

Scatter Creek Wildlife Area

2021 – 2022 Management Plan Update



Violet Prairie Unit.

This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [2020 Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities at the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) develops a process for revising the 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

New Scatter Creek Headquarters Completed (*Goal #12*)



The new Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Headquarters.

The construction of the new Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Headquarters was completed in early 2021, replacing the former headquarters that was destroyed in the 2017 wildfire on the south tract of the Scatter Creek Unit. The new headquarters is located at 16801 Case Road SW on the north tract of the unit and consists of an office building, a 5-bay shop, and a 0.6-acre fenced equipment yard. Improvements were also made to the adjacent parking area to better accommodate horse trailers and other users of the unit. Though the burning of the former headquarters represented the loss of a significant cultural resource to the area, the new facilities provide a more secure and functional home base from which to steward the wildlife area.

Wildfire Recovery (Goal # 1, Objective 1I)

A wildfire severely burned approximately 345 acres of native prairie and oak woodland on the Scatter Creek Unit in 2017. Since the fire, WDFW has been working to seed and plant native vegetation while controlling invasive plants to restore native prairie-oak conditions. WDFW uses an integrated management approach to controlling Scotch broom that utilizes cutting, hand-pulling, herbicide treatments, prescribed fire, and seeding/planting with native vegetation. Conditions in the summer and fall of 2022 were quite favorable to treat Scotch broom, and approximately 25 acres were mowed. Controlled burns were conducted to treat Scotch broom on 37 acres of the Scatter Creek Unit and 17 acres of the West Rocky Unit in 2021 and 2022 combined.

New Acquisitions

Two new units were added to the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area complex and an existing unit was expanded. These acquisitions greatly increased a variety of recreation opportunities in the region while protecting significant portions of native South Sound prairie-oak landscapes that support several rare and endangered wildlife species.



One of the many hidden wetlands to be discovered on the Violet Prairie Unit. Photo by Alan L. Bauer.

Violet Prairie (Goal #1, Objective 1H)

This 1,561-acre unit is located just west of the City of Tenino off Old Highway 99. Formerly operated as an alpaca ranch, the Violet Prairie Unit encompasses a landscape unique to our region with rolling grassland hills, hidden forested wetlands, and acres of stunning views and public land to explore. Recreational opportunities include upland bird and big game hunting, equestrian riding, wildlife viewing, hiking, and biking. The unit also contains 209 acres of native South Sound prairie designated as critical habitat for federally endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterfly and federally threatened Mazama pocket gopher (Yelm subspecies). The unit is being acquired over three phases with the third and final phase expected to be completed in late 2023. We anticipate the unit will be open to the public to access and enjoy in 2024.

Mima Creek (Goal #2, Objectives 2C)

The Mima Creek Unit was acquired in 2021, adding 113 acres of public land to the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area complex. Located off Gate Road, north of Rochester, and tucked between the Black River and the foot of the Black Hills, the unit sits at the southern edge of historic Mima Prairie and marks a stark transition between mounded grassland, oak woodland, and emergent wetland. Together these landscapes support breeding habitat for federally threatened Oregon spotted frog and provide big game hunting opportunities.

Davis Creek expansion (Goal #1, Objective 1H)

Approximately 117 acres were added to the Davis Creek Unit in fall 2022, significantly increasing recreational opportunities on the wildlife area. The new addition encompasses a significant portion of the unit's namesake, increases the area of oak woodland, and expands the area of open fields and access to water features to better facilitate hunt test and field trial events for hunting dogs. Waterfowl and big game hunting opportunities, as well as fishing access, have

also benefited from the addition. We are currently exploring ways to improve equestrian riding opportunities on the unit.



The cool waters of Mima Creek flowing on a crisp autumn afternoon.

Administrative Reorganization

A dedicated wildlife area manager position was created and filled for the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area in 2022. This position was previously responsible for managing the North Olympic, South Puget Sound, and Scatter Creek Wildlife Areas combined; spanning a large geographic area ranging from southern Thurston County to the northern coast of the Olympic Peninsula. Having a dedicated manager position has greatly improved WDFW's ability to address the needs of the wildlife area and provide greater on-the-ground interface with user groups.

New Issues

With the acquisition of new lands comes the hard work of developing infrastructure to ensure safe public access and protection of resources. The wildlife area is currently developing plans for creating and/or improving public access to the Mima Creek and Violet Prairie units and will soon begin the process of amending the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan to include these units and the added acres at Davis Creek. These new lands present added management challenges in providing recreational opportunities while protecting rare and sensitive species and maintaining the integrity of the unique landscapes they represent.