

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area

2019-20 Wildlife Area Management Plan Update



This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts and public recreation opportunities at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, WDFW develops a process for revising management plans for each wildlife area to identify new management priorities and actions. In between plan revisions, the update focuses on recent accomplishments over the last two years.

Management Highlights

Noxious Weed Management (*Goal #1, Objective B*)

Wildlife area staff members have been busy with the constant emergence of new and old weed species across all units of the Sinlahekin. In 2020, staff members inspected approximately 15,000 acres and completed treatment on about 650 acres. Scotch thistle is a significant problem on the Chiliwist Unit. This 5,000-acre unit requires constant vigilance throughout the spring, summer, and fall months. This requires treating plants at the rosette stage and cutting seed heads from older plants. Other accomplishments include:

- Increased control of St. John's wort and Dalmatian toadflax through treatment
- Released thousands of biocontrol agents to control diffuse knapweed and toadflax

- Continued treatment of multiflora rose and bladder senna
- Treated puncturevine and spiny sandbur infestations
- Conducted spurge flax treatments in cooperation with Okanogan County



Biocontrol agents on dalmatian toadflax

Maintain Fences and Gates (Goal #1, Objective C)

On the Horse Spring Coulee Unit, an old, dilapidated gate was removed and a new one was installed. The project involved removing and replacing the H brace stretch point and adding some rail fencing to help secure the gate hinge post. This will make it easier for recreationist to access the unit.

On the Chiliwist Unit, old fencing was rolled up and taken into the metal recycler. The fencing material was from the Carlton Complex Fire fence rebuild. There were also old defunct fences on the Chiliwist that were removed. It was great to see these hazards removed both for wildlife and recreationists in the area.



Horse Spring Coulee Gate



Chiliwist Fence Removal

Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration (Goal #1, Objective C)

Staff members thinned areas within the boundaries of the Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project. Statewide foresters developed the thinning prescription to remove conifers less than a 7” diameter at breast height (DBH). The project is being done to achieve a desired future condition of ponderosa pine savanna with a mature stand stocking density of 20-25 trees per acre, leaving ponderosa pine when possible and western larch for species diversity. Douglas fir should be a minor component of the stand. Staff members will continue to treat areas.



Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration thinning units

Sinlahekin Unit Wildlife Surveys (Goal 2 Objectives A and B, Goal 5 Objective A, Goal 6 Objective A)

Common loon: Five surveys for common loon were conducted during the 2021 season on Blue Lake. One pair was utilizing the lake, but no nesting or reproduction was found to occur. WDFW Volunteer Bob Fischer constructed a common loon platform, which was deployed in Blue Lake on March 31, 2021. Vegetation maintenance on the platform occurred throughout the summer.



Loon platforms

Deer: The district wildlife biologist and assistant district wildlife biologist conducted spring deer surveys within the Sinlahekin Unit for both mule deer and white-tailed deer.

Wolf: Staff members monitored the Loup Loup Wolf Pack by winter track surveys and remote cameras.

Western Gray Squirrel: No surveys were conducted, but the assistant district wildlife biologist documented opportunistic sightings.

Bumble Bee Surveys (Horse Spring Coulee Unit): Two formal bumble bee surveys were conducted within shrubsteppe habitat under the Graves Bumble Bee Survey Protocol, which focuses on the western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis*). The western bumble bee was not found during these surveys, but six bumble bees were submitted to the Xerces Society for identification per survey protocol.



Campground Renovations Project (Goal #7, Objective A)

Funding was awarded through the Recreation and Conservation Office to implement renovations to the campgrounds on the Sinlahkein Unit. The renovations include installing Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approved fire rings and gravel camping pads.



Community Outreach (Goal #8, Objective E)

Staff members participated in the annual Okanogan High School Ecology class field trip to the Driscoll Island Unit. They spoke to the students about the different plants and animals that are found on the wildlife area, as well as the different management methods used to promote various habitat types for different species.

As part of their class, the students looked for and identified different invertebrates in the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers. They also took water sample to calculate dissolved oxygen, ph, temperature, velocity, and turbidity of the river. This has been a great spot for the students to visit because they can see the influence of the Similkameen River on the Okanogan River.



Above Okanogan Ecology Class

New Issues

Restore and protect the integrity of priority ecological systems and sites (*Goal #1, Objective E*)

Staff members submitted and received a Recreation Conservation Office State Lands Restoration Grant to restore old agriculture fields to native cover on the Chiliwist Unit.