

Wenas Wildlife Area

2021-2022 Management Plan Update



This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the [Wenas Wildlife Area Management Plan](#). The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities at the Wenas 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

Wildfire and Post Fire Restoration (*Goal #2*)

The Wenas Wildlife Area has experienced several large wildfires throughout the past few years and post-fire restoration efforts continue to be a top priority. Evans Canyon Fire burned approximately 60,132 acres of the wildlife area in 2020 followed by the Cow Canyon Fire in 2022, which burned an additional 614 acres of the wildlife area. Funding from Bonneville Power Administration, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and State Wildfire Recovery Funds have allowed for habitat recovery efforts to take place within the footprints of each wildfire. Work included post-fire seeding of 60 acres of native grasses and forbs and planting 14,000 native

shrubs. Species planted ranged from a mix of upland to riparian species not limited to antelope bitterbrush, Wyoming sagebrush, golden currant, woods rose, bluebunch wheatgrass, basin wildrye and Sandberg's bluegrass. Volunteer groups from the local community played an essential role in reseeding and shrub planting efforts after both fires. After two years of ongoing rehabilitation efforts restoration sites have been rather successful. Within the acres burned in the Evans Canyon Fire, approximately 14 miles of elk fence were damaged that needed to be replaced and/or repaired. In 2020, 6.5 miles of fence was rebuilt and WDFW did a temporary fix with propping up the remaining fence. Wenas Wildlife Area Staff replaced an additional 1.5 miles of elk fence on Cleman Mountain and Bull Pasture between 2021 and 2022. Federal Emergency Management Agency funding allowed for the wildlife area to have contracting crews complete the remaining six miles of burned elk fence that had been damaged in the fire. The sections of the fence were rebuilt using steel sucker pipe, making the fence more fire-resilient.



Sagebrush Planting on Cleman Mountain after the Evans Canyon Fire

Manastash Ridge Trails Recreational Management (Goal #3)

The Manastash Ridge Trails (MRT) are a network of user-built trails within the boundaries of the Wenas Wildlife Area that have been used by residents of Kittitas County for over 60 years. Due to the high level of recreational use and historic use of the area, a management [plan](#) was

developed over the course of several years and a final draft was approved in February of 2022. Development of the plan was a collaborative effort between the Manastash Ridge Coalition, a group that represents various user groups that have interest in the trails system, as well as WDFW and the Department of Natural Resources. The MRT accommodates hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders and other users while minimizing impacts on the environment and habitat adjacent to the trails. The plan reviewed user-built trails for their cultural and environmental impacts and determined whether to maintain, improve, relocate, or abandon each trail. The plan is currently being implemented with improving educational and regulatory signage as a top priority.



Kittitas Valley as seen from the summit of Manastash Ridge Trails in winter

New Issues

Wenas - Cleman Mountain Acquisition (Goal #1)

The Wenas Wildlife Area acquired Cleman Mountain (1,070 acres) in 2022 from a grant from the Recreation Conservation Office. The property consists of 980 acres of shrubsteppe habitat, 60 acres of irrigated agricultural ground, and 60 acres of riparian habitat associated with 1.5 miles of North Wenas Creek, and over 1 mile of Pine Canyon. The habitat is in excellent condition and benefits a diverse array of avian, terrestrial, and aquatic species. The acquisition improved connectivity for the wildlife area by securing valuable upland, instream, and riparian habitat.



Shrubsteppe habitat on Wenas - Cleman Mountain acquisition



Shrubsteppe habitat on Wenas - Cleman Mountain Acquisition

Durr Road Target Shooting Range Development (Goal #3)

The Durr Road Shooting Area is a dispersed shooting site in Kittitas County on the Wenas Wildlife Area. This is a popular user created-shooting site, in close vicinity to Ellensburg. The site currently poses issues of fire danger as well as a large amount of refuse and garbage being left at the site. This site is currently approved for development of a 100-yard rifle range, 25-yard

pistol range and a shotgun-shooting area with work to begin Fall of 2023. Berms and backstops will be constructed for the rifle and pistol ranges to increase shooting safety and fire resiliency. A lead management best practices plan will be followed, and stormwater management will be implemented at each developed shooting location. This project is possible through state funds and Firearms and Archery Range Recreation grant funding. The site was chosen with extensive input from the public and the Wenas Target Shooting Advisory Committee which consisted of neighboring landowners and a broad representation of various user groups throughout the Wenas Valley.