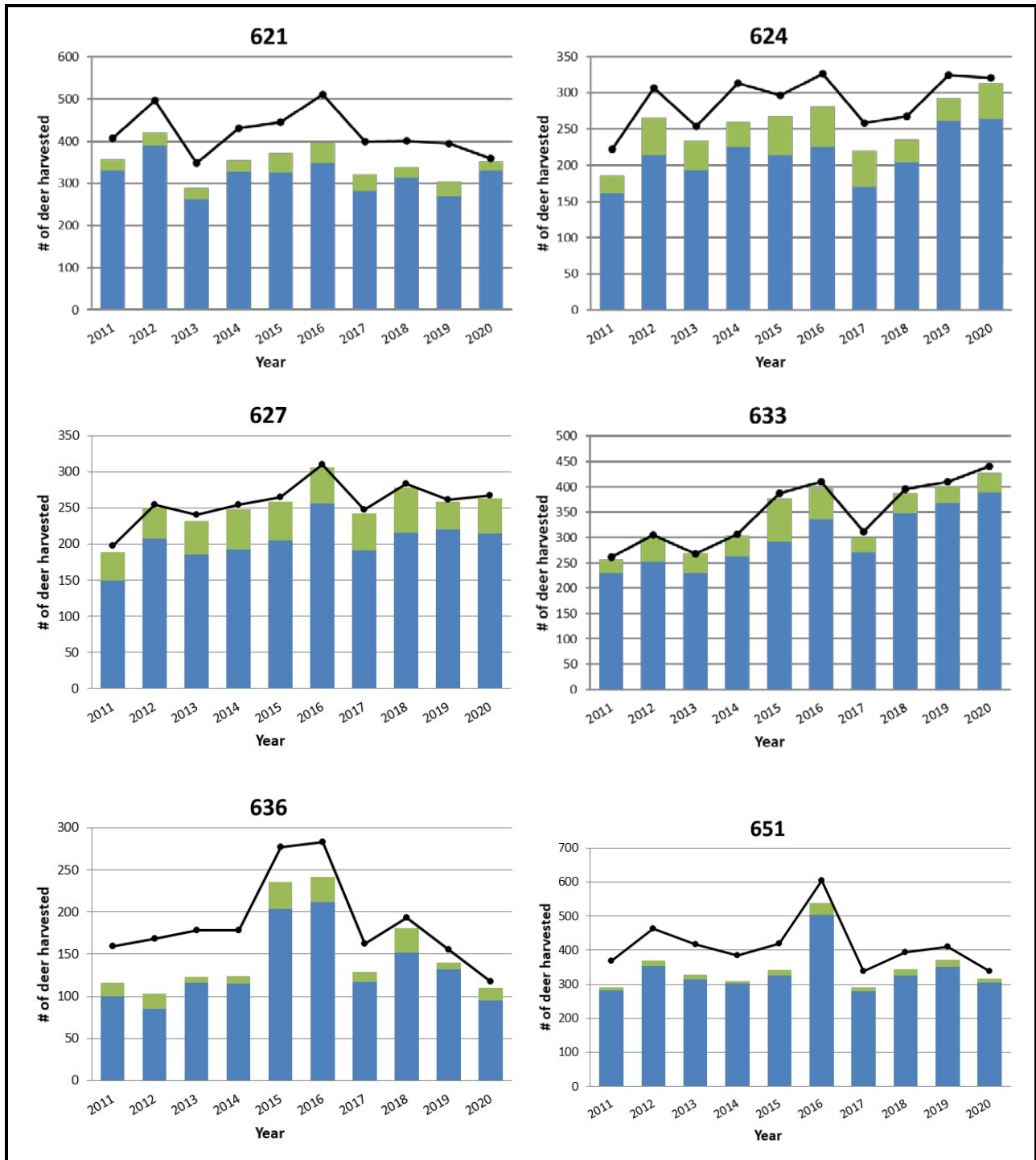
Figures 4 through 6 provide trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where they want to hunt in District 15, as well as what they can expect to encounter with regard to hunter success and hunter numbers.

### **DEER AREAS**

WDFW established Deer Area 6020 in GMU 624 primarily to aid in addressing chronic damage issues. This GMU is open to general season any deer harvest for all three weapon-type user groups. Additionally, 40 second deer permits are available for archery hunters in this area.

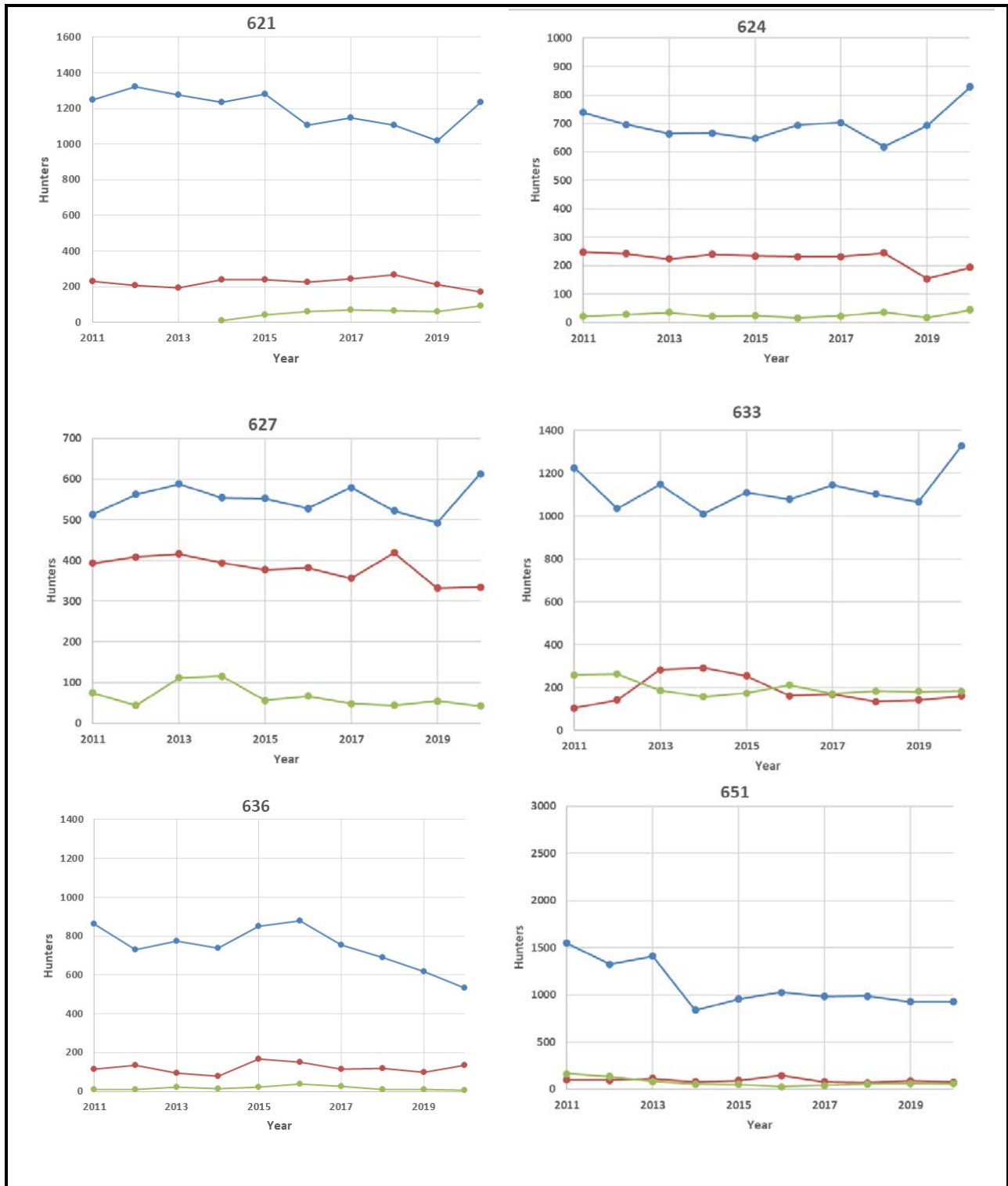
### **NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

There are very few changes anticipated for deer hunting in District 15, although WDFW did adjust permit levels for some hunts.

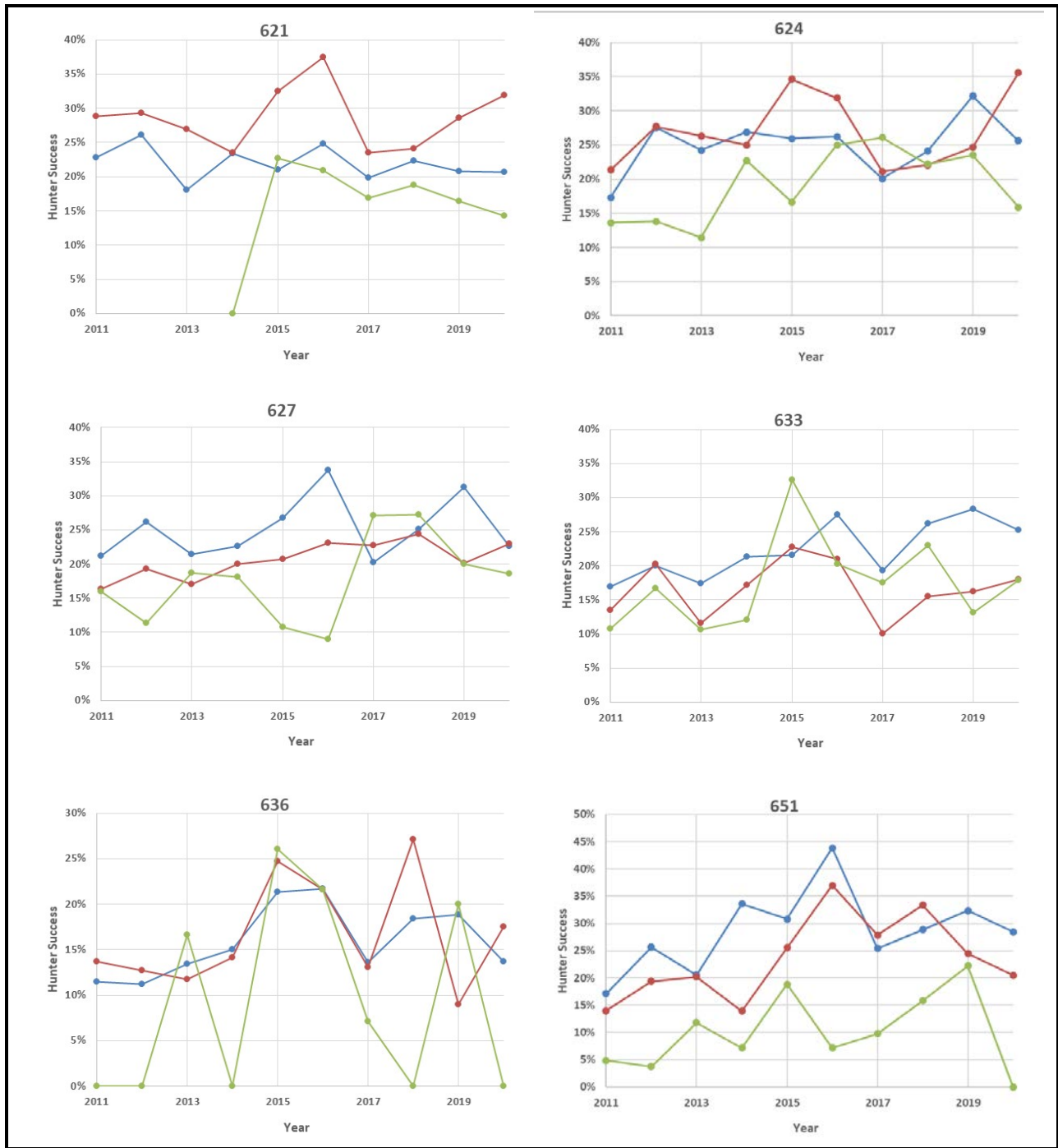


**Figure 4.** Trends in the total number of buck (blue) and antlerless (green) deer harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2011–2020. Total deer harvest (black line) includes harvest from state general and permit seasons plus tribal harvest. Tribal harvest was not available for 2020 season at the time this report was written.





**Figure 5.** Trends in hunter numbers during general modern firearm (blue), archery (red), and muzzleloader (green) deer seasons in District 15, 2011–2020.



**Figure 6.** Trends in hunter success rates during general modern firearm (blue), archery (red), and muzzleloader (green) deer seasons in District 15, 2011–2020.

## BEAR

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

Black bears occur throughout District 15, but population densities vary among GMUs. The best opportunities to harvest a black bear likely occur in GMUs 621, 633, and 636.

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

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

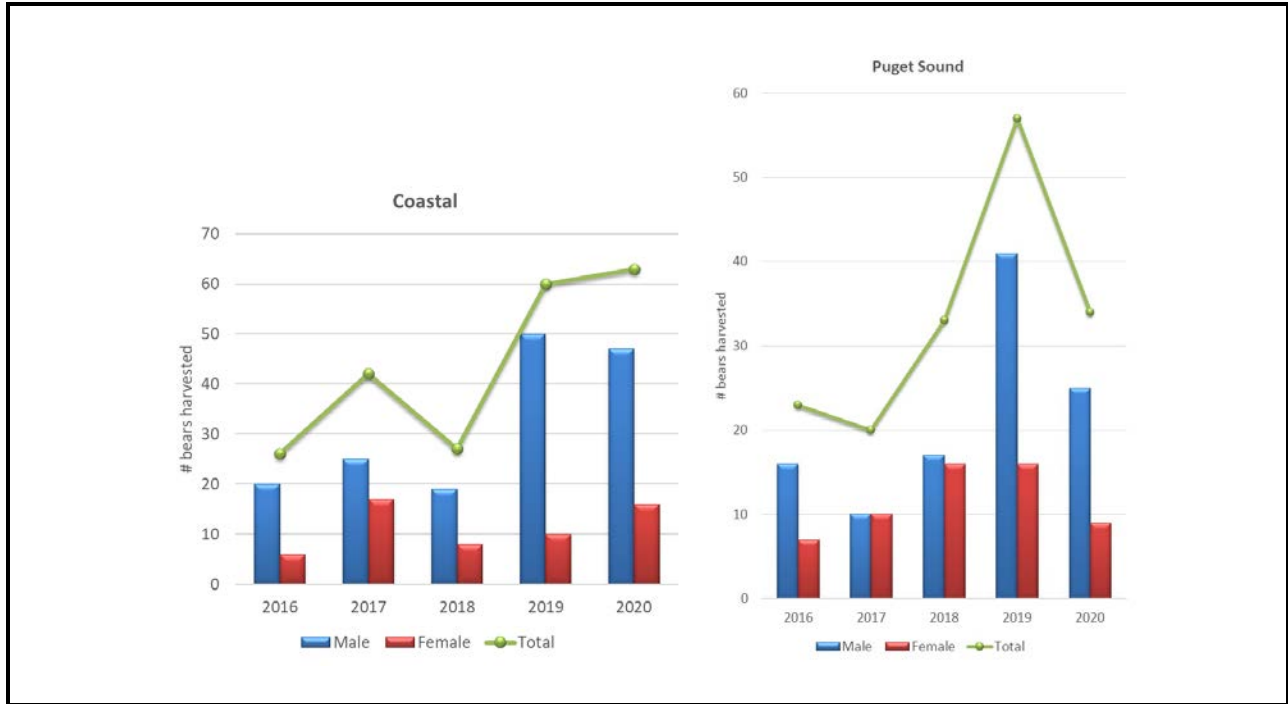
Most bear harvest in District 15 comes from hunters killing a bear opportunistically while hunting other species like deer and elk, although some hunters do specifically hunt bears. Hunter success in District 15 has averaged 5% in the Coastal BBMU and 6% in the Puget Sound BBMU over the last five years.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

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

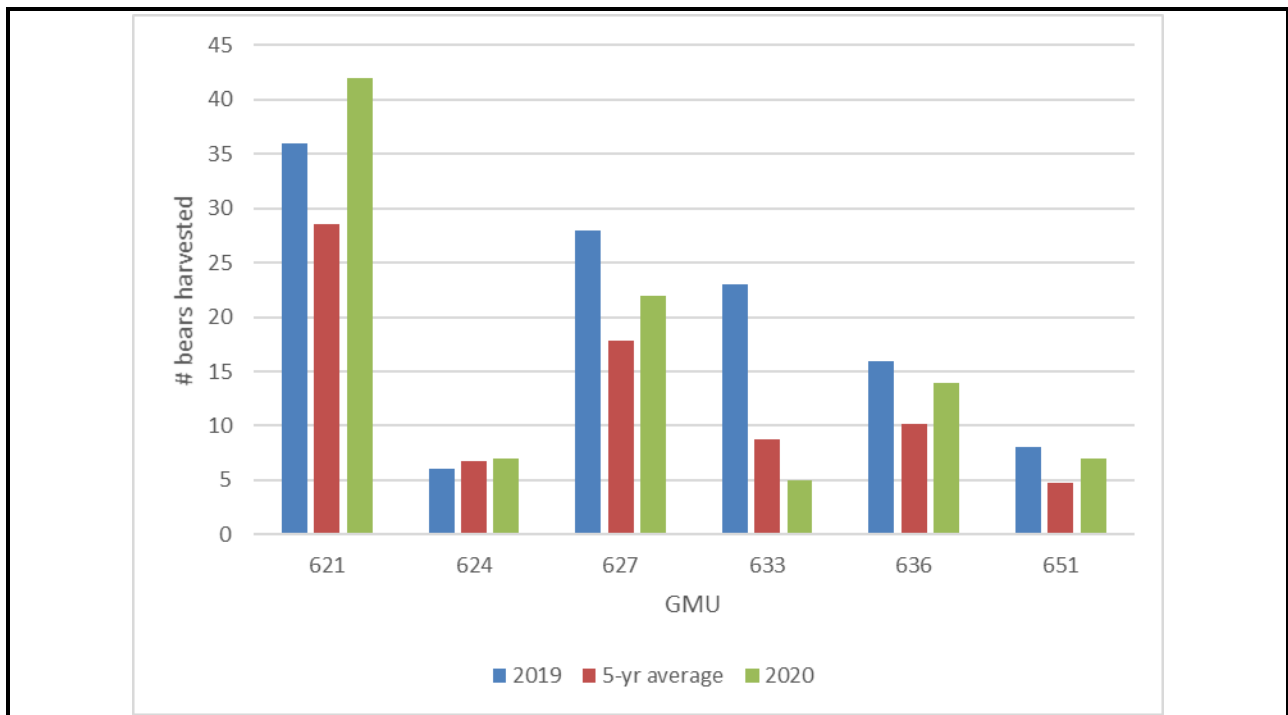
GMUs 621 and 636 offer the most accessible public land in the District and hunting the higher-elevation huckleberry patches could be a good strategy.

### NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

There are no notable changes expected for the 2021 bear hunting season in District 15.



**Figure 7.** Trends in the number of male and female black bears and total number of bears harvested during the general bear season in District 15, 2016–2020. Bears removed for other reasons are not included.



**Figure 8.** The number of bears harvested in each GMU during the 2019 and 2020 seasons in District 15. The five-year average for total number of bears harvested in each GMU is also included.

## COUGAR

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

Cougars occur throughout District 15 and the Department structures hunting seasons to maintain a stable cougar population. Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed to a standardized approach for establishing harvest guidelines based on habitat availability and a standard general season. The Department uses this approach to have a longer season, without any weapon restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline.

WDFW established a series of hunt areas with standard early season dates of Sept. 1 through Dec. 31 and late season dates from Jan. 1 to Apr. 30. The late season is dependent upon whether harvest is above or below the harvest guideline. After Jan. 1, WDFW may close any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline for that unit. Anyone planning to hunt cougar after Jan. 1 should confirm the cougar season is open in the desired hunting area. Harvest guidelines can be found in the Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet. General season cougar harvest was eight in 2019/20 (Table 2). For more information related to the new harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the WDFW website.

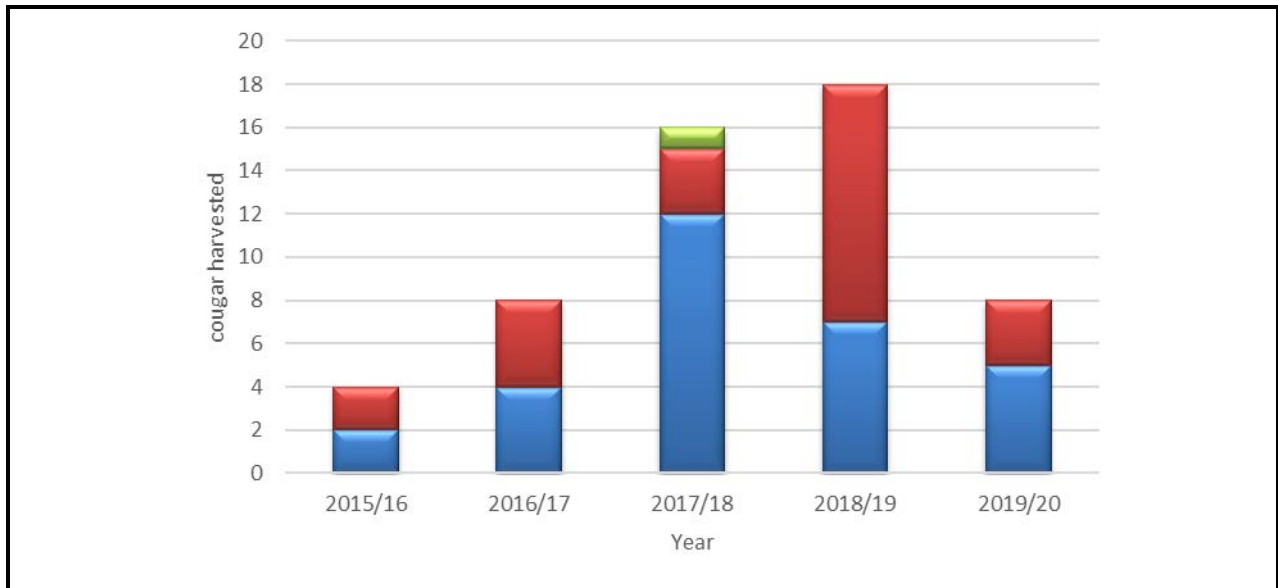
Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline 2019	2019-2020 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	0
642, 648, 651	6-8	4
621, 624, 627, 633	None	4

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

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

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





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

## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Hunting season and harvest guidelines are similar to 2020.

## MOUNTAIN GOAT

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



The Klahhane Club, a sportsman’s group in Port Angeles, introduced mountain goats into the Olympic Mountain range prior to the establishment of the Olympic National Park (ONP) in the 1920s (Houston et al. 1994). Mountain goats thrived in the Olympic range, rapidly expanding their distribution and abundance to more than 1,000 goats by 1983. Concerns over the negative effect of an abundant introduced goat population on high-elevation endemic plants and soil erosion, prompted the Olympic National Park to relocate 407 goats to other ranges outside the Olympics

in the early 1980s (National Park Service, 1995). A mountain goat hunt outside ONP ran from

1983 until 1997, and hunters harvested 119 goats. WDFW closed the Olympic goat hunt in 1997.

The population rebounded from these management actions and were expanding their range and abundance to wilderness areas outside the ONP by 2014. WDFW established a new permit hunt in 2014. This permit hunt ran from 2014 until 2018 and hunters harvested 15 fifteen goats. The Department suspended the hunt during a joint relocation effort that Olympic National Park, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and DFW led to remove mountain goats from the Olympics, while augmenting the Cascade mountain goat population. Other management actions include lethal removal of goats, which is ongoing. This effort has removed more than 400 goats.

These permit hunts should be viewed as management hunts, with two principal objectives being to provide recreational hunting opportunity and to reduce goat numbers. We estimate fewer than 100 goats remain in the hunt area.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

As with any mountain goat hunt, hunters can expect rugged, strenuous hunting conditions as they pursue goats in the designated Olympic goat hunt unit. There are very few maintained trails to access many of the areas where mountain goats can be found in this unit, so hunters should be prepared to navigate challenging terrain. For some areas, the hunt boundary transects right across the mountain top, and goats can easily move between Olympic National Park, where hunting is not allowed, and the permit hunt area. WDFW would recommend hunters focus efforts near Mount Ellinor, Mount Washington, Mount Pershing, Jefferson Peak, or the Brothers. Of course, hunters might find mountain goats in other areas of the goat unit, so you might consider the above as a starting point for scouting. WDFW has recorded very few goat sightings north of Mount Constance in the Buckhorn during the most recent surveys.

Olympic National Park will be conducting aerial lethal removal of goats during July and August 2021. Its efforts will avoid most of the permit hunt area except those areas north of the Mount Constance.

### **NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

This permit hunt reopens in 2021 with three permit hunt periods, 25 total permits, a two-goat limit, and an expanded hunt area.

## DUCKS

### COMMON SPECIES

Several species of ducks use District 15. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, and common goldeneye, are also present on fresh and salt water. Hunters can locate nesting wood ducks throughout the district early in the season and can provide a unique hunting opportunity.



Sea ducks, including scoters, Barrow's goldeneye, long-tailed ducks, canvasbacks, and harlequin ducks inhabit Hood Canal and other saltwater areas.

### POPULATION STATUS

Pacific Flyway waterfowl populations have remained strong for several years, allowing liberal seasons for many species. Wintering duck populations in Washington usually represent 10% or more of the total flyway population. Survey efforts in 2020 were curtailed due to restrictions to support public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

District 15 hunters can expect similar hunting opportunities during the 2021 season. As in recent years, hunter success is often dependent on rainfall and storm events during the waterfowl season. A lack of flooded farm fields can sharply reduce hunting opportunities in District 15. Alternatively, the marine waters of Hood Canal can offer some good waterfowl hunting opportunities.

### PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Public hunting access exists at the mouths of the Duckabush, Quilcene, and Union rivers. Many of the undeveloped lakes and marshes on the Tahuya Peninsula's DNR-managed land offer walk-in hunting opportunities for mallards, ringnecks, and scaup.

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

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

## GEESE

### COMMON SPECIES

Hunters are most likely to find western, lesser, Taverner's, and cackler Canada geese in District 15. White-fronted and, occasionally, snow geese can also be encountered.

### POPULATION STATUS

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

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

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

### PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Same as those listed under ducks.

## FOREST GROUSE

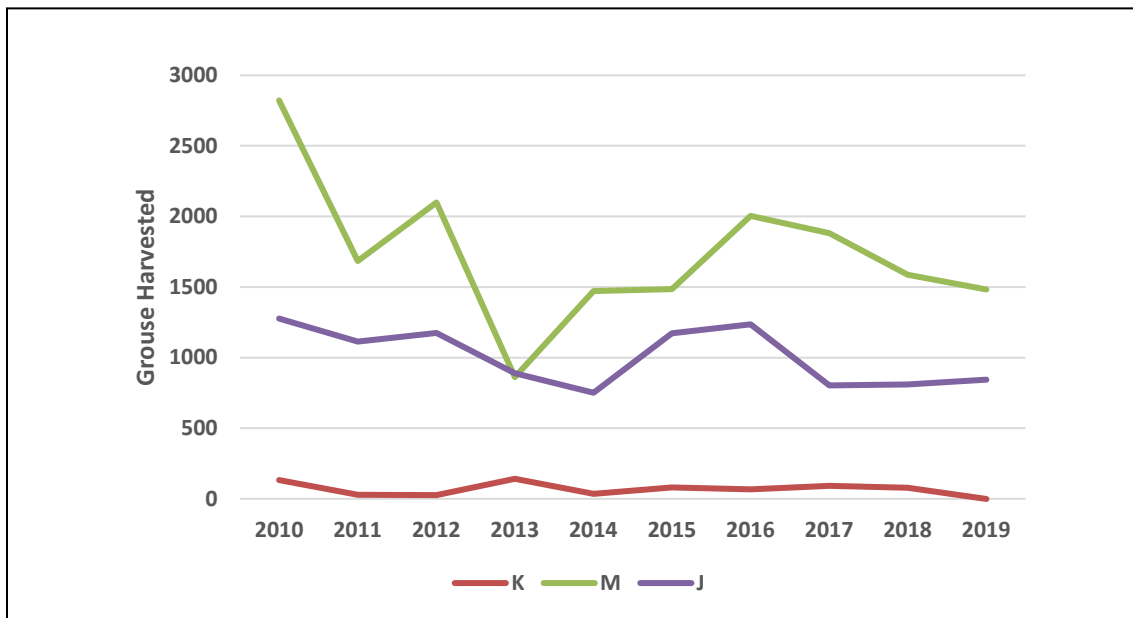
### GENERAL INFORMATION AND POPULATION STATUS

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

WDFW does not conduct any standardized or formal surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 15.

## HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

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



**Figure 10.** The number of grouse harvested in Jefferson, Kitsap, and Mason Counties during 2010 – 2019. 2020 grouse harvest data was not available at the time this report was completed.

## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

The opening date for the grouse season changes from Sept. 1 to Sept. 15 in 2021.

### PHEASANTS

District 15 has no viable populations of wild pheasants. All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 15 are associated with the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program. This program provides an upland bird hunting opportunity and encourages participation from young and older-aged hunters. Each year, WDFW releases 30,000 to 40,000 pheasants at 25 sites, and three of those sites (Hunter Farms, Belfair, and the Mason Lake (Sgt. Mak) site) are in District 15. Hunters can find release site locations and other details on the WDFW [website](#) or websites associated with the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, or at the Peninsula Bird Hunters Association.

### QUAIL



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

## TURKEYS

Although turkeys are occasionally seen, there are no established turkey populations in District 15. Introduction programs were discontinued because populations did not appear to expand, and habitat suitability models indicated District 15 habitats were not likely to support viable turkey populations. Occasionally, single birds are spotted, but this district cannot be recommended as a place to bag a turkey.

## BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

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

### POPULATION STATUS

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

### HARVEST TRENDS

Although band-tailed pigeon harvest statewide is down from 2009 harvest levels, since 2015 the trend has been increasing. The number of band-tailed pigeon hunters continues a downward trend. In District 15, harvest is highest in Mason County, followed by Jefferson County (includes east and west Jefferson County), and Kitsap County where hunters report little to no harvest.

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

Often, band-tailed pigeons congregate in areas with red elderberry, which are typically most abundant in five to ten-year-old clear cuts. Hunting can be exceptionally good in these areas. The key to harvesting band-tailed pigeons is scouting because it is hard to predict which clear cuts,

they will be using during the hunting season. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites and then sit patiently and wait for shooting opportunities as they occur.

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

### **SPECIAL REGULATIONS**

Hunters need a small game license, state migratory bird permit, and migratory bird authorization with band-tailed pigeon harvest record card to hunt. Hunters will have a nine-day season from Sept. 15-23. Hunters should review the 2020 Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet to confirm season dates, harvest reporting, and any other regulation changes.

## **OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES**

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

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU**

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

Information provided is a brief description of major landowners and the level of motorized access a hunter can expect. Access rules change through the seasons and vary by year. Contact the WDFW Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628) or the specific landowner with questions related to recreational access. Although other companies own land in District 15, the two primary private timberland companies with land in District 15 are Green Diamond Resources and Rayonier. Rayonier acquired lands in District 15 formerly owned by Pope Resources Company in 2020. New for 2021, Rayonier may require access permits to recreate on their lands in Kitsap, Mason and Jefferson Counties. Hunters should visit their website for more

information on accessing these lands. Manke, Port Blakely, Hama Hama are also timber companies with land in District 15.

### **GMU 621 (Olympic)**

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

### **GMU 624 (Coyle)**

Other than the resident elk herd in the Sequim area, the Coyle Unit is usually considered a deer area. Although there are scattered timberlands publicly owned by DNR, most are privately owned. The largest property manager is Rayonier, which acquired land from Olympic Resource Management, a division of Pope Resources Company, in 2020. Although some DNR and private mainlines may be open to motor vehicles, most hunting access is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicle. New in 2021, Rayonier may require an access permit to hunt portions of those lands formerly owned by Pope Resources; we advise hunters to check with Rayonier about requirements to hunt their lands in this GMU.

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

The Kitsap Unit is a highly developed area, with private property throughout. However, there is still hunting opportunity on forestlands. DNR owns a considerable amount of land in the western part of the unit. Rayonier and Green Diamond Resource Company also have holdings here. Whether state or private, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles, except that DNR allows all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on designated trails on some of its land in this unit. New in 2021, Rayonier may require an access permit to hunt portions of those lands formerly owned by Pope Resources; we advise hunters to check with Rayonier about requirements to hunt their lands in this GMU.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES**

- **WA Department of Natural Resources – Olympic Region**  
[olympic.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:olympic.region@dnr.wa.gov)  
360-374-2800  
411 Tillicum Lane, Forks, WA 98331-9271
- **WA Department of Natural Resources – South Puget Sound Region**  
[southpuget.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:southpuget.region@dnr.wa.gov)  
360-825-1631  
950 Farman Ave. N., Enumclaw, WA 98022-9282
- **US Forest Service – Hood Canal Ranger District – Quilcene**  
(360) 765-2200  
295142 Highway 101 S., P.O. Box 280, Quilcene, WA 98376

## **PRIVATE TIMBERLANDS**

- **Green Diamond Resources**  
Recreation Email: [recreation@greendiamond.com](mailto:recreation@greendiamond.com)
- **Rayonier**  
Recreation Phone Number: 1-855-729-4868  
Recreation Email: [Hunting@Rayonier.com](mailto:Hunting@Rayonier.com)

## **PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM**

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

## ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

Most GMUs in District 15 are a checkerboard of ownerships and sometimes it can be extremely difficult to determine who owns the land where a hunter wishes to hunt. Some online tools and resources can provide valuable information to help solve the landowner puzzle. The following is a list of a few resources available to the public. Parcel ownership can also be accessed from the county assessor's webpage and viewing the parcel maps. Alternatively, private companies found online offer other map products.

### **WDFW's Hunting Regulations Web Map**

WDFW's Hunting Regulations web map provides hunters with a great interactive tool for identifying hunting seasons and locating tracts of public land within each GMU. Access from WDFW's hunting website at [geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/](http://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/).

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

The best source for identifying the specific location of public lands is DNR PLQ maps, which hunters can buy for less than \$10 on DNR's website.

### **United States Forest Service**

Mapping tools and information can be found on the USFS website.



2021

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District Wildlife Biologist

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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



## **DISTRICT 16 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Clallam and west Jefferson counties

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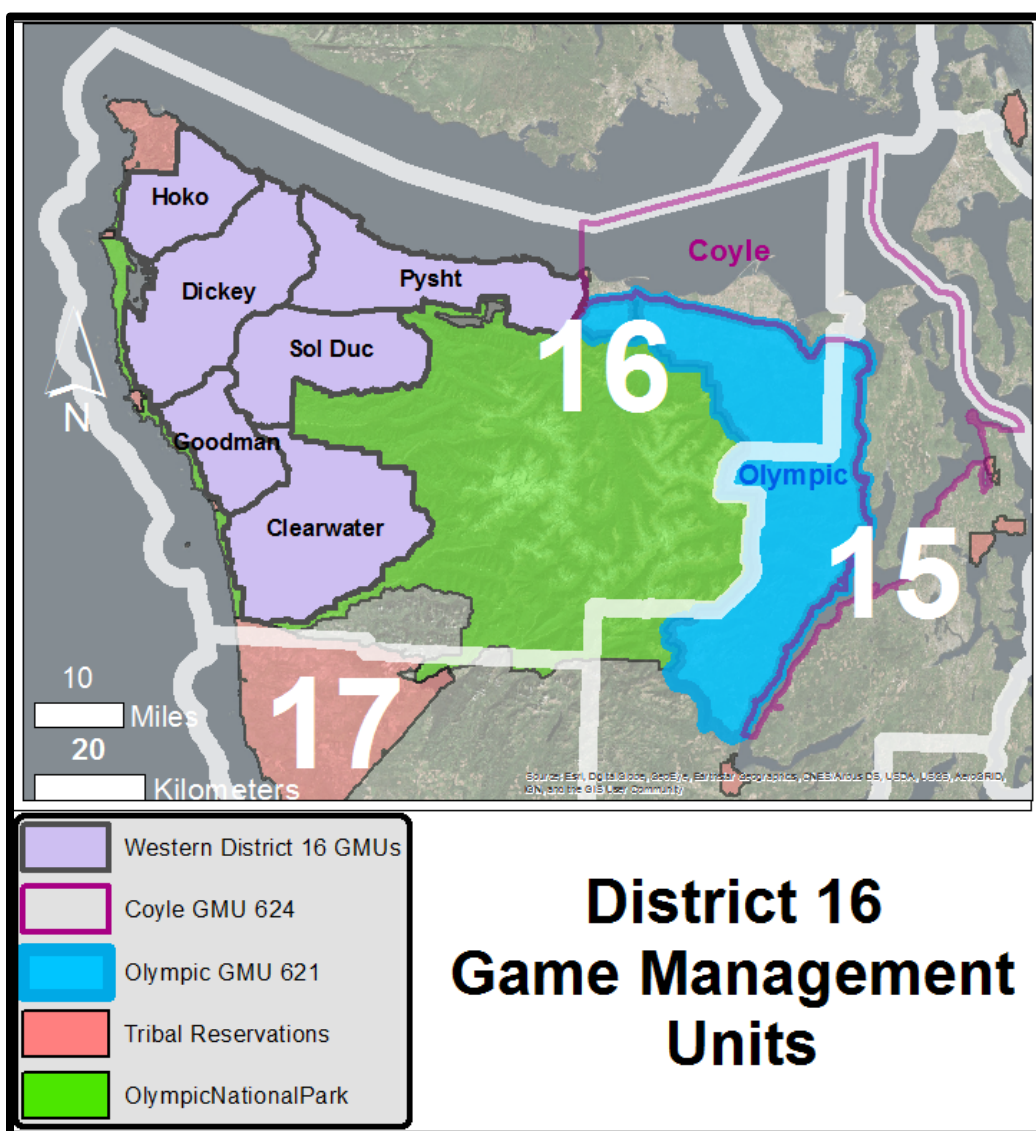
District Biologists Shelly Ament and Anita McMillan collaring a deer fawn.



## DISTRICT 16 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 16 includes Clallam and western Jefferson counties on the Olympic Peninsula (Figure 1). Eight Game Management Units (GMUs) are within District 16. Two eastern GMUs, Coyle GMU 624 and Olympic GMU 621, extend into eastern Jefferson County, which is within District 15. See the District 17 Hunting Prospects for information on Matheny GMU 618.

Each GMU in District 16 has its own unique mix of land ownerships: private residential, private agricultural, private forest industrial, state, and federal forest, and park lands. Higher-elevation forest lands are primarily in public ownership: U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Olympic National Park (ONP). Lower elevation foothills are generally private industrial forest lands and Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed lands.



**Figure 1.** District 16 GMUs. Coyle and Olympic GMUs extend into District 15.



**Table 1.** District 16 Deer and Elk Annual Harvest

<b>District 16* Deer &amp; Elk Annual Harvest</b>							
<b>Species</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
Elk - Bulls Total		323	306	213	213	286	213
Elk - Bulls State	201	226	229	135	141	184	123
Elk - Bulls Tribal		97	77	75	72	101	90
Elk - Antlerless Total		70	50	27	44	29	27
Elk - Antlerless State	8	28	26	2	3	4	2
Elk - Antlerless Tribal		42	24	25	41	25	25
Deer - Bucks Total		1115	967	872	1115	982	987
Deer - Bucks State	995	1000	867	775	993	884	881
Deer - Bucks Tribal		115	100	97	122	98	106
Deer - Antlerless Total		124	97	149	189	150	130
Deer - Antlerless State	85	78	66	117	138	115	84
Deer - Antlerless Tribal		46	31	32	51	35	46
*Includes GMU 601, 602, 603, 607, 612, 615, 621, 624 (GMU 621 & 624 are in both District 15 & 16)							

**Table 2.** District 16 Game Species Annual Harvest (2019 and 2020 small game data not readily delineated by District)

<b>District 16 Game Species Annual Harvest</b>							
<b>Species</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
BEAR*	119	152	94	101	87	66	66
COUGAR	11	5	12	2	8	5	2
DUCKS (Clallam & Jefferson Co)			6,999	6057	11,540	8093	7253
GEESE - September (early season)			154	149	272	97	136
GEESE (late season)			318	183	713	355	331
BRANT - Clallam County			89	90	Closed	Closed	Closed
FOREST GROUSE (Clallam & Jefferson Co)			2,958	2590	4374	4794	5356
MOURNING DOVE (Clallam & Jefferson Co)			36	0	54	67	11
QUAIL (Clallam & Jefferson Co)			31	150	236	164	500
SNIPE			0	0	45	4	0
HARE/RABBIT (Clallam & Jefferson Co)			71	54	60	45	54
* Includes GMU 601, 602, 603, 607, 612, 615, 621, 624 (harvest in entire GMU, even portion in District 15)							



## **EAST DISTRICT 16**

The eastern portion of the district is the Dungeness Basin (western GMU 624 Coyle and northern portion of GMU 621 Olympic). The Dungeness watershed offers a rich diversity of habitats from high elevation, rain-shadow mountains to the lower watershed with plentiful wetland habitats dispersed amidst a mix of riparian and bygone prairie/oak forest. The prairie is now a rural mix of small and large farms with scattered developments. In the lower basin there are some choice private duck hunting club ownerships and a few well-enjoyed public waterfowl hunting areas. Waterfowl hunting opportunities have expanded in the eastern portion of the district in recent years. The Dungeness Basin and the smaller watersheds east of the Elwha are areas where deer abundance results in frequent complaints. The high visibility of deer in the Coyle and Olympic GMUs extends into the lower elevation forestlands with an ideal ratio of forest openings. Some of the Olympic GMU habitat includes large areas of USFS mature and older dryer forest habitat that offers lower quantities of forage for ungulates. The availability of deer for harvest is enhanced within Deer Area 6020, where there are “any deer” regular seasons. The main challenge for hunting in eastern District 16 is the high amount of private ownership, so hunters should invest time needs into arranging hunting access on the target properties.

## **WEST DISTRICT 16**

The west end (Hoko, Dickey, Sol Duc, Goodman, and Clearwater) has the bulk of elk in the district, while the deer are sparse in these same GMUs. Various sub herds of elk are located within District 16. Many elk herds are year-round residents that remain in lower elevation habitats. Some herds regularly migrate into higher elevations, most always being on ONP habitat. There are opportunities to harvest elk as they move out of ONP during the hunting season. The ONP areas vary from the Outer Coast Park strip to the eastern portion of the Clearwater (GMU 615), which includes a large block of land that borders ONP.

Varied hunting opportunities exist within District 16, from waterfowl hunting on designated shoreline and wetland areas along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to forest grouse, deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on private commercial and public forest land. Both state (DNR) and federal (USFS) lands provide hunting opportunities for a variety of species within the district.

## ELK

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

The elk within District 16 are Roosevelt elk. District 16 encompasses various sub herds of the Olympic elk herd, one of 10 herds identified in the state. Elk numbers peaked in the late 1970s, with a conservative estimate of about 12,000 elk outside of Olympic National Park based on historical harvest information. Past elk population estimates were based on a combination of harvest data, telemetry studies, and mark-resight surveys. These techniques yielded a 2000 fall population estimate of about 8,600 in the GMUs surrounding Olympic National Park. The current population of the Olympic elk herd is likely lower.

Overall, the elk harvest opportunity is for 3-point minimum. Much of the elk hunting within the eastern portion of the district is restricted to a limited entry (state hunters – permit only, 3-point minimum, bull-only harvest) with antlerless harvest used as a damage management tool when necessary. Elk hunting opportunities are generally good west of the Elwha River, with possibilities on DNR-managed lands, USFS lands, and private timberlands. However, several areas limit vehicular access. Hunters should obtain permission to hunt on private lands and must obey all posted signs and regulations. Some elk herds migrate down from high alpine meadows in Olympic National Park to lowland winter range. Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Hunters often scout for elk that leave ONP and travel along major river drainages. Keep in mind that it is unlawful to hunt in ONP.

Along with elk come elk damage issues, some of which WDFW manages using harvest and hunting pressure. WDFW's Conflict Specialists manage these elk damage areas and frequently use Master Hunter permittees to put pressure on the herds and encourage habitat use patterns that limit damage and support public safety. If interested, review the information to sign up for the [Master Hunter Permit Program](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/master-hunter) is available at [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/master-hunter](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/master-hunter).

**Radio-Collars and Markers:** Local elk studies and ongoing monitoring require marking elk using transmitting markers or other tags. The radio-collar or ear tag markers should be marked with contact information identifying it as property of WDFW, university or other researchers. Recovering radio-collars from marked animals can provide valuable information to biologists. Please return any radio-collars from animals you harvest. When drugs are used to capture an animal, it is marked with an ear tag printed with directions to call the Department before consuming the meat. If you harvest an animal that you can't consume due to potential drug residues remaining in the meat, the Department will re-issue your original transport tag, special permit, or special permit points as appropriate. For more information see page 46 of the 2021 WDFW Big Game pamphlet.

## WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

Hunters can harvest elk from any of the GMUs within District 16. Reviewing past harvest records can be a starting point for hunters to consider when selecting an area to spend some time hunting. Harvest has been one of the reliable measurements the Department to monitor elk on the Olympic Peninsula. WDFW generates game harvest report data using mandatory hunting reports, follow-up phone surveys, and permit reports. For other species, the small game hunter questionnaire, trapper report of catch, and cougar pelt sealing also inform data. WDFW's [game harvest reports](#) are available at [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest). The 2020 Game Status and Trend Report is available at [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02217](http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02217) [wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02217/wdfw02217.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02217/wdfw02217.pdf).

**West District 16** – The Clearwater (GMU 615), Dickey (GMU 602), Goodman (GMU 612), and Sol Duc (GMU 607) have the highest elk harvest in District 16. These units contain large areas of public land, much of it without restricted access. Be aware there are gated roads in all of these GMUs, some of which allow hunter access and others that are closed to the public.

The Hoko (GMU 601), Pysht (GMU 603), and Coyle (GMU 624) have very limited opportunities for general season hunters. Most of these units contain private land and many of the roads on timberlands are gated. Elk groups in GMU 603 (Pysht) have increased slightly in the recent years.

A thesis on elk with research conducted in the Hoko (GMU 601) and Dickey (GMU 602) is available at this link: [Movements and Habitat Use of Female Roosevelt Elk in Relation to Human Disturbance on the Hoko and Dickey Game Management Units, Washington.](#)

**East District 16** – The Olympic GMU 621 is limited to state permit elk and tribal elk harvest. WDFW doesn't recommend GMU 624 (Coyle) as an elk hunting destination because the opportunities are limited. The season remains open for 3-point minimum. The elk population and associated hunting opportunities may increase in GMU 624, but are most likely outside of District 16.

WDFW establishes hunting seasons not only to allow recreational use, but also to manage elk populations' habitat use patterns within the district. The Department designed Elk Area 6071, within GMU 621 and 624, to specifically address challenges with the Dungeness/Sequim elk herd. Harvest within Elk Area 6071 is limited to damage control, occasionally involving Master Hunter elk hunts from the Region 6 permit list. See District 15 [Hunting Prospects](#) online at [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/prospects](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/prospects) for more information on elk harvest within GMU 621 and GMU 624.

## DISTRICT 16 ELK HUNTING AND HARVEST RECORDS

[Annual harvest reports](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest) can be found on the WDFW website at [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest). The compiled harvest records represent harvest, hunting effort, and success informed by mandatory hunter reports and follow-up surveys for correction factor of non-response bias.

### Bull Elk Harvest

The distribution of Olympic Peninsula elk harvest reflects the general elk abundance, with most harvest occurring in the western GMUs. The west end elk are well distributed, with herds scattered throughout the GMUs. The east Olympic Peninsula elk herds are not as well distributed, with herds having distinct use patterns within watersheds. Hunting the east Olympic Peninsula elk takes more deliberate planning to find the herds and make the most of elk harvest opportunities. The entire GMU 621- Olympic is permit only for elk harvest.

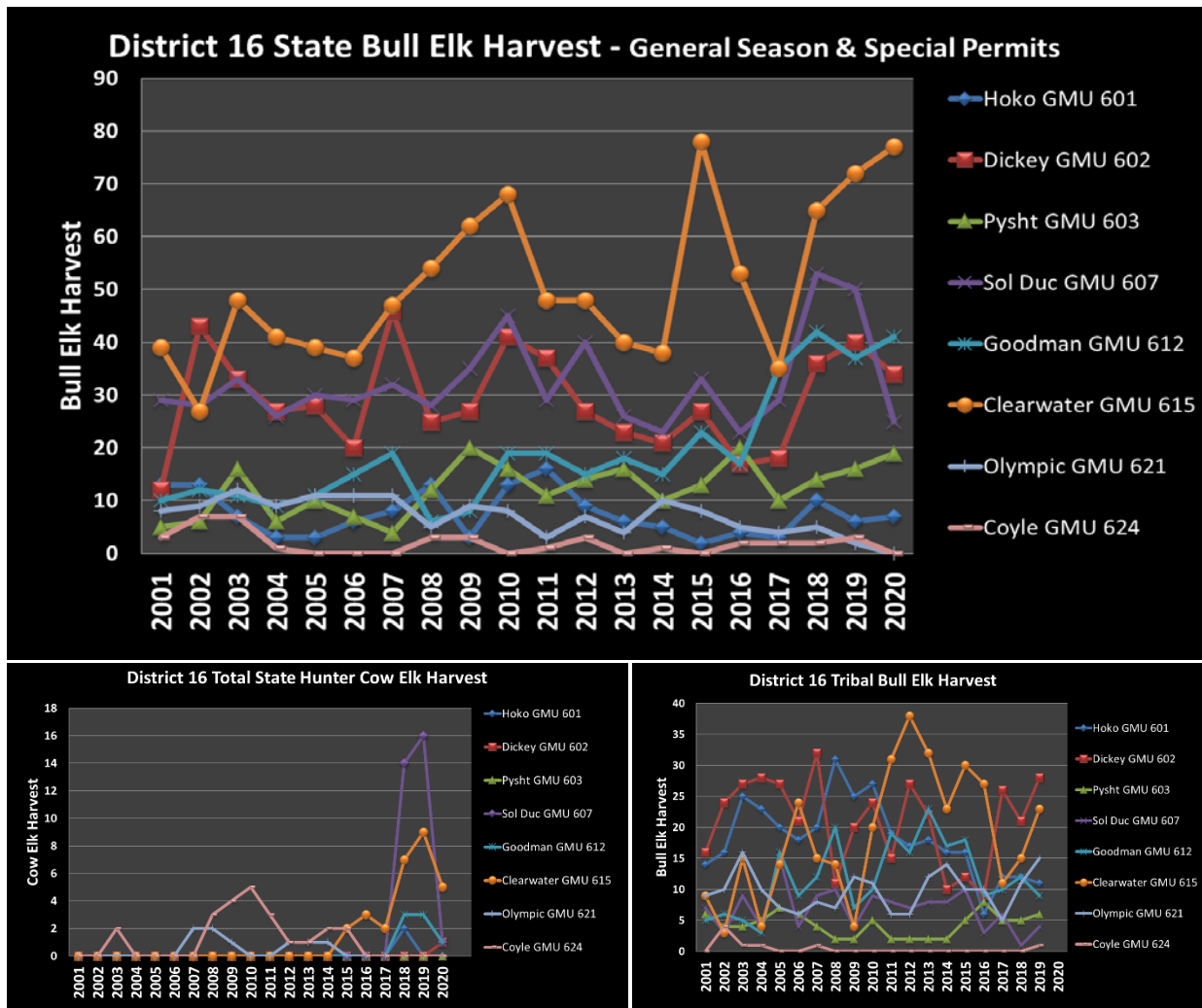


Figure 2. District 16 State Bull and Cow Elk Harvest and Tribal Bull harvest (no tribal 2020 data).



The bull elk harvest within the western GMUs (GMUs 615, 602, and 607) consistently contributes the highest bull harvest levels, while the eastern GMUs (GMUs 621, 624, and 603) consistently have low bull harvest levels, rarely having a GMU harvest total over 20 annually (Figure 2).

### Archery Elk Hunting

Archery elk hunting in District 16 predominately occurs in GMU 615 (Figure 3). GMU 612, GMU 602, and GMU 603 have a much lower level of archery hunter days, ranging between 200 and 400 days annually. GMU 601, GMU 621, and GMU 624 had the lowest level of archery hunter days below 200 days annually.

### Muzzleloader Elk Hunting

Muzzleloader elk hunting was concentrated in GMU 602 and 607 for many years (Figure 4). This changed in 2015 when muzzleloader elk hunting opened in GMU 615 and GMU 612. As the total days spent in GMU 612 and 615 continue to increase the overall trend in muzzleloader elk hunter days has also been increasing.

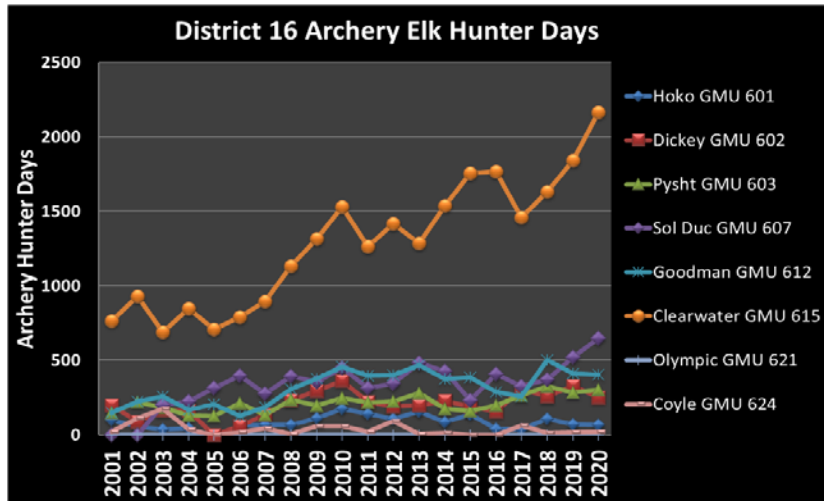


Figure 3. Archery elk hunter days by GMU.

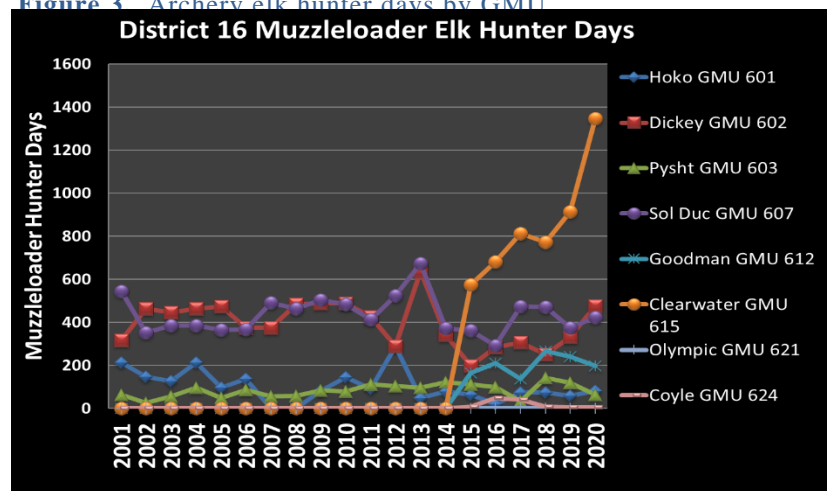


Figure 4. Muzzleloader elk hunter days by GMU.

## Modern Firearm Elk Hunting

Total modern firearm elk hunter days decreased since 2014. GMU 615 modern firearm hunting pressure dropped in half from a 2014 high to a 2017 low. Simultaneously there was a noteworthy 600-day increase in muzzleloader hunting and a 200-day increase in archery hunting. The total number of state hunter days has remained constant, shifting pressure from modern firearm to archery and muzzleloader.

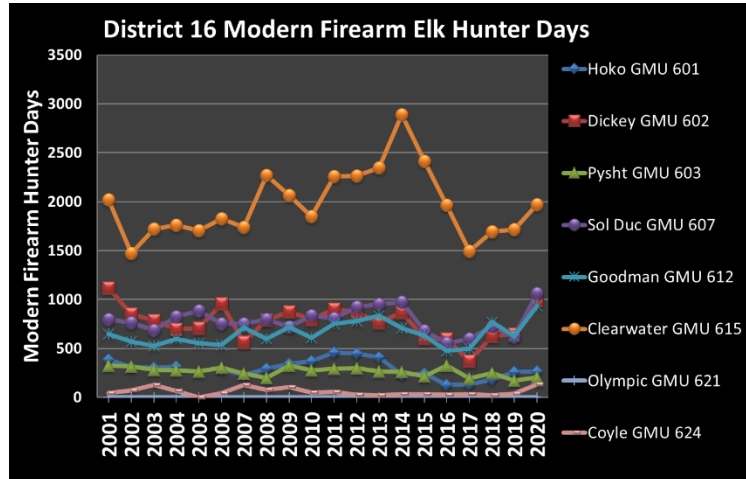


Figure 5. District 16 modern firearm elk hunter days.

## GMU 601 (Hoko) Elk Hunting

Hoko bull elk harvest has remained below 30 since 2011, which is typical for this GMU (Figure 6). Overall participation by state hunters in GMU 601 has dropped since the 2012 season to less than 400 days annually and consisted of primarily modern firearm hunters.

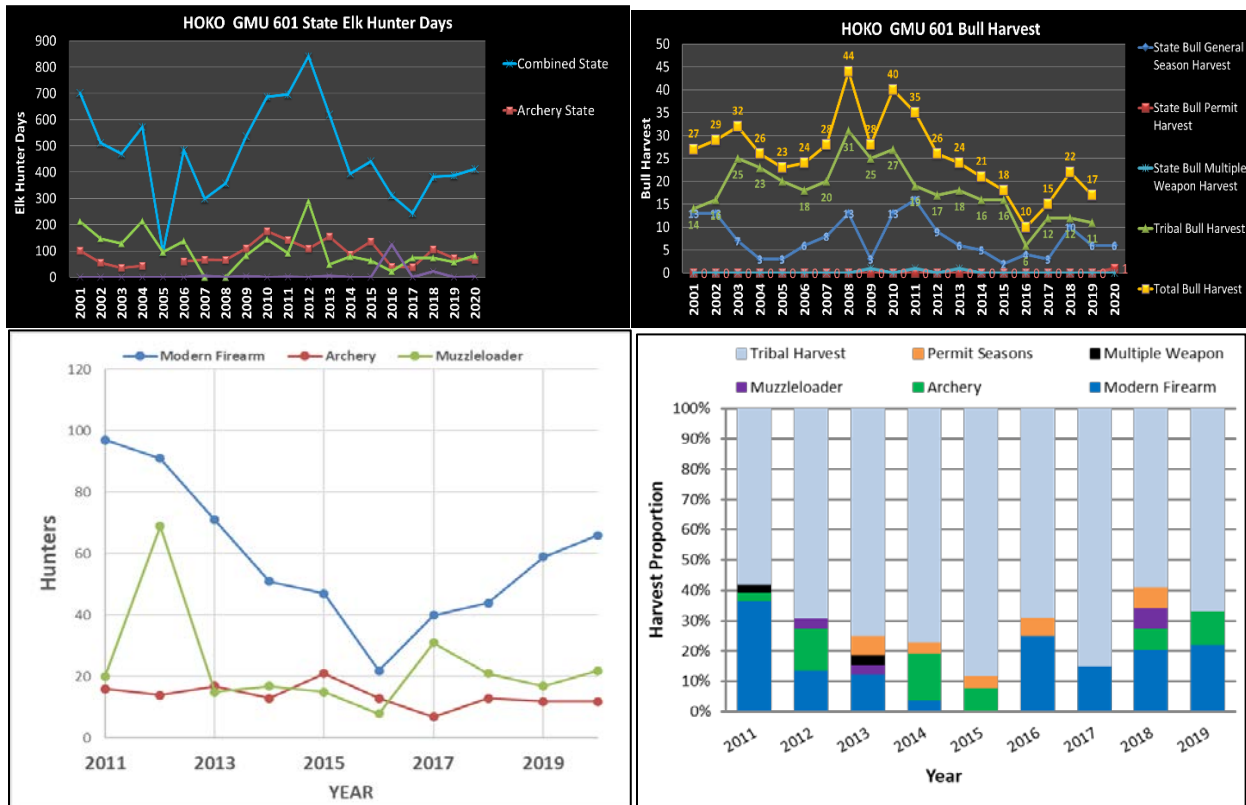
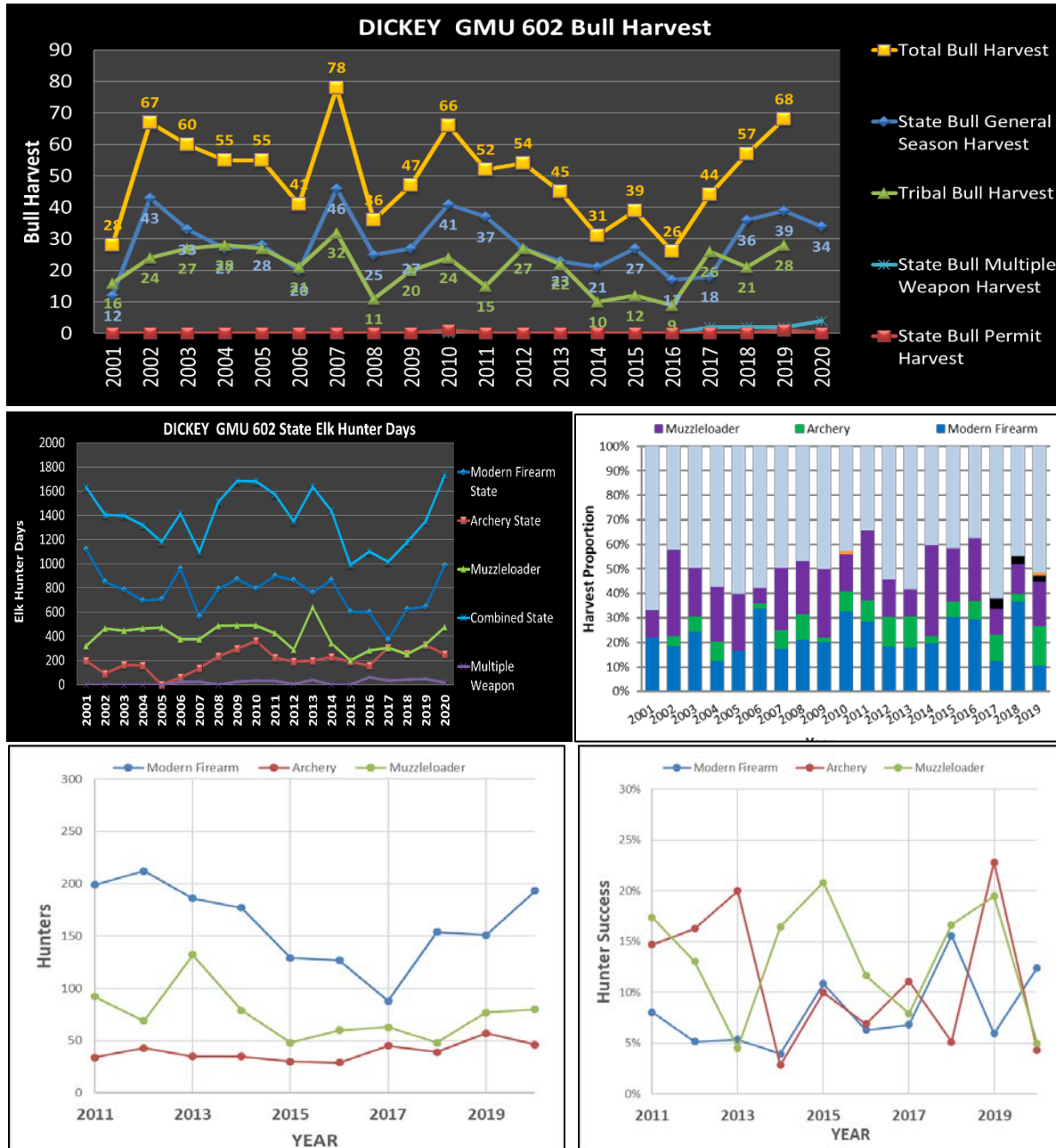


Figure 6. Hoko GMU 601 State elk hunter days and elk hunter numbers, bull elk harvest and all elk harvest proportion (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest).

## GMU 602 (Dickey) Elk Hunting

The total bull harvest in Dickey increased in recent years to 68 in 2019. There was also an increase in state hunter days (Combined) from 1000 in 2017 to over 1700 in 2020 (Figure 7).

The hunter success dropped in 2020 for Archery and Muzzleloader and increased for Modern Firearm compared to 2019.

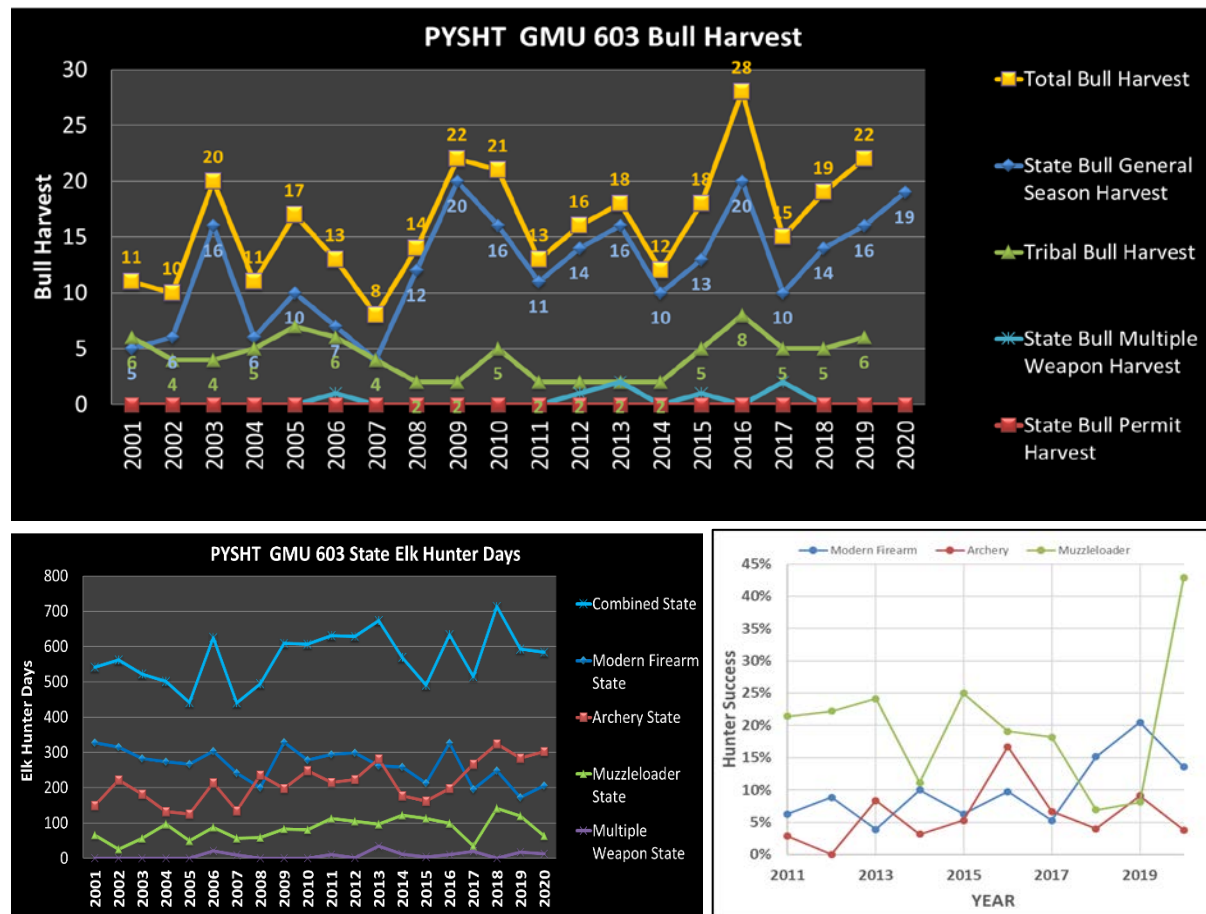


**Figure 7.** Dickey GMU 602 Bull Elk harvest, State Elk Hunter Day Trends, Harvest Proportion, State Hunter Numbers and State Hunter Success (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest).

## GMU 603 (Pysht) Elk Hunting

Abundance of elk in GMU 603 has been increasing in the last three decades. During the 1990s, it was uncommon to observe elk in GMU 603. Even during helicopter searches, WDFW observed few elk. The lack of detectability can be due to other reasons, so there has been interest in better understanding the elk population in this GMU. The Lower Elwha Tribe has conducted elk monitoring and studies during the last 10 years. As the elk population continues to increase, the hunting opportunities are expanding, with the harvest trend increasing since 2001. Most of the elk population increase occurs within the western portion, on Merrill and Ring Pysht Tree Farm and other private forestlands. There are also some herds within the Elwha Watershed, with occasional observations of elk use within the newly formed Elwha floodplains. The Joyce vicinity elk herds have increasing conflict situations arising.

Modern firearm hunters maintain a success rate of around 5 to 10 percent until 2018, bumping up to 15 to 20 percent during 2018-2020 (Figure 8). Hunter pressure has remained relatively constant since 2001. During 2019, state harvest was about 60% of the total elk harvest, with tribal harvest approximately 40% of the total.



**Figure 8.** Pysht GMU 603 Bull Elk harvest, state elk hunter days, and success (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest).

## GMU 607 (Sol Duc) Elk Hunting

Most of the bull elk harvest within GMU 607 is by state hunters with tribal harvest being only 10 percent in 2019 (Figure 9). State hunters take about 30 bulls annually and tribal hunters take about seven bulls annually. The state bull harvest topped at 53 in 2018 and 48 in 2019. In 2018 State hunters were provided a new antlerless elk permit opportunity, resulting in a harvest of 14 in 2018 and 16 in 2019, dropping to 1 in 2020. Hunter success in GMU 607 is usually around 5-20% for all participating state hunters with hunter success for all groups dropping in 2020 (Figure 9).

Hunter success in GMU 607 is usually around 5-20% for all participating state hunters with hunter success for all groups dropping in 2020 (Figure 9).

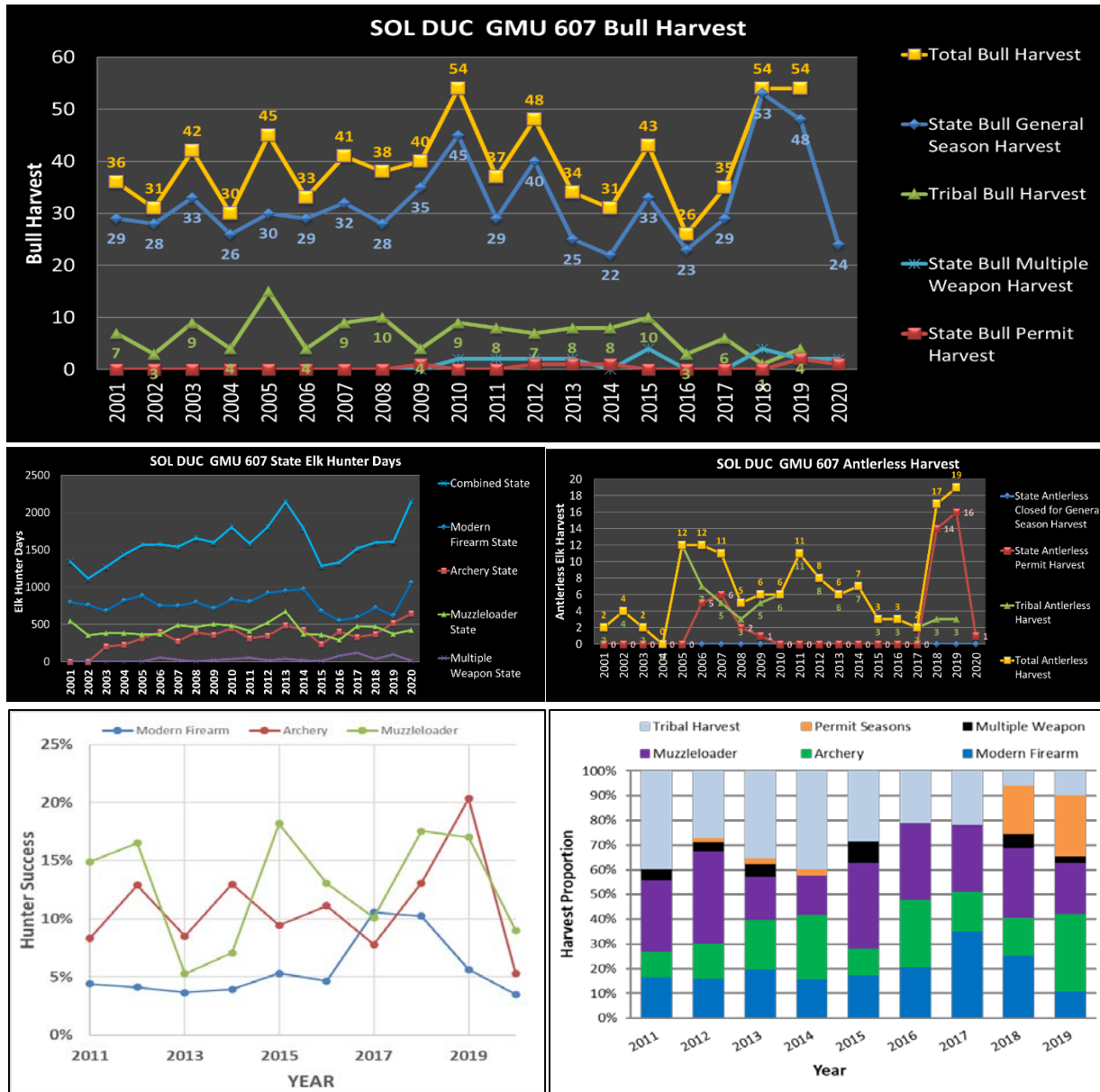
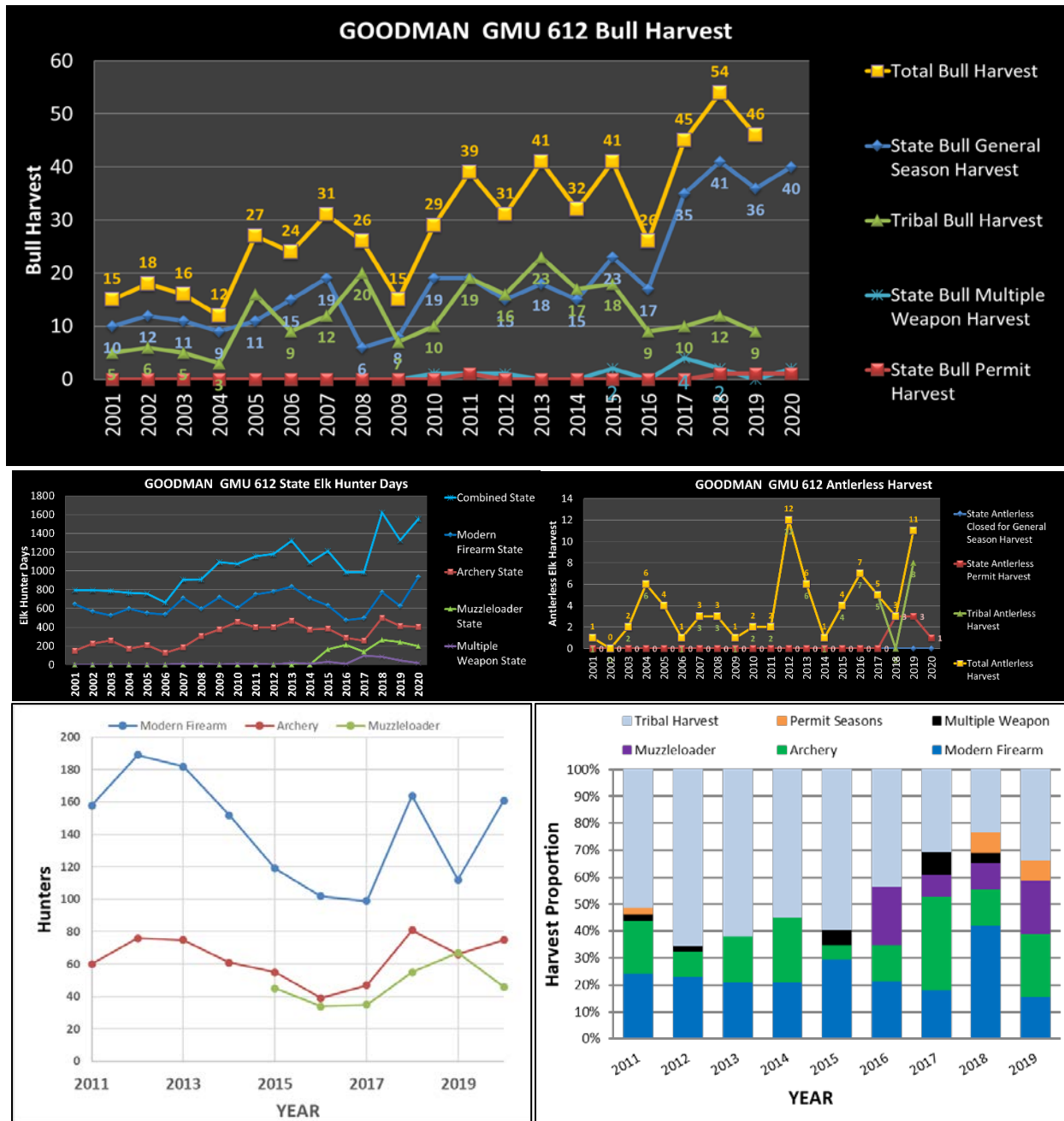


Figure 9. Sol Duc GMU 607 bull and antlerless elk harvest, state elk hunter days, hunter success and proportion of harvest (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest).



## GMU 612 (Goodman) Elk Hunting

State bull harvest in Goodman has maintained harvest numbers 35 and over since 2017, doubling the early 2001-2004 harvest estimates of less than 20 (Figure 10).



**Figure 10.** Goodman GMU 612 bull and antlerless harvest, state elk hunter days and number of hunters, and elk harvest proportion (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest).

The total number of state hunter days in GMU 612 has remained constant over the years, not dropping below 800 days since 2006, while in recent years it has increased to 1,300-1,600 range. In 2015, a new Muzzleloader season opened in GMU 612, resulting in a modest amount of

muzzleloader hunter days (Figure 10). The muzzleloader hunter success has been over 10% until 2020 when it dropped to less than 5%, while modern firearm hunter success has been between 5-15%, with a bump above 15% in 2020 (Figure 11). Archery success has ranged between 5 and 15% most years, with a jump to 36% in 2017 and more recently 18% in 2019. In 2018, state hunters got a new antlerless elk permit opportunity, resulting in a harvest of three in both 2018 and 2019, then a harvest of one in 2020.

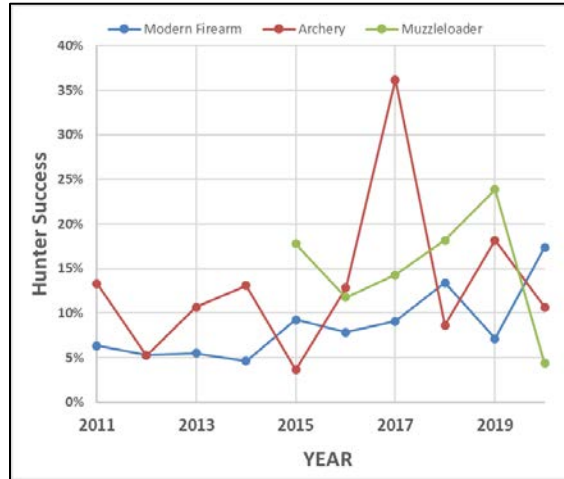
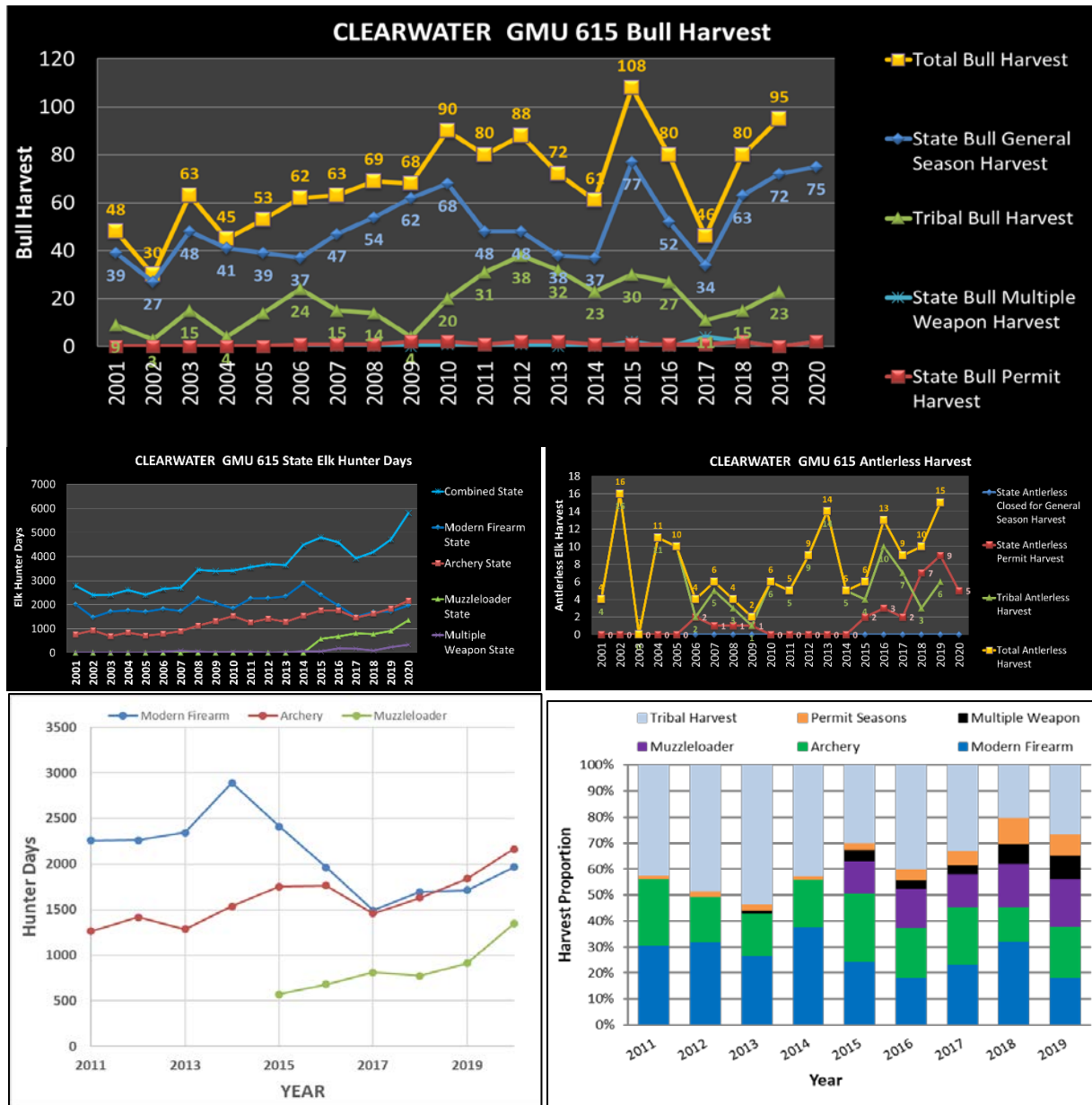


Figure 11. Goodman GMU 612 State Hunter Success.



### GMU 615 (Clearwater) Elk Hunting

GMU 615 has had the most elk harvest of all GMUs in District 16 since 2008 (Figure 2). The total elk bull harvest trend has fluctuated considerably the last five years, with a low of 46 in 2017 and a high of 108 in 2016 (Figure 12). The Clearwater total bull harvest was on the high end at 95 in 2019. State harvest remained steady between 2019 and 2020, with tribal harvest not yet reported.



**Figure 12.** Clearwater GMU 615 bull and antlerless harvest, State elk hunter days and number of hunters and proportion of harvest (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest)

Hunter success for GMU 615 falls within a narrow range for all state hunters, reliably between 4 and 12% (Figure 13). Muzzleloader season opened in 2015. The overall total number of hunter

days remained constant, a result of increased muzzleloader hunter days and an almost equal decrease of modern firearm hunter days.

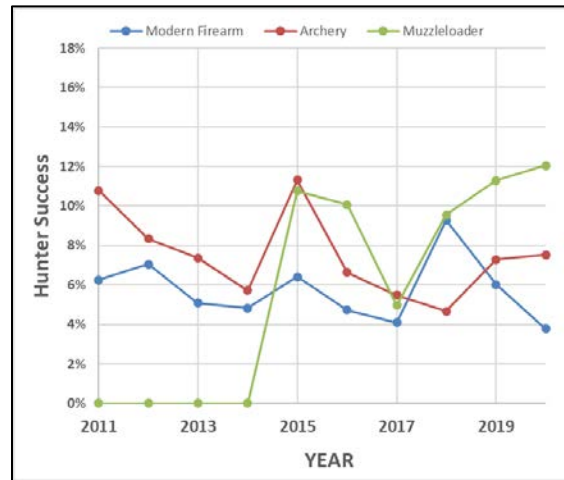


Figure 13. GMU 615 bull elk State hunter days and success.

### GMU 621 (Olympic) Elk Hunting

Olympic GMU 621 elk hunt opportunity is limited to permit hunts and an occasional damage hunt harvest. The permit hunts can be a great opportunity, if the weather and elk use patterns are favorable. Most of the hunting opportunity in Olympic GMU 621 is within District 15. Please review the Hunting Prospects for District 15. Harvest is generally between 10 and 20 bull elk (Figure 14).

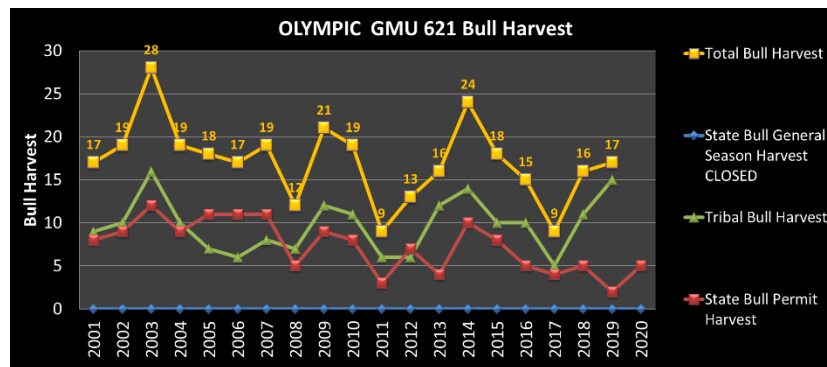


Figure 14. GMU 621 bull harvest from 2001 to 2020 (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest).

### GMU 624 (Coyle) Elk Hunting

GMU 624 is not a prime elk hunting GMU with extremely low harvest (Figure 15). The source of GMU 624 elk harvest are small groups of elk that may have split off from the Dungeness herd or other east Olympic Peninsula elk herds. Over the years, WDFW has received reports of small groups of elk in various locations within GMU 624, mostly within District 15. See District 15 [Hunting Prospects](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/prospects) online at [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/prospects](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/prospects).

Much of the ownership in these areas is private, typically small farms. Securing permission for hunting in much of this area can be difficult. When the Legislature tasked WDFW to consider closing the GMU to elk hunting due to the lack of opportunity overall, WDFW decided to retain the hunting season, which can be a tool to resolve some damage control. If elk abundance increases in this GMU, elk harvest opportunity should increase as well.

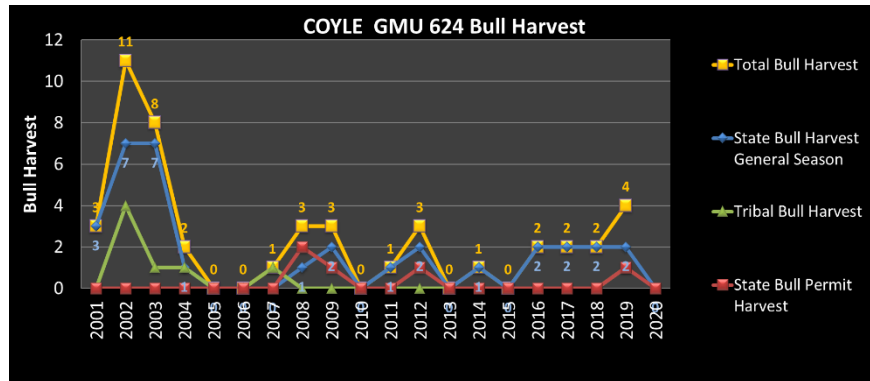


Figure 15. GMU 624 bull harvest from 2001 to 2020 (Note that 2020 Data does not include Tribal Harvest).

### NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES AND NOTEWORTHY REGS

WDFW has adopted night hunting and hound hunting regulations during deer and elk hunting seasons in recent years. See page 21 of Washington’s Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet.

Unmanned Aircraft: WAC 220-413-070 “Using Aircraft” to include unmanned aircraft. See page 87 of the Big Game pamphlet. “It is illegal to: Hunt game animals, game birds, or migratory birds on the day one has operated an unmanned aircraft.” Page 87 of the Big Game pamphlet.

Using Dogs: (WAC 220-413-060) Hunting wild animals (except rabbits and hares) with dogs (hounds) during the months of October or November during the dates established for modern firearm deer or elk general seasons in eastern and western Washington is prohibited. Page 87 of the Big Game pamphlet.

People with disabilities: Note new regulations referenced on page 92 of the Big Game pamphlet.



## ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)

Since 2008, WDFW has received dramatically increasing reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range, including within the Olympic Elk Herd area. While elk are susceptible to many conditions which result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and western Lewis counties. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area. Including elk from the Olympic herd.

All of District 16 falls within the Olympic elk herd range. TAHD is most prevalent among elk on the southern end of the Olympic Peninsula, however recent detections on the northern end confirm the disease is spreading to other portions of the Olympic elk herd range. The WDFW has confirmed the presence of TAHD from elk sampled in GMUs 603, 607, 621, 624, 636, 638, 648, and 651.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male, or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### How hunters can help:

- Harvest a limping elk from any 400, 500, 600 series GMUs
- Turn in your elk hooves along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in western Washington
- Report elk: Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form.

- Clean shoes and tires: Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

In 2021, WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program to encourage west-side (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. This program aims to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can choose to participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in western Washington. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in western Washington with season dates of Sep. 1 – Dec 31 will be awarded. Additionally, participants will receive a custom, waterproof license holder.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments, and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.

## DEER

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

WDFW continues to accomplish black-tailed deer monitoring by tracking the harvest and hunting effort and gathering data on survivability, recruitment, and mortality rates using studies of collared deer and aerial census methods.

WDFW district 16 wildlife biologists continue to research Olympic Peninsula black-tailed deer and assist tribal biologists with ongoing deer studies. Assignments include collaring, deer tracking, and locating collared deer mortalities to identify mortality causes.

According to Dr. Cliff Rice, the lead researcher for recent western Washington black-tailed deer research, some of the largest does captured in western Washington were captured west of the Dungeness on the lower foothills in a mix of DNR and private land.



### WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

#### Western District 16

Western District 16 is generally sparse of deer. This area includes GMUs 601 (Hoko), 602 (Dickey), 603 (Pysht), 607 (Sol Duc), 612 (Goodman), and 615 (Clearwater). Observations and published reports indicate that deer population numbers and density are generally low throughout the district west of the Elwha River. West Olympic Peninsula tribes dropped antlerless harvest in the western GMUs in 2010. Following are links to some deer research in the Hoko GMU:

Factors affecting the survival of black-tailed deer fawns: [files.nwifc.org/wildlife/makah-fawn-report-final-201102.pdf](https://files.nwifc.org/wildlife/makah-fawn-report-final-201102.pdf)

- Abstract of a study on the influence of hair loss syndrome (HLS) on black-tailed deer fawn survival [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/jwmg.772](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/jwmg.772).

## **Eastern District 16**

Eastern District 16 includes the northwestern portion of GMU 621 (Olympic) and the northern portion of GMU 624 (Coyle), which extend east and south into District 15 (eastern Jefferson County). Because WDFW records the data on harvest by GMU, the harvest figures presented here include all GMU 621 and 624, extending into District 15. The portion of District 16 east of the Elwha River has black-tailed deer populations that are readily observed (presumably due to higher densities) and in many areas can often be observed in groups, especially in the vicinity of farmland. In these areas, the deer are often considered to be a nuisance by property owners and agricultural operations, especially in GMU 624. Read more about Deer Area 6020 in [Deer Areas](#) section on Page 40.

GMU 624 does have firearm restrictions, with no centerfire or rimfire rifles allowed. Read more about that in the [Firearm Restrictions](#) section on Page 90.

The mid and lower elevations of GMU 621 have high densities of deer as well, with some scattered blocks of DNR ownership that offer hunting on public land. Private industrial timber lands and DNR-managed lands are largely gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism, and other problems. However, hunters can access many of these roads on foot or with mountain bikes, giving those willing to do the work access to deer that don't get as much hunting pressure. Be sure to check with the appropriate landowner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

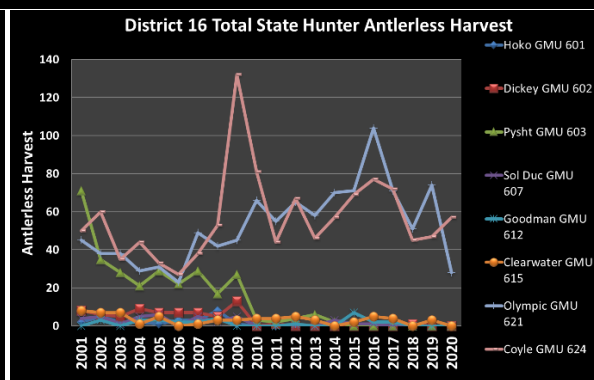
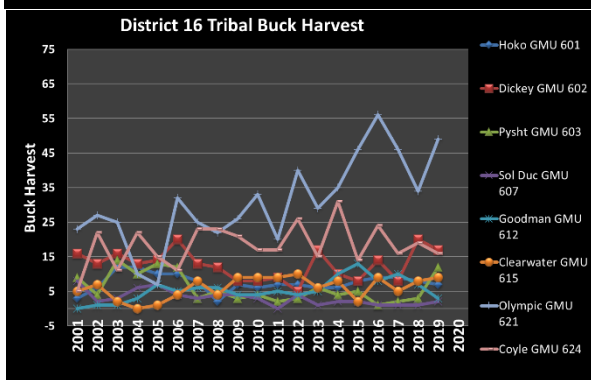
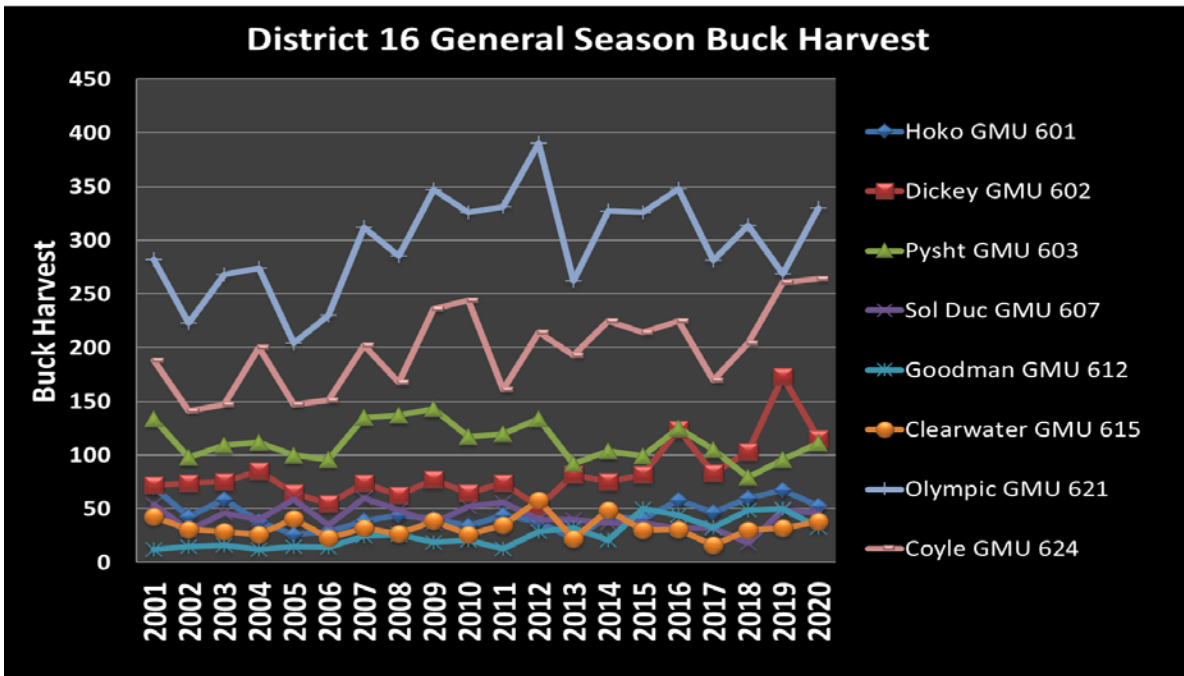
The key to a successful harvest is securing the appropriate permission to hunt on private land and scouting the area prior to the hunting season. Hunters who intend to target deer in developed areas would be well advised to check with local jurisdictions regarding firearm restrictions.

### **DISTRICT 16 BLACK-TAILED DEER HUNTING AND HARVEST RECORDS**

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics for deer based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest) .

See the [District 15 Hunting Prospects](#) for more information on GMU 621 and GMU 624.

Buck harvest within District 16 GMUs is highest on the eastern half and lower as one goes further west. The four GMUs with the lowest buck harvest are Clearwater, Goodman, Pysht, and Hoko, is the most western GMU in the District (Figure 16). Tribal harvest ranges within 5-20 percent of the total deer harvest in District 16 GMUs.



<b>Total 2020 Buck Harvest by GMU</b>	
<b>200+ bucks</b>	<b>Olympic GMU 621</b>
	<b>Coyle GMU 624</b>
<b>100-200 bucks</b>	<b>Dickey GMU 602 Pysht GMU 603</b>
<b>&lt; 100 bucks</b>	<b>Sol Duc GMU 607 Goodman GMU 612 Clearwater GMU 615 Hoko GMU 601</b>

Figure 16. District 16 buck harvest total, general season harvests and tribal harvest.



## Archery Deer Hunting

Archery deer hunting in District 16 is concentrated in GMU 621 and GMU 624 (GMUs 621 and 624 are in both District 15 and 16). GMU 603 had moderate participation by archery hunters prior to 2010, but in recent years it has dropped, comparable now to GMU 615 archery hunter days (Figure 17).

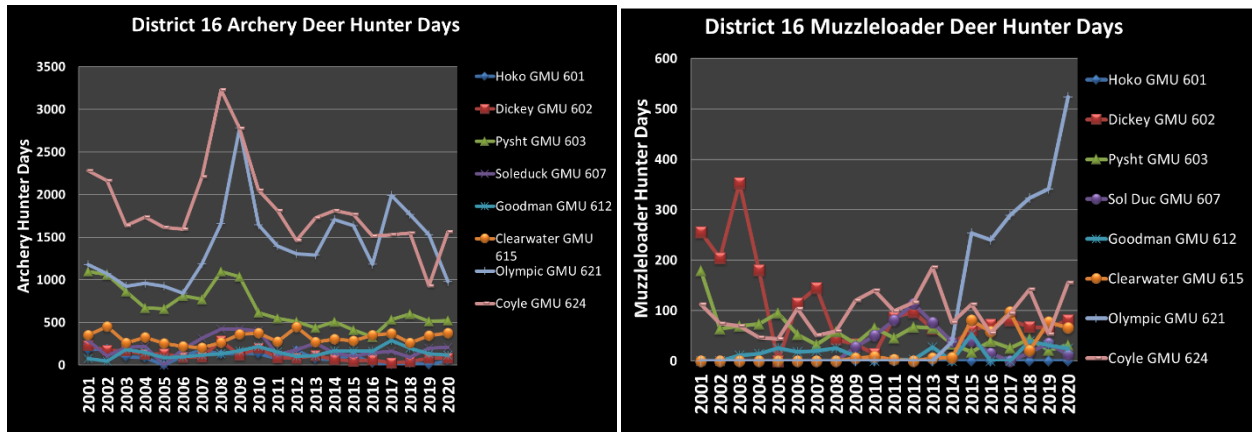


Figure 17. District 16 archery and muzzleloader hunter days.

## Muzzleloader Deer Hunting

Muzzleloader deer hunting has recently increased in GMU 621, while all the other GMUs in District 16 reportedly receive less than 200 hunter days annually (Figure 17). Other GMUs remain consistent with the amount of muzzleloader hunter days.

## Modern Firearm Deer Hunting

Modern firearm hunters have maintained a steady participation level in the GMUs in District 16 (Figure 18).

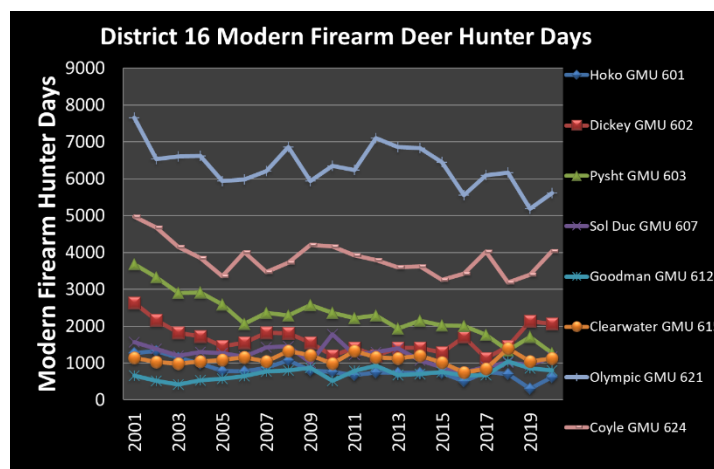


Figure 18. District 16 modern firearm deer hunter days.

## DEER AREAS

WDFW established Deer Area 6020 years ago to allow hunters to harvest does to help reduce deer conflicts within the area north of Highway 101 between Port Angeles and eastern Miller Peninsula, an area rich with high abundances of deer. The Department allows doe harvest within Deer Area 6020 during the general seasons. This area is primarily private land, but it is worth inquiring with landowners about hunting access. Note that much of the state land on Miller Peninsula is state park land where hunting is not allowed. Refer to the firearm restrictions section of the Big Game pamphlet if you are considering this area. The entirety of GMU 624 within District 16 (Clallam County) has [firearm restriction](#) regulations. No hunting is allowed with centerfire or rimfire rifles.

## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Night hunting, hound hunting and permits during deer and elk hunting seasons have been adopted in recent years. See page 87 of Washington’s Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet.

Unmanned aircraft: Wording has been added to WAC 220-413-070 “Using Aircraft” to include unmanned aircraft. See page 87 of the Big Game pamphlet.

People with disabilities: Note new regulations referenced on page 92 of the Big Game pamphlet.



Deer observed walking along a beach grassland

## BEAR



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

WDFW's goals for black bear management are to:

1. Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage black bear and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations;
2. Minimize threats to public safety from black bears, while at the same time maintaining a sustainable and viable bear population;
3. Manage black bear for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by tribal members, wildlife viewing, and photography; and
4. Manage populations statewide for a sustained yield. For management purposes, the state is divided into nine Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs). Harvest levels vary between BBMU depending on local population dynamics and environmental conditions.

District 16 is located nearly entirely within the designated Coastal Black Bear Management Unit (BBMU) except for GMU 624, which is in the Puget Sound BBMU. This area is mostly private land with firearm restrictions. There is no spring bear permit hunt season within the district. Fall black bear hunting is allowed in all GMUs within the district. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for both the Coastal BBMU and Puget Sound BBMU are designed to maintain black bear populations at their current level. The fall black bear hunting season for all District 16 units is Aug. 1 to Nov. 15, 2021. There are no special permit spring bear hunts within the district. Hunters can buy up to two bear tags during each license year.

Wildlife managers use three statistics to assess black bear harvest:

- Proportion of females harvested (no more than 35-39 percent of harvest)
- Median age of harvested females (range no younger than 5-6 years)
- Median age of harvested males (range no younger than 2-4 years)

WDFW does not conduct annual surveys to monitor trends in black bear population size and instead uses harvest data trends for population estimates or indices. Wildlife managers believe that black bear populations are stable in District 16. Black bears occur throughout District 16, but population densities vary among GMUs.

In 2013, the Department began work to estimate black bear density statewide. This research originated in the North Cascade Mountains using two detection methods, non-invasive DNA collection using barbed-wire hair collection and physical capture and deployment of global positioning system (GPS) collars. Results showed that while density varied by human development and habitat productivity, it averaged 20 bears/100 km<sup>2</sup> in western Cascades and 19 bears/100 km<sup>2</sup> in eastern Cascades (Welfelt et al. 2019). In the western Washington study area, average total density estimates (including cubs) were nearly 50% lower than expected prior to this research (20 vs 39/100 km<sup>2</sup>). Because these results showed that density could vary widely by habitat types within limited areas, WDFW determined that density should not be extrapolated to a statewide or even region-wide black bear density given the variability of habitats. Thus, the Department needs more data to evaluate which habitat and management factors are associated with variations in bear density at a broad scale. Depending on funding, a non-invasive DNA collection project is anticipated to be replicated in District 16 next spring/summer. With multiple density estimates in a variety of habitats, WDFW can examine what habitat and human factors are associated black bear density across Washington State and estimate statewide population abundance more accurately. Continued sampling will also allow for appropriate inferences to be made regarding harvest levels and the effects of management actions.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

The prospects for harvesting a black bear in District 16 remain good to excellent. Although some hunters specifically target black bears, hunters harvest most bears opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest and hunter success can vary quite a bit from one year to the next. The variability in the district is likely higher for hunters who specifically hunt black bears versus those who buy a bear tag just in case they see one while deer or elk hunting. During the 2020 season, hunters harvested 77 bears within District 16 GMUs. Hunters harvested an additional 42 bears in GMU 621 and seven bears in GMU 624, both of which include a portion of District 15. Hunter success during the 2020 season ranged from 2% in GMU 601 to 16% in GMU 602. There was a significant increase in the number of bears harvested in GMU 602 (Dickey) last season. GMU 615 (Clearwater) had the highest black bear harvest in the district in 2019 with 40 bears harvested, but only 15 bears were harvested in this GMU last season. The harvest in GMU 621 (Olympic) continues to remain consistent with a total of 42 bears. This is the highest harvest for District 16, but a major portion of this Game Management

Unit is in District 15. Hunters can view summaries of statewide and GMU harvest reports in two tables (Table 3 and Table 4). The harvested report table also represents the percentage of male and female black bear harvest.

Table 3. Black bear 2020 harvest and hunter effort for District 16 GMU's.

WASHINGTON						
STATEWIDE BLACK BEAR HARVEST STATISTICS						
FOR THE 2019 HUNTING SEASON						
BMU	Bear Management Unit Name	Total Harvest	Number Hunters	Hunter Success Rate	Hunter Days	Days/Kill
1	Coastal	333	3,723	9%	36,094	108
2	Puget Sound	134	1,732	8%	14,434	108

Table 4. Black bear 2020 harvest reports for District 16 GMU's.

GMU	Fall Male Harvest	Fall Female Harvest	Total Harvest	Number Hunters	Hunter Success	Hunter Days	Days/Kills
<b>BMU 1 COASTAL</b>							
601 - HOKO	2	0	2	91	2%	569	285
602 - DICKEY	22	9	31	191	16%	1,140	37
603 - PYSHT	2	5	7	69	10%	549	78
607 - SOL DUC	5	3	8	114	7%	630	79
612 - GOODMAN	3	4	7	56	13%	453	65
615 - CLEARWATER	8	7	15	206	7%	1,185	79
618 - MATHENY	4	3	7	49	14%	327	47
621 - OLYMPIC	31	11	42	335	13%	2,345	56
<b>BMU 2 PUGET SOUND</b>							
624 - COYLE	5	2	7	116	6%	864	123



## HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR

State DNR and federal (USFS) lands continue to provide the best opportunities for bear hunting within the district. WDFW encourages hunters to scout for signs of bears (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Access behind gated roads is largely available to those willing to walk or mountain bike, and there are ample numbers of clear cuts/younger age class regeneration units that will attract bears. At higher elevations, those willing to hike in and pack out can pursue bears in classic environments where spot-and-stalk opportunities await. The USFS website has forest health maps that identify areas where bear damage has been detected from aerial surveys. You can find the aerial forest health detection maps at:

[fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/forest-grasslandhealth/insects-diseases/?cid=stelprdb5294941](https://fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/forest-grasslandhealth/insects-diseases/?cid=stelprdb5294941)



Scouting is an extremely important factor that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 16. Although black bears are common and occur in some areas at high densities, they are seen infrequently because of the thick vegetation that dominates the Olympic Peninsula landscape. Black bears can occur in a variety of habitat types, so it can be difficult to narrow down where to search for them. In the early fall, hunters should focus their efforts at higher elevations and in open terrain (hillsides, etc.) and clear-cut areas. Huckleberries ripen throughout the summer, but in the early fall the most remaining berries are typically at higher elevations. A good berry patch yielding much fruit would be a good place to hunt. Bears can also look in recent timber harvests that contain many berry-producing shrubs, including huckleberries, serviceberries, snowberries, blackberries, salmonberries, thimbleberries, and salal berries. During the fall, hunters need to find openings with these characteristics and hike through them to see if there is any bear sign. If they do find fresh sign, odds are there is a bear frequenting the area. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching these areas, they stand a reasonable chance of harvesting a bear. Since the Olympic Peninsula is experiencing a dry and warm summer, it can be expected that bears may move into berry foraging areas earlier this season.



### **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

WDFW strongly urges bear hunters not to shoot sows with cubs. Some cubs that accompany their mother's may tend to lag behind and may not be obvious to hunters. Bear cubs may also be present in trees or well-hidden in dense vegetation in the vicinity. Please observe and be patient before shooting. The past few seasons, several orphaned cubs were reported in Region 6. Some of these cubs were captured and taken to rehabilitation facilities. It is mandatory (per [WAC 220-415-090](#)) that hunters who harvest a bear submit a premolar tooth with a tooth envelope, available at WDFW offices. The premolar tooth is located behind the canine tooth (toward the throat) of the upper jaw. The use of hounds and/or bait to hunt black bear is prohibited statewide ([RCW 77.15.245](#)).

## COUGAR



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

Cougars occur throughout District 16, but local densities can vary among GMUs. WDFW manages cougars in District 16 to maintain a stable cougar population. The statewide goals for cougar are:

1. Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage cougar and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations.
2. Minimize human/cougar conflict.
3. Manage cougar for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by tribal members, wildlife viewing, and photography.
4. Manage statewide cougar populations for a sustained yield.
5. Improve WDFW's understanding of predator-prey relationships.

Since the 2012 – 2013 hunting season, WDFW changed cougar harvest management throughout Washington. The biggest change was shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougars harvested, and instead using a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intent was to have a longer season, without any hunting implement restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a

harvest guideline. WDFW administers this hunt structure within 50 population Management units (PMU<sup>2</sup>s). District 16 includes PMU 42, 43, and 45.

To accomplish harvest goals, WDFW established an early and a late general season for defined hunt areas. The early season is September 1 – December 31 and no harvest limits apply even if harvest exceeds the guideline. Beginning in the 2015 hunting season and then continuing in 2021, WDFW extended cougar season dates through April 30. In this late season, (January 1 – April 30), harvest guidelines apply for hunter killed cougars only. However, to hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, hunters need to buy a new hunting license and cougar tag. WDFW examines harvest numbers starting January 1. If the guideline is met or exceeded, the PMU may not open for the late season. Cougar harvest is monitored during the late season and managers close any hunt areas that meet or exceed the harvest guideline. Over the past 5-years, an average of 66% of the PMU’s remained open to hunters through April 30. Closures occur on the PMU level, resulting in less impact to hunter opportunity. WDFW advises anyone planning to hunt cougar after January 1 to confirm the cougar season is open in the desired hunting area.

Hunters can call 1-866-364-4868 to determine if a specific hunt area is open after December 31. For more information related to the harvest guidelines management approach, please visit: [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/big-game/cougar](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/big-game/cougar). The agency recently formed an internal group to assess the results of implementing the cougar harvest hunting structure. Table 5 provides the harvest guidelines for each District 16 hunt area for 2021 – 2022. This table also provides the cougar harvest for the 2020 – 2021 season for state hunters.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	
	2021-2022	2020-2021 Harvest
PMU 42 - 601, 602, 603, 612	4-6	1
PMU 43 - 607, 615	3-4	4
PMU 45 - 621, 624, 627, 633	None	6

**Table 5.** Cougar Harvest Guidelines for 2021-2022 and State Hunter Reported Harvest for 2020-2021.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 - 2022 SEASON

Most cougar harvest within the district comes from opportunistic encounters while hunters are pursuing deer, elk, or other activities. The total cougar harvest in District 16 can vary from year to year. Table 6 presents total cougar hunting and other mortality while table 7 presents status and trend report information as well as harvest totals and mean averages for the past three seasons (2017 – 2020). Hunters harvested 11 cougars within the district during the general cougar hunt last season. During the general hunt, hunters harvested one cougar in PMU 42, four cougars in PMU 43, and six cougars in PMU 45, which includes a portion of District 15. These totals don’t include tribal harvest and other mortality. See the [Washington Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#) or more information regarding cougar hunting in specific GMUs within the district. Cougars are widespread in the forest lands of District 16. Areas

supporting high numbers of deer and elk provide great opportunity for hunting cougar. GMU 621 consistently has the highest cougar harvest in the district. The other GMUs' cougar harvest numbers fluctuate each year. With the yearly variation, it is hard to predict future harvest, but cougar sightings in the district continue to be somewhat common and there is no reason to suspect much change in the harvest. Under the continuing harvest management guidelines, the two district hunt areas PMU 42 and PMU 43 had not met their harvest guideline in the past eight seasons. However, during the late season cougar hunt in PMU 43 the harvest guideline of 4 cougars was met and the unit was closed to further cougar hunting on February 26, 2021. This highlights that hunters should monitor closures and plan accordingly. One cougar hunter that WDFW's assistant district biologist contacted last season was not aware that there was a harvest guideline for the area he had harvested his cougar.

**Table 6.** Total cougar harvest 2020 – 2021 for PMUs within District 16 (and a portion of District 15) by state hunters. The harvest of male and female cougars is represented. Tribal hunting not included.

<b>PMU 42 – (GMU 601, 602, 603, and 612)</b>									
GENERAL HUNTING				OTHER MORTALITY				COMBINED	
Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Total	
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	

<b>PMU 43 – (GMU 607 and 615)</b>									
GENERAL HUNTING				OTHER MORTALITY				COMBINED	
Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Total	
3	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	

<b>PMU 45 – (GMU 621, 624, 627, and 633)</b>									
GENERAL HUNTING				OTHER MORTALITY				COMBINED	
Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Total	
4	2	0	6	3	2	0	5	11	



**Table 7.** Cougar harvest in District 16 (and portion of District 15) for 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21.

<b>Cougar Status and Trend Report</b>				
	<b>2018 - 2019</b>	<b>2019 - 2020</b>	<b>2020 – 2021</b>	<b>3-Year</b>
	<b>HARVEST</b>	<b>HARVEST</b>	<b>HARVEST</b>	<b>Mean Harvest</b>
GMUs 601, 602, 603, 612	2	1	1	1.33
GMUs 607, 615	2	1	4	2.33
GMUs 621, 624, 627, 633	7	3	6	5.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	

\* Tribal harvest or other sources of mortality not included.



Most of the cougars that the assistant district biologist seals each season have been harvested by hunters who encounter the animals while out deer or elk hunting. However, during the 2019-2020 season, several hunters were successful when specifically targeting cougars after snow events. One father and son hunting team was fortunate to harvest adult male cougars a few weeks apart in two different locations within GMU 615. Enforcement officers in the district report low cougar hunting pressure in most GMUs in previous years. A few cougars were

removed in District 16 last season due to depredation concerns with livestock and domestic animals.

### **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

It is unlawful to kill or possess spotted cougar kittens (usually less than 80 pounds) or adult cougars accompanied by spotted kittens. WDFW strongly encourages cougar hunters to search for possible multiple tracks when pursuing an animal. Female cougars may have kittens in trees or in dense vegetation nearby. Please be very observant and patient before shooting. During the 2015 – 2016 season, WDFW enforcement officers and biologists had to capture two orphaned cougar kittens near Joyce. One kitten later died, and the other kitten will remain in captivity at a zoo. Remember, if you harvest a cougar, there are mandatory reporting and sealing requirements. Voter initiative 655 banned the use of hounds to hunt cougars in the state. Hunting with the aid of dogs is prohibited statewide except during cougar management removals authorized by the Fish and Wildlife Commission and for research purposes.



### **NOTABLE CHANGES**

The Cougar Harvest for Guideline for GMU’s 601, 602, 603, and 612 was changed last season and will remain at 4-6. The Cougar Harvest Guideline for GMUs 607 and 615 was changed from 4 to a range 3-4 last season and this harvest guideline is still in effect. Subadult cougars no longer count towards the cougar harvest guideline. A valid 2022-23 cougar license and tag is required to hunt cougar in April 2022.

### **MANDATORY REPORTING/SEALING**

Successful cougar hunters must report their cougar harvest to the cougar hotline at: 1-866-364-4868 within 72 hours of harvest and have the cougar pelt sealed within five days of notification. This is the same hotline hunters can use to check if cougar hunt areas are open or closed. A premolar tooth and tissue sample will be taken. See the [Washington Big Game Hunting Seasons and Rules](#) for more specific details about cougar sealing requirements.



### COUGAR OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

WDFW is committed to minimizing human-wildlife conflict. With the increase of the human population in Washington, there are more recreationists in cougar habitat, an increase in small livestock farms near residences, along with intentional and unintentional feeding of wildlife around homes. It is essential to raise public awareness and keep both people and cougars safe. A young male cougar killed a mountain biker near North Bend in the spring of 2018. This type of incident is extremely rare and was only the second known human fatality from a cougar in Washington State. Many people in Washington know little about cougar behavior and are not aware of what steps are necessary to avoid negative encounters. Please see: [wdfw.wa.gov/living/cougars.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/cougars.html) to learn more about cougar/human interactions or contact a WDFW Regional Office for a copy of the 2018 “Discover Washington’s Cougars” brochure.

## DUCKS

### COMMON SPECIES

Much of the waterfowl hunting opportunity in District 16 is east of Port Angeles, centered in the Lower Dungeness Basin. The basin has a high density of wintering waterfowl and holds about 7% of the western Washington breeding waterfowl population.

Keep in mind that trumpeter swan numbers have increased in the Dungeness valley in the past five years, and they have been documented near the Dungeness river mouth. WDFW encourages Waterfowl hunters to know all identification features for trumpeter swans and snow geese. It is illegal to shoot trumpeter swans.

### CONCENTRATION AREAS

District biologists have focused on documenting areas with high waterfowl concentrations in Clallam County during the last several years, mapping high use areas during breeding and wintering periods.

The Dungeness Basin is an area of consistently high waterfowl concentrations, even amidst the ongoing development of open space habitats. Fortunately, a rich mix of farmland, wetlands, coastal habitats, and conserved open space retain the necessary food and cover for many wintering waterfowl. Concentrations of waterfowl in freshwater habitats diminish drastically west of the Elwha and Lyre Rivers.

### POPULATION STATUS

Midwinter waterfowl survey counts in District 16 represent about 2% of all waterfowl counted in the state. Midwinter populations include resident and migratory populations. The links below provide more information on the population status.

- USFWS Waterfowl Population Status 2020  
[fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/Waterfowl/WaterfowlPopulationStatusReport20.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/Waterfowl/WaterfowlPopulationStatusReport20.pdf)



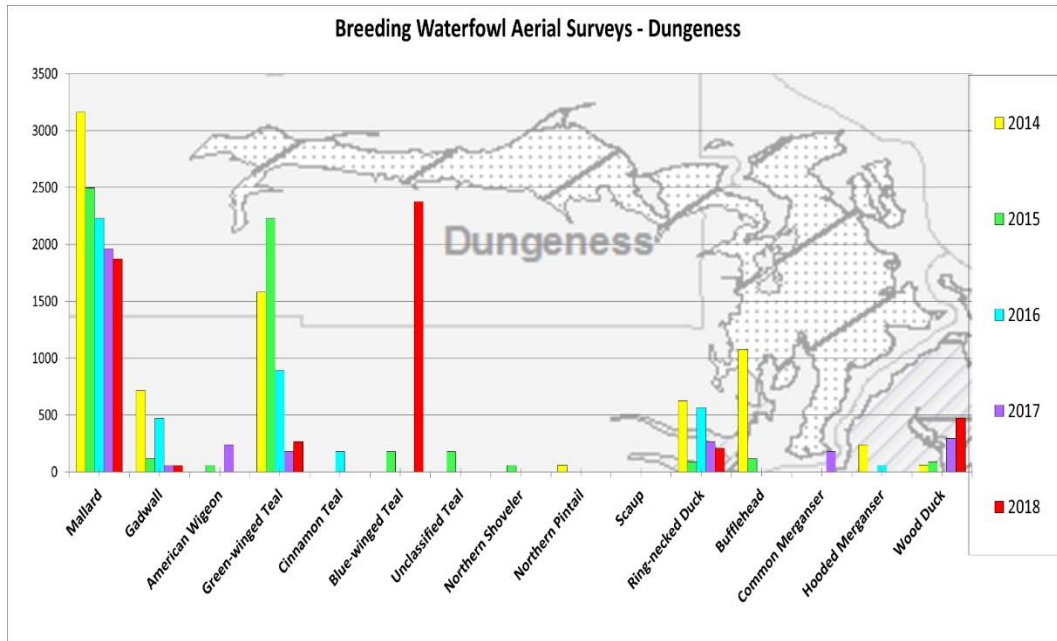


[fws.gov/refuges/RefugeUpdate/MarApr\\_2012/fourflyways.html](https://fws.gov/refuges/RefugeUpdate/MarApr_2012/fourflyways.html)

In 2019, the total duck breeding population estimate within the Dungeness was 3,060, a drop from 5,317 in 2018. The Dungeness transect counts have ranged from 3,060 to 7,518 since 2010. In 2019, the total duck breeding population estimate within the Dungeness was 70% mallards and 10% wood ducks. In 2010, WDFW adopted new methods for western Washington breeding waterfowl surveys, shifting from ground counts to conducting aerial surveys. The Dungeness count has been 4-15% of the total breeding ducks in Western Washington from 2010 to 2016. Washington breeding waterfowl population monitoring can be found in the 2020 Game Status and Trend Report [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02217](https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02217) on pages 297-353. The greatest factor influencing brood production in the district continues to be loss of habitat to development and increasing human disturbance. Waterfowl numbers are expected to remain moderate in District 16.

Sea ducks have had restrictive bag limits due to concerns about low recruitment rates in sea ducks, increasing interest in sea duck hunting, and the unknown impact of reduced sea duck bag limits on compensatory species, particularly Barrow's goldeneyes led to the measure. The harvest survey indicated a 2019 total harvest of 961 scoters, 118 long-tailed ducks, 172 harlequin ducks and 315 goldeneyes. The reported goldeneye harvest included 45% common goldeneye. Primary harvest areas included Island, Mason, Skagit, Clallam, Pierce, and Whatcom counties.





**Figure 19.** Breeding waterfowl survey counts - with background map showing Dungeness aerial transects, including nearby Elwha, Chimacum, and Quilcene habitats.

## HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

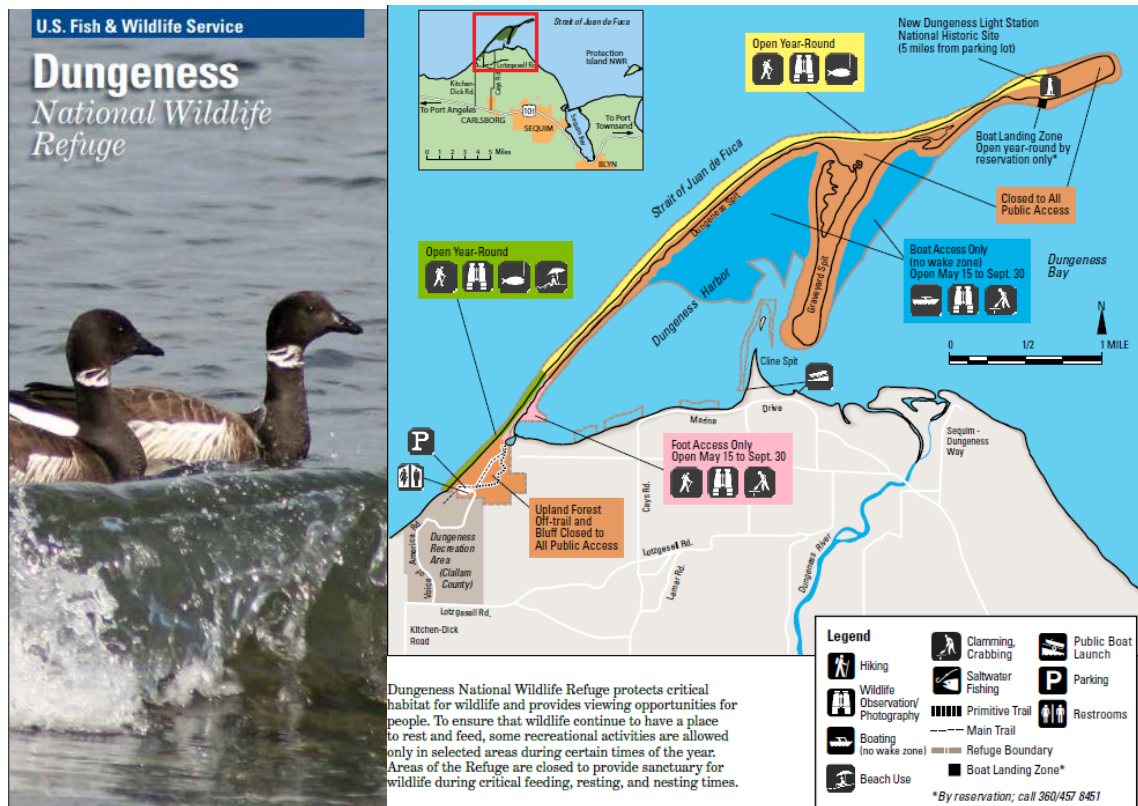
District 16 has limited access for waterfowl hunting. Some locals in the western portion of the district jump shoot in pools and side channels of the west end rivers, along with other small ponds and flooded gravel pit areas. In 2018, hunters harvested 6,031 ducks in Clallam County, and 1,958 ducks in Jefferson County.

Hunters can find the Office of the Washington State Climatologist website at: link [climate.washington.edu/outlook/](https://climate.washington.edu/outlook/) Climate Prediction Center (CPC). The CPC September temperature outlook has increased chances of above normal temperatures statewide. The outlook for precipitation is less insightful with equal chances of above, below, or near-normal temperatures.

Similar to the one-month outlook, the three-month CPC temperature outlook for September-October-November has increased chances of above normal statewide, though chances are only slightly increased at 30-40%. The precipitation outlook has increased chances of above normal precipitation totals across the state.

## HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Public saltwater hunting opportunities are more numerous than freshwater options in District 16, albeit more difficult in many ways. The regulations and landownerships, including tideland ownerships, make it necessary for hunters to plan ahead. The USFS Dungeness Wildlife Refuge has areas that are closed (Figure 20). Hunting is not allowed on the refuge and some of the refuge boundaries can be difficult to determine in the field.



**Figure 20.** Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge map showing closed areas.

**\*IMPORTANT INFORMATION IF YOU HUNT FROM A BOAT** – When hunting from a boat, hunters should ensure the boat anchor is not down on private tidelands without permission. Boat hunters must not go onto private land without permission to retrieve any waterfowl shot. However, hunters should be aware they could run the risk of violating the wastage law if they do not retrieve the waterfowl they have shot. Therefore, it is essential hunters be aware of property ownership, especially when hunting from a boat.

**Shoreline and Tidelands:** There are some private landowners who allow limited hunting access along the saltwater shoreline. Typically, local signs refers to a phone number or contact information, and in some cases the signage spells out the conditions of access. Because these vary from year to year, hunters must make a tour of the area and find out the current arrangements. Hunters should make sure they will have the ability to retrieve ducks, keeping in mind the ownerships where they have permission to hunt and the adjacent ownership where they do not have that permission.

The DNR quadrangle maps display the category of tidelands, with different shades of blue for different public tideland ownerships (Figure 21).



Figure 21. Portion of DNR quadrangle map displaying public tidelands in blue.

For Clallam County, hunters can use the Assessor maps to determine tideland ownership.. Assessor maps are available at the following websites (Figure 22): [clallam.net/Maps/websrv19.clallam.net/map/multipurpose\\_map/](http://clallam.net/Maps/websrv19.clallam.net/map/multipurpose_map/)

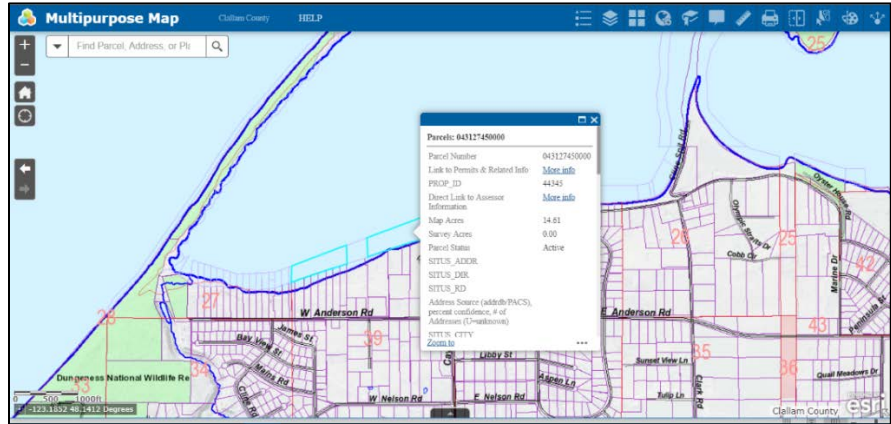


Figure 22. Clallam County website with parcel information on tidelands.

**PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES**

Most all freshwater waterfowl hunting areas in the Dungeness Basin are on private lands. Public land hunting opportunities are changing this year at the Lower Dungeness Unit at the mouth of the Dungeness River. Some hunters find hunting opportunities in the near-shore areas of bays and along the shoreline of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, both on foot and by boat. Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies and along the saltwater shorelines in the district. WDFW urges hunters to obey all state and county regulations at sites near residential areas to avoid potential future closures. Be sure to check the 2020 Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin, and goldeneye) in western Washington. WDFW has studied the local sea duck populations for years and you can review the sea duck management strategies draft publication from 2013 at [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01007](http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01007).

**North Olympic Wildlife Area** includes the [Dungeness Unit](http://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/dungeness-wildlife-area-unit) [wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/dungeness-wildlife-area-unit](http://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/dungeness-wildlife-area-unit) (Figure 23). This unit contains multiple disjointed parcels located about five miles north of Sequim. Hunting opportunities are offered ONLY at the RIVER'S END property. Access to private lands that were previously available is no longer available. WDFW is still evaluating the level of hunter use the the reduced size area can accomodate. Consult the wildlife area unit webpage for information updates. RIVER'S END PROPERTY is located north of East Anderson Road, and west of the Dungeness River. This is about 50acres north of East Anderson Road and west of the Dungeness River. Public access is supported by a small parking area, an information kiosk containing site rules, and a restroom.

**Be advised:**

- Due to popularity, waterfowl hunting at this site is subject to a number of rules. Hunting is restricted to Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, and state and federal holidays. Hunting is restricted to WDFW designated points that are available on a first- come, first-serve basis. Occupancy of a hunt point is limited to a maximum of four people.
- RIVER'S END: It is unlawful to have in possession more than 15 shotgun shells or to fire (shoot) more than 15 shells in one day on this unit (WAC 220-414-050).
- FIREARMS RESTRICTION AREA: Per Clallam County Regulations Chapter 15.16 FIREARMS DISCHARGE RESTRICTIONS - RESTRICTED SHOOTING AREA 1 (North of 101). The area north of Highway 101, and bounded on the west by the Elwha River, on the south by Highway 101, on the east by the east county line, and on the north by the Strait of Juan de Fuca.
- TOWNE ROAD and THREE CRABS PROPERTIES: Hunting management decisions are on hold until further review and planning.

Useful Links:

- Dungeness Wildlife Area Unit [wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/dungeness-wildlife-area-unit](http://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/dungeness-wildlife-area-unit)
- The Dungeness Recreation Area County Park no longer allows hunting. [clallam.net/Parks/Dungeness.html](http://clallam.net/Parks/Dungeness.html)



**Figure 23.** Map of Dungeness - Rivers End and Helen's Pond (3 Crabs Rd)

## GEESE AND BRANT

### COMMON SPECIES

**Canada Geese:** Most goose hunting opportunity in District 16 is for Canada geese. Resident geese are increasing in distribution, especially within urban and rural areas. Habitats like the Port Angeles Coast Guard base, Civic field, and nearby estuaries have had increased usage by Canada geese. In the last 10 years the Department has noticed a Canada goose expansion into wetlands that geese previously didn't use to WDFW knowledge.

**Brant:** Brant hunting is opening for Clallam and Whatcom counties on Jan. 15, 19, and 22, 2022 with a daily bag limit being two brant and the possession limit being six brant. Feb. 5 is the date for youth, veterans, and active military hunters, with the daily and possession bag limit being two brant.

The January 2018 season was the first season that brant hunting was open in Clallam County for decades. WDFW estimated the harvest within Clallam County to be 90 in 2018 and 89 in 2019. To compare, the 2019 harvest in Skagit County was estimated to be 241, Whatcom County was 48, and Pacific County was 72.

Brant hunting was closed in Clallam and Jefferson counties for decades. Brant management was complicated by the difference in productivity of subpopulations, some enduring high nesting failures that led to restrictions on the hunting grounds. The 2014 report on management of brant in Washington is available at [pacificbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Brant-Management-in-Washington.pdf](http://pacificbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Brant-Management-in-Washington.pdf)

WDFW recently added brant hunting in Clallam County. "For the second consecutive year, harvest was allowed in Whatcom and Clallam counties resulting in 48 and 90 brant harvested, respectively, after winter counts had consistently placed the three-year average above the 1,000 brant winter population threshold required to consider opening a county to potential harvest, per WDFW Game Management Plan objectives." (2019 Game Status and Trend Report).

WDFW checked and measured, including collecting feather specimens for DNA,

many of the harvested brant from Clallam County during the 2018 and 2019 seasons to further assess the brant populations.





## **POPULATION STATUS**

Canada geese populations continue to increase on the east side of the district.

## **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS**

Clallam County goose harvest in 2018-19 was 310, about 8% of Region 6's entire goose harvest. Goose numbers are increasing year-round, providing more hunter opportunity by the local production.

## HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Within small acreages and patchy ownership, WDFW doesn't advise pass shooting geese. Local hunters were quite successful in previous seasons using a decoy spread and blinds. Hunters must obtain permission to hunt on private lands and follow all [firearm regulations](#). Many agricultural fields have residential properties nearby, so hunters must be aware of all safety concerns.

Please be respectful of private landowners and avoid conflicts with other recreational users in the area. Brant are typically found along the Dungeness shorelines that hold eelgrass but also occur in other locations from Port Angeles to Sequim Bay. It will be worthwhile to become familiar with the other regular uses in potential brant hunting areas to avoid a location that will have conflicting uses on the few days the hunt is open.

## PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Most goose hunting opportunities are on private agricultural lands in GMU 624.

# FOREST GROUSE

## SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Hunting within any of the forest lands throughout District 16 should offer good opportunities for harvesting grouse. Hunters may find prime forest grouse hunting on DNR and USFS lands within the district. Grouse harvest in Clallam County is one of the highest county totals within Region 6.

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout public and private forest lands in District 16. The chances for harvesting sooty grouse increase at higher elevations. Hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet, within timber stands with huckleberry and other forage plants. Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500 feet, particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (5-25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types.

## HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

Grouse hunting in District 16 continues to decline, a trend WDFW has documented since 2009. Clallam County grouse harvest peaked in 2009 at 6,350 by 1,202 hunters, with Jefferson County 2009 harvest at 3,839 grouse by 1,502 hunters. The 2018 harvest totals for Clallam County were up to 3,060 grouse. Hunters harvested 954 grouse in Jefferson County in 2018.

Habitat conditions certainly play a role, but spring weather and its effect on young is also a huge factor in grouse production and hunting prospects for the fall.

WDFW is collecting grouse wings and tails to evaluate the harvested populations. There are various ways you can contribute your harvested grouse wing. One is to drop them off (with filled out envelopes, provided) at these wing/tail barrels. You can also provide them to local WDFW employees. The information to collect from the harvest is the date and location (GMU). Thanks in advance for helping with grouse monitoring.



## PHEASANTS

District 16 does not have viable populations of wild pheasant and there are no longer any pheasant release sites in the district. For information on current pheasant release sites, check this link to the [Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/pheasant-release) [wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/pheasant-release](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/pheasant-release)

## QUAIL

There is a fair abundance of California (valley) quail in the eastern portion of District 16. They are quite common in the Dungeness Valley, but hunting opportunities can be challenging due to predominately private ownership. Quail, like the deer, thrive in the Dungeness habitats that include a mix of open grass, shrubs, and forest. Some quail hunting opportunities can be found on public lands located in the lower foothills in clear-cuts or any early successional habitats. During 2018, hunters harvested 214 quail in Clallam County, with two harvested in Jefferson County.

## TURKEYS

WDFW doesn't manage District 16 for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare here. WDFW receives occasional reports of individuals or small groups of turkeys within GMU 603. These are likely domestic turkeys that escaped from a farm that raised turkeys in the Joyce area. There are basically no prospects for hunting wild turkeys in District 16.

## BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION



Band-tailed pigeons were quite abundant in District 16 historically. Local hunters reported seeing clouds of band-tailed pigeons in drainages, such as McDonald Creek, on the east side of District 16 back in the 1950s. You will find them throughout the district using forest habitats.

## **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS**

Hunters report relatively low band-tailed pigeon harvest in this district (sometimes zero), but the resource is available throughout the district in good numbers. WDFW Enforcement officers remind hunters that they must have all required hunting licenses, along with the special migratory bird authorization and the band-tailed pigeon harvest card. It is mandatory to report all band-tailed pigeon harvest. More information about population monitoring and harvests is available in the 2020 USFWS band-tailed pigeon population status report.

[fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/Waterfowl/WaterfowlPopulationStatusReport20.pdf](https://fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/Waterfowl/WaterfowlPopulationStatusReport20.pdf)

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

Band-tailed pigeons are most prevalent in the district along marine estuaries, shorelines, and forest roads where they forage on berries. WDFW encourages hunters to search for areas with elderberry and cascara present. Band-tailed pigeons often congregate around these food sources.

## **OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES**

### **Mourning Dove**

District 16 has not been a major dove hunting area, although eastern Clallam County has a lot of doves. To complicate matters, the Eurasian collared dove, an introduced species, is becoming very prevalent in east Clallam County. The estimated 2018 harvest in Clallam County was 34 mourning doves. Reported harvest in Jefferson County during 2018 was 0 mourning doves. There was no reported harvest of doves in 2017 within District 16. The 2020 USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status report [fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/MourningDove/MourningDovePopulationStatus20.pdf](https://fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/MourningDove/MourningDovePopulationStatus20.pdf) has more information

### **Snowshoe Hare and Cottontail Rabbit**

Most all of the rabbits encountered on the Olympic Peninsula will be snowshoe hare (see range maps below). Snowshoe hare are readily observed along forested roads in the western half of District 16, and will be found throughout the district, usually along forested edges. Annual district harvest of hares and rabbits is erratic, ranging from zero to over 300. The opportunity is always there, with a harvest per unit effort expected to range between 0.25-0.70/day. More information on the snowshoe hare and other rabbits can be found at the following links:

- [naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA\\_snowshoe\\_hare.html](https://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_snowshoe_hare.html)
- [naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA\\_eastern\\_cottontail.html](https://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_eastern_cottontail.html)
- [naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA\\_european\\_rabbit.html](https://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_european_rabbit.html)
- [naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA\\_nuttalls\\_cottontail.html](https://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/maps/wa/mammals/WA_nuttalls_cottontail.html)
- [Snowshoe Hare - Canadian Wildlife Federation www.hww.ca/en/wildlife/mammals/snowshoe-hare.html](https://www.hww.ca/en/wildlife/mammals/snowshoe-hare.html)

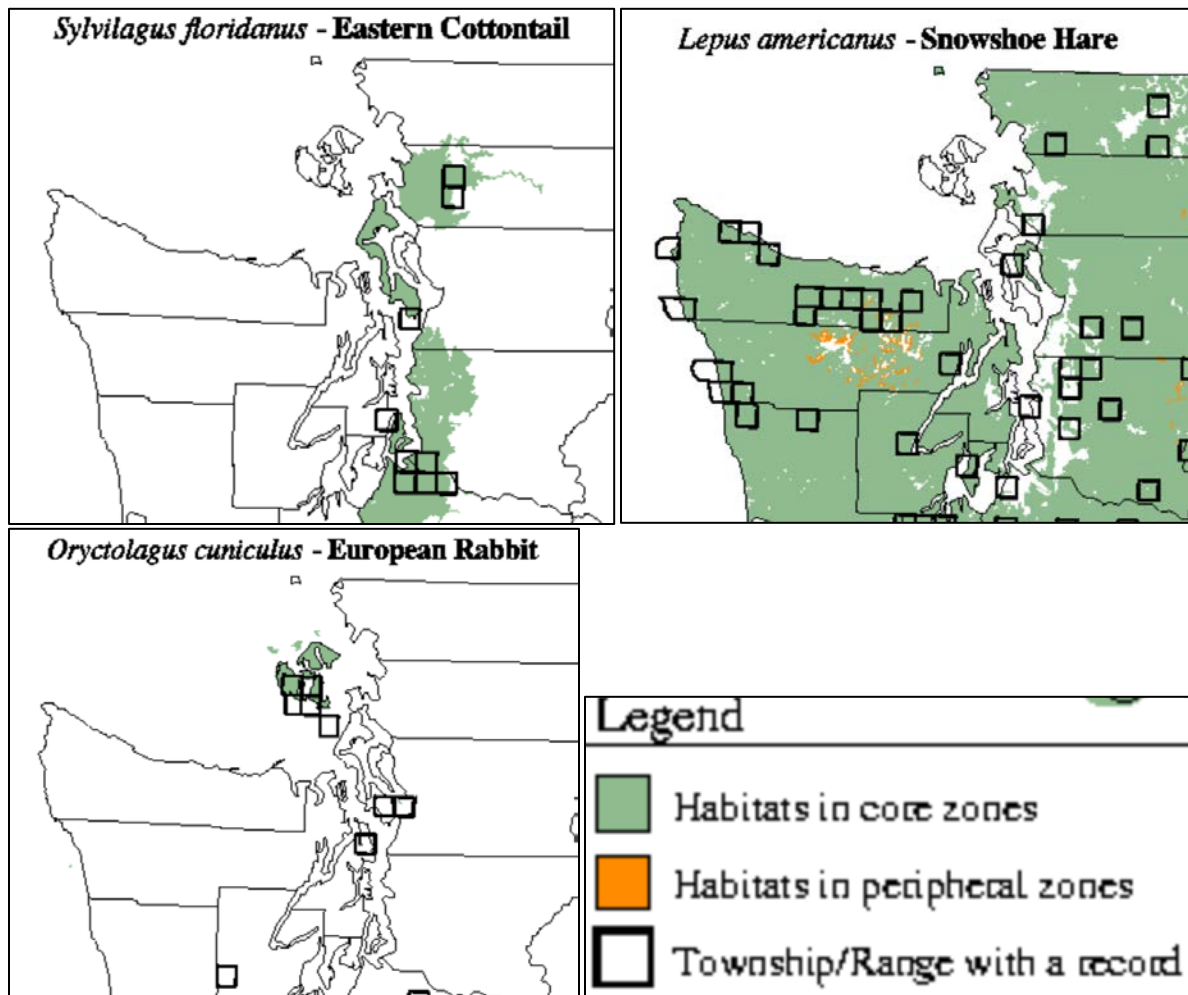


Figure 24. Range maps for snowshoe hare, eastern cottontail rabbit, and European rabbit.

## TRIBAL HUNTING

District 16 is within the ceded area of numerous treaty tribes on the Olympic Peninsula. WDFW and tribes cooperatively manage wildlife populations. Tribal hunting often occurs concurrent with WDFW hunting seasons. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal Enforcement personnel are responsible for ensuring tribal hunting regulations are followed, which may differ from state regulations.

Tribal big game harvest reports are available at: [nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/](http://nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/)



## FIREARM AND WEAPON RESTRICTIONS

These diverse mixtures of ownerships and jurisdictions also present different combinations of firearm restriction regulations and ordinances. The three main firearm restriction regulations most relevant to hunters are the following:

- WDFW – Firearm Restriction - unlawful to hunt wildlife with centerfire or rimfire rifles in “The portion of the GMU 624 (Coyle) within Clallam County.” Page 90 in the 2020 Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.
- Clallam County Code Clallam County Firearms Discharge Restrictions  
[codepublishing.com/WA/ClallamCounty/html/ClallamCounty15/ClallamCounty1516.html](http://codepublishing.com/WA/ClallamCounty/html/ClallamCounty15/ClallamCounty1516.html)
- Jefferson County Code Jefferson County Shooting in the County  
[codepublishing.com/WA/JeffersonCounty/html/JeffersonCounty08/JeffersonCounty0850.html](http://codepublishing.com/WA/JeffersonCounty/html/JeffersonCounty08/JeffersonCounty0850.html)

## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

Make sure you have acquired the necessary permits to drive on public and private land in the area you decide to explore.

**Public Access Permits:** Here are some public access permits to be aware of and that you may need depending on your destination.

[Discover Pass](#) State parks, DNR, and WDFW



[Federal Agency-Interagency Annual Pass](#)



[Federal Agency Interagency Volunteer Pass](#)



The interagency passes include access on National Park Service, USFS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation lands. Keep in mind that many public lands on the Olympic Peninsula are not open to hunting, including Olympic National Park, Washington state parks, and Clallam County parks.

## PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Private timberlands have various access and road closure procedures, so it is prudent to determine current ownership for a target location and the requirements to obtain permission to hunt. Merrill and Ring Pysht Tree Farm in GMU 603 has made a drastic change for 2018 and will not be allowing access for deer hunting. A lottery system is used for the small number of access permits they issue for elk hunting season. The other forest industry ownerships have various access systems in place. Hunters are encouraged to scout the areas they are considering hunting and pay close attention to the signs on all roads. Signs are often the landowner's primary method of informing the public on which areas are open to hunting.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

#### **Rayonier, Inc.**

Website: [rayonier.com/](http://rayonier.com/)

IFP Office 360-452-1351

Forks Office 360-374-6565

Port Angeles 360-457-2329

Information on Rayonier Access Permits:

- [property.rayonierhunting.com/Permits/PermitsHome.aspx](http://property.rayonierhunting.com/Permits/PermitsHome.aspx)
- [property.rayonierhunting.com/AvailableAreas/FindProperties.aspx](http://property.rayonierhunting.com/AvailableAreas/FindProperties.aspx)

#### **Green Crow**

Website: [greencrow.com/contact-us/locations/](http://greencrow.com/contact-us/locations/)

360-452-3325

727 E. 8<sup>th</sup>, Port Angeles, WA 98362

#### **Merrill and Ring**

Website: [merrillring.com/contacts/](http://merrillring.com/contacts/)

360-452-2367

Email: [contact@merrillring.com](mailto:contact@merrillring.com)

813 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362

### OTHER MAJOR LANDOWNERS

#### **Hoh River Trust**

Facebook: [facebook.com/The-Hoh-River-Trust-74841050447/](https://facebook.com/The-Hoh-River-Trust-74841050447/)

## HUNTING ORGANIZATIONS

### **Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation – Olympic Peninsula Chapter**

Website: <http://www.rmef.org/Washington/OlympicPeninsula.aspx>

Douglas Doherty

Phone: (989) 736-4234

Email: [ddoherty@rmef.org](mailto:ddoherty@rmef.org)

### **Jefferson County Sportsmen's Association**

Website: <http://jeffersoncountysportsmen.org/wp/>

Email: [info@JeffersonCountySportsmen.org](mailto:info@JeffersonCountySportsmen.org)

P.O. Box 737, Port Townsend, WA 98368

### **Sportsmen for Wild Olympics**

Website: [www.SportsmenForWildOlympics.org](http://www.SportsmenForWildOlympics.org)

Email: [info@sportsmenforwildolympics.org](mailto:info@sportsmenforwildolympics.org)

### **Wapiti Bowmen Archery Club**

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Wapiti-Bowmen-180948655312545/>

Email: [wapitibowclub@gmail.com](mailto:wapitibowclub@gmail.com)

374 E Arnette Rd, Port Angeles, WA 98362

### **Eyes in the Woods**

Website: <http://www.eyesinthewoods.org/index.php/en/?Itemid=419>

P.O. Box 2406, Olympia, WA 98507

### **West End Sportsmen's Club-Forks**

Facebook Website: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/West-End-Sportsmens-Club-354953248029561/posts/>

Phone: (360) 374-5420

Sportsman Club Road, Forks, WA 98331

### **Washington Backcountry Hunters and Anglers**

Website: [http://www.backcountryhunters.org/washington\\_bha](http://www.backcountryhunters.org/washington_bha)

Max Cole, West Side Co-Chair

Email: [washington@backcountryhunters.org](mailto:washington@backcountryhunters.org)

### **Ducks Unlimited Olympic District**

Website: <http://www.ducks.org/washington/wa-content/state-contacts/?poe=stateHomeIcon>

Chairman Mike Luecht

Email: [papaluke@wavecable.com](mailto:papaluke@wavecable.com)

### **Izaak Walton League of America Greater Seattle Chapter**

Website: <https://www.iwla.org/local-chapters>

A. William Way

Phone: (425) 868-4759

Email: [bway@watershedco.com](mailto:bway@watershedco.com)

3451 E. Lake Sammamish Ln. N.E., Sammamish, WA 98074

## Washington Brant Foundation

Website: <http://www.wabrانت.org/>

Maynard Axelson

Phone: (360) 445-6681

Email: [info@wabrانت.org](mailto:info@wabrانت.org)

15929 Fir Island Rd, Mt Vernon, WA 98273

## Washington Outdoor Women (WOW)

Website: <http://www.washingtonoutdoorwomen.org>

<http://washingtonoutdoorwomen.org/register/> - Workshops

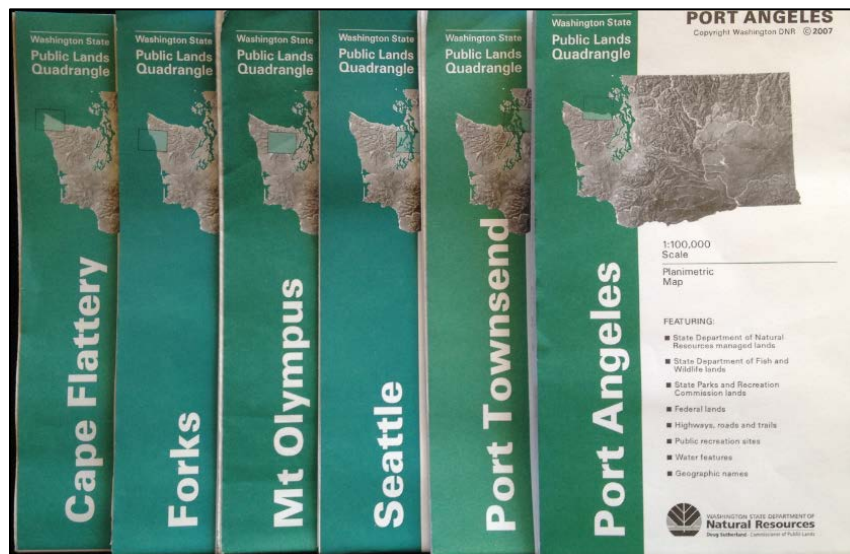
P.O. Box 1656, Bellevue, WA 98009-1656

If you know of an organization that should be included in this document, please let us know.

## ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

WDFW recommends a set of these DNR maps, which you can order online at:

[dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/buy-maps-aerial-photos-or-survey-data](http://dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/buy-maps-aerial-photos-or-survey-data)



These DNR maps are available to buy at Swains and Browns in Port Angeles and Thriftway in Forks but can also be ordered online or by phone.

These DNR maps have some of the best combination of land ownership and current roads. However, keep in mind there have been several DNR and private forest land ownership exchanges in recent years that won't show up on these maps. DNR's website has current DNR ownership displayed at [arcgis.com/apps/Embed/index.html?webmap=fa6875f802ee43f4a21d16df47b71cecextent=-124.6798,47.5345,-123.334,48.3084&zoom=true&scale=false&theme=light](http://arcgis.com/apps/Embed/index.html?webmap=fa6875f802ee43f4a21d16df47b71cecextent=-124.6798,47.5345,-123.334,48.3084&zoom=true&scale=false&theme=light)

Other maps that can be helpful for select areas include:

**Forest Service Online:**

Forest Service maps can be obtained free online at [freegeographytools.com/2007/updated-usgs-24k-topographic-maps-from-the-us-forest-service](http://freegeographytools.com/2007/updated-usgs-24k-topographic-maps-from-the-us-forest-service)

**Forest Service Maps to purchase:**

USFS sells forest district maps that are very useful, as are the custom correct maps shown on the same page.

Link: [fs.usda.gov/detail/olympic/maps-pubs/?cid=stelprdb5195398](http://fs.usda.gov/detail/olympic/maps-pubs/?cid=stelprdb5195398)

East end of WDFW District 16 is the Hood Canal Ranger District/North End map.

West end of WDFW District 16 are the Pacific Ranger District/North End and South End maps.

**OnX App:** The OnX Cellphone App has been the go-to tool for information on land ownership in recent years. One main issue is areas with no cell service could make the tool useless. If you preplan when you have service, you can save the aerial background for the areas you will encounter poor cell coverage and then still use the App without cell service.



2021



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**

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Biologist  
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Wildlife Biologist



## **DISTRICT 17 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Pacific and Grays Harbor counties

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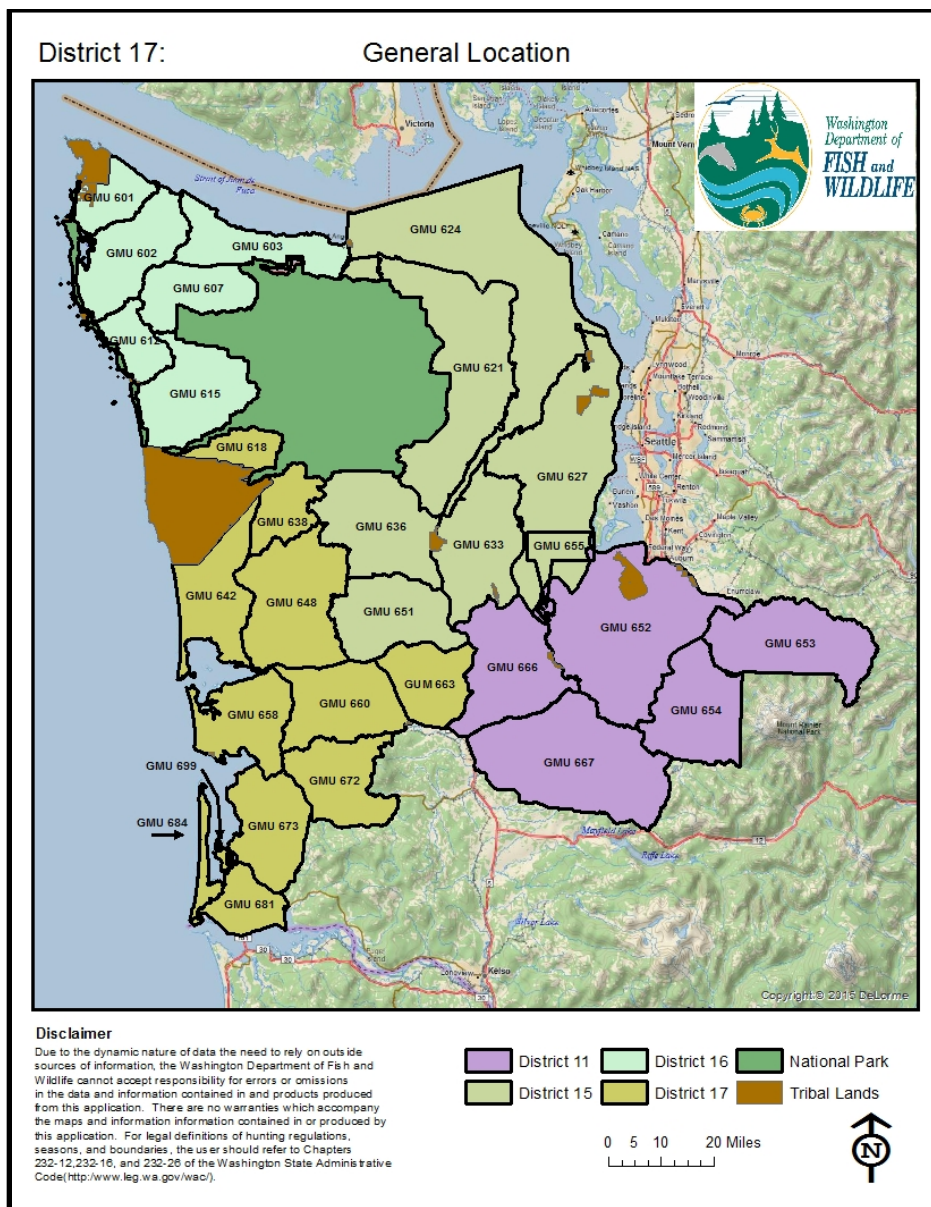
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## DISTRICT 17 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Administratively, District 17 includes all of Pacific and Grays Harbor counties and is one of four management districts (11, 15, 16, and 17) that collectively comprise the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) Region 6 (see map). The northern portion of District 17 (north of Highway 12) includes the southwestern portion of the Olympic Mountains while the southern part of the district is situated in the Willapa Hills.

District 17 is located in southwest Washington and consists of 12 Game Management Units (GMUs): 638 (Quinault Ridge), 648 (Wynoochee), 660 (Minot Peak), 672 (Fall River), 681 (Bear River), 699 (Long Island), 618 (Matheny), 642 (Copalis), 658 (North River), 663 (Capital Peak), 673 (Williams Creek), 684 (Long Beach).



Four administrative districts and their associated GMUs within WDFW Region 6



The landscape in District 17 is dominated by intensely managed industrial forest land characterized by second and third growth forests. These lands are primarily dedicated to producing conifers such as Douglas fir, western hemlock, and occasionally cedar. A small number of stands focus production on red alder. Other habitats in the district range from sub-alpine habitat in areas adjacent to Olympic National Park to coastal wetlands along the outer coast.

District 17 is best known for elk hunting opportunities in the Willapa Hills and waterfowl hunting opportunities around Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and in the Chehalis and Willapa River valleys. High quality hunting opportunities exist for other game species, including black-tailed deer, black bears, and forest grouse. The following table shows the estimated harvest for most game species in District 17 during the 2015-2020 seasons. For more specific information on harvest trends, please refer to the appropriate section in this document.

**Table 1.** Total hunter harvest for selected game species during previous 5 years in District 17.

\*Data Unavailable

‡Cougar harvest may include animals from adjacent GMU’s 636 and 651.

‡ Late season goose not included for 2018-20 due to changes in reporting method

	Harvest year				
Species	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Elk	766	748	856	733	717
Deer	1,476	1,674	1,542	1,258	1,837
Bear	139	202	123	109	73
Cougar	8‡	7	14	11	8
Ducks	16,864	*	19,715	19,157	15,211
Geese (late season)	‡	‡	‡	1,372	1,979
Geese (early season)	190	*	‡ 309	424	269
Forest Grouse	4,503	*	3,724	3,700	3,500
Rabbits	124	*	35	131	5

## ELK

### SUMMARY

**Success rates:** Ranges widely depending on weapon type, GMU, and land access.

**Recent trends:** Stable harvest and hunter effort. Protracted decline in modern firearm elk hunters.

**GMUs with highest elk harvest in rank order:** GMU 673 then 658. Followed by 660 and 681

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

The subspecies of elk in District 17 are Roosevelt elk. Unlike other areas in western Washington, Rocky Mountain elk were never introduced into the area and Roosevelt-Rocky Mountain elk hybrids do not occur. The state of Washington contains 10 distinct elk herds. A portion of two elk herds occur in District 17:

- Olympic elk herd (GMUs 618, 638, 642, and 648)
- Willapa Hills elk herd (GMUs 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, and 699).

The quality of elk hunting in District 17 varies from marginal to excellent depending on the GMU. The greatest harvest opportunities occur in GMUs associated with the Willapa Hills elk herd area, specifically GMUs 658, 672, 673, and 681.

In Washington, elk are managed at the herd level, while harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. In general, each herd occupies several GMUs that collectively define the range of a population that minimizes interchange with adjacent elk populations.

Overall, District 17 is managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing elk herds. To meet that goal, our specific objective is to maintain herds at a minimum ratio of 15 bulls to 100 cows in the pre-hunting season population and a minimum of 12 bulls to 100 cows in the post-season population. Portions of the district (such as GMU 684) must balance overall herd objectives with the equally important mission to minimize conflicts with people. Elk can cause severe impacts to crops, such as hay or cranberries.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor elk populations across the entire district. Trends in harvest, hunter success, and harvest per unit effort are used as surrogates to formal indices or estimates. These surrogates have limitations when applied to monitoring trends in population size. Consequently, the agency developed a more detailed monitoring strategy specifically for the Willapa Hills elk herd to:

- Determine elk population trends
- Quantify cow to calf ratios
- Quantify bull to cow ratios

Due to limitations imposed by the COVID-19 epidemic, no surveys occurred in the Willapa Hills in 2021. WDFW previously conducted surveys during March of 2020 in the southern half of the Willapa Hills Elk herd area in portions of GMUs 506, 530, 673, and 681. WDFW observed 1,524 elk during the survey and the bull to cow ratios averaged 17 bulls per 100 cows. This 17:100 statistic is well above the 12 bulls per 100 cow minimum that WDFW uses to benchmark breeding success. Calf to cow ratios measured 33 calves per 100 cows. This calf ratio indicates fair elk production. Mature bulls, carrying antlers with five points or more, were uncommon.

WDFW conducted surveys during March of 2019 in the northern half of the Willapa Hills Elk herd area, specifically portions of GMUs 658, 660, 672 and 501. WDFW observed 889 elk during the 2019 survey and the bull to cow ratios averaged 23 bulls per 100 cows. This 23:100 statistic is well above the 12 bulls per 100 cow minimum that WDFW uses to benchmark breeding success. Calf to cow ratios measured 45 calves per 100 cows. This calf ratio indicates good elk production. Mature bulls, carrying antlers with five points or more, were uncommon (<10% of total). Hunters with a primary goal of finding a trophy bull are more likely to find success looking outside the Willapa Hills area and into the neighboring Olympic or St. Helens elk herds.

Both calf to cow and bull to cow ratios for the Willapa Hills herd area are robust, indicating a productive herd with decent harvest opportunities. Yearly surveys of the Willapa Hills elk herd will be conducted to sample different segments of the landscape.

All harvest data indicates that elk populations are stable or increasing in District 17. For more detailed information related to the status of Washington's elk herds, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report, which is available for download on the department's website or by [clicking here](#).

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

Probably the most frequent question the Department gets from hunters is, "which GMU should I hunt?" . The answer depends on the hunting method and the target hunting experience. For example, GMU 699 is a small unit closed to both modern and muzzleloader hunters. Another example is that archery hunters are not allowed to harvest antlerless elk in every GMU.

Some hunters are looking for an opportunity to harvest a mature bull. Large mature bulls are found in District 17, but they are not very abundant. WDFW directs hunters seeking mature bulls to spend their efforts in either the Quinault Ridge (638) Matheny (618) or adjacent Clearwater (615) GMUs. All three GMUs are adjacent to Olympic National Park (ONP) and have the reputation of producing some very nice bulls. The best success for five-point or better bulls is garnered by the September rifle permit hunters in either the Quinault Ridge (638) or Matheny (618) GMUs.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would have high densities of elk, low hunter densities, and high hunter success rates. Unfortunately, this scenario does not readily exist in any GMU open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 17. Those GMUs with the highest elk densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them not to hunt in a GMU where they see lots of elk. For other hunters, they might prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of elk if

that means there are also very few hunters. Note that many industrial timber companies have begun limiting access or charging a fee to access their land. This change has effectively, and sometimes dramatically, reduced the density of hunters on those lands.

The information provided in Tables 2, 3, and 4 provides a general assessment of how District 17 GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers were further summarized by the number of elk harvested and hunters per square mile.

Comparing total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison since GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of elk harvested in a five-year period from 2009-2013 during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 681 and 673 was 36 and 116 elk, respectively. That total harvest may seem to indicate much higher density of elk in GMU 673 compared to GMU 681. However, examining the number of elk harvested per square mile (harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>) provides an estimate of 0.436 harvested/mi<sup>2</sup> in GMU 673 and 0.330 harvested/mi<sup>2</sup> in GMU 681. Expressed as the number of elk harvested per mile, elk numbers are probably more similar between the two GMUs than total harvest indicates.

Each GMU was ranked from 1 to 11 for elk harvested/mi<sup>2</sup> (bulls and cows), hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates for the 2009-2013 season. Three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed in order of least rank sum to largest. The modern firearm comparisons are the most straightforward because bag limits and seasons are the same in each GMU.

Archers should consider that antlerless elk seasons are not uniform across all GMUs. Antlerless elk may be harvested during the general season in six GMUs, and three GMUs are open during early and late archery seasons. These differences are important when comparing total harvest or hunter numbers among GMUs. Muzzleloader seasons are not uniform either. Some muzzleloader seasons are open during the early muzzleloader season, while others are only available during the late muzzleloader season. Hunters should keep these differences in mind when interpreting the information provided in Tables 2 through 4.

**Table 2.** Comparison of historic modern firearm general elk season total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates using rank sum analysis. Data presented are based on a historic five year running average (2009-2013).

<b>MODERN FIREARM</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	4	0.078	6	30	0.59	3	13%	2	<b>11</b>
681	109	36	0.330	2	240	2.20	9	15%	1	<b>12</b>
673	266	116	0.436	1	1011	3.80	10	11%	3	<b>14</b>
658	257	62	0.241	3	557	2.17	8	11%	4	<b>15</b>
672	257	34	0.132	4	337	1.31	7	10%	5	<b>16</b>
660	302	27	0.089	5	290	0.96	5	9%	7	<b>17</b>
638	153	10	0.065	7	111	0.73	4	10%	6	<b>17</b>
642	278	6	0.022	9	73	0.26	1	8%	8	<b>18</b>
663	210	2	0.010	10	64	0.30	2	3%	10	<b>22</b>
648	431	17	0.039	8	416	0.97	6	4%	9	<b>23</b>

**Table 3.** Comparison of historic muzzleloader general elk season total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates using rank sum analysis. Data presented are based on a historic five-year running average (2009-2013). GMU 684 is in bold and open during both early and late season for any elk.

\* Note: Muzzleloader seasons were recently opened for the 2014 seasons in units 648, 673, 681.

<b>MUZZLELOADER</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
<b>684</b>	51	14	0.275	1	51	1.00	7	28%	1	<b>9</b>
642	278	3	0.011	6	20	0.07	2	14%	2	<b>10</b>
672	257	9	0.035	3	97	0.38	5	9%	3	<b>11</b>
660	302	10	0.033	4	98	0.32	4	9%	4	<b>12</b>
658	257	11	0.043	2	184	0.72	6	6%	5	<b>13</b>
638	153	2	0.013	5	41	0.27	3	6%	6	<b>14</b>
663	210	1	0.005	7	13	0.06	1	2%	7	<b>15</b>



**Table 4.** Comparison of historic archery general elk season total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates using rank sum analysis. Data presented are based on an historic five year running average (2009-2013). GMU 684 is in bold and open during both early and late archery

\*GMUs with 3-point minimum or antlerless harvest restrictions

<b>ARCHERY</b>											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum	
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank		
658	257	16	0.062	5	111	0.43	5	15%	2	<b>12</b>	
673*	266	79	0.297	3	488	1.83	8	16%	1	<b>12</b>	
<b>699*</b>	8	11	1.375	1	78	9.75	11	14%	3	<b>15</b>	
<b>681*</b>	109	53	0.486	2	377	3.46	10	14%	4	<b>16</b>	
638	153	5	0.033	9	53	0.35	3	10%	6	<b>18</b>	
<b>672*</b>	257	52	0.202	4	483	1.88	9	11%	5	<b>18</b>	
684*	51	2	0.039	7	19	0.37	4	9%	8	<b>19</b>	
660*	302	12	0.040	6	135	0.45	6	9%	7	<b>19</b>	
642	278	2	0.007	10	20	0.07	1	9%	9	<b>20</b>	
663	210	1	0.005	11	27	0.13	2	4%	11	<b>24</b>	
<b>648</b>	431	16	0.037	8	283	0.66	7	6%	10	<b>25</b>	

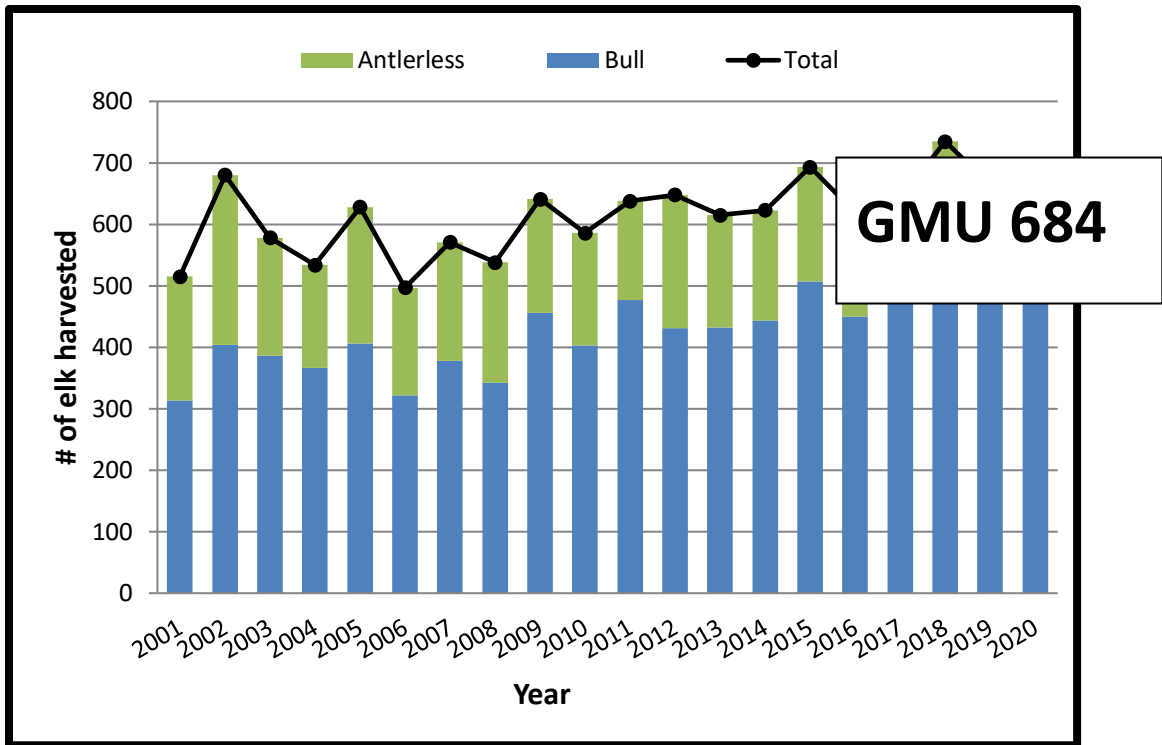
### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Elk populations do not vary much from year to year, especially in District 17, which lacks the severe winter weather conditions that might result in a winter die-off. Consequently, the number of elk available for harvest is expected to be similar in size to the 2021 season. Elk harvest appeared to be higher in 2018 compared to prior years so, a slight decline in elk harvest for 2019 was not unexpected. Hunter numbers do not typically change much from one year to the next, but recent actions by private timber companies to charge for access have reduced hunter numbers in those areas affected.

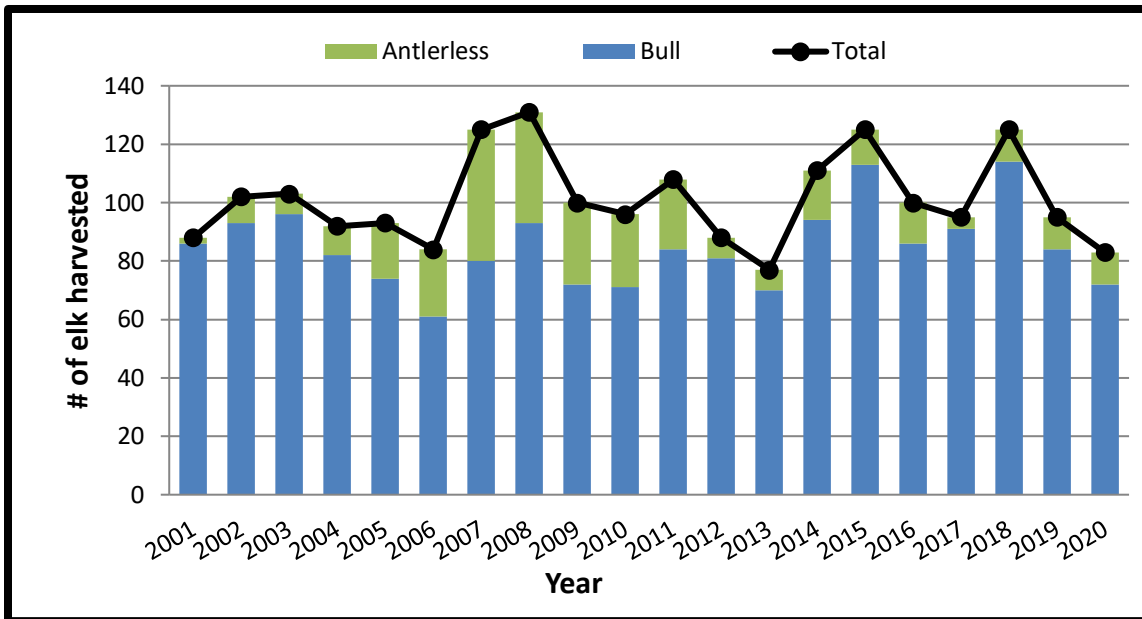
Weather can be dramatically different from year to year and has the potential to influence harvest rates. As an example, 2012 was a hot and dry summer by western Washington standards, which produced extreme fire danger warnings and caused many timber companies to close their lands to public access during the latter part of the general early archery season and the entire early muzzleloader season. We've witnessed record high temperatures in early summer this year so, conditions could result in extreme fire dangers in Fall of 2021. Since WDFW is not able to predict long-term weather events, the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons is recent trends in harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success.

Below (Figures 1-6) are detailed charts on historic elk harvest for District 17. These figures are intended to provide hunters with the following information to make an informed decision on where to hunt.

- A. Historic harvest data for the Willapa Hills and Olympic Elk Herd Areas.
- B. Hunter participation and success rates for the Willapa Hills and Olympic elk herds.
- C. Hunter success rates for Willapa Hills and Olympic elk herds.



**Figure 1.** District 17 Willapa Hills Herd area (GMUs 658-699) elk harvest totals. Total bull (blue) and antlerless (green) elk harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons combined, 2001–2020. Harvest totals do not include tribal harvest.



**Figure 2.** Olympic herd area (GMUs 618, 638, 642, 648), 2001-2020 total elk harvest. \*Note: Only includes elk harvest totals for GMUs inside District 17. Total bull (blue) and antlerless (green) elk harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons combined, 2001–2020. Totals do not include tribal harvest.

## HOW TO FIND ELK

Like most places, when hunting elk in District 17, hunters need to do homework and spend time scouting before the season opens. Predicting where elk are located is especially difficult after hunting pressure increases. The majority of hunters spend their time focused on clear cuts. Elk often forage in clear cuts and are highly visible when they do. Those highly visible elk often attract other hunters. Consequently, clear cuts can get crowded in a hurry. Many elk (especially bulls) will infrequently visit clear cuts during daylight hours. Instead, they may spend most of their day in closed canopy forests, swamps, or regeneration stands.



Corey Bronckhorst with elk taken from GMU 673 during the 2016 archery season.

Some generalities can be made about the landscape that will increase the odds of locating elk. When going to a new area, hunters are encouraged to cover as much ground as possible. Note areas where you see signs along roads and landings. Landings are often ungraveled, making it easy to see fresh tracks. Scouting will reveal which areas hold elk and where to focus more intensive efforts.

After identifying areas with abundant signs of elk, hunters should focus on areas that provide cover and are adjacent to clear cuts. During early seasons, when it is warm, these cover areas often include swamps, creek bottoms, river bottoms, or any place near water. Once the season progresses and temperatures cool, elk are less attracted to water, and locating them becomes more difficult. Hunting pressure also can force elk to use areas that provide thicker cover or are more inaccessible to hunters because of topography.

Later in the season, consult a topographic map and find benches located in steep terrain with thick cover. Elk often use these benches to bed down during the day. Finally, don't let a locked gate (provided that non-motorized access is allowed) keep you from going into an area to search for elk. Frequently, these areas hold elk that have not received much hunting pressure, making them less skittish and easier to hunt. A popular approach to hunting behind gates is to use mountain bikes with trailers. Biking on timber company lands is facilitated by high densities of maintained gravel roads.

## **ELK AREAS**

There are two Elk Areas in District 17: Elk Area 6010 (Mallis or Raymond) and Elk Area 6064 (Quinalt Valley). Nearly all permit opportunities in District 17 are antlerless elk hunts and are associated with these Elk Areas. Elk Area 6010 was established in a location with chronic elk damage problems, and its primary purpose is to provide antlerless harvest opportunities that help control the growth rate of herds in localized agricultural areas.

Elk Area 6064 was established to resolve problems landowners had with elk hunters. Special restrictions apply in each Elk Area. In Elk Area 6064, only Master Hunters are allowed to hunt elk during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons.

The purpose of Elk Area 6010 is to alleviate elk damage on private agricultural lands. Elk Area 6010 also contains tracts of public or private timber company lands where elk are not problematic. Hunters that draw a permit in either Elk Area are encouraged to call the Private Lands Biologist (Scott Harris) in the Region 6 Office (360-249-4628 ext.234). Mr. Harris may be able to put you in contact with a landowner currently having problems with elk.

## **NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

Several private timber companies in District 17 charge a fee to access areas previously open to the public. Property ownership changes irregularly. Hunters should contact landowners in areas they intend to hunt and determine the company's current policy. See private lands access section for more information.

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

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range, including within the Olympic and Willapa Elk herd areas. While elk are susceptible to many conditions which result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and western Lewis County. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area.

Hoof disease is found throughout District 17 in both the Olympic and Willapa Hills elk herd areas. TAHD appears to be more prevalent among elk in the Willapa Herd area and southern end of the Olympic Peninsula.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### **How hunters can help:**

In 2021, WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program to encourage west-side (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. The objective of this program is to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can choose to participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in western Washington. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in western Washington with season dates of Sep. 1 – Dec 31 will be awarded. Additionally, all participants will receive a custom, waterproof license holder.

- **Harvest a limping elk from any 400, 500, 600 series GMUs**
- **Turn in your elk hooves along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in western Washington**
- **Report elk:** Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form.
- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.



## DEER

### SUMMARY

**Success rates:** Depends on weapon type and GMU hunted. For the entire district, hunter success generally ranges from 15-20%.

**Recent trends:** Observable increase in harvest last year compared to the year prior.

**GMUs with highest harvest:** 660, 663, 672, 648

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

Columbian black-tailed deer (black-tails or black-tailed deer) are the only species of deer in District 17. Deer hunting opportunities in District 17 range from marginal to very good. The best opportunities to harvest a black-tailed deer in District 17 occur in GMUs 663, 648, 672, and 660.

In Washington, black-tail harvest regulations are set at the GMU level. All areas of District 17 are managed with the primary goal of promoting stable or increasing deer populations while minimizing conflicts with people. Management objectives include maintaining deer populations to have a minimum of 15 bucks per 100 does in the post-hunting season population.

WDFW does not attempt to survey deer populations to estimate their total numbers in District 17. Trends in harvest, hunter success, and harvest per unit effort are used as surrogates to a formal estimate of population size. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using harvest data to monitor trends in population size, and the agency is currently evaluating new approaches to monitor black-tailed deer populations.

Finding an effective way to monitor black-tailed deer populations has been an ongoing management challenge. Black-tailed deer are secretive and use densely vegetated habitats. Their ability to remain unseen substantially lowers the probability of detection through aerial surveys. Aerial surveys have been attempted, but very few deer were seen during those surveys. The small number of deer observed results in insufficient sample sizes to monitor population trends or demographics (buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios).

Overall deer harvest declined from an estimated 1,837 deer in 2016 to 1,258 in 2017 then, rose again to 1542 in 2018 and 1,674 in 2019. Last year's harvest was 1,476 deer. Long-term trends in harvest data seemed to indicate stable deer populations. The seemingly steep decline from 2016 to 2017 is surprising and without an obvious biological cause. For more detailed information on the status of black-tailed deer in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trends Report. This report is available for download on the Department's website or by [clicking here](#).



Clint Bryson with black-tailed deer taken during modern firearm season of 2016 in GMU 648

## ANTLER POINTS AND AGE

Prior to mandatory reporting in 2001, WDFW conducted field checks stations to gather information of age structure. Hunters have frequently asked if there is a correlation between age and antler points. During the fall of 1979, tooth samples were collected from bucks harvested in western Washington and sent in for cementum annuli aging. Of the total of 36 buck deer tooth samples collected 25 (69%) were spikes and two points. The remaining bucks sampled were at least three points or better (31%), with four of the three points being 2.5 years old at time of harvest.

A more accurate assessment of the age of buck deer harvested in Western Washington has occurred recently. WDFW collected hundreds of tooth samples from successful black-tailed deer hunters during the 2019 and 2020 season. Reported number of antler points was submitted with each tooth and samples were sent to a laboratory for analysis of cementum annuli to determine age. A table of the results is plotted below. Generally, the number of antler points increases with age. However, a 3-year-old buck may still be a spike and, an 11-year-old buck could be a 2 pt. while, conversely, a yearling could have 4 points.

Max Antler Points (1 side)	Average Age – Rounded to nearest ½ year	Total # of Submissions
1 (Spike)	1 Year	65
2	3 Years	120
3	4 Years	97
4	4 ½ Years	65
5	5 Years	30
6	6 Years	4

Figure #3 – Average age of black-tailed bucks harvested in Washington state in comparison to the highest number of reported antler points

## WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

“What GMU should I hunt?” is one of the most frequent questions asked of WDFW. Answering that question is not always easy. The best answer depends on the hunting method and the target hunting experience. Some hunters are looking for the best chance to harvest a large, mature buck, while others want to harvest any legal deer or simply be in an area with few hunters.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would have:

- High numbers of deer
- Low numbers of hunters
- High hunter success rates

Unfortunately, the perfect scenario does not exist in any GMU that is freely open to the public during any season within District 17. GMUs with the highest deer numbers tend to have the highest hunter numbers as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to persuade them to avoid a GMU with many deer. Others prefer to hunt areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if they can avoid other hunters.

Information in Tables 5-7 assesses GMUs by harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for 2009-2013 for each statistic. Total harvest and hunter numbers are summarized by the number of deer harvested and hunters per square mile. A comparison of total harvest or hunter numbers is not always preferred because GMUs vary in size. For example, the average number of deer harvested over 2009-2013 seasons during the general modern firearm season in GMUs 663 and 648 was 245 and 266 deer, respectively. Total harvest suggests that deer densities are quite similar between the two GMUs. However, examining the number of deer harvested per square mile (harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>) provides an estimate of 1.167 in GMU 663 and 0.617 in GMU 648. These numbers indicate that deer densities are probably higher in GMU 663 than in GMU 648.

Each GMU (excluding GMU 618) was ranked from 1 to 11 for deer harvested/mi<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mi<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. The three ranking values were summed to produce a final rank sum. GMUs are listed in order of lowest rank sum to largest. Comparisons are mostly direct since bag limits and seasons are the same for most GMUs. Differences that should be considered are:

1. GMU 681 had a 2-point minimum harvest restriction during all general seasons (2009-2013).
2. GMU 673 had a bag limit of any buck during the general archery season, while all other GMUs (except 681) had a bag limit of any deer.

**Table 5.** Comparison of historic modern firearm general deer season total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates using rank sum analysis. Data presented are based on a five-year running average (2009-2013).

<b>MODERN FIREARM</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	19	0.373	7	56	1.10	3	34%	1	<b>11</b>
642	278	68	0.245	8	276	0.99	2	25%	2	<b>12</b>
660	302	158	0.523	4	746	2.47	6	21%	4	<b>14</b>
672	257	155	0.603	3	715	2.78	8	22%	3	<b>14</b>
673	266	123	0.462	5	579	2.18	5	21%	5	<b>15</b>
663	210	245	1.167	1	1321	6.29	10	19%	6	<b>17</b>
648	431	266	0.617	2	1426	3.31	9	19%	7	<b>18</b>
638	153	13	0.085	10	97	0.63	1	14%	10	<b>21</b>
658	257	116	0.451	6	710	2.76	7	16%	8	<b>21</b>
681	109	25	0.229	9	168	1.54	4	15%	9	<b>22</b>

**Table 6.** Comparison of historic muzzleloader general deer season total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates using rank sum analysis. Data presented are based on a five-year running average (2009-2013).

<b>MUZZLELOADER</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
673	266	41	0.154	1	123	0.46	8	34%	1	<b>10</b>
648	431	4	0.009	6	20	0.05	3	23%	2	<b>11</b>
663	210	8	0.038	3	48	0.23	7	15%	3	<b>13</b>
672	257	3	0.012	5	40	0.16	5	7%	5	<b>15</b>
684	51	3	0.059	2	26	0.51	9	12%	4	<b>15</b>
642	278	1	0.004	8	7	0.03	1	6%	7	<b>16</b>
658	257	4	0.016	4	58	0.23	6	6%	6	<b>16</b>
660	302	2	0.007	7	29	0.10	4	5%	8	<b>19</b>
638	153	0	0.000	9	6	0.04	2	0%	9	<b>20</b>

**Table 7.** Comparison of historic archery general deer season total harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates using rank sum analysis. Data presented are based on a five-year running average (2009-2013).

<b>ARCHERY</b>										
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
		Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Hunters	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
684	51	9	0.176	3	24	0.47	5	38%	1	<b>9</b>
663	210	90	0.429	1	435	2.07	10	22%	2	<b>13</b>
642	278	12	0.043	8	66	0.24	3	19%	3	<b>14</b>
672	257	60	0.233	2	355	1.38	9	17%	5	<b>16</b>
660	302	34	0.113	5	186	0.62	7	18%	4	<b>16</b>
638	153	3	0.020	9	25	0.16	1	11%	8	<b>18</b>
648	431	39	0.090	6	234	0.54	6	17%	6	<b>18</b>
658	257	5	0.019	10	42	0.16	2	12%	7	<b>19</b>
681	109	8	0.073	7	106	0.97	8	7%	9	<b>24</b>
673	266	4	0.015	11	114	0.43	4	4%	10	<b>25</b>
699	8	1	0.125	4	21	2.63	11	1%	11	<b>26</b>

### **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

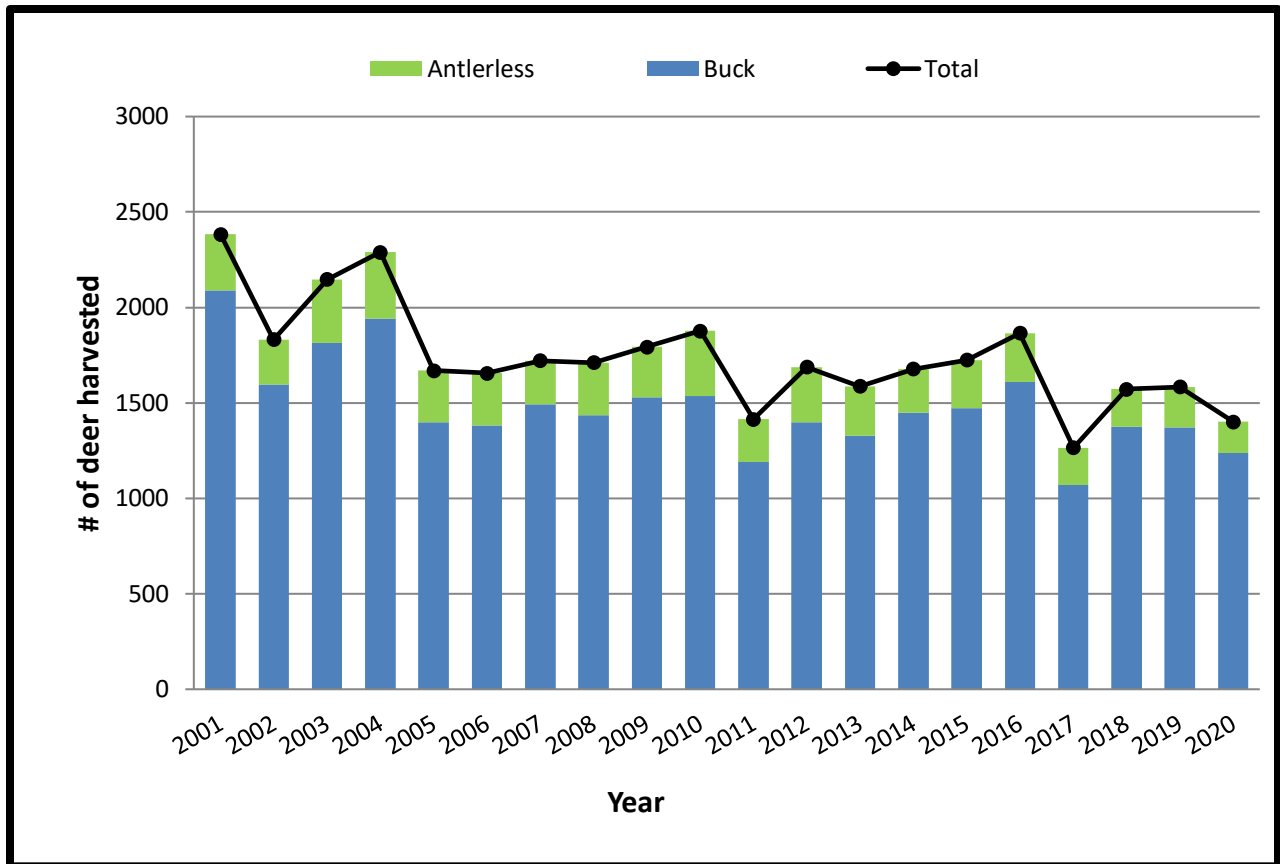
Deer populations do not change dramatically between typical years. Winter weather conditions rarely cause winter die-offs within District 17. Consequently, the total quantity of deer available for harvest is expected to be similar to previous seasons.

Hunter numbers do not change dramatically between typical years unless hunting regulations are significantly modified or access is closed. The best predictor of expected general season harvest is recent trends in:

1. Harvest
2. Hunter numbers
3. Hunter success

The following charts and figures provide trend data for each of these statistics.





**Figure 4.** District 17 deer harvest totals. Total buck (blue) and antlerless (green) deer harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons combined, 2001–2020. Harvest totals does not include tribal harvest.

### HOW TO FIND AND HUNT BLACK TAILS

The key to harvesting a black-tailed deer in District 17 is scouting. Black tails are present throughout the district and in nearly every habitat type. Deer numbers differ among habitat types and the highest deer densities are associated with 3- to 9-year-old clear cuts. These young tree stands provide large amounts of both cover and food.

Many hunters will focus efforts on new clear cuts. Deer in a clear cut are much more visible than most other habitats. However, deer know they are exposed and typically visit the clear cuts at night, early dawn, and dusk. Hunters should also explore areas adjacent to these openings.



Dana Morgan with spike deer taken during the late firearm season in GMU 663

Those areas with cover are more likely to contain deer for the majority of the day. Large amounts of deer sign in an area indicate deer are in close vicinity. Consider that over the past several years, deer in Capitol Forest (GMU 663) were fitted with GPS collars as part of a larger study throughout western Washington conducted by WDFW. The goal of this study was to better understand the effects timber management practices have on deer survival and productivity. These GPS collars automatically upload the deer's location via satellite several times a day. The data gives biologists a detailed look at black-tailed deer movements and habitat use.

None of the deer monitored in WDFW's doe study used an area larger than 0.38 mi<sup>2</sup> (243 acres). The average home range size was 0.14 mi<sup>2</sup> (86 acres). Some deer used an area no bigger than 45 acres in size during an entire year. If a hunter sees signs of deer in an area, but no deer, they need to be patient or change their approach.

The traditional approaches to hunting black-tailed deer include still-hunting or sitting patiently in high use areas (clear cuts, highly traveled trails, or funnels) until the deer appears. A less well-known, or less-utilized, technique is rattling and grunting to simulate two bucks fighting over a doe. The rattling technique is more common with mid-west and eastern white-tailed deer hunters but can be effective on black-tailed deer as well. A quick internet search on the technique yields plenty of evidence to illustrate its effectiveness when conditions are right.

Buck movements tend to increase during the rut and, they are less wary than during other parts of the year. The last week of October and first week of November seem to be those periods of time when male deer are most susceptible to harvest. Starting in 2017, WDFW initiated a buck mortality study which will pinpoint the activity periods and survival rates for male black-tail deer in Western Washington. If you harvest a buck with a collar attached to its neck, please call WDFW or return the collar to one of our regional offices.

### **NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

Several private timber companies in District 17 are going to fee access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Typically, these companies will post signs at primary roadways but, hunters should be aware of changes. Everyone is advised to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the individual company's current policy regarding land access. See the private lands access section for more information.

## BEAR

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

Black bears are present throughout District 17. Bear numbers vary among GMUs and the harvest can change noticeably from year to year. The best places to harvest bears usually occurs in GMUs 648, 660 and 663. Other GMUs worth mentioning are 618, 638, 658, 660, 672, and 681.

Bear seasons are primarily designed to maintain stable black bear populations. Spring seasons are directed to areas where black bear cause measurable damage to young commercial timber stands or other sites of human-bear conflict. The existing bear populations are not expected to have much impact on big game herds. Three statistics used to assess black bear harvest are:

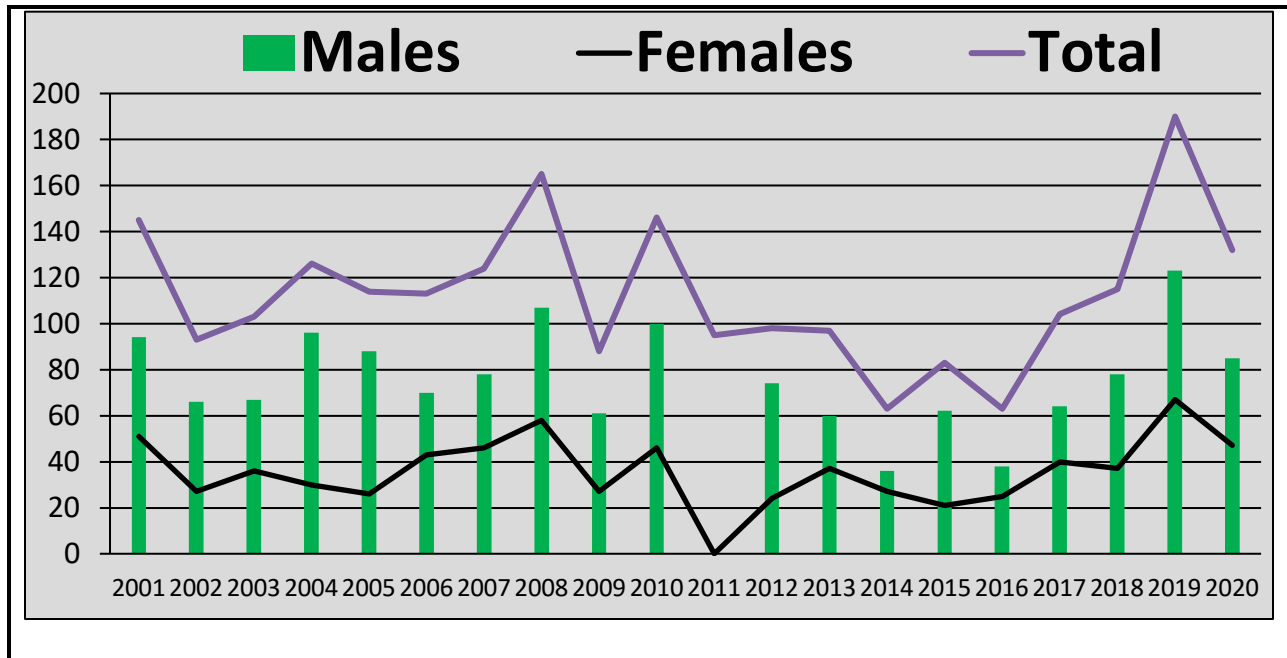
- Proportion of females harvested
- Median age of harvested females
- Median age of harvested males

WDFW initiated surveys in 2019 to estimate bear density in portions of Region 6. The initial study area was located in the Fall River GMU (672). The resulting estimates are expected to help the agency formulate management objectives and understand the relationship between the number of bears in the area with the habitat characteristics and annual harvest rates. For Fall River, the bear density was estimated at just under 8 bears per 100 square kilometers of bear habitat in the summer of 2019.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Most bears are probably harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Overall hunter success is low, but annual harvest can vary widely from year to year and 2019 and 2020 had some of the highest harvest rates for the past 10 years. Depending on the GMU hunted, between 4 and 15 percent of bear hunters in District 17 were successful in 2019. Since 2001, overall hunter success for this district has typically ranged from 4 percent to 8 percent. District-wide, bear hunter success in 2019 was 11%. Hunter success rates are likely higher for those that specifically hunt bears compared to hunters that take bear incidentally during deer or elk season.

Annual bear harvest in District 17 increased from 2002 to 2008. Harvest declined sharply during the 2009 season but rebounded in 2010. Bear harvest has since remained generally stable to increasing, although 2014 was a low year and 2019 was a high year.



**Figure 5.** Trends in the number of male and female black bears and total number of bears harvested during the general bear season in District 17, 2001–2020. Harvest estimates include bears harvested during spring permit seasons. Totals do not include bears removed because of conflicts with people or timber damage. The sex of harvested bears was not available for 2011.

More bears are typically harvested during the general season in GMUs 648 than any other GMU. GMU’s 642, 658, 660, 663, 673, and 681 are also regular producers of bears during the general and spring permit hunting seasons. Overall bear harvest in 2019 and 2020 were above the five-year average.

### HOW TO FIND BLACK BEAR

Black bears are common and occur at high densities in some locales. However, bears in District 17 are seen infrequently because of thick vegetation dominating the landscape. Consequently, scouting is extremely important when hunting for black bears.

Black bears occupy a variety of habitat types, and it can be difficult to narrow down where to find them. Because bears have an incredible sense of smell, hunters should focus on open terrain. When out in the open, a bear can be seen from a distance without alerting it. In dense cover, a bear is likely to smell a hunter before being seen and move to avoid an encounter. Bears are often located in clear cuts containing a large number of berry-producing shrubs. Examples include:

- Elderberries
- Salmonberries
- Huckleberries
- Blackberries
- Salal berries

During the fall, hunters should seek clear cuts with these types of shrubs and search for bear sign. Fresh signs indicate a bear is visiting that stand. Patient hunters who watch these areas for extended periods of time can increase their chances of harvesting a bear.

### **NOTABLE CHANGES**

Bear Season starts August 1<sup>st</sup> across all parts of the state



Bear Photo from GMU 672 survey site



## COUGAR

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

Cougars occur throughout District 17, but densities vary among GMUs. Cougar populations in District 17 are managed primarily to maintain a stable cougar population. Beginning in 2012, WDFW changed the system for managing cougar harvest in Washington. WDFW shifted away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougars harvested, and implemented a standard season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intended goal was to allow a longer season without weapon restrictions. Cougar seasons will close for a specific area once harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline.



To accomplish harvest goals, WDFW established a series of hunt areas with standard season dates of September 1 through April 30. Harvest numbers are examined starting January 1. Any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline may be closed. Anyone planning to hunt cougar after January 1 should take a moment to confirm the cougar season is still open. Harvest guidelines for each hunt area located in District 17 are provided in Table 8.

Starting in 2019, WDFW convened an internal group to assess the results of implementing the harvest guideline hunting structure.

**Table 8.** Harvest guidelines and 2016-21 cougar harvest for hunt areas located in District 17.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	2020-21 Harvest	2019-20 Harvest	2018-19 Harvest	2017-18 Harvest	2016-17 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5 adults	1	0	1	4	1
642, 648, 651	6-8 adults	5	4	10	8	5
658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, 699	8-11 adults	3	3	3	7	3

## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

Cougar harvest in District 17 is highly variable. The variability may be due to the prohibition on hound hunting and trapping. Most cougars are taken opportunistically by deer and elk hunters. Since 2001, the average number of cougars harvested in District 17 is six animals. Young animals are overrepresented in the harvest. Most cougar harvest in District 17 has occurred in GMU 642, 648, and 651

## **NOTABLE CHANGES**

Subadults will no longer count towards the cougar harvest guideline. Please remember that the season ends April 30, unless closed early. A 2022 tag and license are required after March 31, 2022.

## DUCKS

### COMMON SPECIES

A wide variety of ducks occur in District 17. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, and common goldeneye are present, but occur in low numbers. Nesting wood ducks can be located in the Chehalis River Valley early in the season and provide a unique hunting opportunity. Sea ducks, including scoters and long-tailed ducks, are seen occasionally in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor.

Mallards are the most abundant species of duck in Washington. Consequently, mallards constitute the majority of ducks harvested statewide (typically  $\geq 50$  percent). In contrast, American wigeon are the most abundant species of duck in District 17. During recent aerial survey flights of Willapa Bay, American wigeon typically comprised 50 percent to 60 percent of the ducks observed. Hunters should expect to primarily harvest American wigeon, northern pintail, and mallard. Green-winged teal are abundant early in the season but decrease in numbers as the season progresses.

### MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY

Very few ducks are found during late spring and early summer. Beginning in mid to late September, birds within the Pacific Flyway will migrate south from Alaska. (Note - Banded ducks marked from the Central Flyway have been harvested along coastal Washington, indicating that some movement between flyways does exist).

Duck numbers will continue to increase until peaking in late October and early November. The migrating ducks are believed to concentrate in District 17 as resting areas. They do not appear to remain in the district for long periods of time. Consequently, the number of ducks located inside District 17 likely varies on a daily basis. Total duck numbers decline precipitously once the flow of migrants from Alaska has stopped. By Christmas, duck numbers are typically 5% of what they were at the end of October. Unlike eastern Washington, major weather events do not alter migration chronology in coastal Washington. Regardless of weather events, duck numbers decline at about the same point in time each year.

### CONCENTRATION AREAS

In general, waterfowl concentrations occur in Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and the Chehalis and Willapa River valleys. The exact locations where duck concentrations occur depends on many factors (hunting pressure, weather, food, etc.) that can change daily.



Waterfowl concentrations shift around the bay each winter. Small, forested wetlands also provide areas where migratory ducks may congregate. In the river valleys after large soaking precipitation events, dabbling ducks can be found in areas where sheet water has accumulated. The number of ducks that can use these small bodies of water can be surprisingly high. Hunters should scout a few days before hunting to locate where concentrations of ducks are currently located and/or where sheet water is likely to occur.

## **POPULATION STATUS**

Pacific Flyway waterfowl populations have remained strong for several years, allowing liberal seasons for many species. Breeding duck populations in western Washington were not monitored until 2010, when WDFW developed and began flying established transects in five select areas of western Washington. Surveys are flown during April and early May. One of the selected areas occurs in District 17 and is associated with the Chehalis River Valley.

Surveys did not occur in 2020-21 due to impacts of the coronavirus. In 2019, the breeding population in the Chehalis River Valley was estimated at 4,130 ducks which, is lower than the 6,841 estimated in 2018. Mallard numbers during the spring breeding flights remained the same and American wigeon numbers decreased for the second year.

## **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS**

Breeding duck numbers in Alaska are the biggest factor affecting duck hunters in Washington. Unfortunately, surveys were canceled due to impacts from the coronavirus. Historic harvest can provide insight into probable hunting opportunity. Overall, harvest trends since 2016 have been rising slightly and are more similar to the average total number of ducks harvested since 2010. For instance, the 2016 season was noteworthy for having low numbers of ducks in October. Harvest, especially for Grays Harbor, again ticked up in 2018 compared to the 2016 season. Last year, 2020, was an average year for duck hunter harvest.

## **HUNTING TECHNIQUES**

Duck hunting techniques should vary depending on where you choose to hunt. Traditional setups work best when hunting inland waters around ponds, rivers, or feeding areas. Birds are most active in early morning and late afternoon, as they move between resting sites and feeding areas.

The tides influence hunting the coastline of Willapa Bay or Grays Harbor. Regardless of the time of day, ducks along the coastline tend to move very little at either low or high tide. Hunters can expect very little movement during tidal extremes. However, bird activity and opportunities increase when the tide is going out or coming in. A perfectly timed tide can provide success to coastline hunters at 3 p.m., unlike traditional waterfowl hunting areas that are typically limited to early morning and late afternoon. For more information, see [Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting](#).

## **PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES**

There are a number of WDFW Wildlife Areas in District 17 that offer good waterfowl hunting opportunities. The following map is intended to provide hunters with the general location of these wildlife areas, but hunters should visit the WDFW waterfowl hunting page ([click here](#)) or the Go Hunt application for more detailed information.

The website includes waterfowl information related to location, current waterfowl management activities, and common species. Other public land opportunities occur on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. For more information about hunting on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, please visit their website or [click here](#).

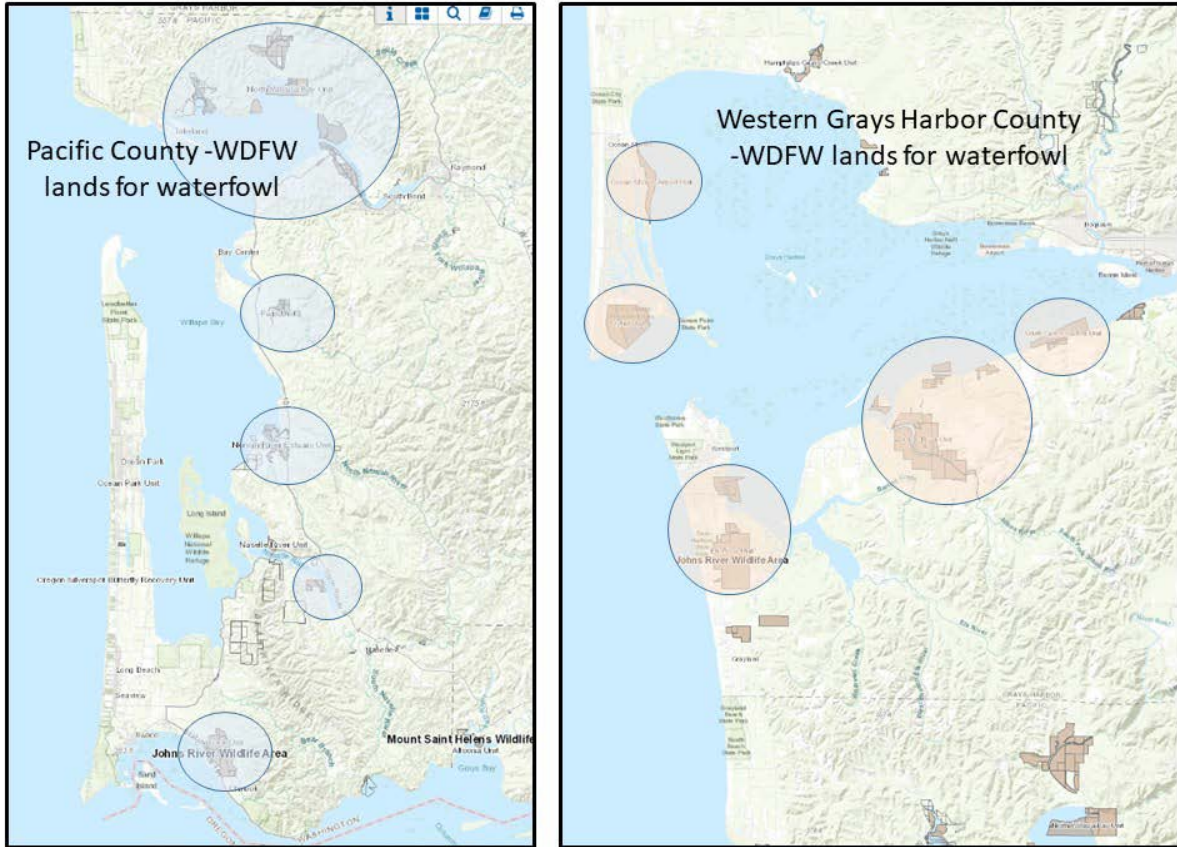


Figure 7: WDFW lands and waterfowl hunting areas within western portion of District 17.

## GEESE

### COMMON SPECIES

The sub-species of Canada geese found in District 17 include western, dusky, lesser, taverner, Aleutian, Vancouver, and cackler. Large numbers of black brant can be found in Willapa Bay beginning in late January and early February. Occasional flocks of snow geese and white-fronted geese occur infrequently.



## **MIGRATION CHRONOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION AREAS**

The timing of migration for geese in District 17 is nearly identical to that described for ducks. Few geese reside locally in the district. Starting in September, waves of migrant geese begin showing up from Alaska. One distinct difference between ducks and geese is that goose numbers do not decline in late November as sharply as duck numbers. Many geese choose to stay the winter in the agricultural areas of District 17 where they find food. Brant is distinct from the other species of geese and, are mostly found in Willapa Bay starting in the latter half of December or early January.

Most geese aggregate in areas of agricultural lands around the Willapa and Chehalis River Valleys. Some properties routinely have geese on them. Generally, the specific fields where geese concentrate changes on a weekly basis. The Chehalis and Willapa River Valleys are not expansive, so relocating geese is not difficult. In contrast to other geese, Brant will be almost exclusively located in close vicinity to areas where eel grass is found.

## **POPULATION STATUS**

Very few geese breed in District 17. Consequently, WDFW does not survey for breeding geese within the district. Long term goose nest surveys have occurred elsewhere in Washington. Portions of the lower Columbia River have small but relatively stable breeding populations.

Wintering populations of geese are hard to survey effectively because geese forage widely in agricultural areas that make them difficult to locate. The number of geese observed in Washington during the midwinter-waterfowl surveys has been relatively stable since the early 2000s.

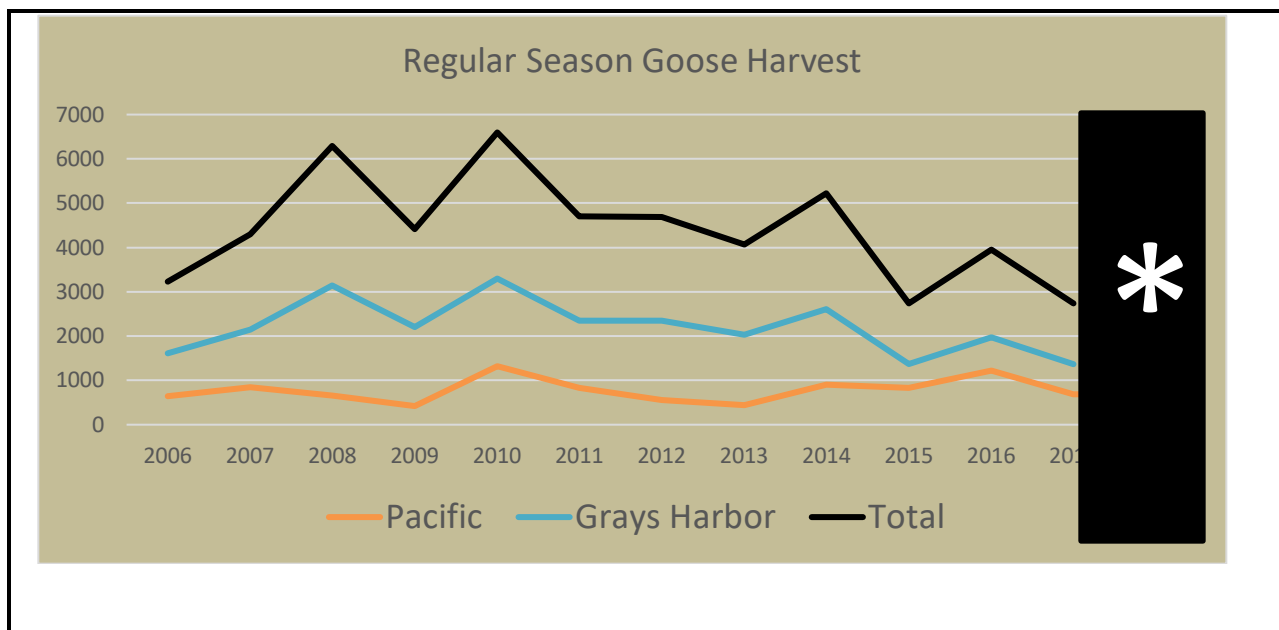


WDFW former district biologist Hoenes with a resident dusky goose fitted with VHF transmitter on Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

## **HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS**

Historically, most goose harvest has occurred in Grays Harbor County during the regular season. A decline in the goose harvest for Grays Harbor County may partially be attributed to its inclusion into Goose Area 2 (see charts) in 2015. Pacific County goose hunters have long been required to obtain southwest goose authorizations, and the number of Pacific County hunters has not changed significantly. The Department expects that the number of Grays Harbor County goose hunters will gradually increase as hunters obtain their southwest goose authorization.

Given the current trends in goose populations farther north, the goose hunting opportunities in District 17 are expected to remain consistent. Pacific populations of large geese appear to be greater than last year. Hunters can expect to harvest an average of one or two geese per day.



## HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Goose hunting is almost standardized. Goose hunters find agricultural areas where geese feed and set up well before daylight in portions of the field where geese are known to concentrate. In District 17, feeding geese tend to congregate in pastures containing cattle operations. Most goose hunting opportunities occur on private property. Hunters must obtain permission before hunting private lands.

During the early September goose hunting season, noticeable concentrations of western Canada geese have been observed in and around Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay. These areas tend to congregate molting geese earlier in the season and those recently molted birds seem to continue to use those areas throughout the early season. Recent goose surveys conducted in August 2019 around Baker Bay, near the town of Chinook, documented a large numbers of geese. Many of the areas where geese are found require boat access but, favorable goose hunting can occur near shore using traditional methods.

Inclement weather may force local and migratory geese further upland and into river valleys than during more mild weather. This tends to occur more frequently during the regular goose season that starts in October. High easterly winds may force the birds to land in fields where they become less exposed to the wind but are more vulnerable to hunters.

## SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Both Pacific and Grays Harbor counties are contained within Goose Management Area (GMA) 2. Special regulations apply in GMA 2 to prevent harvest of dusky Canada geese. These special regulations include:

1. Hunters must possess a valid migratory bird hunting authorization for Goose Management Area 2 to hunt geese, except during the September goose season.

2. February and March seasons are closed on WDFW Wildlife Areas and USFWS Wildlife Refuges.
3. Hours are 30 minutes after the start of official waterfowl hunting hours to 30 minutes before the end of official waterfowl hunting hours. If a hunter takes a dusky Canada goose, the authorization will be invalidated and the hunter will not be able to hunt geese in Goose Management Area 2 for the rest of the season, including the special late goose season.
4. Beginning in 2018, a Mandatory Harvest Report Card was issued for hunters to record the number and species composition of their daily bag. Hunters are required to report their harvest onto this report card as soon as practical, after harvesting a goose.

WDFW strongly recommends that hunters review the most recent Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season pamphlet to ensure they are in compliance with current regulations. Pamphlets are available at any retailer that sells hunting licenses or online on WDFW's website ([click here](#)).

## **PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES**

Many wildlife areas in District 17 provide a chance to hunt geese. Check the earlier map or visit [http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/waterfowl\\_hunting\\_on\\_wdfw\\_wildlife\\_areas.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/waterfowl/waterfowl_hunting_on_wdfw_wildlife_areas.pdf) for more details. Additionally, some landowners have enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program. Those lands provide additional hunting opportunities for the public. See the private lands section for more details or visit the Hunt Planner Webmap at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>

## **NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES**

None for 2021.

# **FOREST GROUSE**

## **SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS**

There are two species of grouse in District 17, ruffed grouse and blue grouse (sooty). Ruffed grouse are the most abundant and occur at lower elevations and valley bottoms. Throughout the west, ruffed grouse typically prefer habitats that support abundant deciduous shrubs or small trees, particularly along stream corridors and other riparian areas. These thick, somewhat impenetrable habitats provide protective cover for ruffed grouse. West of the Cascade Range stands of red alder can provide suitable habitat conditions for ruffed grouse. Blue grouse can be found in higher elevation habitats, but overlap does occur. Blue grouse are usually found in the uplands at elevations above 2,500 feet and may exceed 6,000 feet. Across Oregon and Washington, blue grouse prefer coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir and true fir. At higher elevations, birds are primarily found in western and mountain hemlock, lodgepole pine, and white bark pine. The Ruffed Grouse Society has developed [an interactive map](#) for blue and ruffed grouse habitat on national forest land. *Note – the map only assesses a small portion of land in District 17 that belongs to the US Forest Service. State and private lands are not portrayed. The map is only a guide to habitat and may not accurately predict where grouse can be found.*

## POPULATION STATUS

WDFW no longer conducts surveys to monitor grouse populations in District 17. Currently, the agency uses harvest data trends as surrogates to formal population estimates or indices of population size. Total harvest numbers tend to vary with hunter numbers (see Figure 17), so catch per unit effort, or “grouse per hunter day,” is the best indicator of population trend. In District 17, grouse harvest per hunter day has ranged from 0.12 to .0.38 birds per hunter day. The 2018 rate was 0.20 birds per hunter day, slightly higher than the 0.12 birds per hunter day in 2017.

To obtain better information on grouse population status and demographics, WDFW conducted a pilot effort in 2016 to collect grouse wings and tails from harvested birds in portions of Grays Harbor County. Results from the 2018 season are listed below (Table #9 ). This collection effort is expected to continue in 2021 with collection barrels located at strategic locations in the district.

**Table 9.** The number, sex, age, and species type of forest grouse harvested in Grays Harbor County during the 2018 hunting season, September 1 – December 1.

Species	Female	Male	Unknown Sex	Juvenile	Yearling	Adult	Breeding Age*	Total collected
Ruffed	1	3	8	8	0	0	4	24
Blue	25	19	0	31	2	9	2	88
<b>Totals</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>112</b>

\*Breeding Age denotes birds with molt patterns that showed they were of breeding age but that could not be distinguished as yearling vs adult.

The goal of collecting grouse wing and tails is to monitor species, sex and age ratios in the harvested population as indices of production and composition. If possible, please contribute to these collections. Location of wing collection barrels is located on the [WDFW webpage](#).

## HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

The total number of grouse harvested in District 17 has gradually been declining since 2008. Most grouse are taken from Grays Harbor County and the number of blue grouse harvested in 2018 is generally higher. This higher take of blue grouse may be related to the amount of higher accessible terrain in Grays Harbor County which tends to be more characteristic of blue grouse habitat and has a significant amount of USFS lands.

## HUNTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE TO HUNT

A generally effective way to hunt grouse is by walking roads and shooting birds as they flush, or after they roost in a nearby tree. Grouse are present in higher densities along roads with little traffic. Consequently, hunters should target roads behind locked gates or that have been

decommissioned. To learn more about hunting grouse, please visit WDFW's upland bird hunting webpage or [click here](#).

## NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Forest grouse season starts two weeks later than previous years. The season runs from Sept. 15, 2021 - Jan. 15, 2022 to protect brood hens with chicks.

## PHEASANTS

All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 17 are provided by the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program. District 17 does not have self-sustaining populations of pheasant. The primary intent of the release program is to provide an upland bird hunting opportunity and to encourage participation from young and older-aged hunters. Each year, 30,000 to 40,000 pheasants are released at 25 sites. Two of those release sites (Chehalis River and Chinook) are in District 17. The Chinook Release Site is located in Pacific County and the Chehalis River Release Site is located in Grays Harbor County. To locate maps for the Chehalis River and Chinook release sites and learn more about the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, [click here](#).

In a typical year, around 1,000 pheasants were released from the Chinook site and at Brady. A special youth hunt will occur in September as well as a distinct senior hunt (age 65 and older). Pheasant releases end on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Hunters should be aware that special regulations apply on western Washington pheasant release sites. Notably:

- Hunters must purchase a western Washington pheasant license
- Non-toxic shot is required
- Hunting hours are between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

For further information about Pheasant hunting in Washington, please visit our website at: [Pheasant hunting | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

## QUAIL

Mountain quail rarely occur in District 17. This district does not contain any sizable population, and sightings are rare. The few sightings that occur are usually located in five to 10-year-old clear cuts with abundant shrub cover and pine saplings. Some sightings occur in brushy cover located adjacent to agricultural land. In 2020, very few quail were reportedly harvested from in Grays Harbor County, and none came out of Pacific County.

## TURKEYS

There are no sizable turkey populations in District 17. Generally, less than 30 turkeys will reportedly be harvested for all of southwest Washington during any given year. The only area previously known to hold any number of birds in District 17 was in the Willapa River Valley on Department of Natural Resources land in the southern part of GMU 672. All other flocks that have been reported to occur in District 17 are small (<15 birds), occur on private agricultural



lands, and are thought to be pen-raised birds released by adjacent landowners who no longer wanted to take care of them.

Most turkeys that had been found in District 17 were eastern wild turkeys. Approximately 400 eastern wild turkeys were introduced into southwest Washington from 1987-2000. Introduction was discontinued because turkey populations did not grow or expand, and habitat suitability models indicated southwest Washington habitats were not likely to support viable turkey populations.

## BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

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

### POPULATION STATUS AND TREND

WDFW monitors band-tailed pigeon populations using a standardized population index survey. These surveys occur at 16 mineral sites where band-tails are known to congregate. Since WDFW initiated the standardized mineral site survey, the population index indicates band-tail populations have fluctuated through the years but have never declined to levels that would warrant more limited harvest opportunities.

### HARVEST TRENDS AND 2021 PROSPECTS

Band-tailed pigeon harvest in District 17 once measured thousands of birds. Bag limits were 10 birds per day until 1950, when statewide harvest was estimated at 90,000 birds. However, overharvest and habitat changes caused significant decline in overall numbers. Harvest in District 17 has previously accounted for 30 percent of the statewide harvest. Annual harvest in Grays Harbor County had averaged 80 birds for the decade following 2002, which was the highest average annual harvest among the 19 counties where band-tails are harvested.



The maximum total harvest for District 17 since hunting resumed in 2002 was 265 birds. The total statewide harvest has never exceeded 2,100 birds.

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

Band-tailed pigeons frequently congregate in areas with red elderberry and cascara. These small trees are most abundant in five to 10-year-old clear cuts where hunting can be exceptionally good. The key to harvesting band-tails is scouting. Identifying specific clear cuts used by band-tails is hard to predict. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites. Upon finding a good site, sit patiently and wait for pass shooting opportunities to occur.

Band-tails often congregate at seeps and mineral sites. They show strong site fidelity to these locations and often return to the same seeps year after year. WDFW conducts annual surveys at such mineral sites to assess changes to the band-tailed population. These mineral sites are not abundant and are hard to find. If a hunter is lucky enough to locate a mineral site where band-tails congregate, it is likely to be a successful season.

Only one mineral site was known to exist within District 17 prior to 2021. Please contact WDFW if you know the location of any sites where band-tailed pigeons obtain minerals in Pacific or Grays Harbor counties.

## **SPECIAL REGULATIONS**

Since band-tail seasons were re-opened in 2002, hunters are required to purchase a migratory bird authorization. Harvest must be submitted using harvest cards submitted to WDFW after the season has closed. These regulations will apply in 2021 as well. Hunters should review the 2021 Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet to confirm season dates and any other regulation changes.

## **RESEARCH**

Starting in May 2021, WDFW initiated a project to capture and fit band-tailed pigeons with satellite telemetry devices in portions of District 16 and 17. A total of eleven birds were fitted with transmitters that are programmed to obtain multiple locations throughout the day and periodically upload those locations via the cell tower network.

The goal of this project is to conduct research on Band-Tailed Pigeons in areas without identified mineral sites that could allow WDFW to fulfill the following objectives: 1) Identify new mineral sites to allow the agency to more accurately index our statewide population via Mineral site surveys 2) more expertly manage our BTP harvest seasons to potentially allow an expanded hunting opportunity, 3) provide detailed information on resource selection to inform how to manage habitat that would increase the statewide population.

Already in 2021, this research project has led to the discovery of a new mineral site location in Grays Harbor county. Hunters and members of the general public are funding this research via the migratory bird stamp and artwork program. The existing project is expected to continue through the year 2025 across various districts within Region 6.

## OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

Other small game species and furbearers that occur in District 17, but were not covered in detail include cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hares, coyotes, beaver, raccoons, river otter, marten, mink, muskrat, and weasels. Additional migratory birds include snipe and coot.



Photo of coyote taken by Bob Ehlers during the 2015 season in GMU 648.

## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

District 17 is not well known for its large amount of public land opportunities. However, public land opportunities do exist on lands administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), WDFW, and Grays Harbor County.

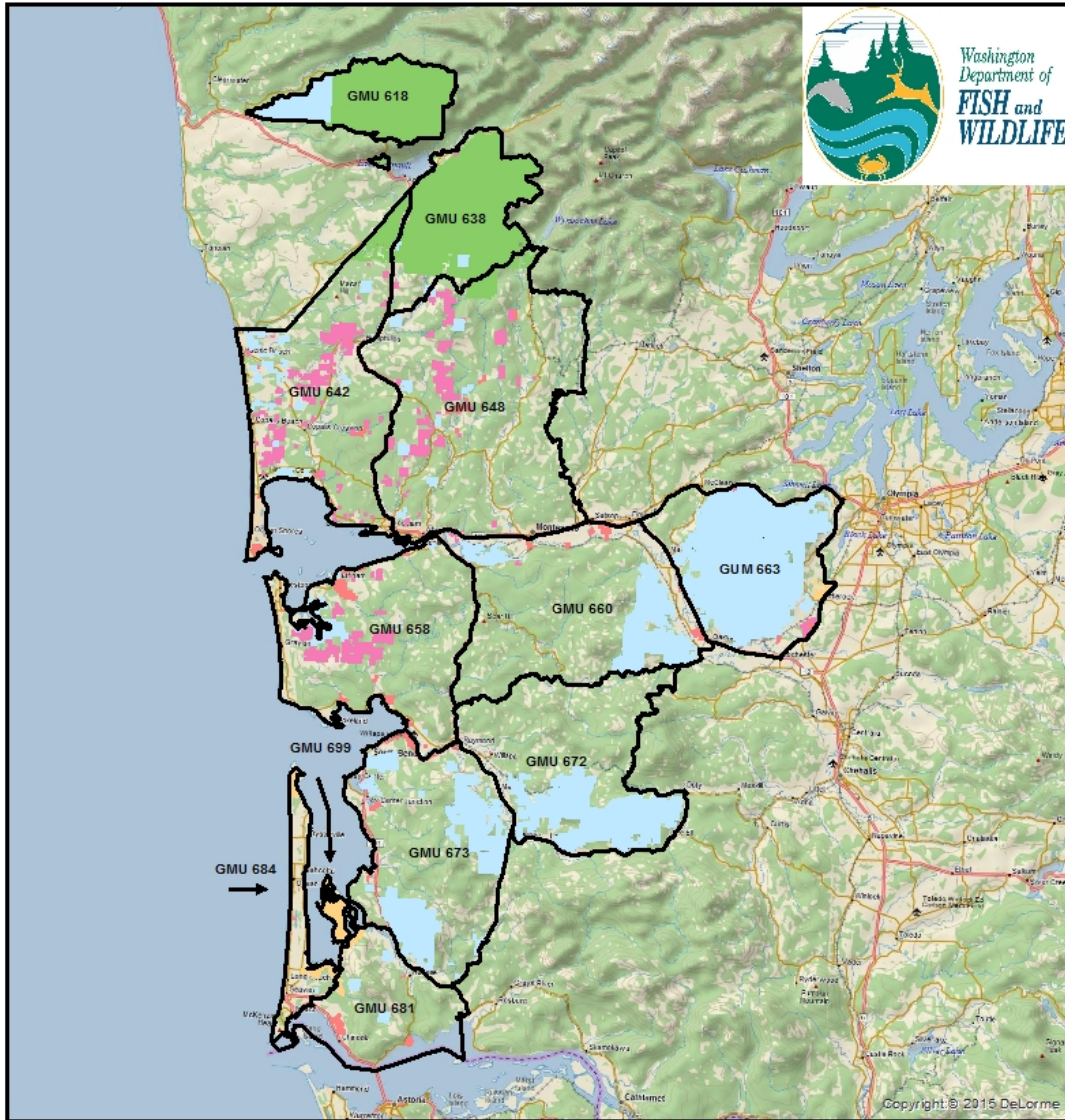
GMUs with the greatest amount of public land include 618, 638 and 663. Large tracts of DNR lands also occur in GMUs 660, 672, and 673. The USFWS Willapa National Wildlife Refuge occurs in portions of GMUs 681 and 684. GMU 699 is what its name implies, an island, and the entire GMU is part of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

The majority of all other public land opportunities in District 17 occur primarily on WDFW wildlife areas or on lands managed by Pacific and Grays Harbor counties. For more information related to the location of WDFW wildlife areas, visit [WDFW's hunting access website](#). For more information on resources available to locate public lands please see the Online Tools and Maps section below.



District 17:

Major Public Lands



**Disclaimer**

Due to the dynamic nature of data 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 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 232-26 of the Washington State Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

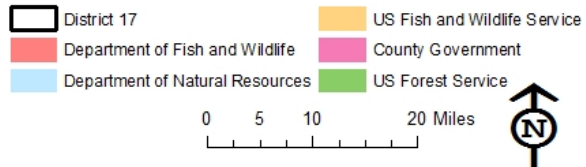


Figure 12: Location of public lands open to public access within each GMU of District 17.

## PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The vast majority of hunting opportunities, especially for big game and upland birds, occur on private industrial forestlands. Timber companies that own large tracts of land and are the most well-known include Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Hancock, Green Diamond, and Campbell Global. However, hunters should be aware that there are many other smaller timber companies with operations in District 17.

WDFW recognizes that some great hunting opportunities occur on private industrial forestlands and works cooperatively with private timber companies to maintain reasonable public access during established hunting seasons. Private industrial forestlands have always been open for public access, but hunters should always remember they are being granted access to private property and access to that property is a privilege.

There has been an increasing trend of timber companies restricting public access and shifting towards a permit system to limit the number of hunters that hunt on their lands. One of the primary reasons for access restrictions and the loss of access is hunter disrespect of the landowner rules. When hunting on private industrial forest lands, WDFW reminds hunters to remember the following:

#### **HUNTING ON PRIVATE LANDS IS A PRIVILEGE, SO TREAT THEM WITH RESPECT**

- ✓ **Obey Posted Signs**
- ✓ **Leave Gates As You Found Them**
- ✓ **Pack Out Your Trash**
- ✓ **Be Courteous**

### IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT ACCESS FOR THE 2021 SEASON

There are a variety of fee access programs in place, and they vary by area and by company. However, all current programs at the time of this writing fall into three general categories, which include Permit-Unlimited, Permit-Limited, and Leases. These fees will also apply to all other outdoor recreational activities, including hiking, camping, mountain biking, and fishing. General descriptions of these three programs are as follows:

**Permit-Unlimited:** Hunters will be required to purchase an access permit, but there will be an unlimited number of permits available. Only holders of a valid permit will be allowed to recreate in areas associated with the permit.

**Permit-Limited:** There will be a set number of permits available on a first come, first served basis. Only people who have secured one of the limited permits will be allowed to recreate in areas associated with that permit. Permit cost is anticipated to be several hundred dollars. This type of system was implemented by Weyerhaeuser in their Pe Ell Unit (GMUs 672 and 506) during the 2013 season.



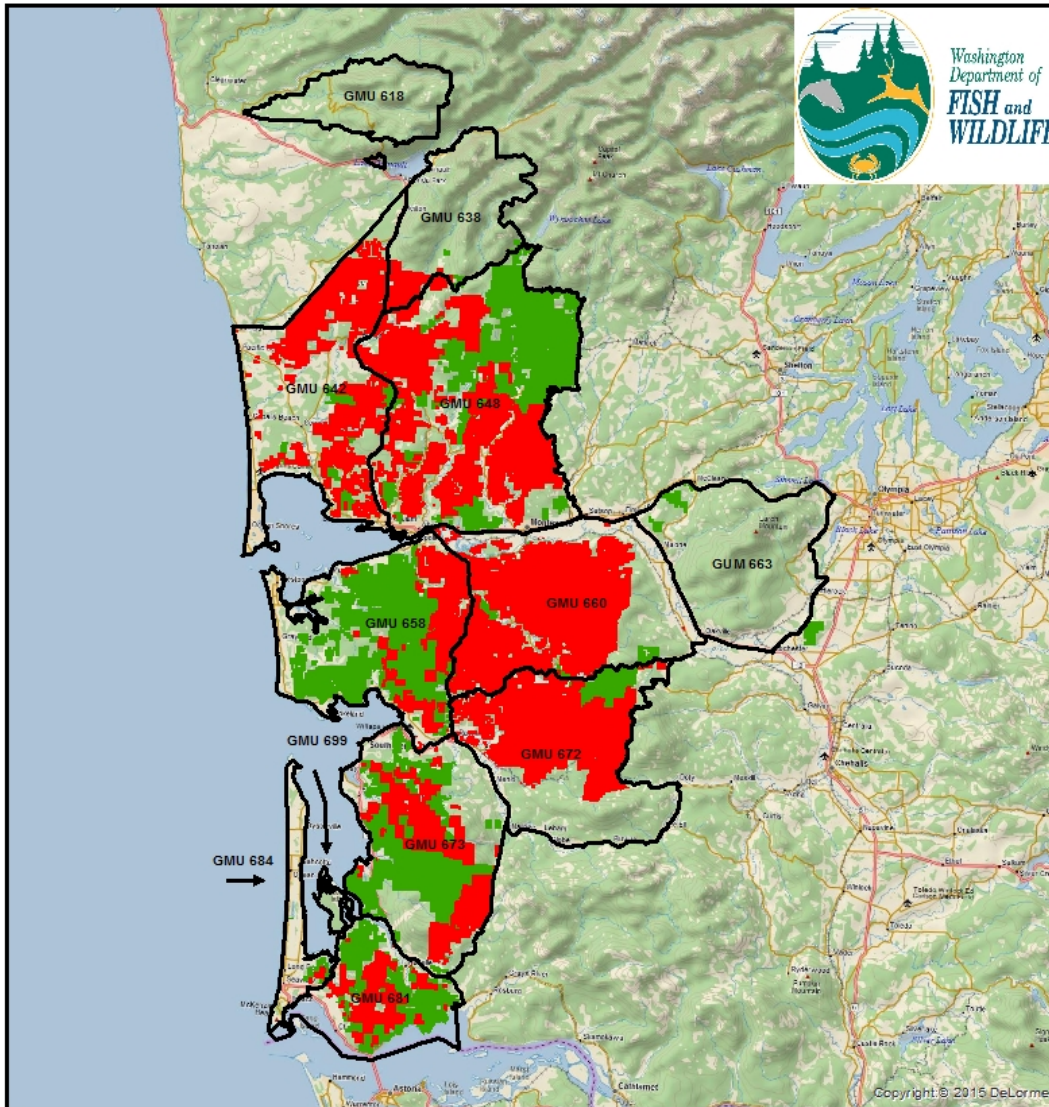
**Leases:** Designated tracts of land are leased to an individual, or groups of individuals, and only the lessee and their families are allowed to access that particular track of land. The cost of a lease can be several thousand dollars.

Hunters need to be aware that many timber companies are charging these access fees in areas where they have historically offered free access. Consequently, it is very important that hunters take the time to contact landowners in areas where they plan to hunt so they know whether or not the company's access policy for that area has changed.

The following map represents areas in District 17 where WDFW knows timber companies will be requiring a fee to recreate on their property. However, the broad implementation of access programs by several timber companies since the 2013 season has been a very dynamic process that always seems to be changing. It is important to highlight that the map represents what has been presented to WDFW as of Aug. 4, 2017. It is very possible that some of the areas presented as free access (green) could become fee access (red) areas by the time hunting seasons begin on Sept. 1. Thus, hunters should use this map as a general reference and should understand it is ultimately their responsibility to contact the appropriate timber company to determine how hunter access will be managed in the areas they plan to hunt.

District 17:

Private Forest Lands Access



**Disclaimer**

Due to the dynamic nature of data 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 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 232-26 of the Washington State Administrative Code (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/>).

-  District 17
-  Private Forest Lands - Fee Access
-  Private Forest Lands - Free Access

0 5 10 20 Miles



Private timber company ownership in District 17, including free access (dark green) and permit and fee required (red) lands. The map represents data available on Aug. 4, 2017, and may change at any time.

## BASIC ACCESS RULES

Specific rules related to hunter access on private industrial forestlands vary by company. WDFW encourages hunters to make sure they are aware of the rules in areas they plan to hunt. Most timber companies provide these rules on signs at access points (gates) or their website, if they use for public communication, or will provide them to hunters who call to inquire about access (see below for contact information). However, hunters are encouraged to follow these basic rules if they find themselves in an area, they are not familiar with and are in doubt about specific landowner criteria. The following are intended to be general guidelines of the basic access rules that are commonplace on many private industrial forestlands. Timber companies may have more or less restrictive rules in place and it is ultimately the responsibility of hunters to make sure they are familiar with those rules.

- ✓ Respect the landowner and other users.
- ✓ Read and obey all posted signs.
- ✓ A logging road without a sign does not mean it is open for public access.
- ✓ Drive slow with headlights turned on when driving on roads opened to public access.
- ✓ Avoid areas of active logging.
- ✓ No camping, littering, ORVs, off-road driving, target shooting, or forest product removals.
- ✓ An open gate does not mean the road is open to public motorized access.
- ✓ Gate closures apply to all motorized vehicles including motorcycles and quads. This includes vehicles with electric motors that propel or assist the rider.
- ✓ Private forest lands are usually closed to public access during hours of darkness.

All users of private forest lands need to be aware that failure to obey landowner rules can result in prosecution for trespassing and or even a *persona non grata* from the landowner.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACCESS ALLOWED BY MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

**Hancock:** Hancock industrial forestlands have different levels of access based on management areas. All Hancock industrial forestlands in GMUs 658, 673, and 681 are only open to non-motorized access. During modern firearm seasons they will open some key main lines to disperse hunters and allow access to interior areas.

**Rayonier:** Rayonier currently has three levels of access: seasonal permit, recreational lease, and general permit access. For seasonal permit and recreational lease areas, access is only allowed for the permit and/or lease holder and is subject to access rules established by Rayonier. Areas under general permit access require the purchase of a permit from the company. District 17 GMUs with Rayonier lands include 638, 642, 648, 658, 673, and 681. Maps and other information are available on their web site.

**Forest Investment Associates (FIA):** FIA recently purchased large blocks (more than 30,000 acres) of Rayonier land primarily in Pacific County (GMUs 673 and 658), with some parcels in

Grays Harbor County. FIA will respect leases and permits associated with those Rayonier lands. Other FIA lands are open for hunting. AFM manages the permit system for much of the FIA holdings

**Green Diamond:** Green Diamond manages hunter access using the dot system and posts access rules at their gates. All of their lands in District 17 are currently open to non-motorized public access. As hunting seasons approach, they will usually begin opening additional roads to public access if fire danger is low. District 17 GMUs with Green Diamond ownership are 642, 648, 658, and 660.

**Campbell Global:** Campbell Global uses the dot system to manage hunter access and posts access rules at their gates. As hunting season approaches, they will normally open some roads to motorized access for the hunting seasons if fire danger is low. District 17 GMUs with Campbell Global-managed timberlands are 648, 658, 672, 673, and 681.

**Weyerhaeuser:** Weyerhaeuser currently has three levels of access in District 17: general access permit areas, enhanced permit areas, and lease areas. For permit and lease areas, access is only allowed for the permit and/or lease holder and is subject to rules established by Weyerhaeuser. District 17 GMUs with Weyerhaeuser ownership are 648, 658, 660, and 672.

**The Nature Conservancy:** The Nature Conservancy owns more than 6,000 acres in Pacific County, GMU 681. There is open walk-in access during most of season. Vehicles are not allowed.

## **HEADS UP FOR ARCHERY AND MUZZLELOADER HUNTERS**

Private timber companies have traditionally opened their lands to modern firearm hunters during established seasons. Archery and muzzleloader hunters should be aware they may not have full access, particularly vehicle access. Access levels change and can vary by season, year, or landowner. Most often, access is influenced by industrial fire classification issued by DNR. Hunters are urged to respect the landowners and adhere to any access restrictions the landowners have implemented.

## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE “DOT” SYSTEM**

The dot system is used by several timber companies in District 17. Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Green Diamond, and Campbell Global all use this system. The dot system is a system of colored dots posted at the start of a road to indicate what level of access is allowed beyond that point. It is intended to give the public a clear understanding of what roads are open to public motorized access.

Normally under the dot system, access is granted for daylight hours only. Landowners usually understand that some hunters will go in an hour or so early to get to their hunting areas and sometimes they may come out a little late. Hunters should always stop and read signs. While several landowners use the dot system, they all have their own minor differences. In some cases, landowners will close gates in the evenings to prevent unauthorized access.

- Red Dot – no motorized access
- Yellow Dot – Motorized access on weekends only

- Green Dot – Motorized access for licensed vehicles on maintained roads
- No Dot – Some landowners use this, and it means the same as a Red Dot

## CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

Some landowners have hotlines and/or websites where hunters can find information about public access. However, many of these landowners do not have staff members dedicated to answering hunter questions. Hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628) if they have questions related to public access on private industrial forest lands.

Timber Company	GMUs	Phone Number	Website
Hancock	658, 673, 681	1-360-795-3653	No website
Hancock	Various other GMUs	1-800-782-1493	<a href="https://hancockrecreationnw.com/">https://hancockrecreationnw.com/</a>
Rayonier	Various	1-360-533-7000	<a href="http://www.rayonierhunting.com/">http://www.rayonierhunting.com/</a>
Green Diamond	Various	1-360-426-3381	<a href="http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/">http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/</a>
Weyerhaeuser Forest Investment Associates	Various	1-800-636-6531	<a href="http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/">http://www.wyrecreationnw.com/</a>
Grays Harbor County	658, 673	(404) 261-9575	<a href="http://www.forestinvest.com/">http://www.forestinvest.com/</a> or check <a href="#">Hunting Property for Lease   American Forest Management</a>
Olympic Resource Management	642, 648, 658, 673		<a href="http://www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/departments/Forestry/grays_harbor_county_-_public_vehicle_access.php">http://www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/departments/Forestry/grays_harbor_county_-_public_vehicle_access.php</a>
Lewis and Clark Timberlands	684		<a href="https://permits.greenwoodresources.com/PermitHome.aspx">https://permits.greenwoodresources.com/PermitHome.aspx</a>

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU

One of the most common questions we get from hunters is, “what is hunter access like in the GMU I want to hunt?”. Generally, this question is referring to the amount of motorized access and not access in general. It is important to differentiate the two because hunters enjoy a high level of access in all District 17 GMUs. However, the type of access varies between motorized and non-motorized access.

The following rating system was developed for District 17 GMUs to give hunters a general idea of what type of access is available in the GMU they are thinking of hunting. For the purposes of this exercise, access ratings are specific to the level of motorized access allowed and does not refer to the level of access in general. Several GMUs have some type of fee access areas that



grant the permit or lease holders a higher level of access. The following ratings are based on a hunter not having a lease or permit. Each GMU was given a rating of excellent, good, and poor, with the level of access associated with each rating as follows:

- **Excellent** – Most, if not all, of the main logging roads are open, as well as most of the spur roads.
- **Good** – There is a mix of open and closed roads, with some main logging roads open, but many of the spur roads are closed to motorized access.
- **Poor** – Most of the GMU is closed to motorized access but may be open to non-motorized access.

Information provided is a brief description of major landowners and the level of motorized access a hunter can expect. Access rules change through the seasons and vary by year. Information is updated when available. Hunters are encouraged to contact the WDFW Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628) if they have questions related to hunter access that have not been answered.

#### **GMU 618 (Matheney) – Access Rating: Excellent**

GMU 618 is dominated by federal lands included in the Olympic National Forest. The minority of land not managed by the USFS is under state management via the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

#### **GMU 638 (Quinault Ridge) – Access Rating: Good**

The majority of GMU 638 is associated with the Olympic National Forest and managed by USFS. There are numerous small landowners in areas outside of the national forest. Much of the more productive areas of this GMU are private lands not considered industrial forest lands. The Quinault valley is not recommended for hunters who are not familiar with landownership boundaries. Rayonier also has some signed recreational lease areas.

#### **GMU 642 (Copalis) – Access Rating: Poor**

The primary landowner in this GMU is Rayonier. They have recreational lease, seasonal permit, and general access areas in this GMU.

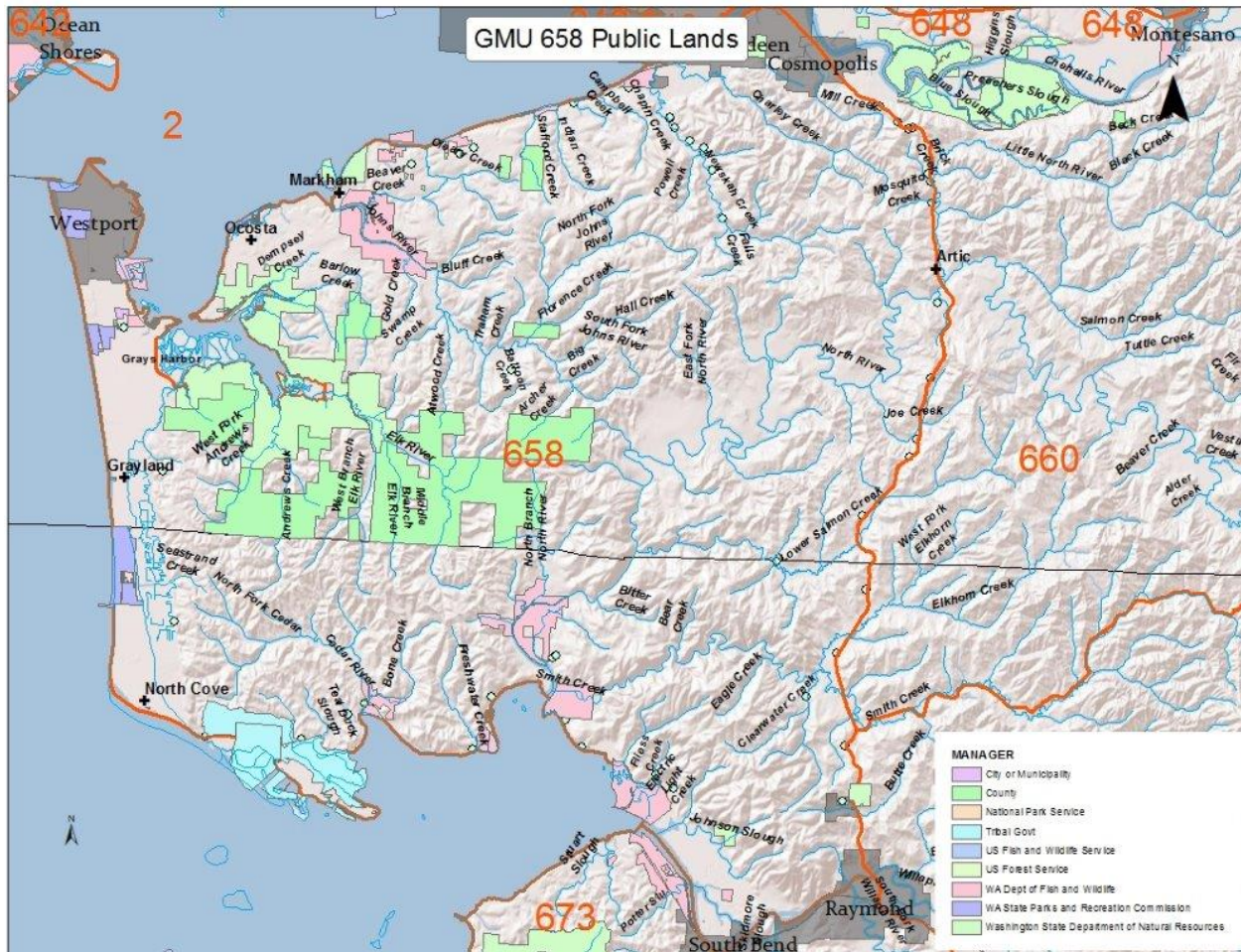
#### **GMU 648 (Wynoochee) – Access Rating: Poor**

Overall, GMU 648 consists mostly of private industrial forestlands, but there are also several smaller landowners. Primary landowners in GMU 648 include Weyerhaeuser, Rayonier, Green Diamond, Fruit Growers, Grays Harbor County, and Campbell Global. A portion of the GMU comprises the Hoquiam and Aberdeen watersheds, which are closed to all public access. In addition, several landowners have a cooperative road management agreement with WDFW. Hunters should be advised to read and follow all posted signs. Rayonier has a few leased access areas in this GMU signed. The majority of Rayonier lands in this GMU are managed under their general access program.

## GMU 658 (North River) – Access Rating: Good

Primary landowners in GMU 658 are Hancock, Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, Grays Harbor County, Campbell Global, Green Diamond, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Overall, access is good, but will vary among landowners. The majority of Hancock property will be gated, but some main logging roads will be open during the general modern firearm season. DNR lands in this GMU are surrounded by private forest lands but are accessible by non-motorized access across private timberlands. Many of the landowners surrounding the public lands will open gates for reasonable access to public lands for hunting seasons once fire seasons are over. Rayonier has some recreation leases and general access areas in this GMU. Access to Weyerhaeuser lands in this GMU is restricted to permit and lease holders.

*Note* – WDFW recently added 1100 acres to the Elk River Unit just south of Westport and east of Twin Harbors state park. These lands are not yet included in the following map.



## GMU 660 (Minot Peak) – Access Rating: Poor

The primary landowner in GMU 660 is Weyerhaeuser. All of their lands in this GMU are managed under their general access permit program. A small portion of this GMU is owned by DNR. To prevent elk from being pressured onto farms in the Chehalis Valley, motorized access is limited on DNR lands.

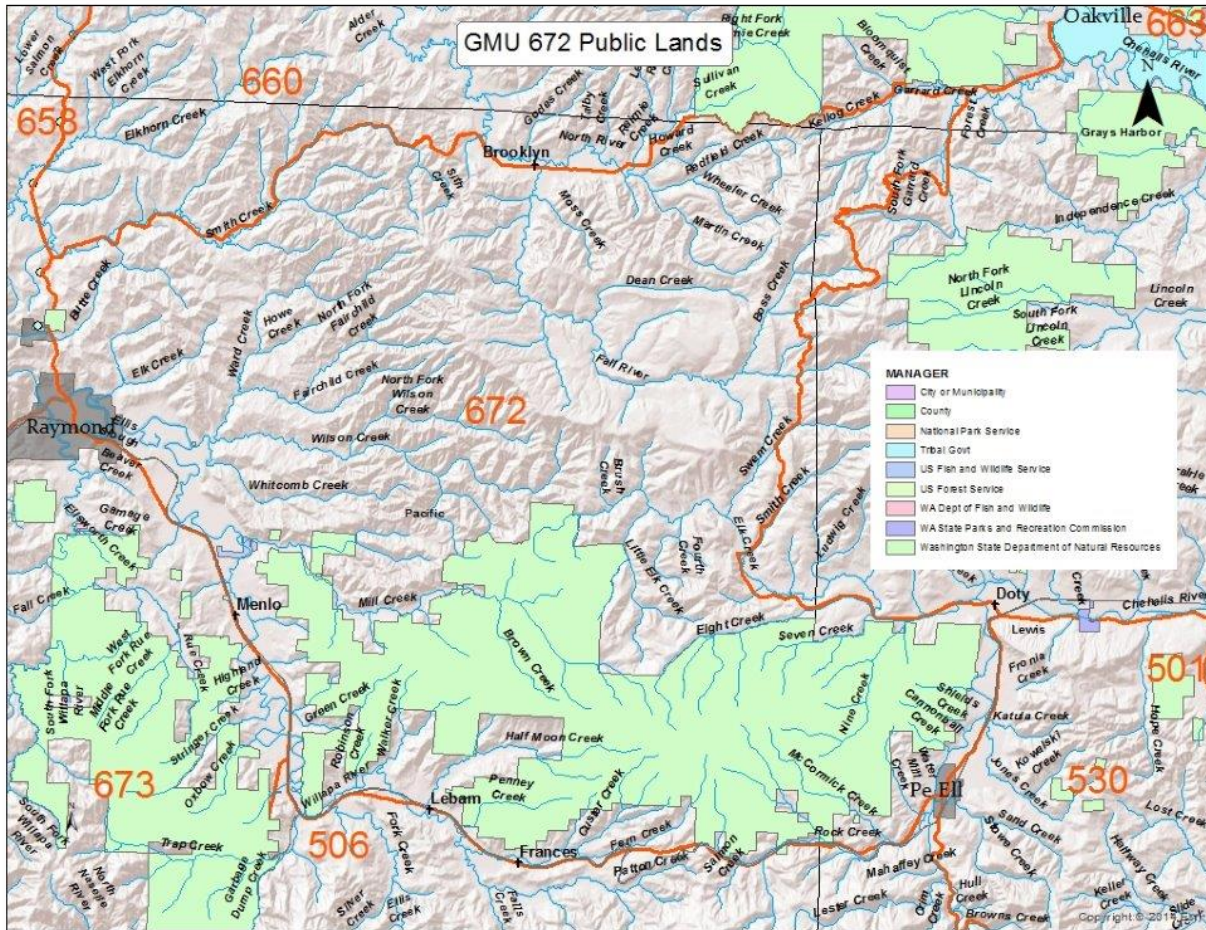


### GMU 663 (Capitol Peak) – Access Rating: Excellent

The majority (more than 80 percent) of GMU 663 is owned and managed by DNR, and most roads are open to motorized access. This area also has ORV trails. Hunters are advised to make sure they read and adhere to all posted rules.

### GMU 672 (Fall River) – Access Rating: Good

The primary landowners in GMU 672 are Weyerhaeuser and DNR. All Weyerhaeuser lands in this GMU are only accessible to permits holders.



### GMU 673 (Williams Creek) – Access Rating: Poor

Access in this GMU is quite variable and depends on the landowners. Primary private timberland owners are Hancock, Forest Investment Associates (FIA), Hampton, and Campbell Global. DNR also owns large tracts of land. In most areas, Hancock will limit access to only include non-motorized, but will open a few of the main logging roads during the general modern firearm season to disperse hunters and allow some interior access. FIA has recreational lease and fee access areas in this GMU available through the [American Forest Management company](#).

### **GMU 681 (Bear River) – Access Rating: Good**

Hunters can expect a lower level of access than in the past. The dot system is used by some owners, but it is not consistent because of the checkerboard ownership. Primary private landowners are Hancock, Rayonier, Weyerhaeuser, and The Nature Conservancy. Rayonier has some leased lands in this GMU and some general permit access areas. Portions of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge occur in GMU 681, and hunters planning to hunt on Refuge lands should contact the Refuge before doing so, as special regulations do apply in some areas. For details, [click here for the website](#) or call 360-484-3482. Nature Conservancy lands are open to hunting, but motorized access is restricted. Weyerhaeuser has recreational lease and permit access areas in this GMU.

### **GMU 684 (Long Beach) – Access Rating: Poor**

With the exception of Leadbetter Point, the majority of this GMU consists of private property. Hunters are advised to make sure they have permission to access private property before they actively hunt in GMU 684. Portions of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge occur in GMU 684, and hunters planning to hunt on Refuge lands should contact the Refuge beforehand, as special hunting regulations apply. [Click here for the website](#) or call 360-484-3482.

Lewis and Clark Timberlands owns some property in the unit. Access is allowed via a no-cost permit. Go to <https://permits.greenwoodresources.com/PermitHome.aspx> for more information.

### **GMU 699 (Long Island) – Access Rating: Poor**

The entire GMU is owned and managed by the USFWS. Access is by boat only, but camping is allowed in designated areas. Hunters should contact the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge for more details. [Click here for the website](#) or call 360-484-3482.

## **PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM**

There are several private landowners in District 17 enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program. However, at the time of this writing, Cooperative Agreements with these landowners have not been finalized. The majority of landowners are expected to renew their Cooperative Agreements for the 2021 hunting season but, the department is hesitant to provide that information in this document. Hunters are encouraged to check [WDFW's Hunter Access website](#) or call the Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628), to periodically check for updated information.

## **ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS**

Most GMUs in District 17 are a checkerboard of ownerships which can be extremely difficult to determine who owns the land where a hunter wishes to hunt. Fortunately, there are several online tools and resources that many hunters do not know about, which provide valuable information that helps solve the landowner puzzle. The following is a list and general description of tools and resources available to the general public.

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

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

## **Online Parcel Databases**

Technology has come a long way and has made it much easier for the general public to identify tax parcel boundaries and the associated landowner. However, because this technology has not been readily available in the past, there are several hunters who are not aware it exists.

Pacific County tax parcels can be searched using Mapsifter, which is a user-friendly mapping program that allows users to zoom in to their area of interest, click on a parcel, and identify who owns that parcel. The Pacific County Mapsifter tool can be located at <http://pacificwa.mapsifter.com>.

Grays Harbor tax parcels can be searched on the [Grays Harbor County website](#).

Downloadable Phone Applications are available from private industry which are very user friendly and highly functional when afield.

## **WDFWs "Places to go hunting"**

WDFW's updated web page includes additional information on "places to go hunting. This page provides additional information on various hunting opportunities including large format printable GMU maps. <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations>