

2024 District 10 Hunting Prospects

Cowlitz, Lewis, and Wahkiakum counties



Washington
Department of
**FISH &
WILDLIFE**

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District 10 general overview

District 10 is in southwest Washington and includes Cowlitz, Lewis, and Wahkiakum counties. Game Management Units (GMUs) in District 10 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 vast area ranges from tidally influenced Columbia River shorelines to Cascade peaks. Details for each GMU in District 10, including size, approximate percentage of public land, primary landowners, and access roads, can be found in the GMU overviews section.

A large portion 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 usually find this information on their websites or by calling their 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. In 2014, major changes to hunting access were introduced, requiring hunters to purchase an access permit to hunt on most Weyerhaeuser lands, including the Saint Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). Motorized access permits range from \$250 to \$400, while non-motorized access permits are between \$75 and \$125. Visit their [website](#) for more details. Weyerhaeuser also allows free public access on their lands enrolled in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Private Lands Access Program. To find these lands, visit the [Private Lands Hunting Access webpage](#).

Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting without an access fee, though vehicle access may be limited. Major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Manulife (formerly 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. For more information about hunting opportunities on private lands, visit the [WDFW website](#), refer to page 96 of the [Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#), or by using the [WDFW Hunt Planner](#).

Public land in District 10 includes the [Cowlitz](#) and [Mount St. Helens](#) wildlife areas. Additionally, the [Gifford Pinchot National Forest](#) spans eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is scattered throughout all three counties. These state and federal lands are open for public access. Spans of eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is scattered throughout all three counties. These state and federal lands are open for public access.

The [WDFW Hunt Planner webpage](#) has useful map layers like GMU and elk/deer area boundaries, roads, Wildlife Areas, and different types of base maps (aerial photos, topography). If you prefer to use online or mobile apps like OnX Hunt to plan your hunt, OnX includes all WDFW Private Lands Access properties

as a separate layer when you add Washington from the list of states. Look for the “WA Private Lands Hunting Opportunities” layer and activate it with the toggle button.

For hunters interested in using e-bikes, note that they are typically considered motorized vehicles allowed only on roads and trails open to other motorized use (local regulations may vary). Hunters should check with each landowner, public or private, to ensure they are allowed. Please see the [WDFW](#) and [DNR](#) E-bike policy planning webpages for more information.

Visitors to WDFW- and DNR-managed lands with a parking placard for people with disabilities can use Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes on all non-motorized natural surface trails and closed roads where bicycles are allowed until June 30, 2023, or until new legislation is enacted.



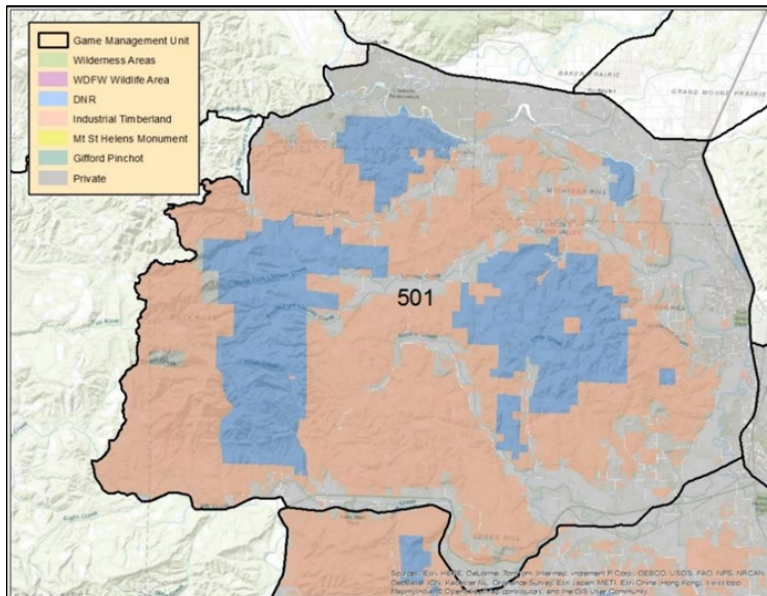
Successful Hunter with Blacktail Buck Taken on Forestlands in District 10. Photo by Tom Rhodes.

GMU overviews

GMU 501 - Lincoln

GMU 501 (Lincoln) is located west of Interstate 5 (I-5) near Chehalis and Centralia, and predominantly lies within Lewis County. The unit is a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes in the lower elevations close to I-5, transitioning quickly to forestlands as the elevation increases. Key geographic features include the Chehalis River, Interstate 5, and the Doty Hills. The unit is generally excellent for black-tailed deer but less favorable for elk.

Figure 1. GMU 501 - Lincoln, General Land Ownership



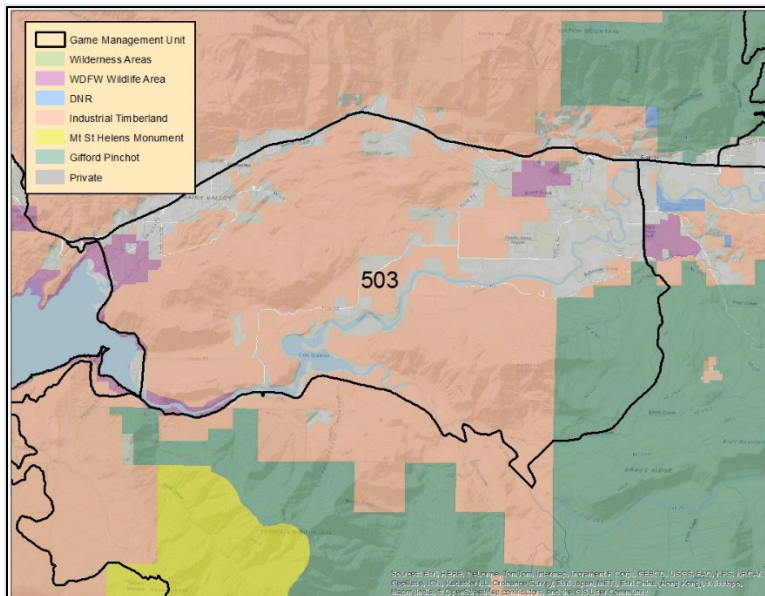
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 232 |
| Public land | ~35% |
| Industrial forestland | ~45% |
| Urban/suburban | ~10% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | Weyerhaeuser; DNR; small agricultural owners; state and industrial forestlands |
| Habitat/terrain | Floodplain/private agricultural areas and steeper hills; mix of flatter agricultural areas and steeper hills |
| Primary access points | State Route 6; Lincoln Creek Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | Average for ruffed grouse; very good for waterfowl |

GMU 503 - Randle

GMU 503 (Randle) is located east of I-5, near Randle and east of Riffe Lake, south of State Route 12, and is entirely within Lewis County. The GMU features a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes in the lower elevations, private industrial forestlands, and U.S. Forest Service lands. It also includes the Kiona Creek and Kosmos units of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area. Key geographic features include the Cowlitz and Cispus rivers, USFS Road 25, and State Route 12. The unit is generally moderately productive for black-tailed deer and elk, though its small size and substantial private property make access challenging.

Figure 2. GMU 503, Randle, General Land Ownership



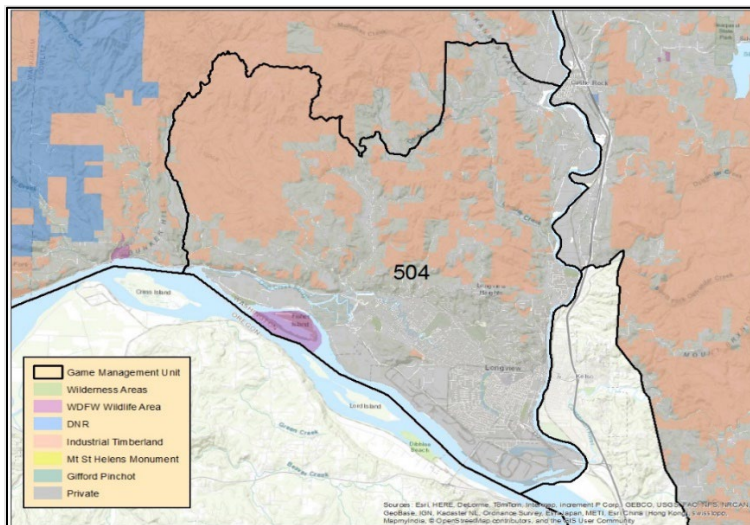
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 56 |
| Public land | ~20% |
| Industrial forestland | ~50% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---|
| Primary landowners | Small agricultural owners, U.S. Forest Service, private industrial forestlands |
| Habitat/terrain | Floodplain/private agricultural and residential; U.S. Forest Service lands; forested hills and flatter agricultural areas mix of flatter agricultural areas |
| Primary access points | State Route 12, U.S. Forest Service 25 Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | Average for ruffed grouse, low for waterfowl |

GMU 504 - Stella

GMU 504 (Stella) is located west of I-5, entirely within 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, and private industrial forestlands. It also includes the Fisher Island Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. Key geographic features include the Columbia River, the City of Longview, and Coal Creek. The unit generally has low productivity for black-tailed deer and elk. Access is challenging due to its small size, prevalence of private lands, and urbanized areas. Additionally, GMU 504 is “Firearm Restricted,” meaning modern firearms are not allowed for hunting. Refer to the annual Big Game Hunting Regulations for specific details. The GMU also has a small population of Columbian white-tailed deer in low-elevation areas near the Columbia River, but there is no open season for these deer. Check the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet for additional information.

Figure 3. GMU 504, Stella, General Land Ownership



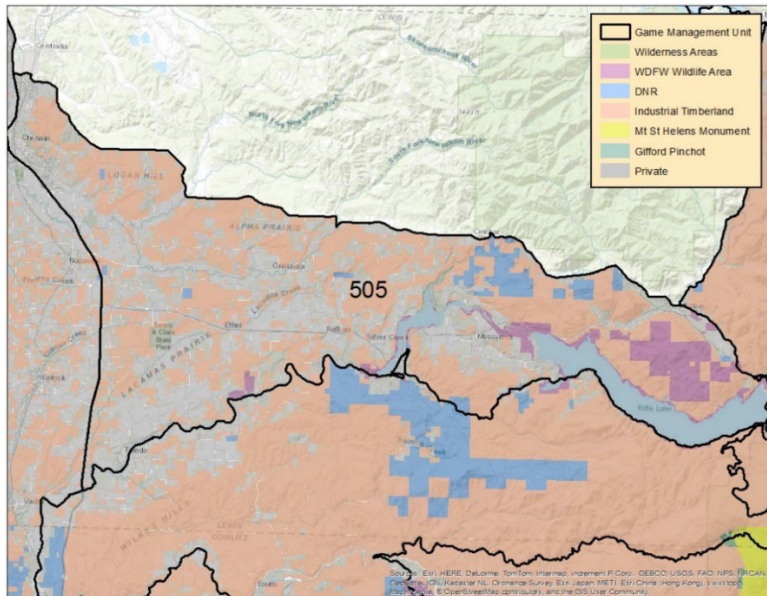
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 96 |
| Public land | ~5% |
| Industrial forestland | ~40% |
| Urban/suburban | ~35% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | Small agricultural owners, Weyerhaeuser, urban/suburban |
| Habitat/terrain | Industrial forestlands, floodplain/private agricultural and urban, mix of forested hills and flatter developed areas |
| Primary access points | State Route 4, Coal Creek Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | Average for ruffed grouse, good for waterfowl |

GMU 505 - Mossyrock

GMU 505 (Mossyrock) is located east of I-5, north of the Cowlitz River, and entirely within Lewis County. The GMU is primarily a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes. It also includes the Peterman Hill and Swofford Pond units of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area. Key geographic features of GMU 505 include the Cowlitz River, I-5, State Route 12, and Riffe and Mayfield lakes. The unit generally offers good productivity for black-tailed deer, but only has a small elk population. Access can be challenging due to numerous small private landholdings, though the Peterman Hill Unit of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area provides good deer hunting opportunities.

Figure 4. GMU 505, Mossyrock, General Land Ownership



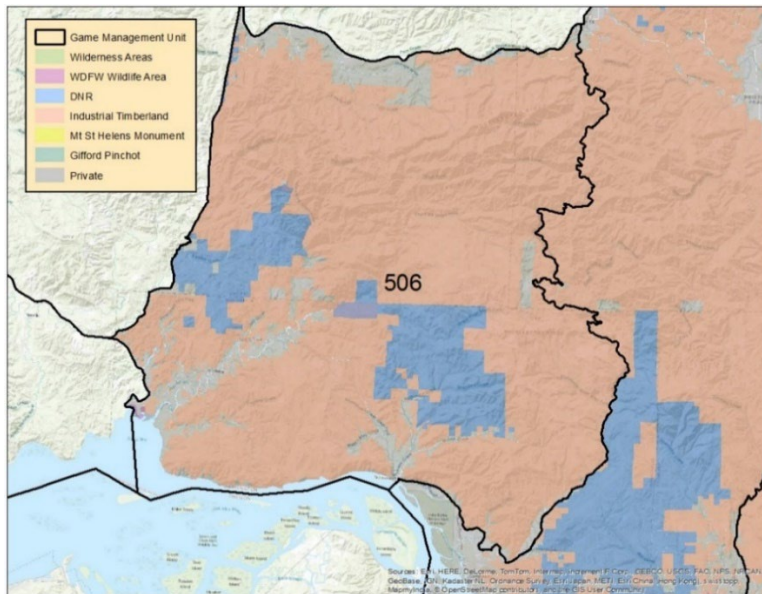
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 295 |
| Public land | ~20% |
| Industrial forestland | ~45% |
| Urban/suburban | ~5% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---|
| Primary landowners | Small agricultural owners, private agricultural, private industrial and state forestlands |
| Habitat/terrain | Mostly flatter or rolling topography; some steeper, rugged terrain |
| Primary access points | State Route 12, Peterman Hill Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed grouse, modest for waterfowl |

GMU 506 - Willapa Hills

GMU 506 (Willapa Hills) is located west of I-5 and spans Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum counties. The GMU is primarily private industrial and DNR forestlands, with some private agricultural lands and rural homes on the valley floors. Key geographic features include the Willapa Hills, Gray's River and Gray's Bay, the Willapa River, and State Routes 3 and 6. The unit offers good productivity for black-tailed deer and has a strong elk population. Access involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners, as well as locating public lands.

Figure 5. GMU 506, Willapa Hills, General Land Ownership



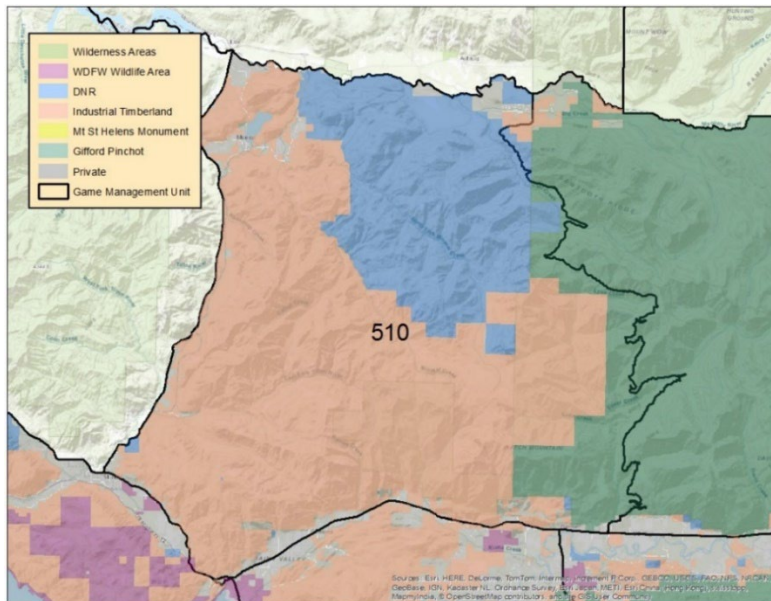
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 371 |
| Public land | ~30% |
| Industrial forestland | ~60% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---|
| Primary landowners | Hancock, Rayonier, DNR, private industrial and state forestlands |
| Habitat/terrain | Mostly rugged mountainous terrain; limited flatter, valley floor topography |
| Primary access points | State Routes 3 and 6 |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed grouse and waterfowl |

GMU 510 - Stormking

GMU 510 is located north of State Route 12, east of State Route 7, and lies entirely within Lewis County. The GMU is primarily a mix of private industrial forestlands, DNR forestlands, and USFS-managed lands. Key geographic features include the Tilton River, Stormking Mountain, and Kiona Peak. Overall, the unit is low in productivity for black-tailed deer and elk.

Figure 6. GMU 510, Stormking, General Land Ownership



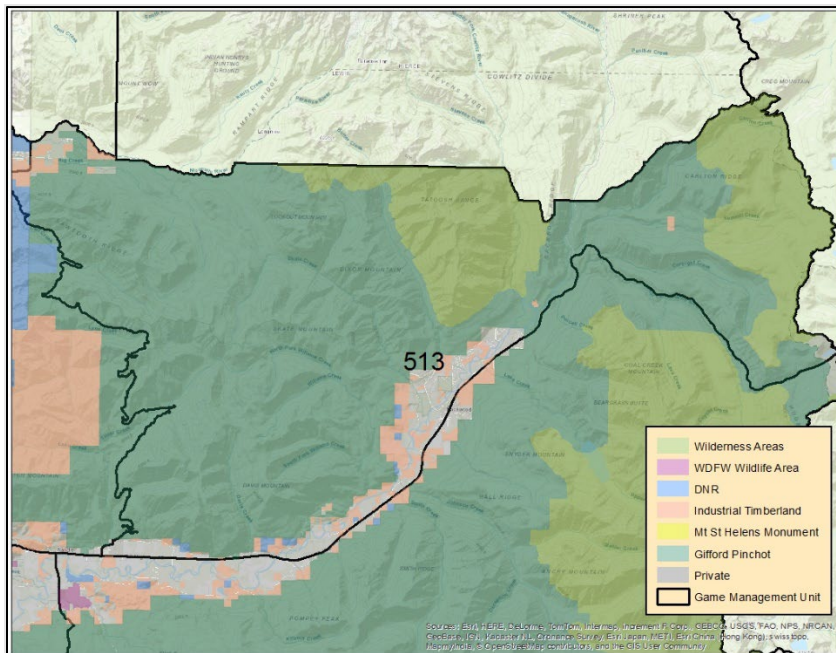
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 208 |
| Public land | ~50% |
| Industrial forestland | ~45% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | Hancock, Sierra Pacific, DNR; private industrial, state, and U.S. Forest Service forestlands |
| Habitat/terrain | Rugged mountain terrain |
| Primary access points | State Routes 3 and 12; U.S. Forest Service Road 47, DNR Road 1 |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed and sooty grouse, poor for waterfowl |

GMU 513 - South Rainier

GMU 513 (South Rainier) is north of State Route 12, south of Mt. Rainier National Park, and lies entirely within Lewis County. The GMU is almost entirely managed by the USFS, with the exception for a narrow strip of private lands along State Route 12 and the Cowlitz River. Key geographic features include the Cowlitz River, Sawtooth Ridge, Skate Mountain, and Carlton Ridge. The unit also contains two USFS wilderness areas: Tatoosh and William O. Douglas. Overall, the unit has low productivity for black-tailed deer and elk.

Figure 7. GMU 513, South Rainier, General Land Ownership



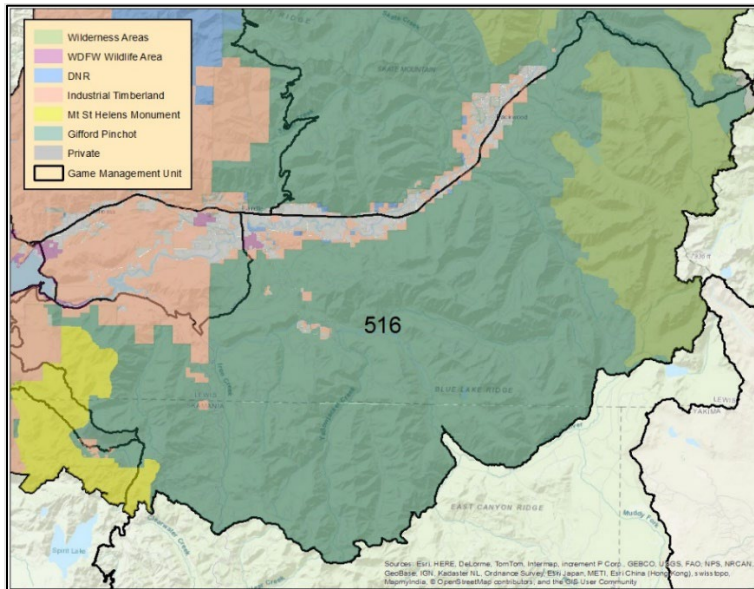
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 240 |
| Public land | ~95% |
| Industrial forestland | ~0% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |
| Wilderness | ~20% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | U.S. Forest Service |
| Habitat/terrain | Federal forestlands, rugged mountainous terrain including wilderness |
| Primary access points | State Route 12, U.S. Forest Service Road 47, Pacific Crest Trail |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed and sooty grouse, poor for waterfowl |

GMU 516 - Packwood

GMU 516 (Packwood) is a very large unit located, south of State Route 12, and lies entirely within Lewis County. The GMU is almost entirely managed by the USFS, with the exception for a narrow band of private lands along State Route 12. Key geographic features include the Cowlitz River, Cispus River, and Goat Rocks Wilderness. Overall, the unit has low productivity for black-tailed deer and elk.

Figure 8. GMU 516, Packwood, General Land Ownership



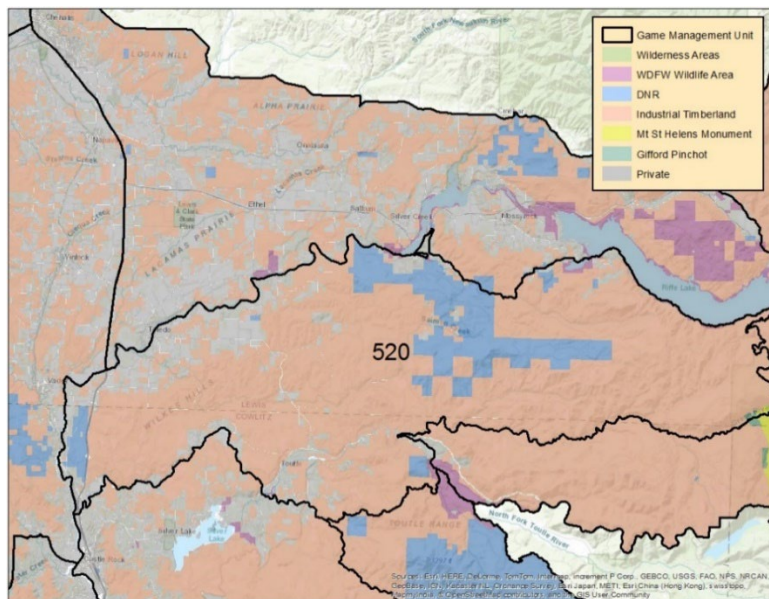
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 538 |
| Public land | ~95% |
| Industrial forestland | ~2% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |
| Wilderness | ~20% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | U.S. Forest Service |
| Habitat/terrain | Federal forestlands, rugged mountainous terrain including wilderness |
| Primary access points | State Route 12, U.S. Forest Service Roads 20 and 24; Pacific Crest Trail |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed and sooty grouse, poor for waterfowl |

GMU 520 - Winston

GMU 520 (Winston) is located east of I-5, primarily between the Cowlitz and Toutle/Green rivers. While the unit is mostly in Lewis County, it also extends into Cowlitz and Skamania counties. The GMU is primarily private industrial forestlands, with some DNR lands, a small section of USFS at its far eastern edge, and rural homes and agricultural areas in the northwest. Key geographic features include the Toutle and Green rivers, Cowlitz River, Riffe Lake, and Salmon Creek. The unit has good productivity for both black-tailed deer and elk. Accessing the unit requires navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners, as well as identifying public lands.

Figure 9. GMU 520, Winston, General Land Ownership



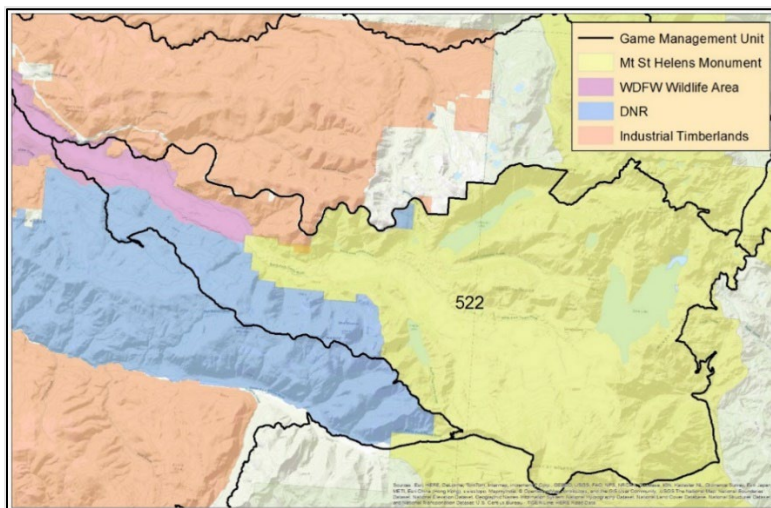
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 299 |
| Public land | ~20% |
| Industrial forestland | ~75% |
| Urban/suburban | ~2% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | Weyerhaeuser, Olympic Resource Management, DNR |
| Habitat/terrain | Mountainous terrain, flatter in the western part of the GMU |
| Primary access points | State Routes 505 and 12, Winston Creek Road, Weyerhaeuser 1900 |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed and sooty grouse, poor for waterfowl |

GMU 522 - Loo-wit

GMU 522 (Loo-wit) is a small unit located south of State Route 12 within Skamania and Cowlitz counties. The GMU is dominated by the USFS Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, with smaller portions owned or managed by DNR, Weyerhaeuser, and WDFW. The Mudflow and Hoffstadt units of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area partially lie within this GMU. Key geographic features include Mt. St. Helens and the North Fork Toutle River. Recreational access is heavily limited due to Monument policies designed to protect the recovering landscape. **Hunting in this unit is generally prohibited, with exceptions for elk and mountain goat hunting, which are allowed on a permit-only basis.**

Figure 10. GMU 522, Loo-wit, General Land Ownership



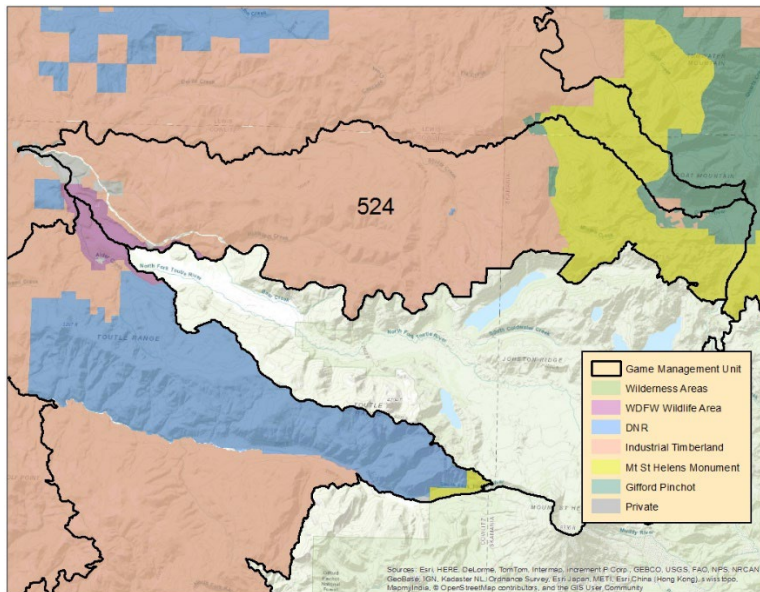
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 93 |
| Public land | ~95% |
| Industrial forestland | ~5% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---|
| Primary landowners | U.S. Forest Service (St. Helens Monument), DNR, WDFW, Weyerhaeuser |
| Habitat/terrain | Mt. St. Helens blast zone and mudflow, DNR/private industrial forestlands, remote mountainous terrain |
| Primary access points | State Routes 504, U.S. Forest Service Road 26/99, DNR 3000 Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | CLOSED season for these species |

GMU 524 - Margaret

GMU 524 (Margaret) is a small unit located south of the Green River, primarily within Cowlitz and Skamania counties. This GMU is primarily owned by Weyerhaeuser and the USFS Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, with smaller areas of private industrial forestland and a small portion of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. Key geographic features include the Green River and Mount Margaret Backcountry. The easternmost portion of the unit (as defined by Elk Area 5066) is closed to general season elk hunting, with some permit-only hunting allowed.

Figure 11. GMU 524, Margaret, General Land Ownership



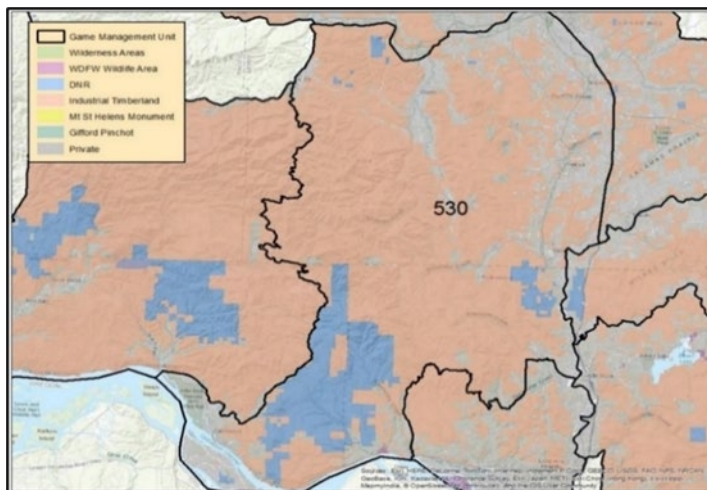
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 96 |
| Public land | ~20% |
| Industrial forestland | ~75% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | U.S. Forest Service (St. Helens Monument), Weyerhaeuser |
| Habitat/terrain | Private industrial forestlands, remote mountainous terrain, Mt. Margaret Backcountry |
| Primary access points | State Routes 504, Weyerhaeuser 1100 |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed grouse, poor for waterfowl |

GMU 530 - Ryderwood

GMU 530 (Ryderwood) is located along the western side of I-5, extending from Castle Rock to Chehalis, and spans Cowlitz, Lewis, and Wahkiakum counties. The GMU is primarily private industrial and DNR forestlands, with private agricultural lands and rural homes on the valley floors and Puget Island. Key geographic features include the Willapa Hills, the Columbia and Chehalis rivers, and State Routes 4 and 6. The unit has very good productivity for black-tailed deer and supports a good elk population. The unit also has a population of Columbian white-tailed deer in low elevation areas near the Columbia River, particularly in the vicinity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Julia Butler Hansen Refuge and Puget Island. Hunters are reminded that there is no open season for these deer and should consult the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet for details.

Figure 12. GMU 530, Ryderwood, General Land Ownership



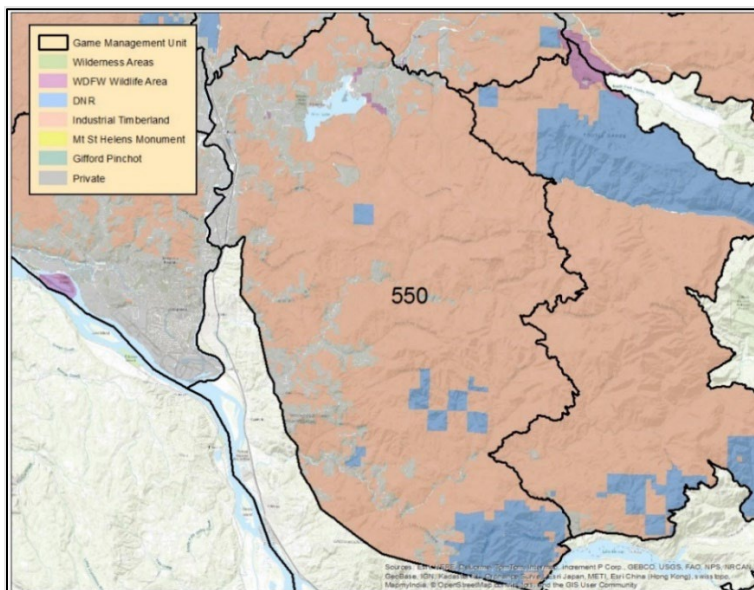
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 541 |
| Public land | ~20% |
| Industrial forestland | ~70% |
| Urban/suburban | ~5% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | Sierra Pacific, Weyerhaeuser, DNR, small private/agricultural |
| Habitat/terrain | Private industrial and DNR forestlands; floodplain/private/agricultural, mountainous terrain |
| Primary access points | State Routes 4, 6, and 506; Boistfort Road, Germany Creek Road, Abernathy Creek Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed grouse and waterfowl |

GMU 550 - Coweeman

GMU 550 (Coweeman) is located east of I-5 and south of State Route 504 in the Cascade Mountain foothills, entirely within Cowlitz County. The GMU is primarily private industrial forestlands, with some DNR lands, along with rural homes and agricultural areas, mostly in the northwestern part of the unit. Key features include Silver Lake, the Coweeman, Cowlitz, and Kalama rivers, as well as Baird Mountain and Georges Peak. The unit has very good productivity for black-tailed deer and good productivity for elk. Accessing the unit requires navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as identifying public lands.

Figure 13. GMU 550, Coweeman, General Land Ownership



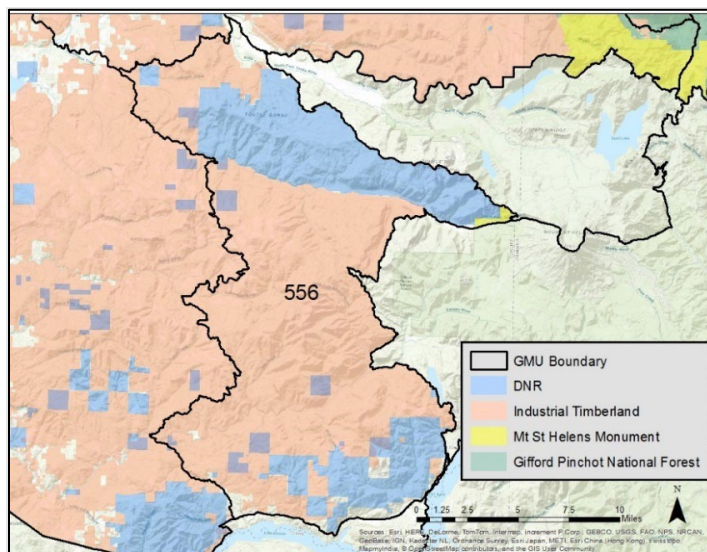
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 347 |
| Public land | ~15% |
| Industrial forestland | ~80% |
| Urban/suburban | ~5% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary landowners | Weyerhaeuser, DNR, small private/agricultural |
| Habitat/terrain | Private industrial and DNR forestlands; floodplain/private/agricultural, mountainous terrain |
| Primary access points | State Routes 504, Weyerhaeuser 4700, 6100, and 6300; Kalama River Road, Rose Valley Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed grouse, modest for waterfowl |

GMU 556 - Toutle

GMU 556 (Toutle) is located east of I-5 in the upper watersheds of the Coweeman, Kalama, and South Fork Toutle rivers, entirely within Cowlitz County. The GMU is primarily private industrial forestlands but also includes a significant amount of DNR land in its northern and southern portions. Key geographic features include the Coweeman, Kalama, and South Fork Toutle rivers, as well as Lakeview Peak and Big Bull, Elk, and Little Cow mountains. The unit has modest productivity for black-tails and good productivity for elk. **Hunters should be aware that all elk hunting in GMU 556 (Toutle) is by Special Permit only, with no general season for elk.** In 2021, the boundary between the Toutle and Yale GMUs was adjusted to simplify hunting regulations. The new southern boundary of GMU 556 now follows Lewis River Road. Accessing the GMU requires navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners, as well as identifying public lands.

Figure 14. GMU 556, Toutle General Land Ownership



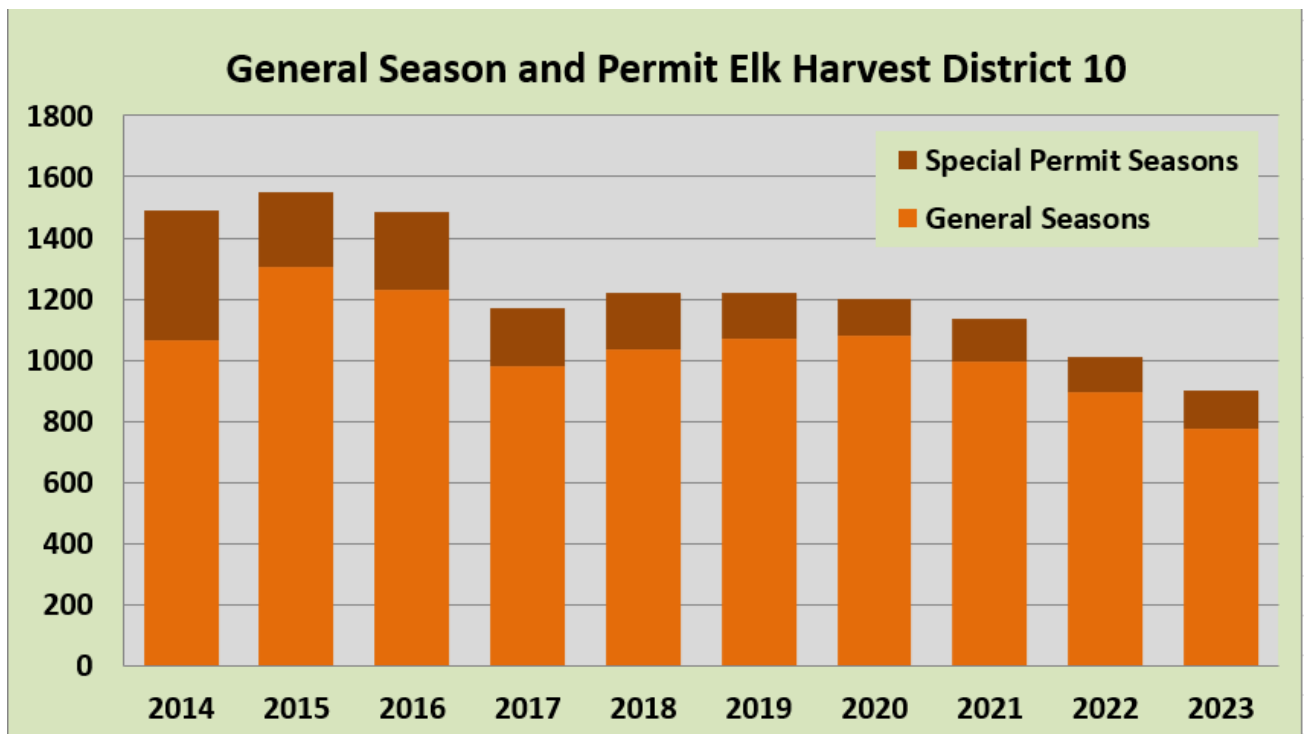
| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Square miles | 230 |
| Public land | ~35% |
| Industrial forestland | ~65% |
| Urban/suburban | ~0% |

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---|
| Primary landowners | Weyerhaeuser, DNR |
| Habitat/terrain | Private industrial and DNR forestlands, mountainous terrain |
| Primary access points | State Routes 503 and 504; DNR 4200 and 4250 roads; Weyerhaeuser 4950, 5500, 7200, 1400, 6600; Rock Creek Road |
| Small game/waterfowl | Good for ruffed and sooty grouse, poor for waterfowl |

Elk

Historically, District 10 has been among the leaders in statewide elk harvest. In 2023, the highest general season harvests occurred in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills), 530 (Ryderwood), 520 (Winston), and 550 (Coweeman). The district also offers many permit hunts to manage the elk population, address agricultural damage caused by elk, and provide recreational opportunity. Additionally, GMUs 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle) are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In 2023, 777 elk were harvested during the general season, with an additional 124 elk taken by permit in District 10. Elk west of I-5 belong to the Roosevelt sub-species, while those in the Cascade Mountain Range are of mixed origin. Cascade elk are a genetic combination of native Roosevelt elk and introduced Rocky Mountain elk. The chart below illustrates the elk harvest trend in District 10 over the past ten years, highlighting how this harvest is divided among general and permit seasons.

Figure 15. General Season and Permit Elk Harvest in District 10



Additional metrics can help hunters decide where to begin scouting for an elk hunting location. The table below 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 is organized by GMU and represents the 5-year averages for the 2019-23 modern firearm general hunting seasons.

Table 1. District 10 modern firearm general season elk harvest, 2019-23, 5-year averages

| GMU | Elk Harvest | % Success | Hunters | Hunters/sq mi | Harvest/sq mi | % 5pt+ Bulls |
|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 501* | 16 | 7.0 | 214 | .9 | .07 | .59 |
| 503 | 6 | 3.0 | 158 | 2.8 | .10 | .60 |
| 504* | 6 | 7.6 | 80 | .8 | .06 | .28 |
| 505 | 11 | 5.4 | 167 | .6 | .04 | .73 |
| 506 | 116 | 13.0 | 898 | 2.4 | .31 | .39 |
| 510 | 8 | 6.2 | 136 | .7 | .04 | .68 |
| 513 | 13 | 7.2 | 185 | .8 | .06 | .63 |
| 516 | 16 | 2.8 | 572 | 1.1 | .03 | .59 |
| 520 | 63 | 7.8 | 810 | 2.7 | .21 | .64 |
| 524 | 19 | 6.4 | 306 | 3.2 | .20 | .61 |
| 530 | 76 | 9.8 | 783 | 1.4 | .14 | .51 |
| 550 | 51 | 6.0 | 823 | 2.4 | .15 | .41 |
| Total** | 402 | 7.2 | 5052 | 1.5 | .12 | .51 |

*Antlerless elk included. **GMUs 522 and 556 not included (special permit only).

Elk population information

Elk populations in District 10 GMUs, including the Mount St. Helens Elk Herd, are down from their historic highs in the mid-2000s. This reduction aligns with the objectives of the [Mount St. Helens Elk Herd Plan](#). Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity, combined with several years of late-winter and spring storms, have reduced the elk population in these GMUs. Elk within the Mount St. Helens herd typically lack the necessary fat reserves to endure long, harsh winters. Additionally, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (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, according to unpublished WDFW data.

Survey efforts conducted during the spring of 2017-19 and 2022 indicated that the Mount St. Helens Elk Herd had stabilized at about 1,000 adult female elk in the area surveyed as an index to the population. The most recent survey, completed in 2024, showed a slight increase to approximately 1250 adult females. Available data suggests the elk population remains below objectives and well below historic highs. Hunters should expect a generally challenging elk hunting season in the Mount St. Helens herd area in 2024. WDFW has reduced antlerless hunting opportunities accordingly.

Elk population surveys in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills) and 530 (Ryderwood) are conducted intermittently, with the most recent survey completed in spring 2023. Surveys conducted in 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2023 indicate stable elk populations in these units. Severe winter conditions rarely cause

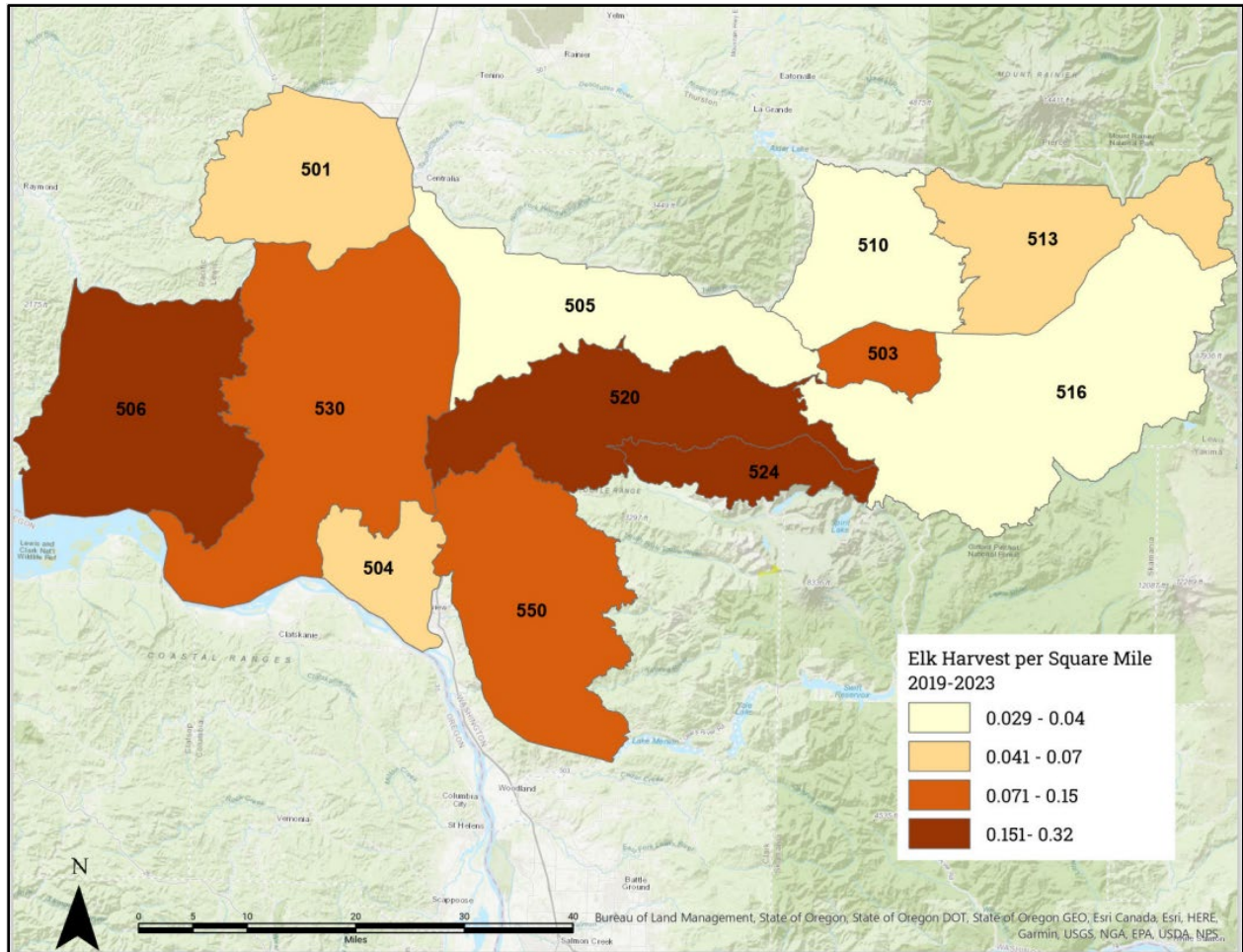
population-level impacts on Willapa Hills elk. Hunting opportunities and success rates should be similar to recent years.

The general bull elk season is always challenging, but the District 10 elk population yields a harvest of nearly 800 bull elk annually. Hunters who put in the effort and stay focused may be rewarded with success. Below is an illustration of the average elk harvest per square mile in District 10 during 2019-23 modern firearm general seasons, organized by GMU. Note that GMUs 522 and 556 are excluded because all elk hunting in these two units is by special permit only.



Bull Elk Taken in District 10. Photo by Jeff Larson.

Figure 16. Average number of elk harvested annually, per square mile, during modern firearm general season in District 10, 2019-23



Additional resources

You can find annual [game harvest reports](#) for deer and elk on the WDFW website. For more information regarding elk management in the Mount St. Helens, Willapa Hills, and South Rainier elk herd areas, review the elk herd managements plans on the [Game Management Plans \(GMP\) webpage](#).

Elk scouting strategies

Use the [Hunt Planner mapping tool](#) to view aerial photos and identify recent clear-cuts and drainages. You can do some pre-season scouting on commercial tree farms by bike or on foot, as most areas will not be open to motorized access yet. Motorized access and camping are generally available on DNR and U.S. Forest Service lands unless there is a high fire danger. Prospective elk hunters should remember that elk often prefer cooler, wetter areas during warmer weather and are more often active during dawn and dusk.

Treponeme-associated elk hoof disease (TAHD)

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with some 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) — suggested something different. WDFW, with a panel of scientific advisors, conducted diagnostic research that found that 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 livestock industry for decades, TAHD had never been documented in elk or any other hooved wildlife species. 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.

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 implemented an incentive-based pilot program to encourage hunters in west side GMUs (400, 500, and 600 series) to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing the prevalence of the disease over time. The program aims to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase the overall elk harvest. General season or permit hunters participate by submitting elk hooves at collection sites in western Washington. Locations of [collection sites](#) are available on the WDFW website. Hunters who submit hooves with signs of TAHD, such as 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.

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, visit [WDFW’s website](#) and [Washington State University’s website](#). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65-66 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.

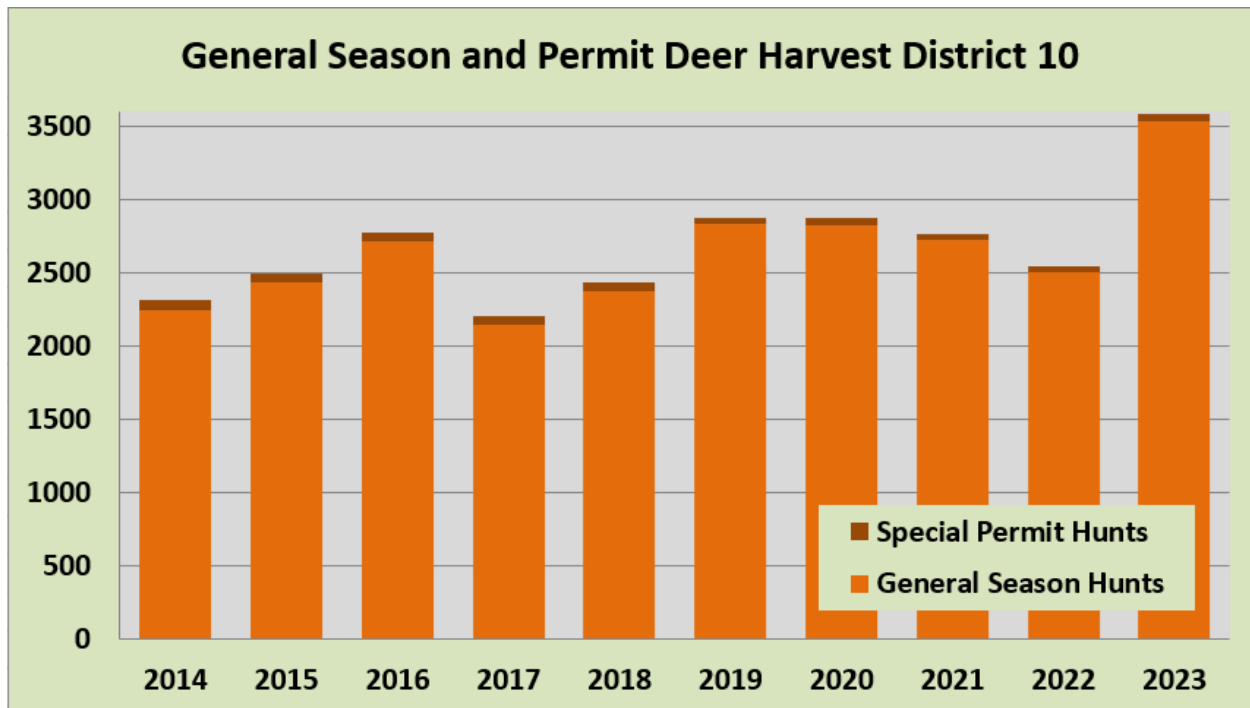


Study elk captured in GMU 550. Photo by WDFW.

Deer

Several GMUs in District 10 are among the best in the state for black-tailed deer harvest. The highest 2023 general season buck harvests in District 10 occurred in GMUs 550 (Coweeman), 520 (Winston), 530 (Ryderwood), 505 (Mossyrock), and 501 (Lincoln). Most of the harvest occurs during general seasons, with a small portion occurring during special permit seasons (see figure below). For more information on deer in District 10, review the [Game Status and Trend Reports](#) on the [Game Management Plans \(GMP\)](#) webpage.

Figure 17. General Season and Permit Deer Harvest in District 10



Additional metrics can help hunters 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 is organized by GMU and represents the 5-year averages for the 2019-23 modern firearm general hunting seasons.

Table 2. District 10 modern firearm general season deer harvest, 2019-23, 5-year averages

| GMU | Buck Harvest | % Success | Hunters | Hunters/sq mi | Harvest/sq mi | % 3pt+ Bucks |
|-----|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 501 | 238 | 25.6 | 932 | 4.0 | 1.03 | .29 |
| 503 | 45 | 16 | 288 | 5.1 | .80 | .33 |
| 504 | 52 | 28.4 | 181 | 1.9 | .54 | .45 |
| 505 | 229 | 27.4 | 838 | 2.8 | .78 | .34 |
| 506 | 235 | 25 | 939 | 2.5 | .63 | .28 |
| 510 | 32 | 11.6 | 279 | 1.3 | .15 | .53 |
| 513 | 23 | 11.6 | 197 | 0.8 | .10 | .50 |
| 516 | 49 | 9.2 | 535 | 1.0 | .09 | .38 |
| 520 | 340 | 27.2 | 1248 | 4.2 | 1.14 | .28 |
| 524 | 29 | 16.8 | 172 | 1.8 | .30 | .38 |
| 530 | 350 | 25.4 | 1357 | 2.5 | .65 | .31 |

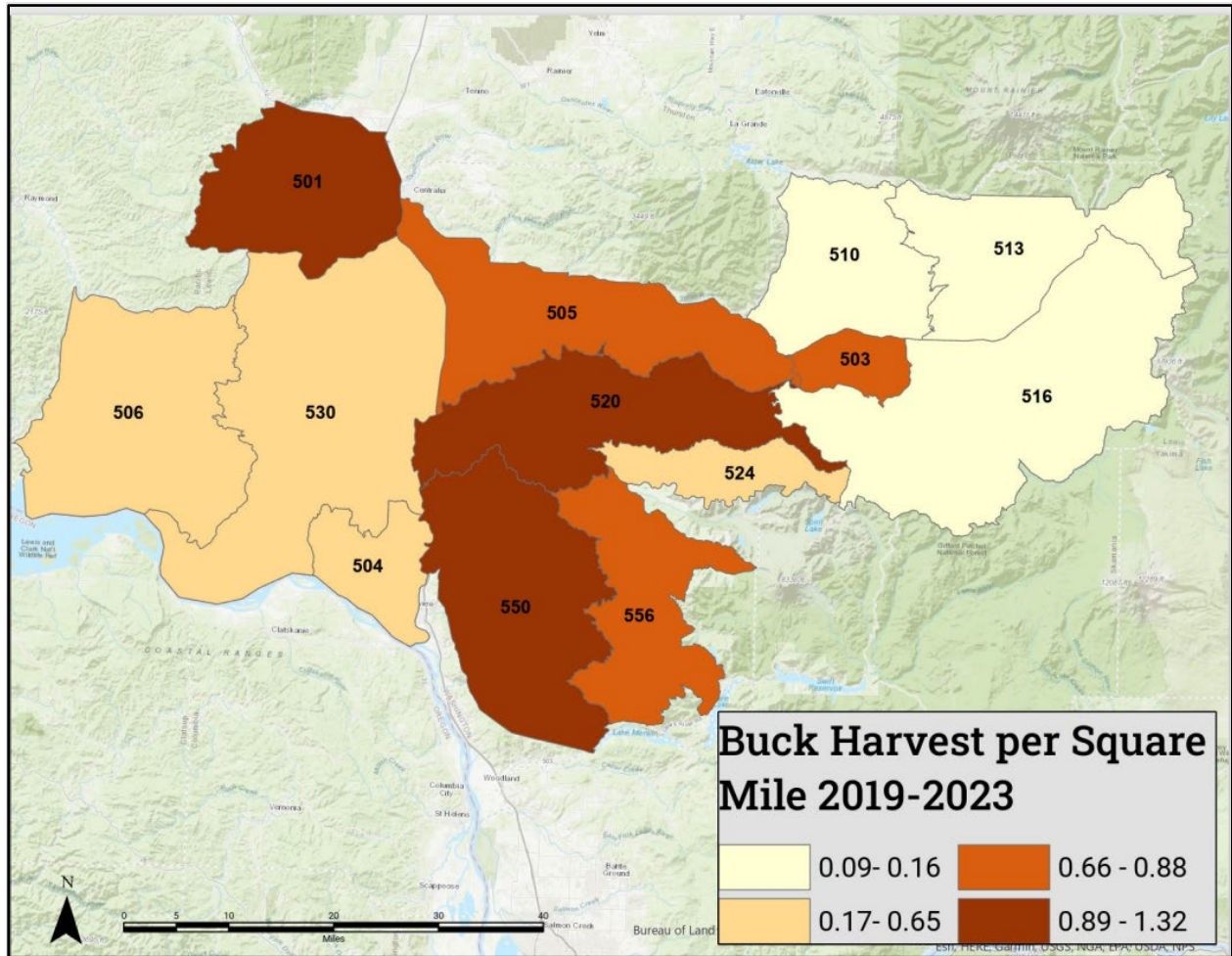
| GMU | Buck Harvest | % Success | Hunters | Hunters/sq mi | Harvest/sq mi | % 3pt+ Bucks |
|--------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 550 | 459 | 29 | 1608 | 4.6 | 1.32 | .28 |
| 556 | 194 | 22.4 | 871 | 3.9 | .87 | .24 |
| Total | 2274 | 24.9 | 8815 | 2.5 | .64 | .30 |

Black-tailed deer populations in District 10 are stable to increasing. 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 the 2017 harvest. Recent winters have been mild, and deer hunting opportunity should be good again in 2024.

Hunting for black-tailed deer is often best near the end of the general season when conditions improve for stalking and moving through heavily vegetated areas of western Washington. The best opportunities typically occur during the late buck hunt, when favorable stalking and weather conditions coincide with the breeding season, or rut. The 2024 late buck season runs Nov. 14-17. 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.

Below is an illustration of the average buck harvest per square mile from 2019-2023 by GMU in District 10 during the modern firearm general hunting season. Note that GMU 522 (Loo-wit) is excluded as this unit is closed to deer hunting.

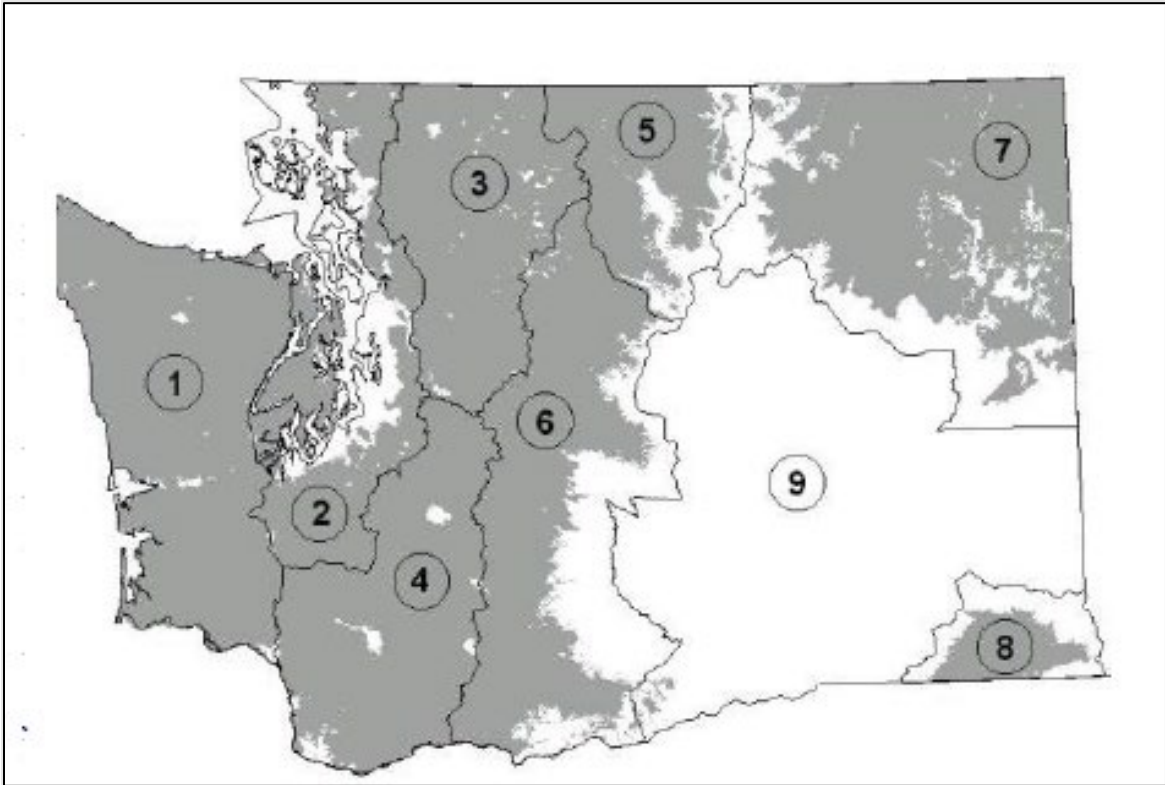
Figure 18. Average number of bucks harvested annually per square mile during modern firearm general hunting seasons in District 10, 2019-23.



Black bear

District 10 is part of both the South Cascades and Coastal Bear Management Units (BMU) for the fall bear hunting season which is open Aug. 1-Nov. 15. There currently are no spring bear hunting opportunities in District 10.

Figure 19. Black bear distribution (grey) and Black Bear Management Units (9) in Washington.



Harvest numbers and hunter success in 2023 were similar to those in 2022. The total bear harvest in District 10 was 132 in 2023, compared to 144 in 2022. The table below includes black bear harvest numbers and hunter success, organized by GMU, for the 2021-23 hunting seasons. For more information on the management of black bears in Washington, including the Coastal and South Cascades management zones, review the [Game Status and Trend Reports](#).

Successful bear hunters must submit a premolar tooth to WDFW. For more information on this requirement, refer to page 68 of the [Big Game Hunting Pamphlet](#).

Hunting for black bears is challenging but can be rewarding. Hunters should use a variety of methods, such as targeting areas with favored foods like huckleberries, blackberries, and cascara trees. Other effective techniques include glassing clearcuts or alpine areas at dawn and dusk, and predator calling.

Table 3. District 10 black bear harvest, 2021-23.

| GMU | Total harvest (2023) | % Hunter success (2023) | Total harvest (2022) | % Hunter success (2022) | Total harvest (2021) | % Hunter success (2021) |
|-----|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 501 | 13 | 7 | 13 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| 504 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 506 | 29 | 7 | 21 | 7 | 12 | 4 |
| 530 | 13 | 3 | 20 | 7 | 15 | 4 |
| 503 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| 505 | 14 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| 510 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| 513 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 12 |
| 516 | 20 | 9 | 31 | 12 | 10 | 4 |
| 520 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| 524 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| 550 | 10 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 556 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 0 |



Black bear in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Photo by WDFW.

Cougar



Two young cougar siblings examine a camera trap site set-up by WDFW biologists. Photo by WDFW.

In 2023-24, hunters harvested 15 cougars in the GMUs that comprise District 10. The cougar hunting season structure recently underwent a review, and the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission has approved proposed changes.

In 2024, the cougar hunting season runs from Sept. 1 to March 31, or when the quota is reached, whichever occurs first. The current cougar hunting regulations are not included in the printed hunting pamphlet, but they can be found in the [online regulations](#). Prospective hunters should visit the [cougar hunting page](#) to assure that the season in their prospective area remains open.

All successful cougar hunters must report their harvest to the toll-free Cougar 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.

All hunters who purchase a cougar tag must report their hunt activity (successful or unsuccessful) via the WILD system by March 31, 2025.

Cougars are difficult to hunt, so most deer and elk hunters typically harvest them when the opportunity presents itself. 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.

Mountain goat

The southern Washington Cascade Mountains support a robust population of mountain goats. These populations span the boundaries of WDFW districts. Specifically, the Goat Rocks population is found in both Districts 8 and 10, while the Mount St. Helens population is located in Districts 9 and 10.

Goat populations in the Goat Rocks area have declined in recent years and currently stand at approximately 141 goats. Tag numbers have been reduced, but 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 should review the boundaries of the hunt areas before heading out.

Starting in 2018, mountain goat permits were issued for the Mount St. Helens population. Goats have re-colonized the area following the 1980 eruption, and the population now stands at approximately 335. For hunting management, two hunt areas have been delineated, with one tag awarded in each area annually from 2018-22. Beginning in 2023, two tags were available for each hunt area.

Successful draw applicants for all hunt areas will receive a letter with additional details about the hunt areas, mandatory checking requirements and goat identification training, biological sample collection, and more.



Mt. St. Helens mountain goat harvest. Photo by Brad Croce.

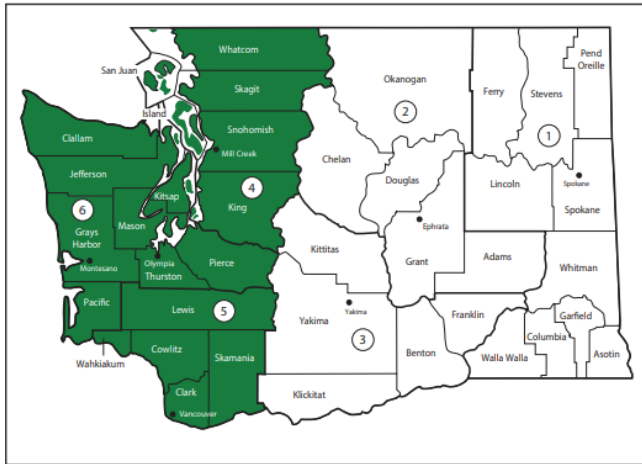
Pheasant

WDFW releases pheasants multiple times throughout the pheasant hunting season at various locations in District 10. In Lewis County, releases occur at the Kosmos Unit of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area and on DNR property on Lincoln Creek. Additionally, there is a private lands release at Woodland Bottoms. More information about pheasants and the [Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#) sites is available on the WDFW website. Site location guides with maps will be available in the 2024 Western Washington Pheasant Release Pamphlet, which will be available in late summer.

Youth hunters and those over 65 years of age should check the regulations for opportunities to hunt earlier in the season before the general season opens. Hunting hours are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Figure 20. Western Washington Pheasant Release Program

Western Washington Pheasant Release Program



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 can also be found in the higher elevations of District 10. Grouse hunters should note that the statewide season for forest grouse in 2024 is Sept. 15-Jan. 15 (previously Sept. 1-Dec. 31). This change, implemented in 2021 after public input, aims to reduce the vulnerability of breeding females to harvest during early September. After brood break-up in mid-September, females are less vulnerable to harvest. Since females drive population growth or decline, delaying the season start is a strategy to increase the grouse population.

Effective hunting strategies include targeting riparian areas with mixed forest vegetation and walking closed or abandoned roads.

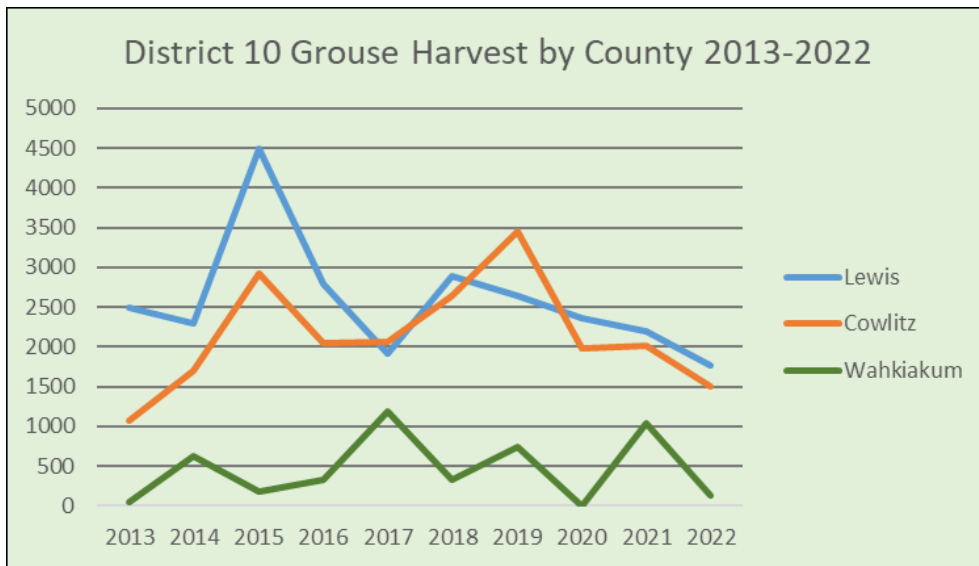
WDFW is collecting wings and tails from hunter-harvested grouse. The submission of wings and tails is voluntary and helps wildlife managers determine the species, age, and sex composition of the grouse harvest locally. Grouse hunters can help by depositing one wing and the tail of harvested grouse into collection barrels located throughout the region. Paper collection bags and instructions are available at each location. Please use one bag for each bird and do not deposit wings in a plastic bag.

Grouse [wing and tail collection locations](#) can be found on the WDFW website. Please note that barrel locations are subject to change before or during the grouse season, so hunters are encouraged to check the website frequently.



Grouse Wing and Tail Collection Barrel. Photo by WDFW.

Figure 21. Grouse harvest by county in District 10, 2013-22.



Waterfowl

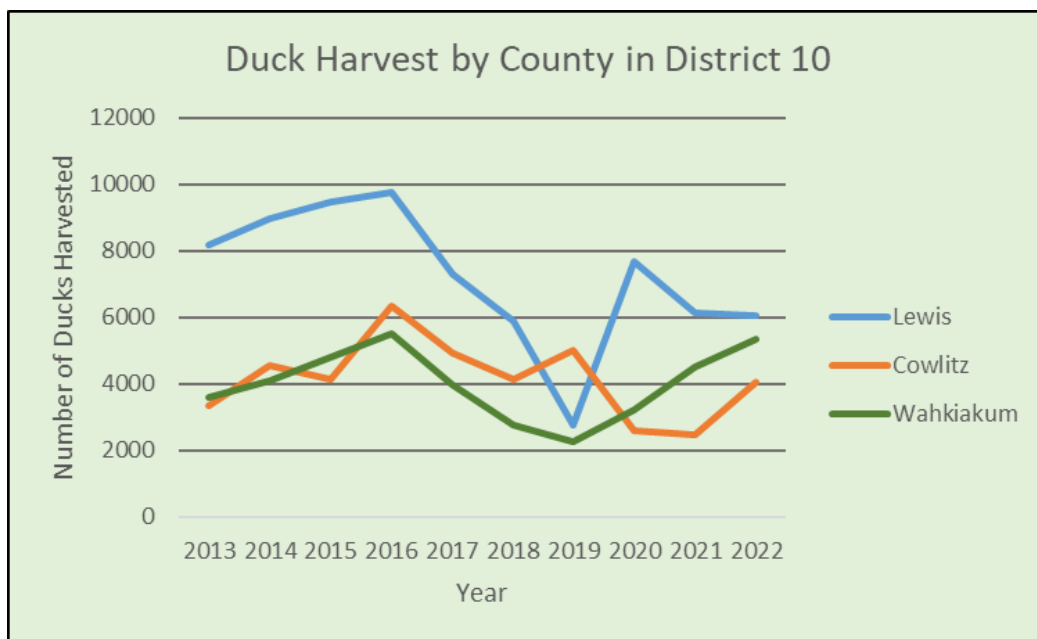
Duck hunting

For the first time since onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey was conducted in 2022. Results for the 2024 breeding waterfowl survey have not yet been published. When available, they can be found on the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](https://www.fishandwildlife.gov) website. In 2023, the prairies were drier than average, resulting in a 7% decline in waterfowl from the 2022 survey and a 9% decline from the long-term average.

Hunters are reminded to consult the [2024-25 Washington Game Bird Hunting Pamphlet](#) for details on hunting regulations. Prospective hunters should pay special attention to the late September season, which is open only to youth hunters. Check the regulations closely for the details on this mentored hunting opportunity for early-season ducks.

Early season hunting 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 be aware of outgoing tide conditions to avoid getting your boat stuck. Later in the season, high water might disperse birds, making flooded farmlands more successful hunting grounds. Prospective hunters should note that success often depends on the severity of fall and winter weather, with wet, blustery conditions generally producing better duck hunting in southwest Washington.

Figure 22. Number of ducks harvested by county in District 10, 2013-22.



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 during the previous year must pass a goose identification exam with a minimum of score of 80% to receive authorization for the current year. Goose hunters are encouraged to review the different subspecies of Canada geese in southwest Washington, as the ability to identify these birds is critical for a productive and enjoyable season.

Please review the [information regarding goose identification](#) before hunting this season, and refer to the [2024-25 Game Bird Hunting Pamphlet](#) for more information.

While dusky Canada geese remain a concern, several other subspecies are abundant and support large annual harvests.

Goose hunters are encouraged to take advantage of the early goose season in September. For details on this enjoyable goose hunt for western Canada geese, refer to the [2024-25 Game Bird Hunting Pamphlet](#).

Important information for Area 2 goose hunting

Goose hunting in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties is subject to the additional restrictions of Goose Management Area 2 (GMA2) – 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 before each hunting season.

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission has approved the following regulations for southwest Washington goose hunting 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 a field check, 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 Management Area 2 is split between the Coast (Pacific County and a portion of Grays Harbor County west of Highway 101) and Inland (Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, and a portion of Grays Harbor County east of Highway 101).
- In Goose Management Area 2 (Coast or Inland), legal goose hunting hours begin 30 minutes after the start of official waterfowl hunting hours, and conclude 30 minutes before the end of official waterfowl hunting hours.
- 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](#) or by mailing the cards to: WDFW, Wildlife Program – Waterfowl Section, PO Box 43141, Olympia WA 98504. The reporting deadline is March 20, 2025. Reports need to be postmarked by the reporting deadlines even if

you did not harvest any birds. Please note that you must comply with these reporting requirements, or you will be required to pay a \$10 administrative fee before obtaining a harvest record card the next year.

- The goose hunting season will be open every day from Sept. 7-15 as well as Oct. 12-27, and on selected dates (Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays) from Nov. 2, 2024-Jan. 12, 2025, and Feb 8-March 5, 2025.

Public Land Resources

DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)

601 Bond Road
PO Box 280
Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280
Phone: 360-577-2025
[https://www.dnr.wa.gov/
pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov](https://www.dnr.wa.gov/pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov)

To purchase [DNR quadrangle maps](#), please visit the DNR website.

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

For more information on the [Gifford Pinchot National Forest](#), including maps, closures, and more, visit the U.S. Forest Service website, or contact local offices with the information below.

Headquarters

10600 N.E. 51st Circle, Vancouver, WA 98682
360-891-5000

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 Lands Access Resources

WDFW Private Lands Access Program

Free public hunting opportunities for different species are available through the Private Lands Access Program. The [Private Lands Hunting Access](#) 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](#)

Not all properties allow the same hunting options. Landowners can allow hunting of all legal species or choose to be more restrictive, such as allowing only deer and elk, waterfowl, or turkey. Read each property description carefully for property rules, and maps of property locations. Please be respectful — hunting on private land is a privilege.

NEW properties are added and removed each year, so be sure to check the [Private Lands Hunting Access](#) webpage for updates.

Table 4. District 10 Private Lands Access Program, 7,222 acres, effective July 15, 2024.

| Landowner | Location | Species allowed | Hunting type | Acres |
|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| Weyerhaeuser | Multiple parcels | All species | Feel Free to Hunt | 6,297 |
| Columbia Land Trust | 2 properties, Wahkiakum Co. | Waterfowl | Register to Hunt | 259 |
| Woodland Bottoms | 2 properties, Cowlitz Co. | Pheasant and waterfowl | Feel Free to Hunt | 369 |
| Nisqually Land Trust | Cattle Creek Road, Lewis Co. | Deer and elk | Feel Free to Hunt | 200 |
| Longtain Road (NEW) | Wahkiakum Co. | All species | Hunt by Written Permission | 97 |

For Private Lands Access program information in District 10, please contact:

Monique Gray
 360-635-7606
Monique.gray@dfw.wa.gov

Private Forestlands

Green Diamond

- Recreation permits must be purchased for motorized and non-motorized access.
- For more information, visit the [Green Diamond](#) website.

Manulife (formerly Hancock) Forest Management (HFM)

- The Cathalmet Tree farm is open for non-motorized recreational access.

PacifiCorp

- Generally open for non-motorized recreational access.
- No camping allowed.
- For more information, visit the [PacifiCorp](#) website.

Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management

- Was recently acquired by Rayonier.
- For more information, visit the [Rayonier](#) website.

Rayonier

- Hunting access by lease or permit depending on the location.
- For more information, visit the [Rayonier](#) website.
- Call the Rayonier hotline: 855-729-4868

Port Blakely

- Generally open to public access.
- Check the [Port Blakely](#) website for information on access.

Sierra Pacific

- Generally open to walk-in, day-use access.
- Call the Sierra Pacific 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 Private Lands Access Program designated as Feel Free to Hunt.
- Motored and non-motorized permits available
- For information on recreational access and permits, visit the [Weyerhaeuser](#) website.
- Call the Weyerhaeuser hotline: 866-636-6531