

Wildlife Program

Week of December 15-21, 2014

LANDS DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Weed Suppressive Bacteria Applied: Kurt Merg applied cultures of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* to rehabilitation sites on the Chelan Butte, Wenas, and Snake River wildlife areas. The variant of this species that Merg applied inhibits cheatgrass, medusahead rye, and jointed goatgrass – all annual grass weeds that pose a significant threat to nascent stands of seeded, wildlife-friendly grasses and forbs.

Bridgeport Unit Grazing: Jeff Burnham met with Wells/Sagebrush Flat staff to inspect livestock effects associated with the temporary permit currently in effect for the Bridgeport unit. After demonstrating utilization monitoring techniques and confirming that animals were not accessing a nearby stream, utilization was estimated to be 11% and 21% for locations in the west pasture.



Sunnyside Wildlife Area Wildfire

Restitution: Jeff Burnham met with Joe Shorin (ATG), several WDFW staff, and insurance company representatives to provide information about last spring's fires, as well as some details and justification for planned restoration activities.

iForm Weed Treatment Management Application: Dave Heimer contacted managers who either missed the iForm presentation at the Lands Division Workshop or had problems with loading the iForm application. The weed iForm application allows field staff to enter weed occurrence and treatment data, which can then be pushed to GIS or used to produce reports and required documents like spray records.

Spartina Crews: The North Puget crew worked on the Skagit Wildlife area where they planted natives at Debay Slough and the Headquarters units as part of the Recreation and Conservation Office Skagit Bay Riparian Enhancement project. The crew crushed 0.5 acres of invasive cattail at the Deep Water Slough site and attended the cattail management meeting in LaConner. The Willapa Bay crew familiarized themselves with the Collector Program. The Program uses data from the iForm application to display sites in a GIS format on an iPad in real time, and to annotate shoreline segments to make sure that areas are thoroughly surveyed. Les Holcomb and Russ Nunez attended the Willapa Bay Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting in South Bend with WSDA, DNR, Shoalwater Tribe, and Pacific County. The group discussed areas of responsibility, funding, and Grays Harbor work. Les and Russ also traveled to the Skagit Wildlife Area to troubleshoot an airboat issue and ended up towing the boat back to Montesano.

Invasive Cattail Meeting: Dave Heimer, Tom Wampler and the North Puget Crew attended a meeting in LaConner with Brian Williams (Habitat Biologist) and staff from the Skagit Wildlife Area to discuss progress of the invasive cattail project. Approximately 31 acres were mechanically treated during the season. The group talked about challenges, lessons learned, remaining work, and planning for the 2015 season.



Figure 1: Goat Island before (10/22/14) and after crushing (11/21/14) with Marshmasters



Figure 2: Deepwater Slough before (9/6/14) and after (9/23/14) crushing invasive cattail

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Langsdorf Landing Water Access Site Redevelopment Completed: Langsdorf Landing, on the Columbia River west of Vancouver on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area, was redeveloped using Recreation and Conservation Office Boating Facilities funds. Improvements included replacement and development of the existing boat launch, boat loading float, concrete walkways and abutment, ADA loading platform, kiosk, paved parking, accessible parking, expanded gravel parking, storm water treatment, CXT vault toilet, and fencing.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

BPA Mitigation Settlement Discussion: Paul Dahmer, Amy Windrope, and Cynthia Wilkerson developed materials for a larger discussion with Phil Rockefeller (NW Council Member), Nate Pamplin, Bill Tweit, Jim Brown, Chief Crown, Dan Rawding, Dan Weeks, and Jessica Fogel (ATG) regarding potential components of a long-term settlement agreement that would include land acquisition and operations and maintenance funding.

Land Information System: Paul Dahmer, Elyse Kane, Julie Sandberg, Shelly Snyder, Rob Geddes, and Jim Blum received a demonstration by DNR's Tim Strickler showing the functionality of DNR's Aquatic Lands interactive geographic information system accessed thru the internet to provide mapping and data services to multiple users. DNR is using an extensible model taking advantage of map services and key data stewards to provide this functionality that may be applicable in some form paired with WDFW's Land Information System.

SEPA and Cultural Review: Kat Kelly worked with Wildlife Area and CAMP staff to review SEPA checklists and cultural review documents for the Colockum Wildlife Area Culvert and Road Repair, Barnpipe Tidegate Replacement, Wiley Slough Tidegate Replacement, Tumwater Falls Hatchery Redevelopment, Whitestran Access Redevelopment, and the Soos Creek Hatchery projects.

Cultural Resource Looting: Kat Kelly met with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) staff assessed a request by charged looters for a hearing. The looter has requested that civil penalties be re-evaluated. Kat suggested that WDFW would find the following alternatives appropriate: 1) cooperate with an interviewer to relay the history of looting in the region, 2) cooperate with DAHP staff to formally record any archaeological sites identified by local looters and not yet inventoried, 3) work with staff on any activity that would provide an opportunity to recognize and understand the living relationship between tribal people and the archaeological/cultural record, and/or 4) work on an environmental restoration project as an opportunity to recognize the effect vehicular traffic and unauthorized digging has on the environment. Kat also mentioned that WDFW is interested in discussing a penalty that carries an opportunity for education/outreach/rehabilitation. If this moves forward, wildlife area and regional staff should be involved.

Public Disclosure Requests: Considerable time was spent managing and providing information associated with PDRs.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Kat Kelly met with other state agencies to plan two 2015 statewide cultural resources training opportunities for state employees to be held in the spring (eastside) and the fall (westside).

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Greater Sage-grouse: A federal Continuing Resolution was released in early December and it contains a provision precluding the USFWS from writing or issuing any Section 4 rule for sage-grouse in Federal Fiscal year 2015. WDFW will use the time to continue to develop, deploy, and implement upon approval, a Candidate Conservation Assessment with Assurances for sage-grouse in Washington. Specifically, page 725 of the bill provides the following regulations related to USFWS listing actions and sage grouse species:

6 SEC. 122: None of the funds made available by this 7 or any other Act may be used by the Secretary of the Interior to write or issue pursuant to section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1533)

- (1) a proposed rule for greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*);
- (2) a proposed rule for the Columbia basin distinct population segment of greater sage-grouse;
- (3) a final rule for the bi-state distinct population segment of greater sage-grouse; or
- (4) a final rule for Gunnison sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*).

The agreement includes a general provision in Title I of the bill, prohibiting for fiscal year 2015 any use of funds to write or issue a final rule to list the Gunnison sage-grouse or the bi-State Distinct Population Segment of greater sage-grouse, and any proposed rule to list the greater sage grouse range-wide or in the Columbia Basin. The Committees stated that they recognize the unprecedented collaboration regarding sage-grouse conservation and also that the provision is not intended to impede current conservation efforts. It is imperative that stakeholders continue on-the-ground conservation and monitoring activities. The Committees direct the Fish and Wildlife Service to include an update on the status of all sage-grouse with its fiscal year 2016 budget submission. The Department of Interior subsequently sent out a press release noting that the provision does impede the Fish and Wildlife Service's ability to finalize a 4(d) rule related to the Gunnison Sage-Grouse in Colorado, which was listed as threatened earlier this year. The full DOI press release language is contained in the attached full report.

Fisher Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances: Listing and Recovery Manager Penny Becker, Forest Habitat Manager Terry Jackson, and Biologist Jeff Lewis met with members of the Washington Forest Protection Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for fisher in Washington. The discussion focused on potential covered activities and conservation measures to be included in the agreement that would contribute to Fisher recovery and reintroduction in Washington.

Small Forest Landowner Coordination on Western Gray Squirrel and Fisher: Listing and Recovery Manager Penny Becker, Forest Habitat Manager Terry Jackson, and Biologist Gary Bell met with the Small Forest Landowner Advisory Committee to discuss outreach and strategies to attain better participation in voluntary Western Gray Squirrel protections by small forest landowners. In addition, Becker gave an additional overview of the CCAA for fisher

being developed and sought assistance in the review of conservation measures and outreach to potentially interested landowners.

Lands Division Winter Workshop - Section Manager Wilkerson and Division Manager Gardner attended the Lands Division Winter Workshop in Wenatchee on December 9th. Wilkerson gave a presentation on Priority Landscapes, moderated a panel with three land trust representatives about working together with WDFW, and oversaw a scenario where workshop participants evaluated and ranked seven potential properties of interest of either land acquisition or conservation easement. The Land Trust Panel was comprised of: Cherie Kearney – Columbia Land Trust; Bob Bugert – Chelan Douglas Land Trust; and Gary Schalla – Inland Northwest Land Trust. Overall themes were that we could improve on coordinating and working together and with local communities.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Diversity Citizen Science draft framework: Wendy Connally rolled out the *Diversity Citizen Science draft framework* to biologists, volunteer coordinators, Public Affairs, and Senior Staff. She's requesting comments by December 23rd, prior to the Winter Wildlife Meeting. This framework will help guide project proposal, development and implementation for Citizen Science data collection for priority Diversity species. She'll present the edited framework for discussion at the winter meeting.

Draft strategic plan framework for the WildWatch camera system: Wendy Connally is continuing to research and compile background information – contracts, collaborators, budgets, staff participants, and equipment inventory by site – to inform a draft strategic plan framework for the WildWatch camera system. The strategic plan will help define purpose, recruit and retain partners, and improve operations, maintenance, tracking, and sustainability of the WildWatch camera projects.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

District 3 Wolf Activity: The radio-collared wolf OR-15 moved into a more agriculturally developed area in Asotin County on Monday. District Biologist Wik went to the area to try and obtain a total pack count while the animals were in very open country. Unfortunately and fortunately, they had already left the area back towards the forested habitats. Conflict Section staff Rasley and Earl responded to work with landowners in the area on the same day. The following day the collared animal was on the other side of the Blue Mountains south of Dayton. Wik spent one day this week checking and pulling remotely activated cameras from an area south of Dayton. Not all of the pictures have been reviewed yet, but two wolves were recorded on a day that OR-15 was also in the area. One black and one gray were documented.

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Cleanup of abused area: Debby Flynn and Robert Grijalva used a rented excavator to collect boulders along South Fork Road and placed them to protect an area along the South Fork of Asotin Creek that has a long history of abuse from the public. The site was long thought to be private property until Brian Trickel and Bob Dice closely examined ownership records in the Asotin County Courthouse and discovered the majority of the site is in fact agency property. The site had several areas where trees were blown in half from shooting. There were also blown up televisions, heavy garbage collections, and deep ruts from abuse with four-wheel drive vehicles. The site is in the riparian zone of the South Fork of Asotin Creek. Debby and Robert picked up all the trash and blocked vehicle access to the site with boulders. Debby later seeded bare areas with grass seed.



Placing collected boulders along South Fork Road



Boulders placed and signs posted

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Winter Conditions

Wildlife Management - District 1: Temperatures mostly hovered around freezing (32 degrees Fahrenheit). There were alternate periods of rain or wet snow falling on most days. The 49 degrees North Ski Resort currently has two inches of snow at the lodge and (still) only ten inches at the top of Chewelah Mountain, which is the main ski hill.

District 3: Mild and wet conditions prevailed through the week. Warm and windy conditions ended the week.

Private Lands and Wildlife Conflict – District 2: Heavy rain with highs in the mid 40's.

District 3: Mixed snow and rain conditions. Temperatures continued to freeze at night and warm to the upper 30's during the day with freezing fog.

Wildlife Areas: Swanson Lakes WLA: Once again, it was warm (up to 49 degrees Fahrenheit), with wet off and on, and heavy winds on Sunday. There is no snow cover at Swanson Lakes.

Blue Mountains WLA's: Temperatures were warm on the wildlife area with some snow that covered upper elevations on Wednesday. Staff returning from work at upper elevations are bringing a lot of mud back on their four-wheelers and pickups. Snow is still pretty light at upper elevation areas in the Blue Mountains.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Private Lands / Wildlife Conflict

Whitman County Depredation Investigation: Conflict Specialist Bennett, Private Lands Biologist Lewis, and Supervisor McCanna conducted a depredation investigation near Lamont, Washington. One dead ewe was determined to be a Confirmed Wolf Depredation and two other ewes had been scavenged too much for a determination.

Two year old ewe found dead in a creek near Lamont, Washington prior to a field necropsy

Wolf Advisory Group Sub-Committee Meeting: Supervisor McCanna traveled to Olympia to participate and explain the steps the department is taking to work with producers in northeastern Washington. The department is working with producers to create three different Local Working Groups to determine what non-lethal activities will work for three different wolf territories.



Region One Wolf Management Team: Supervisor McCanna held the first wolf management team conference call to check on progress of creating Local Working Groups and all wolf activity within the region. McCanna will hold these conference calls every two weeks.

Radio and Newspaper Interviews: Supervisor McCanna was contacted by a dozen different reporters on the sheep depredation in Whitman County.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Areas

Revere Wildlife Area (WLA) Sharecrop hay going to LT Murray WLA's: Assistant WLA Manager Finch met with the Wenas and LT Murray WLA Assistant Managers Jody Taylor and Wayne Hunt at Revere WLA on Wednesday. They conferred with the hay lessee there, Charles Brown, on which portions of the stacks were the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) lease share. WDFW's share is being transferred from Revere to the Wenas and LT Murray WLAs, for supplemental elk feeding. This hay transfer will zero out a budget deficit for the Swanson/Reardan/Revere complex, as well as provide good hay for feeding game without any sales tax or indirect charges paid by the Wenas or LT Murray.



WDFW's Jody Taylor, Wayne Hunt, and lessee Charles Brown at Revere WLA –
Photo by Mike Finch

REGION 2

WOLVES: Nothing to report

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Northern Leopard Frog (NLF) Project: Biologists Finger and E. Duvuvuei attended a conference call with Regional Program Manager (RPM) Monda, Listing and Recovery Section Manager Becker, Diversity Division Manager Gardner, and Biologist Hallock to discuss the next steps with regards to Northern Leopard Frog reintroduction, habitat management at both source population and potential reintroduction sites, and mosquito control issues.

Biologist Finger continued to work on finalizing the contract for the NLF genetic processing and population viability analysis for Washington State University (WSU) to perform the statement of work. Meanwhile, Biologist Duvuvuei prepared the data and genetic samples for shipment to the WSU lab. She also obtained a pricing proposal for the disease surveillance work and discussed processing options with lab personnel. Biologists O. Duvuvuei and E. Duvuvuei met with Jim Weirsma from the Bureau of Reclamation to calibrate equipment and discuss water quality

sampling. As part of the translocation feasibility study, water quality equipment will be used to get baseline data of over-wintering conditions in the NLF management area and two potential release sites. This data will also be compared to the 2003-2004 overwintering data, when Biologist Wisniewski located hibernating frogs with radio-telemetry and measured water quality.

Wildlife Areas

Native Seed Planting on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Land within Chiliwist

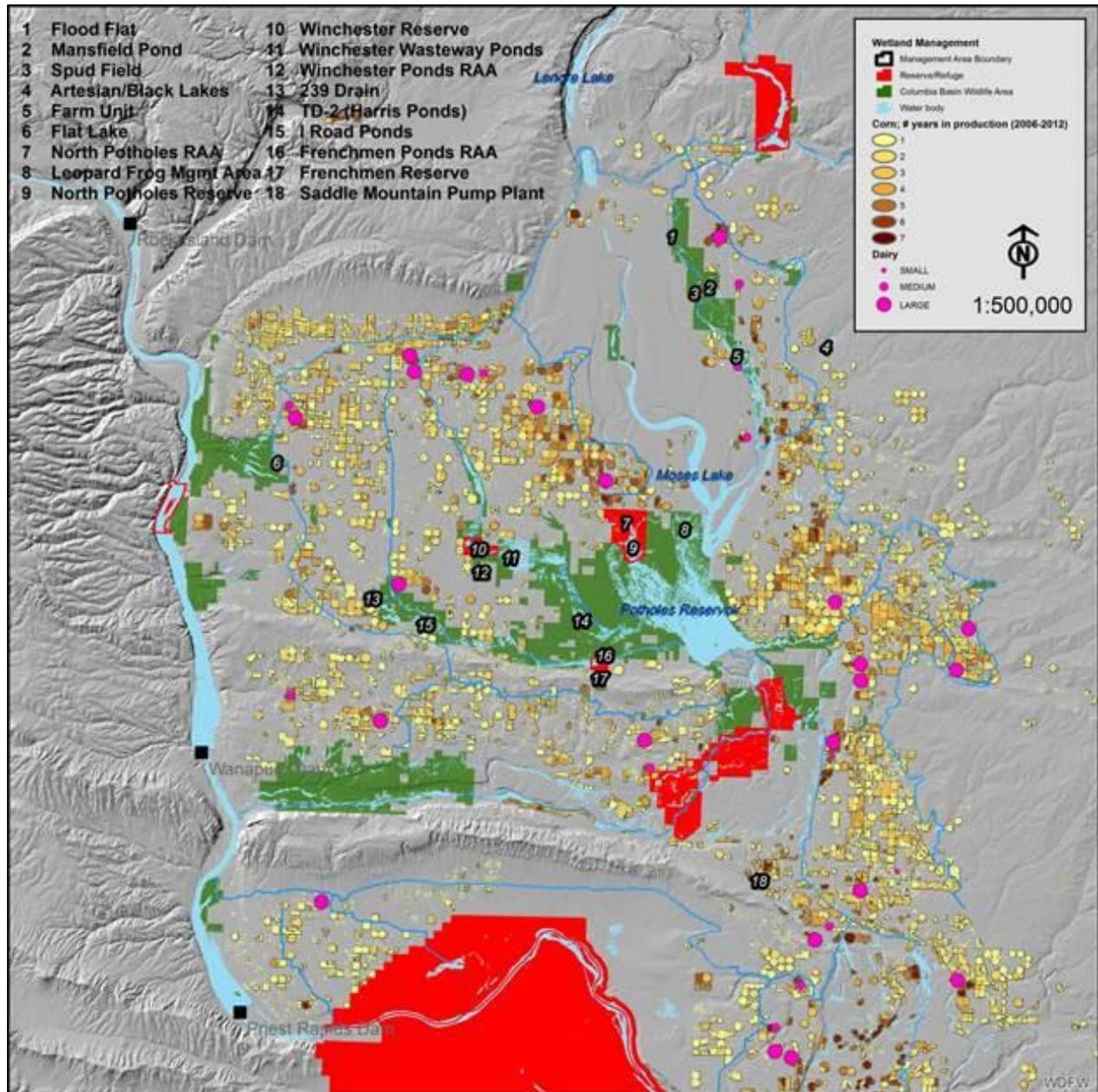
Wildlife Area: Manager Haug and Assistant Manager Nathan Wehmeyer planted six acres of moderate to severely burned ground on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area significantly impacted by the Carlton Complex fire. BLM Wildlife/Fuels Biologist Erik Ellis provided the native grass mix and, in return for WDFW sling-seeding it onto the area, kept a portion of the seed to use in the same area. Approximately two to four inches of snow was on the ground at the time, which provided challenges accessing the area and applying the seed.



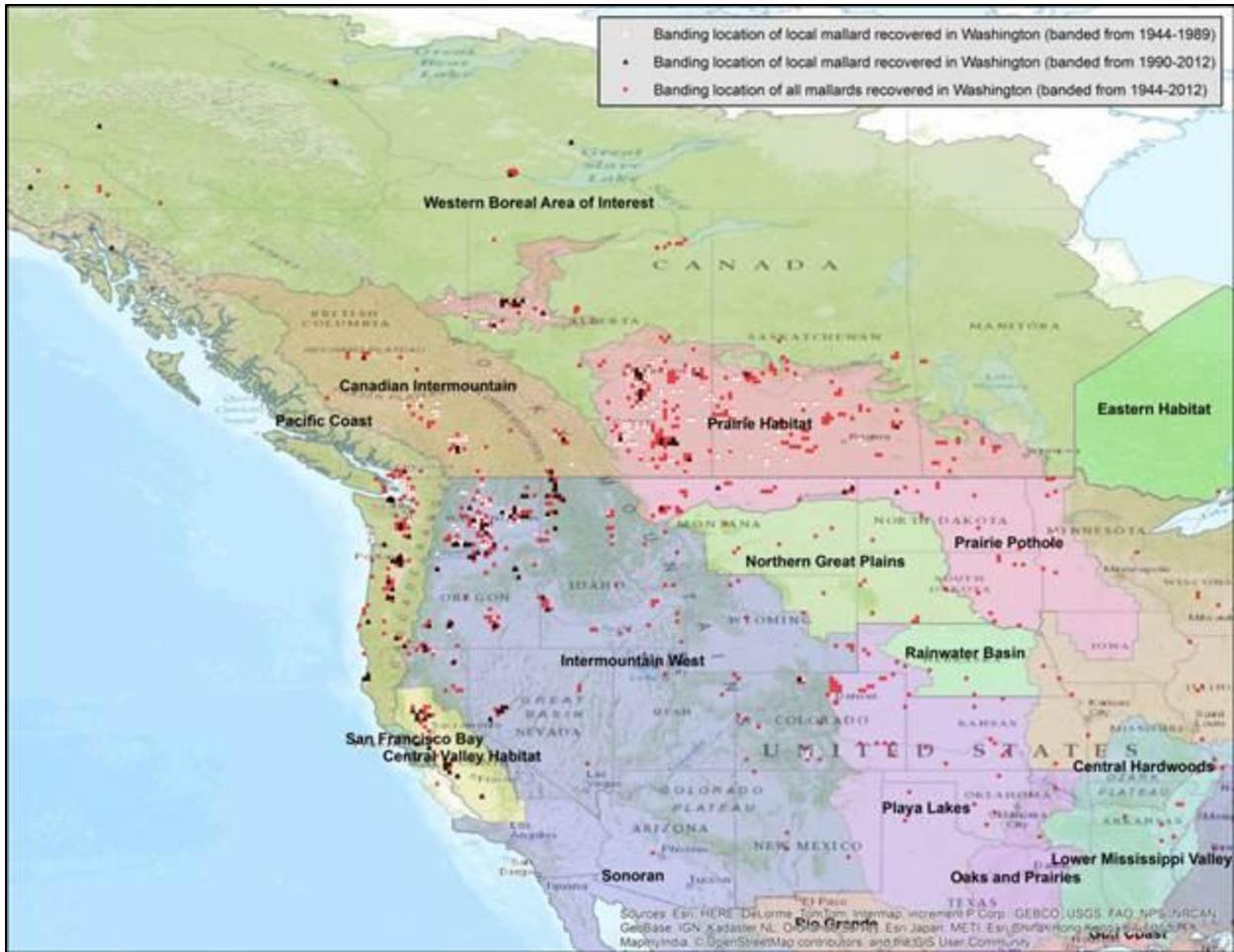
Assistant manager Nathan Wehmeyer sling seeding native grass seed within the Carlton Complex Fire on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area with fantastic views of the Okanogan Valley below; looking Southeast – Photos by Justin Haug

Wetland Management Plan: Biologist E. Duvuvuei led a meeting with Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (CBWA) staff, Waterfowl Specialist Wilson, and the District Biologist to discuss habitat management activities of CBWA reserves. Much of the discussion was centered on proposed reserve boundary changes and control of invasive tall emergent vegetation to improve habitat conditions. Duvuvuei continued edits and is working on the reserve management section. Biologist Finger produced a draft figure displaying the distribution of reserves, wetland management sites, and areas of regular corn production to support the wetland management plan. Finger reviewed breeding population datasets which will be used to provide figures showing trends in dabbling and diving breeding populations within the Columbia Basin Irrigated and Winchester and Frenchmen Wasteways strata. These numbers appear to have peaked in the early 1980's, declined steadily until around 2012, and inched upwards since. Finger will coordinate with the Waterfowl Section to ensure we're using the most recent datasets. Finger produced a figure displaying banding locations of local mallards harvested in Washington. This

figure helps show where Washington harvested ducks are produced and justifies investment in habitat conditions for eastern Washington, where production has decreased from the peak of the early 1980s.



Draft Project Area Map for the Wetland Management Plan. The intent of this image is to display the juxtaposition of regular corn production against areas of sanctuary and placement of wetland management efforts to help understand where our focus should be directed. Dairies are displayed because available corn crop data does not differentiate between corn varieties, such as silage, which is fed to cows and has minimal waterfowl habitat value –
Figure by R. Finger



Draft figure showing the original banding location of mallards harvested in Washington State. This image shows the importance of mallard production in specific regions (including eastern Washington) as contributors to our mallard harvest – Figure by R. Finger

Columbia Basin Dense Nesting Cover Project: Biologists Finger and O. Duvuvuei assisted with drill seeding for the dense nesting cover project in the Gloyd unit. We were very fortunate with mild conditions that allowed for the completion of the fall seeding on December 18th. Fall seeding is typically much more successful than spring seeding, particularly during drought years. During wet winters, such as we've been having, fall seedings are typically very successful. Finger planted 260 basin wildrye plugs (leftovers) in an area that was



Riparian stabilization and dense nesting cover project – Photo by R. Finger

disturbed during the Flood Flat wetland project construction. This area has some of the highest quality nesting cover (wildrye, saltgrass, greasewood community) on the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area and this planting will help ensure it reverts back to what it was, rather than a monotypic knapweed stand.

Photo of typical nesting cover in vicinity of disturbed site shown above. This is optimal nesting cover that typically occurs in areas that collect extra moisture (swales and shallow depressions), it is hopeful that much of the 200+ acres seeded in the dense nesting cover project will someday look similar to this, particularly once the feed water begins to flow – Photo by R. Finger



GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Columbia Basin Mule Deer Surveys: Biologist O. Duvuvuei entered and began analyzing data collected during the recent aerial and ground mule deer surveys. These annual surveys are conducted throughout the Columbia Basin to obtain population estimates and herd compositions. Preliminary results indicate that the herd composition is within the desired range for GMU 272 (24 bucks per 100 does and 66 fawns per 100 does). Duvuvuei will continue analyzing the data to estimate the population size, herd composition, and ratios of legal bucks throughout various areas in the Columbia Basin.

Private Lands/Access

Columbia Basin Access Sites: Assistant Manager Eidson spent time this week checking high use access sites in the Desert portion of the wildlife area for any issues. A few signs needed attention and were dealt with. Access Manager Harmon serviced sites in the Sun Lakes area and O'Sullivan area. Access Manager Graves spent most of the week grading roads and parking areas and assisted Access Manager Harmon with installing a new vehicle counter.



GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Areas

Scotch Creek / Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Management Plan: Considerable time was spent this week by Scotch Creek staff to familiarize the planning team with units of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. Manager Olson and Assistant Manager Dupont toured all seven units of the complex with planning leads Melinda Posner and Jeanie Demorest from Olympia. We then participated in a District Team meeting to kick off the process of writing new management plans for Scotch Creek and the Sinlahekin Wildlife Areas. One suggestion we are moving forward with is to manage all these units under a single complex, the Okanogan Valley Wildlife Areas Complex. This process will take much of our time as we develop this comprehensive plan over the next nine months.

Winter Conditions

District 5

Past Weather: Mild with the exception of two freezing events which were relatively short lived. Rainfall has resulted in a good fall green-up of native (Sandberg's bluegrass) and invasive (cheatgrass) cool season grasses.

Short-Term Forecast: The 10-day forecast is for warmer and wetter conditions than normal. However, overnight lows will get well below freezing around Christmas with daytime highs also below the freezing point.

Long-Term Forecast: The winter season is forecasted to be warmer and drier than normal.

Habitat: Forage is available at all elevations. Winter wheat and cool season grasses are available due to lack of snow cover.

Snow Depths: 100% snow-free.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date.

Animal Condition: No reports of animals in poor condition that can be attributed to winter conditions. Animals observed to date appear to be in great condition.

Mortality: None reported or expected in short-term.

District 6

Recent Weather: The past week was mild with little or no snow accumulation at lower and middle elevations, and additional slopes melted out.

Short-Term Forecast: Above average temps with rain or snow, depending on elevation, expected early in the week, followed by seasonal temps and mostly dry weather through next weekend.

Long-Term Forecast: Above normal temperatures with normal precipitation is expected for the remainder of December. For January and February, above normal temps and below normal precipitation is forecast.

Snow Depths: Additional slopes melted out at lower and middle elevations, with little snow below 2000 feet in the Methow down valley from Twisp, and even less snow in the Okanogan Valley at similar elevations. Middle elevation snow pack remains below average. Snow pack continues to be slightly above average at higher elevations near the Cascade Crest.

Snotel sites –*

Hart's Pass (6500 ft): 57 in

Salmon Meadows (4,460 ft): 11 in

**No snotel sites exist in core deer winter range areas.*

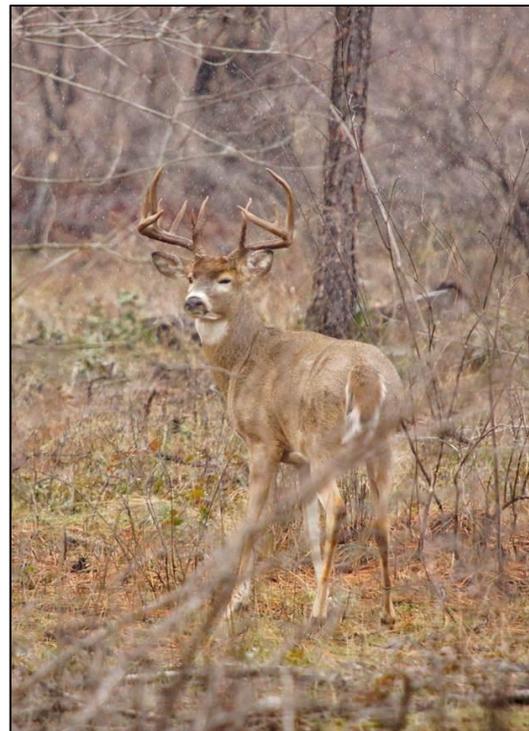
Habitat: With considerable bare ground, forage is available throughout the District on most deer winter range areas. Outside of the burn, even snow-covered areas have shrubs protruding well above the snowpack and animal movements are not impeded. Within the burn, recent rains and melting bared many slopes and deer are once again utilizing the considerable fall green-up.

Animal Concentrations: In general, deer remain well distributed on the landscape and the mild conditions allowed some animals to even drift back up slightly in elevation now that breeding season is largely finished. Significant numbers of deer still remain concentrated around orchards near Pateros.

Animal Condition: Deer generally look to be in good to excellent condition for early winter. Some individual exceptions have been noted. However, they are likely the result of some other compromising factor, not snow and range conditions.

Mortality: None reported other than normal levels of road-killed animals.





From Above – Bohemian Waxwings in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, a Townsend's Solitaire displaying to waxwings in a bit of a territorial dispute, a juvenile Golden Eagle in flight north of headquarters, a white-tailed deer making it through the late hunt on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, and a view looking north towards Loomis and Grandview Mountain with a new blanket of snow (notice snow-free Sinlahekin Valley) taken from near wildlife area headquarters – Photos by Justin Haug

*Sunrise on the Scotch Creek
Wildlife Area* – Photo by Jim Olson

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek Staff constructed a re-entry gate for use in the Clemans Mountain elk fence project. The modified wind chime design will be easier for elk to use, but has the bars spaced close enough together to keep big horn sheep from getting below the fence and to the nearby domestic goats.



Oak Creek Staff constructed a hay storage enclosure on the Inouye's property in the Nile. Most winters, the Inouyes feed some elk to keep them out of nearby residences, and rather than continue to use some thrown together hog panels that the elk sometime push over, staff built a small fenced area that can hold two large bales. The Inouye's really appreciated the sturdy design and gate that makes the area easier to use.

Oak Creek Staff continued to monitor all the feed sites for elk activity. Elk continue to be in the area but are not building on the feed sites yet.

Peak Elk Counts for Week

Headquarters-
Junction-
Nile-
Sheep-
Cowiche-

Winter Weather

Weather was mild over the past week with a lot of rainfall. Mild weather is expected this coming week. No snow accumulation is expected.

There are no elk on the feed sites and access to vegetation is good.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Wenas Wildlife Area

Winter Feeding

Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: 0 animals.

There are no elk on the feed site and access to vegetation on the slopes of Cleman is good. Although we aren't seeing elk on the feed site, there are significant numbers building on the lower slopes of Cleman Mountain. With the Mellotte gate still unlocked, and the open conditions, use of the area by the public is high and that disturbance is most likely why the elk are staying away from the feed site.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Winter Weather: Weather was seasonal to mild over the past week. Mild weather is expected to continue in the coming week, with highs in the mid to upper 30's and lows in the upper 20's, and light snow possible for several days.

Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep: Biologists Bernatowicz and Moore setup the plywood portion of the Clemans sheep trap. Biologist Bernatowicz again worked on logistics. The boat ramps and shorelines are still closed on Wanapum Pool. Much of Grant County PUD staff is off for the holidays, so getting permission to launch and release sheep was unlikely. Trapping was delayed until mid-January.

Deer Survey: Biologist Bernatowicz surveyed deer along the Yakima River from Selah to Ellensburg. Low clouds, fog, and rain hampered surveys, but 150 deer were located with 62 fawns and 23 bucks per 100 does.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor attended the Upper Wenas User Group meeting. Discussions centered on status of access to DNR's BBQ Flats. DNR has letters of intent from both private landowners that will allow the Maloy road to be reopened through the private land to the beginning of State land. They hope to have agreements complete and the road re-opened by fall 2016, possibly in time for general elk season.

Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor did a field check on the elk fence contractor's crew. Taylor called them over the weekend to advise them of the heavy rainfall Saturday (>1") and that the mud and soft soils would significantly restrict equipment use in the coming week. They decided to come anyway and do hand work for the short holiday week.

Wildlife Management

Private Lands Biologist Stutzman and Kaelber attended a meeting with other district staff from all programs about user conflicts at the Windmill WMA, specifically between anglers and waterfowl hunters. Various resolutions to these long standing issues were discussed.

Stutzman again monitored the corn stubble access sites over the weekend for both waterfowl and hunter use. There were a few hunters out on Saturday and a good amount of birds using the corn stubble access sites. Sunday however was warm and windy and although there were some birds flying, there weren't any hunters using the fields south of Finley.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand had contact with a LHP hunt manager to discuss late season hunting opportunities. Most if not all of the State drawn special permit holders on specific ranches have filled their permits.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Private Lands Biologist Stutzman discussed details of the SAFE program with a wheat farmer who may be interested. The landowner is concerned about having to reseed and Stutzman will do a site visit in the new year to help answer some of his questions.

Stutzman contacted the Richland Rod and Gun Club and the local Washington Waterfowlers Association chapter to let them know about the Corn Stubble access program. Both groups were excited and interested in the properties and Stutzman sent them some information that they plan to pass on to their members.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand traveled to the Cold Creek area to follow-up on last week's hazing activity. No new evidence of elk activity or sightings was observed in or near the orchard and vineyard crops.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored elk activity near the top of Rattlesnake Mountain along the Hanford boundary. Some evidence of deer was located in the fresh dusting of snow, but all the elk activity was observed in the mid to low elevations within the ALE.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a deer damage complaint from the Enforcement program concerning a landowner in the Kahlotus area with deer damaging his newly seeded CRP crop. Attempts to contact this landowner have been made, but were unsuccessful.

Warm and wet conditions were again encountered in all areas of Kittitas and Yakima counties this week. Slight flooding was observed in low areas subject to area rain collection and snowmelt. Agriculture fields with elk use showed elk trails and hoof depressions. Several landowners with new seedings (mostly alfalfa) called to report the potential for damage. Field

visits to three areas to haze elk, place hazing devices, and observe damage were conducted. Snow at about 3000 ft. appeared to be accumulating.

Deer were again hazed this week from an area in Thorp. One master hunter harvested an antlerless deer inside the damage area and hazed the others. The offal of this deer was retained for Golden Eagle work.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed elk from Reecer Creek, Robbins Road, Umptanum Road, and the Robinson Canyon areas this week, in an effort to keep elk moving to non-conflict winter range areas.

Elk below the elk fence near Weaver Road

Conflict Specialist Wetzel contacted a landowner off Weaver Road in a large private development that does not allow hunting. The landowner owns most of the private land below the elk fence and gave permission to access the parcel to place salt on the west side of the elk fence at the re-entry gates in hopes of luring elk to the WDFW side of the fence.



Yakima Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzel spoke with a vineyard manager near Mabton who called to report pronghorn damage to her vineyard. The area was inspected and the damage appeared to be in two distinct areas and occurred during September of this year. A DPCA was discussed with the manager and plans were made to help prevent damage again next September. No pronghorn were observed and tracks were inconclusive, however pronghorn have been observed in this general area.

The area directly adjacent to a vineyard near Mabton that reported pronghorn damage



GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom attended a meeting with WDFW staff and insurance providers at the Sunnyside HQ shop. The meeting was scheduled to provide insurance providers with the needed information to establish a final payout total for the damages incurred by spring wildfires. In attendance were RPM McCorquodale, Habitat Biologist Ritter, Range Specialist Burnham, Assistant Manager Sak, Senior Assistant Attorney General Shorin, three representatives from insurance providers, and their agronomist. Between WDFW staff, all questions were addressed to the satisfaction of the insurance providers. An on-site tour of the burn will occur within the next few weeks between Assistant Manager Sak and Stuart Turner – Agronomist. It is anticipated that a settlement will be reached after the agronomist provides a report to the insurance providers.

Manager Bjornstrom worked with Lisa Nelson on wildlife area budgets. Monies were moved around and allocations increased as needed. Lisa is researching funding opportunities for capital projects for wildlife area staff.

Assistant Manager Buser coordinated efforts with Kurt Merg to establish a test plot of bio-control bacteria for cheatgrass. The test plot is incorporated into a native grass restoration project that wildlife area staff is conducting on the Ringold Springs Fish Hatchery, in cooperation with hatchery staff.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman worked to dispose of some old pesticides and fertilizer that were removed from the storage barn last winter. The old bags of fertilizer were taken to Yakima County Solid Waste at the hazardous materials disposal area. Huffman completed the paperwork to transfer the old pesticides to the Department of Agriculture through their waste pesticide disposal program. Hopefully they will schedule a drop off in the spring.

Manager Huffman contacted state patrol early Wednesday morning after shooting was heard behind the feed site. The area closed to tribal hunting on the 15th, so no hunting should have been occurring. Officer Myers responded and coordinated with Yakama Tribal Police to seize the elk. Due to elk presence near the feed sites, Huffman closed the three gates on the wildlife area to protect wintering wildlife. That evening Huffman unlocked the Oak Creek gate for some people to go look for their friend who had entered the area from the Nile that morning and had gotten lost in the fog. They were able to find their friend and got out by about 9:00.

Manager Huffman completed interviews with five candidates for the Oak Creek Forester Position. Ecologist Tveten, Forester Kuehn, and retired Forester Matt Dahlgreen (formerly with The Nature Conservancy) were part of the interview panel again. Huffman will review materials and complete reference checks on the top candidates over the next week or so and hopefully make a selection soon.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris worked with Vegetation Ecologist Kurt Merg to identify locations to apply the cheat grass bacteria. Merg applied it to ~3.5 acres in the Sheep Company area; a two-acre plot within the Cottonwood #2 fire footprint and on ½ acre each of three of the 2014 forb plots (one, three, and four). Portions of each site were also harrowed to determine if that increases the effectiveness of the bacteria. We had a good, heavy rainfall on Saturday, which was perfect timing for the bacteria.



Vegetation Ecologist Merg applying bacteria to recently seeded forb plot

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Gates were closed Friday on the L.T. Murray winter closure area. Techs Hill and Schnebly re-configured and organized winter closure signage. A few of the signs had to be repainted and new maps laminated. Assistant Manager Hunt locked the gates between 6 and 6:30 AM Friday, and staff spent the better part of Thursday and Friday getting all the winter closure signage in place. Hunt also provided information for a news release in the Daily Record to let folks know that we locked the access gates Friday morning.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Sharp-tailed Snake Project: Biologist Milner worked on a power point presentation for our citizen science project, which we are planning to conduct in the San Juan Islands. We hope to engage local residents in locating additional sites where the snakes occur in the islands.

Leque Island Bird Monitoring: Biologist Milner worked with partners to revise the project protocols.

Low Elevation Pika Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra complete analysis delivery of season survey data for creation of a final project report. Three documented pika sites were

located in this apparently disjunct low elevation site. Elevations of pika occurrence at the site ranged from approximately 700 feet to 1600 feet.

A Pika (Ochotona princeps) at a low elevation site in Snohomish County

Wildlife Management

Consultation/Permitting Requests; Municipal, Private Utilities, other:

Biologist Anderson continued work and review for requests of assistance regarding species or habitat management consultation for urban wildlife (e.g. osprey nests, eagle territories, heron colonies) given construction or land-use alteration work per local municipal code requirements to work with WDFW.



More on WDFW Priority Habitat and Species Recommendations and how WDFW provides assistance at the local and broader planning levels can be found here:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

Anderson provided a final draft of a mock website and permit for internal collaborative review in regards to a proposed Inactive Osprey Nest Removal Permit website. The site will provide a programmatic permit for inactive Osprey nest removal on built structures (e.g. cell towers) in safety or property damage situations while meeting state regulatory needs.

Eagle Nest - Medina: Multiple WDFW staff, including Enforcement, Biologist Anderson, Regional Manager Link, and other staff were involved with citizens and USFWS regarding the removal of an unknown eagle nest in Medina. The nest was in an old tree that was dead and in decline per a Certified Arborist Assessment (<http://pnwisa.org/>). It was a situation where the birds were back on territory but the nest was inactive and a safety situation was confirmed with the tree near a residence in a fall zone. The removal mimics the natural biology of tree and nest loss during the non-breeding season due to wind storms, tree failure, etc. The landowner retained a permit from US Fish and Wildlife for nest removal. However, WDFW fielded many calls, field visits by staff, and coordination efforts with USFWS and concerned citizens.

Anderson spoke with city of Medina Deputy Mayor Lee who called him to gain insight into the biology of eagles. Anderson also made multiple contacts with the community to assist in monitoring the territorial pair in efforts to document a new nest. They will likely rebuild given their territory has not been affected overall, they are showing pair-bond, and more sensitive breeding activity has not yet initiated. We all look forward to an alternate nest being built in a spot that has less human-wildlife safety conflict.

In regards to snag management, see our WDFW Wildlife Tree website:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/snags/index.html>

Bald Eagle Management in Washington:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/bald_eagle/

Medina eagle nest in a clearly declining tree, per certified arborist assessment of tree status and health. The tree was permitted to be taken down outside of the nesting season by US Fish and Wildlife in order to mimic natural nest loss. WDFW is working with the community to monitor the territorial pair in order to document an alternate nest location and building activity.



Barred Owl – fishing monofilament: Biologist Anderson was notified by a citizen group that a local barred owl had been found dead and entangled in monofilament fishing line. Anderson received pictures of the animal and confirmed identification (as there was some question by the reporting party).

Please be responsible in outdoor recreational activities, clean up after yourself, whether hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, or otherwise. Stay back from wildlife and watch them from a distance to avoid disturbance and let them go about things as they would normally. This provides for learning experiences about the ecology of a given animal as well as “keeping them wild”.

More information on how and why citizens should promote and help keep derelict fishing gear out of our natural areas we all love and recreate in can be found here:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/derelict/>

And tips on how to watch wildlife without disturbance – provide respect and learn about the animal:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/responsible/>

Nooksack Elk Herd: Biologists Yarborough, Witman, and Caldwell attended an Elk Damage meeting to discuss elk management issues with the tribal co-managers.

Graduate Projects: Biologist Yarborough met with Western Washington University professor David Wallin to discuss current and future research involving graduate students in Skagit and Whatcom County.

Padilla Bay National Estuary Reserve: Biologists DeBruyn and Yarborough met Sharon Riggs at the Padilla Bay Center to discuss goals and objectives for the upcoming revision of their management plan, and how WDFW can fit into their planning process.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project: Science Tech Anderson and Biologists DeBruyn and Yarborough, as well as cooperators from Puget Sound Energy and the Trumpeter Swan Society, continued to conduct field surveys this week to monitor for sick and injured trumpeter and tundra swans. This week, eighteen swans were collected in Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. Gizzard and liver samples were collected for contaminant analysis. Tracheal and Cloacal swabs were taken to monitor for other diseases. Two carcasses were sent to the USDA laboratory for analysis. Power line strikes continue to be the leading cause of mortality. However, an increase in unknown cause of death cases is gaining momentum. Laboratory results will confirm or deny the suspected presence of avian diseases.

	Lead	Power line Strike	Trauma	Unknown	Feather Pile	Total (per county)
Sumas						
Whatcom		14	2	4	6	26
Snohomish	2	6	5	3		16
Skagit		11	3	10	5	29
San Juan				1		1
						72 (Grand Total)

Waterfowl Mortality Survey: Biologist DeBruyn and Science Tech Sherman Anderson returned to Wiser Lake and searched for waterfowl carcasses. The lake is the site of an outbreak of aspergillous fungi in ducks. One duck collected last week (a northern pintail) also tested positive for avian influenza type H5N2 which has been detected north of there in British Columbia in commercial poultry operations. Thirty-seven sets of duck remains were located, of which seven were submitted to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin for necropsy. A trumpeter swan was found dead and a tundra swan was captured and euthanized. The swans were also sent to Madison for testing. DeBruyn and Anderson have ramped up biosecurity measures and are taking every precaution, using personal protection equipment and decontamination procedures to insure no further spread of avian pathogens. The National Wildlife Health Center has dispatched a biologist to take over the collection and processing of specimens.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm Coordinated with the Snohomish County Environmental Cleanup Crew to remove a truck load of garbage that was dumped near the middle parking area. Manager Boehm also reported a sign-tagging incident at the same parking lot. Six WDFW informational signs were damaged, along with tagging of the City of Everett's water tubes and numerous traffic signs in the area. Manager Boehm reported the incident to WDFW Enforcement, Snohomish County Sherriff, and the City of Everett.

Spencer Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that volunteers completed the trail clearing work at Spencer Island. Manager Boehm will continue to coordinate with WDFW Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey to provide wildlife viewing benches that also can be used as the center-support for transportable blinds used by waterfowl hunters.

Volunteers completed trail-clearing work at the Spencer Island unit

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm responded to WDFW Enforcement action concerning the illegal taking of swans at the Crescent Lake unit. Informational signage was posted to educate hunters to prevent further incidences.

Fir Island Farm Baseline Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and a biologist from Shannon and Wilson uploaded data from water quality monitoring devices on the site. There are eleven devices on the site that take water depth, conductivity, and temperature readings every fifteen minutes. The devices are deployed in drainage sloughs and groundwater wells, and the data must be uploaded and cleared from the devices monthly. These data will be used to determine whether or not there is an effect on the parameters after an estuary restoration project is installed on the site.



Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked on drafting an Alternatives Analysis document and a few agenda options for an upcoming Stakeholder meeting in January. A draft of the agenda options was sent to the WDFW Leque Team for review.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Projects Coordinator Brokaw submitted a response to comments received by stakeholders regarding PSNERP, and participated in a PSNERP team conference call. There is currently an open public comment period on PSNERP through January 8th, 2015. More information on this process, the documents under review, and how to comment is available at: <http://pugetsoundnearshore.org/outreach.html>.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to three calls for elk damage complaints in Skagit County where follow-up meetings with landowners took place. Specialist Witman also received a deer complaint in reference to a neighbor feeding deer on Whidbey Island.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Watchable Wildlife – Eagle Camera: Biologist Anderson worked with Citizen Science Coordinator Connally, Biologist Falxa, and arborist contractors to troubleshoot and update the Lake Washington Bald Eagle Camera. Last year’s young chewed up the camera wires in their near-fledging frustrations. They also bounced and ripped apart the bulk of the nest prior to fledging! It’s tough to be a young adult, locked at home with no transportation!

Two eagles were heard adjacent to the nest tree in the thicker stand of trees they often perch in, vocalizing. Their regular presence at the nest tree and vicinity over the past month is promising. Our fingers are crossed. The camera can be followed here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/eaglecam/video_1w2.html

2014 season eaglets took their youthful angst out on the WDFW eagle camera wires, stripping and pulling at them

Wildlife Areas

Nooksack Unit Property Addition: Manager Kessler took pictures of the new Peterson property that connects with the Nooksack unit. The property is on the east side of the unit, on the banks of Silver Creek. The pictures will be included in the Lands 20/20 Report.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation: The Boardwalk renovation on the Tennant Lake unit that is funded by the Washington State



Recreation and Conservation Office grant continued. The crew made great progress on the long loop section of the boardwalk. Manager Kessler fielded many questions from hunters as to the timing of the remodeling project. Hunting is closed on Tennant Lake Monday through Friday, when the crew is working. It is open to hunting on weekends, and during the holidays.

The Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation Project is underway



Lake Terrell Gate and Field Vandalism:

Science Tech Otto checked out a broken open gate at the Lake Terrell unit, and found three individuals trying to pull out a very stuck pickup truck from one of the barley fields. A friend of theirs had rammed the parking lot gate with a truck to break the gate open, then told the friends about the gate. They came and tried to do donuts in the wet field and got the 4x4 pickup stuck. Manager Kessler helped to get information, and an Enforcement Agent was called. The agent arrived and interrogated the 17 year old subjects. A backhoe was brought in, but could not get the truck to move in the mud. A tow truck came and, along with the Lake Terrell Tractor, was able to finally free the truck. The agent will recommend the truck driver performs community service work, and the gate breaker pays restitution. Science Tech Otto and Manager Kessler repaired the gate.

Nooksack WLA Staff repaired a gate at Lake Terrell



Waterfowl Program:

NRS Meis met with Swinomish Tribal Land Manager Kevin Anderson. Mr. Anderson was interested in learning more about how WDFW manages our agricultural lease lands and waterfowl and wetland management program.

NRT Cosgrove and NRS Meis monitored water levels, waterfowl, and hunter use on the Island unit. Waterfowl and hunter activity remain high, with good amounts of corn, barley, and fava beans yet to be fed on. Swan and shorebirds (mostly yellowlegs) have also been observed using the site.

Private Lands/Access Management

Pheasant Site Management: NRT Otto assisted Skagit Wildlife Area staff with removing signs posted around the Bow Hill release site. Tech Otto and Deyo removed signage from the Arnold Farm release site on Whidbey Island.

Illegal Dumping Issues: NRT Otto and Deyo removed garbage in parking areas of Waterfowl sites in Skagit and Whatcom County.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Surveys: NRT Otto and Deyo completed a survey of use at access sites in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. After completing surveys, technicians assessed blind conditions at multiple sites. (See pictures below)



Cook West Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site



Picture looking back at blind at Francis East site



Picture from blind at Green Road

WATERFOWL HUNTER SUCCESS SURVEY
Please fill out this card. Your name is _____

Hunter Name: NARBAL Date: 12/27/14 Number of Hunters: 2 Arrival Time: 8:15 Depart Time: 9:30

Wild ID #'s: _____

Harvest-species, Sex, & # (e.g., Mallard-2 Male & 1 Female): 2 SHORE L WEA

Did You Use Decoys? (Yes) No Did You Use Duck Calls? (Yes) No

*Please rank as follows: (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = fair, 4 = good and 5 = excellent)

Number of Waterfowl Seen: 1,000 +

Quality of Hunt: A

Overall Satisfaction: A

Program Website: _____

Program Maps: _____

Comments: GREATEST HUNT EVER

Thank You and Happy Hunting!

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Hunter Success Surveys reveal that some hunters are experiencing high success and are pleased with the efforts WDFW staff is putting forward

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Bald Eagle management: Assistant District Biologist Cyra met on site with a landowner representative and consultant after meeting with neighbors who reported a second Bald Eagle nest in the area of a proposed home development. Questions of potential management issues to be addressed by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (who manages activity around Bald Eagle nests) were discussed, and more accurate locations of both nests were obtained and information was sent to both WDFW and USFWS in Olympia.

Second bald eagle nest in a known territory in area of proposed development in the lower Snohomish valley

Elk hunt health concerns: Biologist Anderson provided outreach to an archery hunter that successfully took a bull. The bull had an abscess up on its shoulder. Occasionally, animals can have a local injury and infection like this. These instances are often just due to injury or other common factors. The animal itself is fine to harvest. Cutting out the affected area takes care of the issue. It is always a good idea to contact your local WDFW biologist if an animal is harvested that acts odd, has meat that smells around the affected area and is discolored. Biologists can consult with our state Wildlife Veterinarian for advice if it seems like a situation different than the occasional injury and infection.

In this case, the rest of the animal was just fine and a good hunt.

Game Meat Handling information can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/meat_safety/

Pelt Sealing Requirements: Biologist Smith and Anderson worked with R4 Customer Service and local hunters to provide for sealing requirements for bobcat and cougar. Pelt seal requirements for bobcat, river otter, and cougar are per international and state regulations. Please ensure these laws are followed in your harvest of these species. Check the Big Game pamphlet or Trapping Regulations for harvest reporting, sealing, and other needs in your recreational efforts: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>



Wildlife Identification: Biologist Anderson identified a gray/silver farmed mink that had taken up residence under a house in the rural edge of Redmond. The animal didn't do well in the wild given its captive life and lack of having to care for itself prior to its escape or release. Death appeared to be of natural cause. Note it is against state law to release any wildlife, captive or otherwise, without appropriate permits.

Farmed mink brought in for identification. These animals are farmed and somewhat domesticated due to this – please don't illegally release them



Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie WLA Signage: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports new pet-focused informational signage was posted at four pheasant release hunting units. In response to frequent and numerous incidences, and conflicts during the hunting season, signs that read “No Dogs Except When Hunting” were posted. Prior to the hunting season, Manager Boehm posted signage advising pet walkers that hunting season is open, safety orange clothing is recommended, and to keep pets on-leash, so as to not impose on hunter-related activities. Due to the many complaints, illegal dog-training activities, and no response to the initial signage at all four pheasant release units, a firmer restriction was necessary. This measure was supported by Region 4 Enforcement, the Wildlife Program Manager, and Wildlife Area Advisory Committee members.

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton submitted a Hazard Tree Review request to Skagit County as suggested by Habitat Biologist Wendy Cole for the hazard tree removal project proposed for the Wiley Slough site.

Manager Rotton performed administrative duties including vendor payment and monthly administrative reports and agricultural lease statements.

Manager Rotton and NRS Meis attended an end of season debriefing meeting for the WDFW staff involved in the cattail control project. The group discussed lessons learned from this field season and potential adjustments to consider for the next season.

NRT Cosgrove picked up litter and monitored public use and waterfowl use on the Fir Island Farms, Jensen, Milltown, Leque Island and Johnson/Debay's Slough Game Reserves.

Manager Rotton has contacted Olympia Land Program staff to coordinate the upcoming public bid process for agricultural leases.

Skagit River Moorage: NRS Meis and NRT Cosgrove continued to monitor remove debris build-up during high river conditions on the boat house and moorage facilities to reduce concerns of more logs catching and causing damage to facilities and equipment and creating safety issues for boaters in the area.

Island Unit: Manager Rotton continued to follow up on action items related to the barge lease agreement, tide gate repair process, and ditch maintenance project for the Island unit.

Skagit Bay Estuary: NRT Cosgrove and NRS Meis test-ran the Wooldridge jet sled after making repairs to the throttle and shifting system. Cosgrove and Meis used the boat check to remove vegetation from two of the three buoys at the mouth of Deepwater Slough that mark Skagit Estuary Game Reserve boundary.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman conducted follow-up assessment and photographs for crop damage in the Day Creek area and Minkler Lake areas of Skagit County. Witman also met with a landowner who is experiencing crop damage from grazing elk in Skagit County and discussed hazing options and damage hunt options. Later, Witman discussed trespassing issues with landowner in Skagit County and future plans for property that is heavily utilized by elk. He also met with a landowner in the Acme area of Whatcom County who has approximately 40-50 elk utilizing his property for grazing. During this meeting, they discussed non-lethal strategies and hazing options. Lastly, Witman assisted an incentive Elk Permit holder with hunting property within a damage area of GMU 437/4941.

Private Lands/Access Management

Landowner Payments: NRT Otto and Deyo delivered A-19 forms to a landowner partner on Whidbey Island. The landowner was pleased with the program and looking forward to our partnership next year. Biologist Caldwell also met with another Whidbey Island landowner to deliver A-19 forms. During this meeting several discussions were had regarding farming plans for 2015 and the potential for changing hunt site characteristics so as to enhance pheasant cover and food. These measures would potentially enhance the overall hunting quality of the site. It was decided that future discussions would take place during late spring.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Questions: Biologist Caldwell received many questions from hunters about quality hunting opportunities on private lands in Region 4. Biologist Caldwell referred these hunters to internet resources and answered their questions.

***GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES,
AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY***

Wildlife Management

Flight Following: Assistant District Biologist Cyra worked on reformatting and editing the winter marine waterfowl survey SOP to include other potential incident scenarios and their appropriate response by flight followers.

Radio Communications: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted Program staff with training and assigning call numbers per our DNR contract.

Equipment Maintenance: Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed maintenance on field equipment and assisted Assistant District Biologist Smith with the procurement of a loaner flight helmet/flight suit for a survey while the District 12 helmet was being serviced.

Wildlife Conflict Staff Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell organized a meeting between all Wildlife Conflict staff to discuss field issues, program objectives and goals, scheduling time off notifications, storage issues, vehicle staging and sharing, office moves, workload issues, wildlife management updates, supervisor issues, and the sharing of ideas/creative thoughts.

Spring Bear Hunt History Information: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell organized and forwarded the Spring Bear Hunt history information to Conflict Staff for review.

Private Lands Access Staff Meeting: Biologist Caldwell organized a meeting between all Private Lands Access staff to discuss field issues, program objectives and goals, Private Lands Biologist hiring updates, scheduling time off notifications, storage issues, vehicle staging and sharing, office moves, workload issues, wildlife management updates, supervisor issues, and the sharing of ideas/creative thoughts.

Private Lands Biologist Hiring Coordination: Biologist Caldwell contacted candidates to schedule interviews for the Private Lands Biologist position out of La Conner, WA. He also organized interview questions for this process.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Lower Columbia River Shorebird Survey: Biologists Holman, Doorly, Stephens, Biologist emeritus Miller, and Technician Johnson, in cooperation with USFWS, surveyed for shorebirds in the lower Columbia River. Species observed included black-bellied plover, killdeer, western and least sandpipers, and dunlin. Areas with suitable habitat were accessed by boat and included Gray's Bay and several islands in the lower Columbia. This survey effort was part of the Pacific Flyway Shorebird Survey, a monitoring program designed to guide the management and conservation of wintering shorebirds in the Pacific Flyway. Data from this survey will contribute to the Migratory Shorebird Project, which is the largest coordinated survey of wintering shorebirds on the Pacific Coast of the Americas and spans from Canada to Peru.



Lower Columbia River Shorebird Survey

General Goose Surveys: Biologist Doorly, along with Technicians Johnson and French-Lescalleet completed the 2014-2015 General Goose Surveys this week for the month of December. These surveys are conducted once a month in various areas around Region 5. This year the surveys will focus more exclusively on accurate counts of the Dusky Canada goose. Surveyors will also record any collars of duskies and other species seen. The purpose of these surveys is to observe Dusky Canada goose numbers as well as any collared waterfowl and record the information necessary for population estimation of the dusky and analysis of survival and movements of all collared geese. This month, duskies, as well as collared cackling and resident dark geese, were observed during the surveys.

Klickitat Deer Post-season Surveys: Biologists Holman, Bergh, McDonald, and Stephens conducted the annual post-season aerial deer surveys in GMUs 578, 388, and 382. The purpose of these surveys is to estimate buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios after the hunting season has ended. This is one piece of information used in the management of these deer. This year's

survey was complicated by low clouds and fog, but two and a half days of flying were still possible over the course of a week. A total of 1,443 deer were seen and 1,274 of those were classified. Additional data analysis will be completed next week. A special thank you to Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Sue VanLeuven for flight following and Officer Dan Bolton for checking weather in the field for us. Other wildlife seen during the survey included turkeys, chukar, bald eagles, a golden eagle, coyotes, and a cinnamon-colored black bear. (see photos of deer in the Grayback GMU, deer in a winter wheat field, and wind turbines with highway 97 and Goldendale in the background).



Deer in the Grayback GMU



Deer in a winter wheat field

Wind turbines with highway 97 and Goldendale in the background

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Scotch Broom Aerial

Application Treatment: An aerial application of herbicide was applied to large infestations of scotch broom on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area in early October. This effort aims to

reduce established scotch broom plants as well as decrease establishment of the plant into new areas. This will open up new places for elk forage and encourage native vegetation. Trees will be planted in these areas as well, to limit reemergence of scotch broom plants. Wildlife Area staff have been documenting the progress of herbicide treated scotch broom to determine the effectiveness of the application. The photos below show the progression after three months since the application occurred.





Photo taken 10/17/14



Photo taken 12/3/14

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2014-2015 SW Washington goose hunting season continued this week. As of Sunday, December 21st, 308 hunters have checked a total of 736 geese at three check stations at a ratio of approximately 2.39 geese per hunter. Three duskies were harvested during this period. At the moment, all zones remain open for Management Area 2A. A total of 80 duskies are distributed amongst five zones in Management Area 2A and 2B. Zones may close to hunting geese if dusky quotas are exceeded. **As a reminder to hunters, check stations will be closing early at 2:00pm on Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24th, 2014.** WDFW would like to thank hunters in the field that day for getting to check stations early. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the Region 5 office at (360) 696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting and waterfowl. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 3, 6-7, and 9-10 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet for further details regarding requirements for participation:

<http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf>.

Access

Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes picked up and hauled over 1,000 pounds of trash on two different occasions this week including two TV sets and ten tires.

Vancouver Lake



Leidle North Campground: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes cut and removed four trees from around the camp grounds that were dangerous and could fall on campers.

Leidle tree removal

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Conflict

Wildlife Conflict – D-10: Conflict Specialist Conklin signed several DPCA’s with Wahkiakum County land owners this week. Conklin also talked with a hunter who harvested an elk using a Land Damage Permit in the Boistfort area. The elk had hoof disease and the hunter sent the pictures below to Conklin.



Boistfort area harvested elk

Winter Conditions

D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal. Light accumulations of snow fell on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area the last weekend of November. Temperatures have been above average the first few weeks of December with no additional snow on the Wildlife Area. Heavy rainfall occurred December 20th and 21st.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 2,500 to 7,500 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for below normal temperatures and precipitation. A strong, very warm, very wet "pineapple" storm is predicted with several inches of rain forecast for most elevations including the possibility of flooding.

Long-Term Forecast: Following the warm, wet weather, a cooler but not a wet period is forecast. This will likely include the first significant snowfall for the Cascades this year. The January forecast and the three month forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available at all elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are currently snow free, with minimal depths at the middle and upper elevations.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The first winter elk survey was conducted on the Mudflow unit December 8th, with 63 elk observed.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition

Mortality: None reported to date.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2014, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9: Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Weather in the South Cascades this past week has been mild with light snow early in the week, followed by rain showers the last part of the week. Snow pack is below normal and most areas below 3,500 feet have little snow.

Winter Severity: The Klickitat Wildlife Area is snow-free and forage habitat is available. There is little concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. The eastern portions of Klickitat County have no snow and deer are reported in good condition as it is still early in the season.

Habitat: Habitat is open and forage available below 3,500 feet in most of the south Cascades.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations seen due to inclement conditions.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition and numerous deer have been seen in the past week with healthy fawns. Elk have been seen in normal concentrations in the Lower Trout Lake Valley.

Mortality: None documented this week other than a few-road killed deer in Klickitat County.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week.

Mount St. Helens Elk Herd 2014/2015 Winter Conditions – Sno-Park Snow Depth, NRCS Snotel Data, and Snowpack

From Web Pages:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/giffordpinchot/recreation/wintersports/?recid=31178&actid=91>

http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3_pl

<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

SNOPARKS:

Name	Elevation	11/15/2014	11/30/2014
MARBLE MT	2,700'	No report	No report
WAKEPISH	2,800'	No snow	No snow

SNOWTEL STATIONS:

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/1 – 11/15	11/15 – 11/30
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	Avg. Snow Depth (inches)	0.0	0.0
		Min. Temp (F)	23.0	18.0
		Max Temp (F)	59.0	48.0
		Avg. Temp (F)	37.0	37.0
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	27.6	35.2
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	Avg. Snow Depth (inches)	0.0	0.0
		Min. Temp (F)	23.0	10.0
		Max Temp (F)	63.0	52.0
		Avg. Temp (F)	39.0	39.0
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	12.8	16.1
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	Avg. Snow Depth (inches)	0.0	0.0
		Min. Temp (F)	19.0	21.0
		Max Temp (F)	61.0	52.0
		Avg. Temp (F)	40.0	38.0
		Year to date precipitation	11.0	13.5

		(inches)		
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg. Snow Depth (inches)	0.0	0.0
		Min. Temp (F)	19.0	16.0
		Max Temp (F)	58.0	55.0
		Avg. Temp (F)	36.0	37.0
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	23.8	30.7
CALAMITY	2,500'	Avg. Snow Depth (inches)	0.0	0.0
		Min. Temp (F)	21.0	21.0
		Max Temp (F)	58.0	52.0
		Avg. Temp (F)	40.0	40.0
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	15.6	20.8

SNOTEL STATIONS:

Snopack % of Avg. Snow	11/15/2014	11/30/2014
JUNE LAKE	0%	0%
SPIRIT LAKE	0%	0%
SHEEP CANYON	0%	0%

REGION 6

NO REPORT SUBMITTED THIS WEEK