

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 collectively comprise the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) coastal region, referred to as 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, mountain goat, bear, cougar, waterfowl, and grouse. A variety of small game species like rabbit, quail, coyote, and bobcat are also present. Table 1 presents estimates of harvest for most game species in District 15 during the 2021 hunting season, and how those estimates compare to the 2020 season and the five-year average. Find specific information on harvest trends in the appropriate species section of this document.

Table 1. Estimates of the 2020, 2021*, 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.

*2021 harvest data was not available for cougar at time of printing this report

Species	Harvest		
	5-year avg.	2020	2021
Elk	37	32	28
Deer	1,740	1,845	1,845
Mountain Goat	n/a	0	1
Bear	81	97	67
Cougar	9	9	n/a
Ducks	5,068	5,286	6,679
Canada Goose	338	610	451
Snipe	79	123	77
Grouse	2,670	3,049	2,083
Mourning Dove	50	115	0
Quail	64	61	0
Snowshoe Hare	2	0	0
Cottontail Rabbit	60	73	60

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 we occasionally receive 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. Periodically, we receive 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: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 we are 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 reference 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 do not 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 2022, eight rifle, four archery, and three muzzleloader permits are available. Each permit season provides additional days to hunt compared to the general season. WDFW recommends hunters look for elk along the main river drainages that flow into Hood Canal, including the Dosewallips, Duckabush, Hama Hama, 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 nearby valley ridges year-round or will migrate to summer range in Olympic National Park (ONP). Recently, some elk from the Duckabush herd have been moving south to new areas between the Hama Hama and Duckabush rivers. The Hama Hama group spends most of the year on land owned by the Hama Hama Company. Elk in the Lilliwaup are generally non-migratory and spend the year in and around Lilliwaup Swamp. In the past, WDFW has recorded elk movement from Lilliwaup Swamp north 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. DFW has also documented elk movement between the upper Wynoochee River drainage and the North Fork Skokomish.

GMU 636 is open to hunting by special bull permit only. In 2022, five rifle, four archery, and one muzzleloader permits are 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 River are primarily non-migratory. In the upper Wynoochee Valley, WDFW has recorded elk movements into Olympic National Park during the summer. Occasionally elk over-winter in the North or South Fork Skokomish river valleys. WDFW has recorded elk from this area moving as far south as the WDFW forage fields along the Wynoochee River in GMU 648.

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 3-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 than the number of special permits would suggest and hunters looking for an elk in any of these GMUs could encounter Tribal hunters.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2022 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 60% for archery, 43% for muzzleloaders, and 63% for modern firearm hunters.

In GMU 636, muzzleloader hunters report the highest success at 100%, followed by rifle hunters at 68%, and archery hunters at 38%.

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

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.

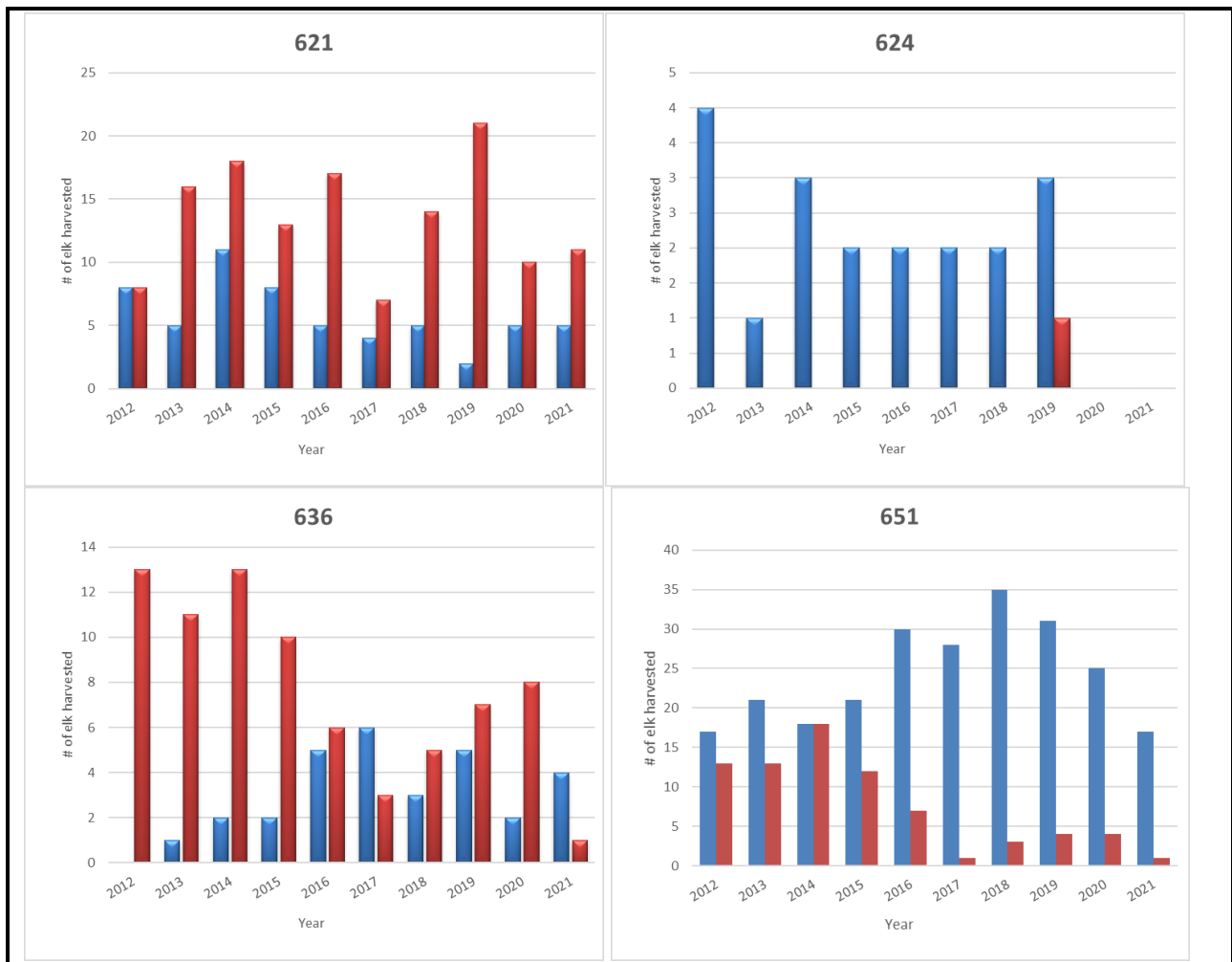


Figure 1. Total State (blue) and Tribal (red) elk harvest in GMUs 621, 624, 636, and 651 during 2012–2021.

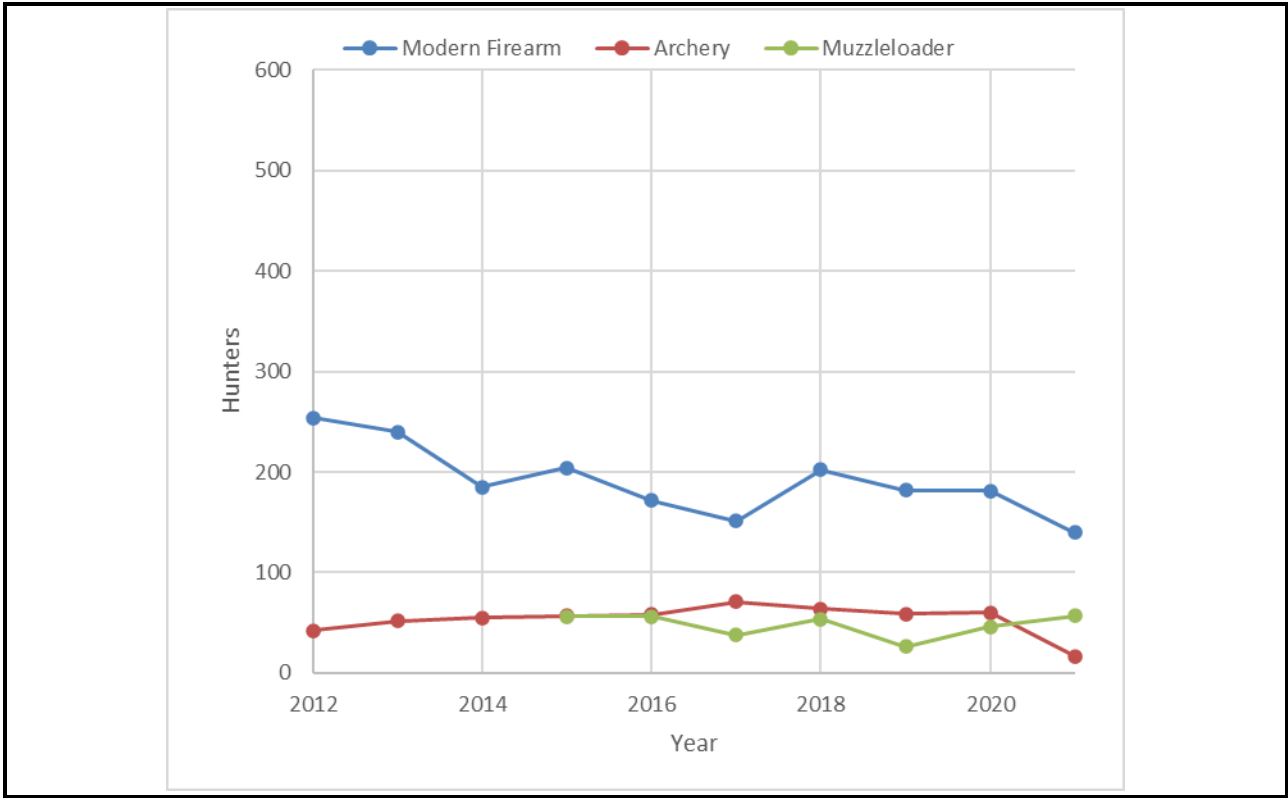


Figure 2. Elk hunter numbers during the general hunting seasons in GMU 651, 2012–2021.

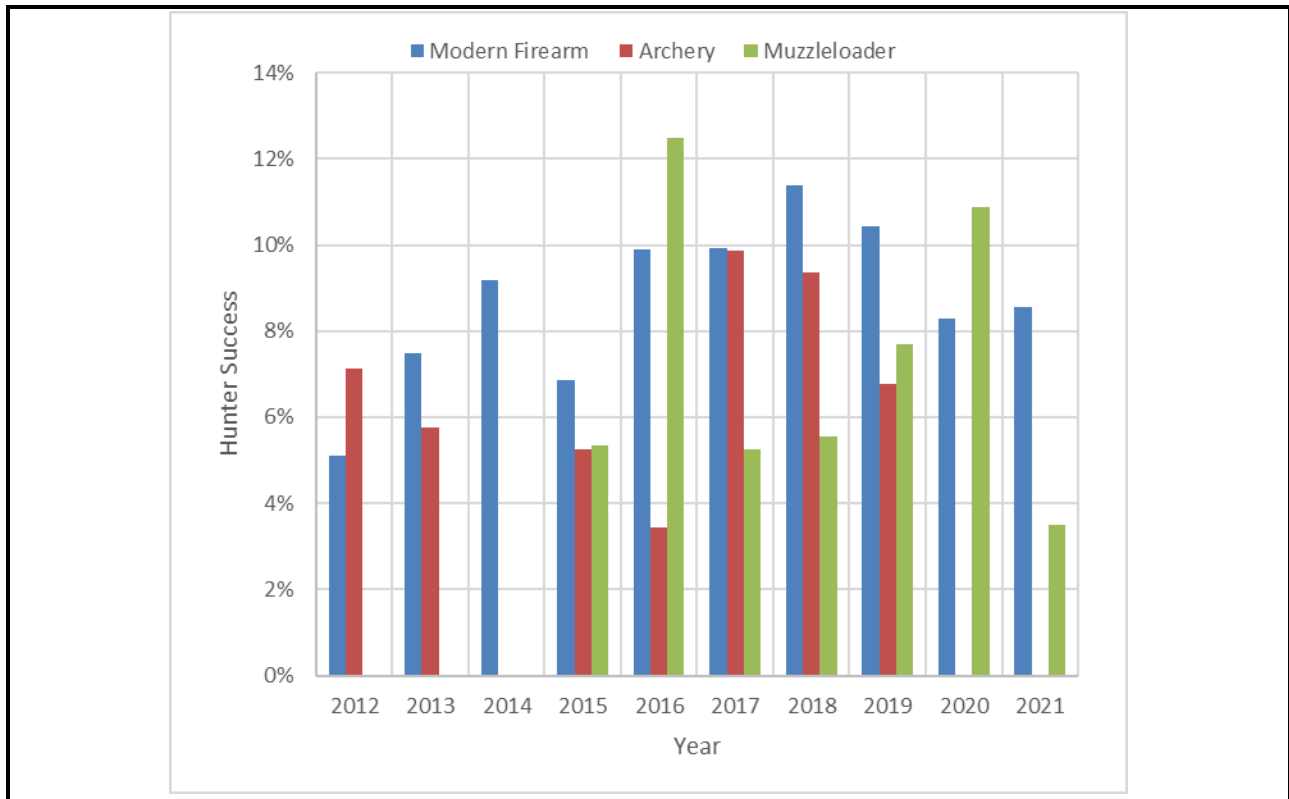


Figure 3. Elk Hunter success rates during general hunting seasons in GMU 651, 2012–2021.

ELK AREAS

There are two elk areas in District 15: Elk Area 6061 (Twin Satsop) and Elk Area 6071 (Dungeness). Elk Area 6061 was established primarily to aid in addressing chronic elk damage issues, while Elk Area 6071 was established to limit elk hunting for safety reasons.

Current hunting regulations allow the harvest of 3-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.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

None.

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, harvest trends, hunter success, and harvest per unit effort are used to supplement to a formal index or population size estimate. WDFW recognizes the limitations this approach and 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 reference the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report, which is available for download on the Department's website.

WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

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

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

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2022 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 don't change dramatically from one year to the next. Consequently, the best predictor of future harvest during general seasons available are recent harvest trends, 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 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

Deer Area 6020 is in GMU 624 and was established 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 the Department adjusted permit levels for some hunts.

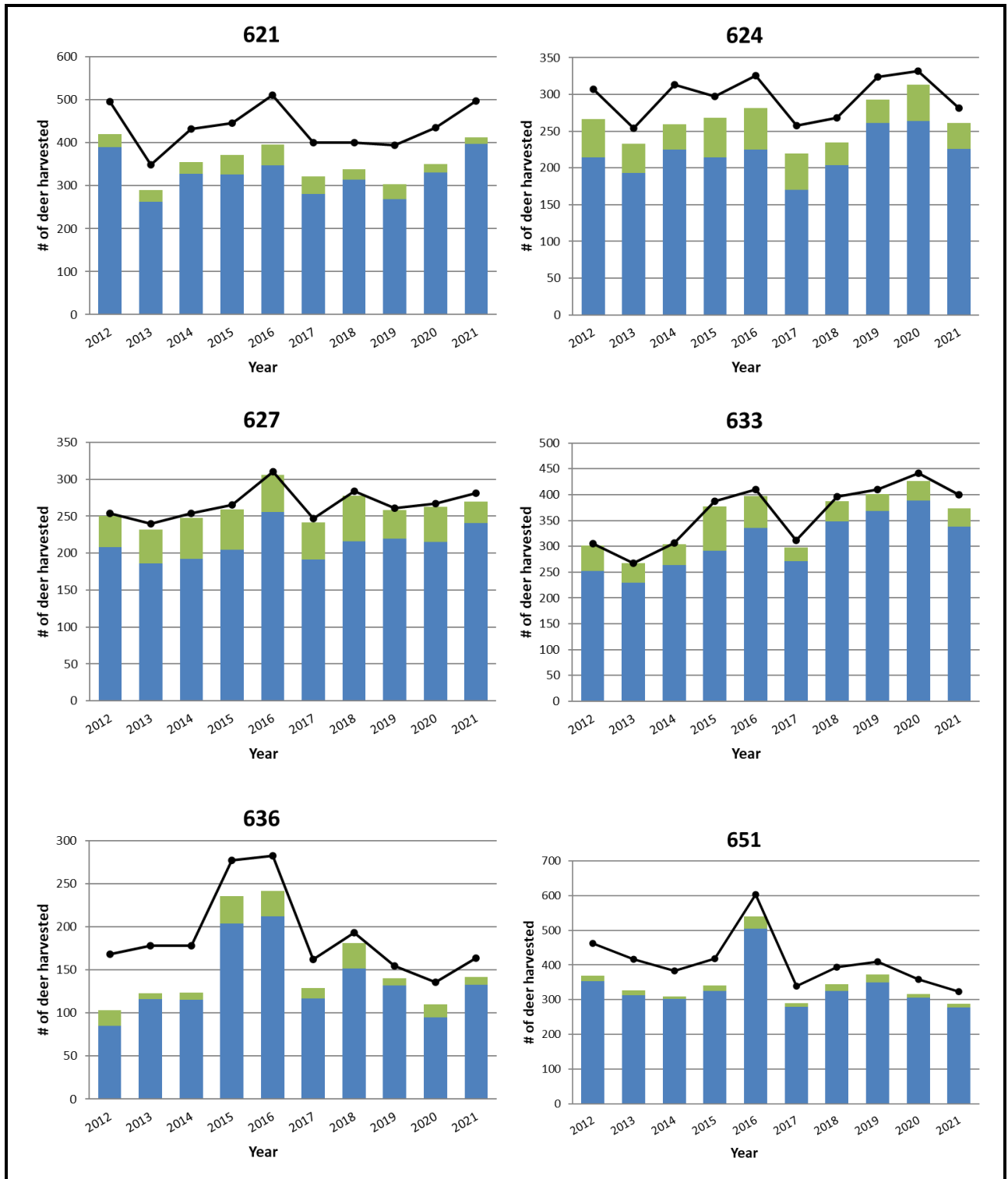


Figure 4. Trends in the total number of buck (blue) and antlerless (green) deer harvested during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2012–2021. Total deer harvest (black line) includes harvest from state general and permit seasons plus Tribal harvest.

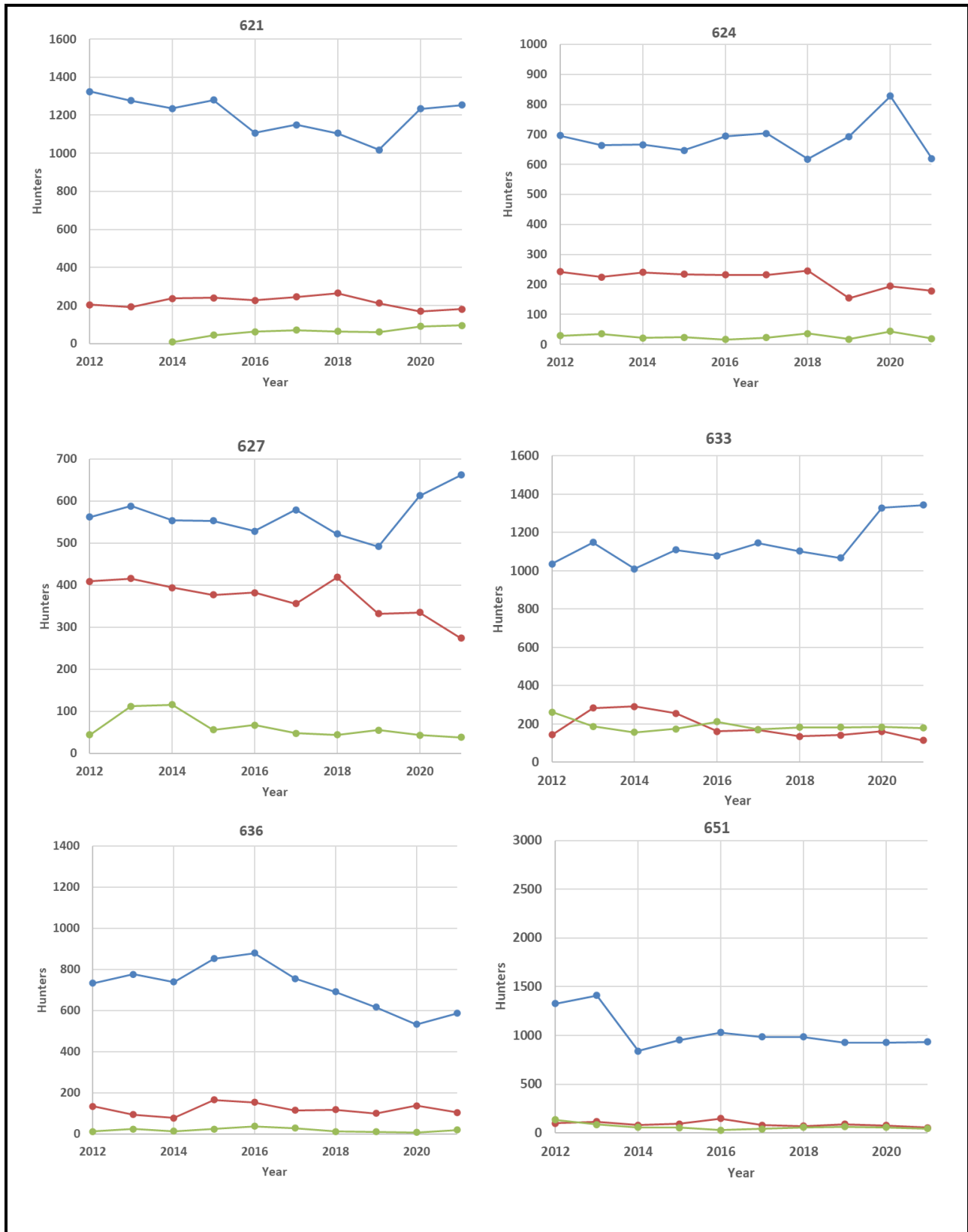


Figure 5. Trends in hunter numbers during general modern firearm (blue), archery (red), and muzzleloader (green) deer seasons in District 15, 2012–2021.

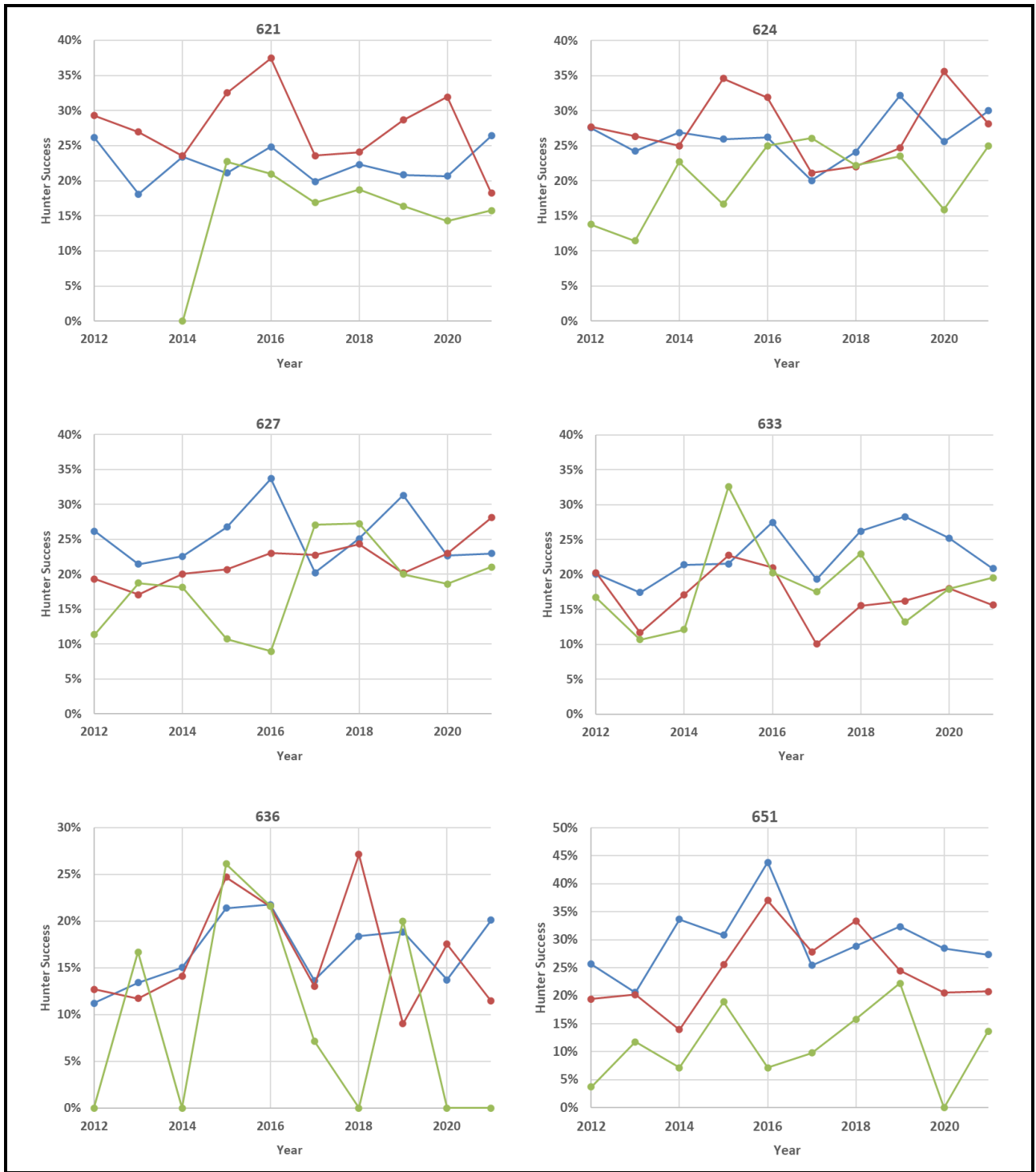


Figure 6. Trends in hunter success rates during general modern firearm (blue), archery (red), and muzzleloader (green) deer seasons in District 15, 2012–2021.

BEAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears occur throughout District 15, but population densities likely 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 Aug. 1 to Nov. 15. Hunters can buy up to two bear tags during each license year.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2022 SEASON

Most bear harvest in District 15 comes from hunters harvesting 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 decreased in 2021 (Figure 7). At the GMU level, bear harvest is usually highest in GMU 621 (Figure 8). Since 2017, GMUs 627 and 633 have offered two spring bear permit hunts. These hunts were added to reduce bear-human conflicts in two units with expanding urban development. Hunter participation and success during these permit hunts was low. Since 2017, the Department has issued 30 permits, 15 hunters hunted with the permit, and hunters harvested three bears.

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

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

The Fish and Wildlife Commission suspended spring bear permit hunts for 2023.

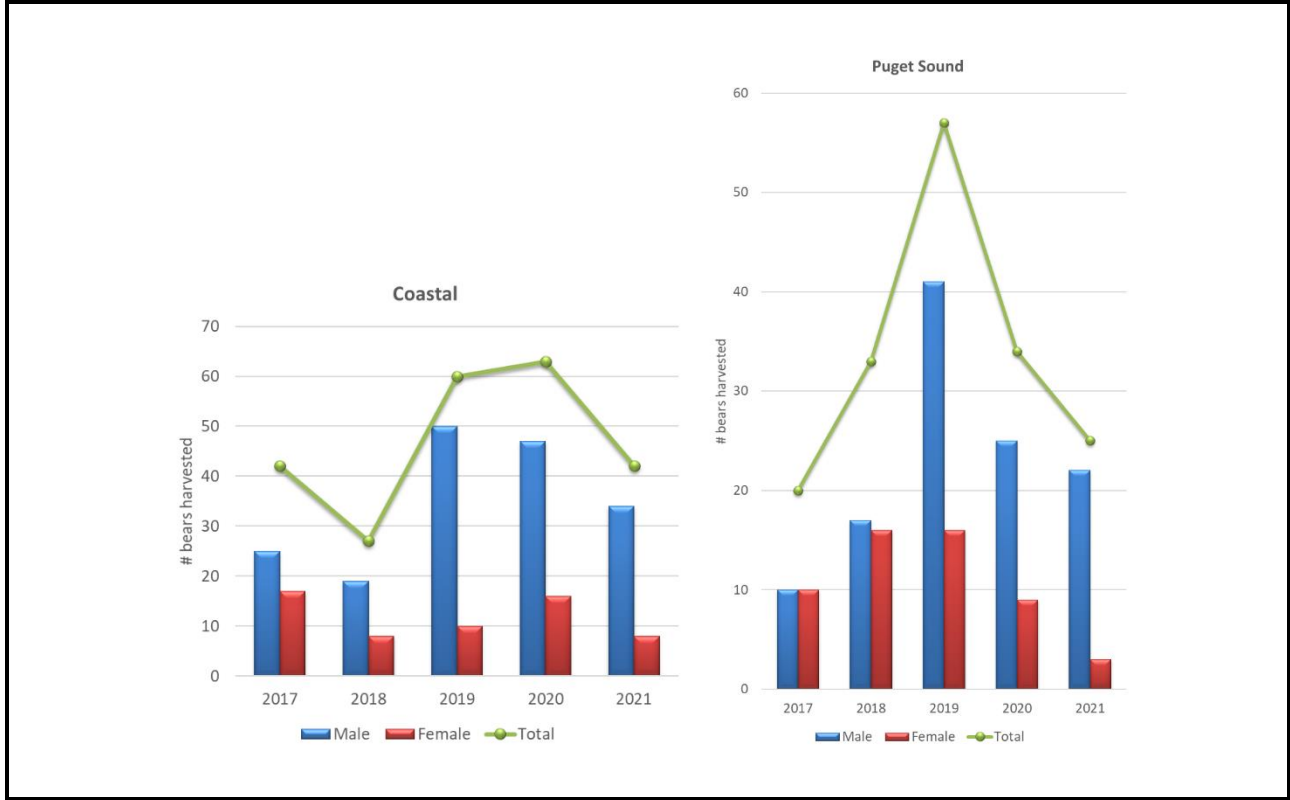


Figure 7. Trends in the number of male and female black bears and total number of bears harvested during the general bear season in District 15, 2017–2021. Bears removed for other reasons are not included.

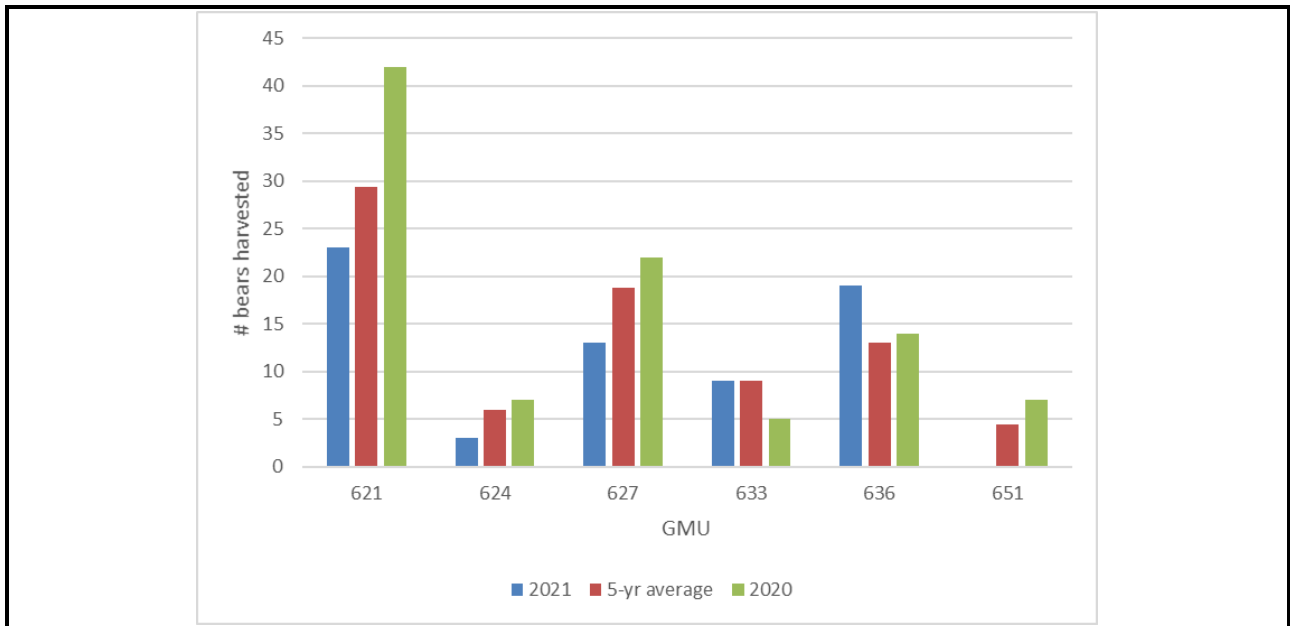


Figure 8. The number of bears harvested in each GMU during the 2020 and 2021 seasons in District 15. The five-year average for total number of bears harvested in each GMU is also included.

COUGAR

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

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

WDFW established a series of hunt areas with standard early season dates of Sept. 1 through Dec. 31 and late season dates from Jan. 1 to April 30. The late season is dependent upon whether harvest is above or below the harvest guideline. After Jan. 1, WDFW may close any hunt area that meets or exceeds the harvest guideline for that unit. Anyone planning to hunt cougar after Jan. 1 should confirm the cougar season is open in the desired hunting area. Harvest guidelines can be found in the Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet. General season cougar harvest by management unit is shown in Table 2; however, 2021/2022 cougar harvest data was not available at the time this report was written.



Photo courtesy of S. Murphie

Table 2. Harvest guidelines and the reported 2020-21 harvest for the three cougar hunt areas located in District 15.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline 2020	2020/21 Harvest
618, 636, 638	4-5	1
642, 648, 651	6-8	5
621, 624, 627, 633	None	6

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2022 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 2015/2016, the number of cougars harvested during hunting seasons has averaged eleven.

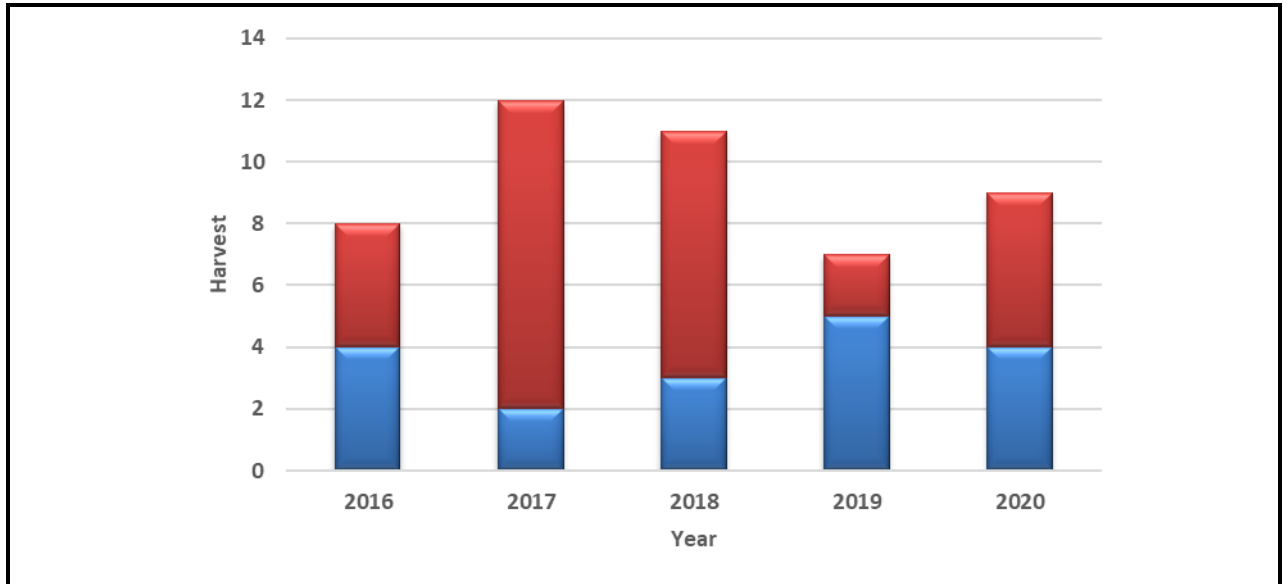


Figure 9. The estimated number of male (blue) and female (red) cougars harvested by hunters annually in District 15 (all GMUs combined), 2016 –2020.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

None.

MOUNTAIN GOAT

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Mountain goats were introduced into the Olympic Mountain range prior to the establishment



of the Olympic National Park (ONP) in the 1920s. Mountain goats thrived in the Olympic range, rapidly expanding their distribution and abundance to over 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. A mountain goat hunt outside ONP ran from 1983 until 1997, and 119 goats were harvested. 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. To again address concerns over the negative effect of an abundant introduced goat population on high-elevation endemic plants and soil erosion, the ONP, United States Forest Service (USFS), and WDFW initiated efforts to remove mountain goats from the Olympics.

WDFW established a new permit hunt in 2014. This permit hunt ran from 2014 until 2018 and fifteen goats were harvested. WDFW suspended the permit hunt during a joint management action to remove mountain goats from the Olympics by ONP, USFS, and WDFW, which began in 2018. From 2018 to 2020, more than 400 goats were removed from the Olympics with many relocated to the Cascades. In 2021, the ONP began targeted lethal removal by helicopter and an additional 119 goats were removed.

WDFW reopened a permit hunt in 2021 with 25 permits available split between three seasons. Only one adult male goat was harvested.

The final phase of significant management activity occurs in 2022. ONP will conduct aerial removals across the Olympics in and out of the park. WDFW anticipates this action will remove most of the remaining goats, particularly those in the WDFW permit hunt area. As such, the permit hunt for 2022 is not available.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

No hunt in 2022.

DUCKS

COMMON SPECIES

Several duck species use District 15. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, and common goldeneye, are also present on fresh and salt water. Nesting wood ducks can be located 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.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2022 PROSPECTS

District 15 hunters can expect similar hunting opportunities during the 2022 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 land offer walk-in hunting opportunities for mallards, ringnecks, and scaup.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Of note for 2022, harvest of harlequin ducks is not allowed.

GEESE

COMMON SPECIES

The subspecies of Canada geese most likely to be found in District 15 include western, lesser, Taverner's, and cackler. White-fronted and, occasionally, snow geese can also be encountered.

POPULATION STATUS

Like ducks, goose numbers in the district are largely driven by weather. The more severe the weather, the more likely the northern subspecies can be seen in the area. Anecdotal observations suggest that local westerns are stable or slightly increasing.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2022 PROSPECTS

Goose hunting opportunities in District 15 are expected to be like trends observed during the last few seasons. Most geese are taken 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 hunting opportunity. 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 2022 PROSPECTS

The number of grouse harvested in District 15 has been consistently low in Kitsap County and highest in Mason County recently (Figure 10). Grouse harvest in Jefferson County includes areas in District 16.

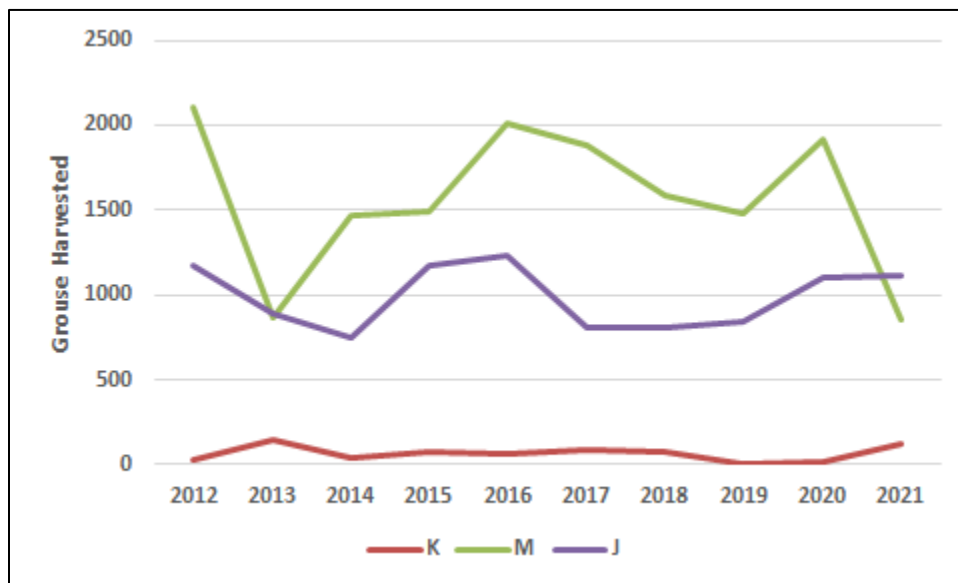


Figure 10. The number of grouse harvested in Jefferson, Kitsap, and Mason counties during 2012 – 2021.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

None.

PHEASANTS

There are no viable populations of wild pheasants in District 15. All pheasant hunting opportunities in District 15 are associated with the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, which provides an upland bird hunting opportunity and encourages participation from young and older-aged hunters. Each year, the program releases 30,000 to 40,000 pheasants at 25 sites, and three of those sites (Hunter Farms, Belfair, Trask Lake, and the Mason Lake (Sgt. Mak) site are in District 15. Release site locations and other details can be found on the [WDFW website](#). In 2021, hunters harvested 943 pheasants in District 15.

QUAIL

Although frustratingly unpredictable, hunters are mostly likely to find quail in District 15 in two to six-year-old timber harvests, under power lines, and in tall scotch broom stands 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 include 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 timber harvests 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, District 15 doesn't have any established turkey populations. 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 WDFW doesn't recommend this district for successful turkey hunting.

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 ft. in elevation. In autumn, they eat mainly berries, nuts, grains, acorns, and fruits.

POPULATION STATUS

WDFW monitors band-tailed pigeon populations using a standardized population index survey. These surveys occur 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, the trend has been increasing since 2015. 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 little to no harvest is reported.

WHERE AND HOW TO HUNT BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Often, band-tailed pigeons congregate in areas with red elderberry, which are typically most abundant in five to 10-year-old timber harvests. Hunting can be exceptionally good in these areas. The key to harvesting band-tailed pigeons is scouting because it is hard to predict which timber harvests, 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 2022 Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet to confirm season dates, harvest reporting, and any other regulation changes.

OTHER SMALL GAME SPECIES

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

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUNTER ACCESS IN EACH GMU

Although District 15 is not well known for large amounts of public land opportunities, they do exist on lands administered by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in all District 15 GMUs. The 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. All hunters are encouraged 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. Hunters are encouraged to contact the WDFW Region 6 office in Montesano (360-249-4628) or the specific landowner if they have questions related to recreational access. Although other companies own land in District 15, the two primary private timberland companies with land in District 15 are Green Diamond Resources and Rayonier. Rayonier acquired lands in District 15 formerly owned by Pope Resources Company in 2020. New for 2021, Rayonier may require access permits to recreate on their lands in Kitsap, Mason, and Jefferson counties. Hunters should visit the Rayonier 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. Rayonier may require an access permit to hunt portions of those lands formerly owned by Pope Resources. WDFW advises 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 manages a considerable amount of land in the western part of the unit. Rayonier and Green Diamond Resource Company also have holdings here. Whether state or private, most access in this unit is walk-in or by non-motorized vehicles, except that DNR allows all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on designated trails on some of its land in this unit. Rayonier may require an access permit to hunt portions of those lands formerly owned by Pope Resources. WDFW advises hunters 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 they generally open 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 their 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

Washington Department of Natural Resources – Olympic Region

olympic.region@dnr.wa.gov

360-374-2800

411 Tillicum Lane, Forks, WA 98331-9271

[Website](#)

Washington Department of Natural Resources – South Puget Sound Region

southpuget.region@dnr.wa.gov

360-825-1631

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

[Website](#)

U.S. Forest Service – Hood Canal Ranger District – Quilcene

(360) 765-2200

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

[Website](#)

PRIVATE TIMBERLANDS

Green Diamond Resources

[Recreation Website](#)

Recreation Email: recreation@greendiamond.com

Rayonier

Recreation Phone Number: 1-855-729-4868

[Recreation Website](#)

Recreation Email: Hunting@Rayonier.com

PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

Hunters are encouraged to call the WDFW 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 challenging 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 can be found [here](#).

Department of Natural Resources Public Lands Quadrangle (PLQ) Maps

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

U.S. Forest Service

[Mapping tools and information](#)