

# Briefing: in response to Commission question about grazing on WDFW land

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# Bluesheet Request

Question raised during Grazing Program Review:

"Whether livestock grazing should be permitted on WDFW Lands"

## Part 1

- Decision-making Process
- Summary of Goals from past Commissions

## Part 2

- DFW costs in M&O to support grazing
- How much income is generated through leases
  - including cost sharing
- Benefits and detriments
- Community acceptance of DFW and landowner decisions to sell land to WDFW





**Grazing on WDFW Lands |**  
**Washington Department of Fish &**  
**Wildlife**



# Decision-Making Process

## Commission Policy C-6003 (revised Feb 2021)

***“Permitted livestock grazing on department lands has several roles, including managing vegetation for wildlife, enhancing recreational opportunity, encouraging conservation across multiple ownerships on landscape scales through coordinated resource management, and protecting community character.”***

# Whether/when to permit grazing

## New grazing: Grazing Evaluation Framework (frequency of occurrence)

- Potential benefits: ecological, habitat, recreational, landscape conservation, and/or community character
- Potential risks: ecological, recreational, fish/wildlife, and conflicts with fund sources or management/recovery plans
- Decision makers (joint): Regional Director, Regional Wildlife Program Manager, Lands Division Manager



# Example - Benefits

**Is the proposed grazing action designed to meet specified vegetation/habitat/recreation objectives where those objectives may maintain or improve ecological integrity in general or benefit individual target species? If so, select one or more of the following:**

- Stimulate growth, palatability, or accessibility of forage for wildlife (e.g., wild ungulates)
- Control/remove vegetation to benefit shorebirds/waterfowl (e.g. reed canary grass)
- Remove agricultural residue to benefit waterfowl, sandhill cranes, etc.
- Control/remove vegetation for other reasons (i.e. to reduce competition with priority species, to reduce fuels and the severity of fires that might occur, etc.; provide specific rationale)
- Suppress invasive weeds
- State Other Objective(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Is the proposed grazing action designed to help achieve conservation on a landscape scale? If so, select one or more of the following:**

- Provide relief for individuals who have lost opportunity from wildfire, wolf activity, etc.
- Participate in coordinated resource management (CRM)
- Reduce need for fencing within a given landscape among CRM participants
- State Other Objective(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Is the proposed grazing action designed to protect community character and values? If so, select one or more of the following:**

- Reduce the potential risk of wildfire
- Facilitate movement of livestock from one grazed area to another when WDFW land is in between
- Achieve acquisition goal/honor agreements made during property purchases
- Retain ranching and associated "open" (undeveloped) space
- Build relationships to foster cooperative efforts



# Example - Risks

## II. Identify Potential Risks

**Does the proposed grazing pose potential risks to fish and wildlife or fish and wildlife habitat or to ongoing recreation? Is the proposed grazing inconsistent with fund source allowances, purposes of acquisition, wildlife area management plans, or other existing agreements? If so, select one or more of the following:**

- Conflicts with fund source allowances or purposes of acquisitions (Check with Real Estate)
- Fencing risks to wildlife (grouse, bighorn lambs, pronghorn, migration routes, perching raptors, etc.)
- Proximity of domestic sheep to bighorn sheep
- Effects on the recovery of threatened or endangered species (area part of a recovery plan, etc.) or associated designated critical habitat
- Conflicts with habitat or species management actions outlined in the wildlife area plan
- Risks to species of greatest conservation need or other species that are of special interest to WDFW
- Risks to riparian, wetland, or other habitats of special interest to WDFW
- Risks to soil resources, including biological soil crusts in upland systems and streambank stability in riparian systems
- Risks to riparian areas where recent or ongoing habitat restoration work for anadromous fish has been performed
- Conflicts with fish- and wildlife-related recreation or other recreation activity prioritized by the Wildlife Area Management Plan
- Conflicts with ability to comply with existing contract or binding agreement
- Risk of invasive weed establishment and spread
- History of wolf-livestock conflict, including wolf depredations and lethally removed wolves
- Risk of transmission of livestock-borne diseases to wildlife
- State Other Risk(s) \_\_\_\_\_





# Existing Grazing

## Permit Issuance and Renewal: Cross-program review

- Review by Fish, Habitat, and Wildlife biologists and regional program managers, Wildlife Conflict Specialists, and Lands Division staff
- Grazing management plans:
  - Role of grazing to accomplish stated objectives and summarize benefits (literature-based) (WHY)
  - Include specifics such as limit timing, impose protective conditions, minimizing likelihood of wolf-livestock conflict, and track ecological integrity (HOW)
- Decision makers (joint): Regional Director, Lands Division Manager (WHO)



# Methow Wildlife Area permit

Invasive weed biomass significantly reduced (left);  
native community only used lightly (right)





# Quilomene Wildlife Area permit

Goals and Objectives:  
-Facilitate Wild Horse Coordinated  
Resource Management





# Chiliwist Wildlife Area permit

## Goals and Objectives:

- Facilitate winter mule deer use
- Maintain/increase shrub cover
- Reduce undesirable vegetation





# Sinlahekin Wildlife Area permit

## Goals and Objectives:

- Facilitate winter mule deer use
- Maintain/increase shrub cover
- Reduce undesirable vegetation



# Commission Engagement

Review in the case of:

- New acquisitions, within 3 years
- Grazing where it hasn't occurred in past 10 years (SEPA as well if > 640 acres)





# Past Commission Goals/ Direction



# Commission Direction & Requests

Reflected in the Grazing Guidance and Management Tools document

- Protect Community Character
- Past requests for information
  - Protective measures to manage risk
  - Ecological integrity and compliance monitoring
  - Grazing management plan content
  - Outreach with stakeholder







# Costs and Income

# Annual Grazing Costs & Income

ACTIVITY	COST	NOTE
WLA Staff Coord/Planning/Implementation	\$94,000	60 permits 32 hours/permit
Coordination/Planning/Ecological Integrity Monitoring	\$105,000	range ecologist
Review/Approval/Admin	\$26,000	district team, real estate, management, fiscal office
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>	
Cash and In-Kind Payments	\$178,000	14,500 aums \$12.32/aum approx 23% in-kind



# Other Grazing Costs

(not systematic, can be substantial)

- Fencing
  - Fence maintenance performed by permittee
    - Reduces WLA boundary maintenance costs to WDFW
  - Fence renovation
    - After wildfire (FEMA, state funds)
    - New permit (acquisition, wildfire relief pasture)
- Weed Control
- Grazing Program Development
  - WAC/Policy
  - Guidelines and Tools





# Benefits & Detriments

# Potential Benefits of Managed Grazing vs Potential Detriments of Unmanaged Grazing

## Example benefits\*

- Big game habitat
- Waterfowl habitat
- Reduced fire severity in some situations
- Coordinated management across different ownerships
- Engaged private property owners
- Landscape land-use implications
- Neighbor relationships

*\*See Grazing Guidance and Grazing Management Tools, 1.0 and 1.4; see also Response to SEPA comments, 4.3 (especially 4.3.4 for fire and fuels)*

## Potential detriments+

- Degradation of riparian areas
- Soil disturbance
- Reduced forage and increased weeds
- Fence and displacement effects

*+See Grazing Guidance and Grazing Management Tools, 1.5; see also Response to SEPA comments, 4.3.1 – 4.3.3 and 4.3.5*





# Staff Perceptions

- District Team Process
- Willing Seller
- Community Acceptance
- Story Map

# Questions?

Contact your Communications Manager  
for help and review of your PowerPoint.

