

Updates to W.T. Wooten sections of management plan

UPDATES / CHANGES

Elk Fence: WDFW needs to research ways to provide a fire barrier along the elk fence to reduce the chances of it burning again.

Watson Lake Road Relocation: Through the RMAP project, a portion of the road from Deer Lake to Watson Lake was moved away from the Tucannon River to the base of the hill. The purpose of the project is to reduce the amount of sediments deposited into the river. The project was completed spring of 2009. Rehab of the old road bed will include planting with 3,000 trees and shrubs and will occur in spring of 2010.

Sensitive Period Closures: Due to winter weather conditions stressing wildlife, sensitive period closures have been made permanent from year to year. One location that benefits from a winter area closure is Cummings Creek. Closing the area to all human access decreases the extra stress put on the wildlife during that critical time period. Metal signs were purchased in winter 2009 to better inform the public of the winter area closure. The steps to make the closure permanent will be researched and the process will be begun.

NEW ISSUES

Tucannon Lakes: The 8 lakes on the WT Wooten WLA are in need of serious repair. The dams have needed repair for a number of years, but no funding has been provided to complete the work. The lakes need to be considered individually and prioritized whether to close them, fix them, or rehabilitate them. Spring Lake and Rainbow Lake, in particular, are becoming very shallow and temperatures are warming up. Both need dredged to continue to provide enjoyable fisheries for the public. Big 4 Lake is in danger of high water in the Tucannon River eventually washing it out. The importance of Big 4 Lake needs to be considered and whether it should be repaired or no longer kept as a lake.

Tucannon Power Line: The Habitat Biologists are looking into burying the Columbia REA power line that runs through the WT Wooten Wildlife Area. The purpose of burying the line is to reduce the chances of another fire on the Wildlife Area and to prevent a power line maintenance swath being cut through the Wildlife Area, especially in the riparian areas. The beginning steps have been taken on the project, but things have been put on hold due to the budget crisis.

MAJOR STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Food Plots: The food plots on Abels Ridge were replanted in fall of 2008 to produce wildlife forage and habitat in 2009. However, the planting failed and the plots were replanted again in fall of 2009. In addition to Abels Ridge, approximately 3 acres at the headquarters were cultivated and planted to a turnip/clover mix in 2008. An additional 1 acre at the headquarters was cultivated and planted to a "Wildlife Mix" in spring of 2009. The plots will be monitored and replanted as necessary to keep a forage source available for the wildlife.

Russell Property: WDFW was able to obtain funding through a grant to clean up the old cars, appliances, and garbage on the Russell Property. The work was completed in October 2009. Three semi-truck loads of cars and farming implements were hauled to recycling by Sutton Salvage, as well as a 20-yard bin full of metal and wire. The grant also included adding woody debris to the stream running through the property and re-channeling the stream on the private land to make it more suitable for fish habitat. Willows and other shrubs were planted along the stream channel to improve habitat.

STATUS REPORT OF 2010 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2009 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measures	Progress/ 2010 Related Activities/ Comments
Irrigate pastures	Headquarters and Hartsock fields irrigated throughout the summer	Continue in 2010
Establish and maintain food plots	Wheat was planted in the Hartsock fields, but due to irrigation problems the planting failed. One new acre was planted at the Headquarters	Plant wheat at Hartsock in 2010
Maintain 8 lakes	Water level and inlet/outlet structures were maintained weekly.	Continue maintenance in 2010
Maintain Spring Lake dike, repair damage caused by vegetation	Salvage logging funds were spent to feed elk in Yakima. No funds are left from the salvage logging to help repair the lakes.	Pursue another funding source in 2010
Maintain four mineral sites	Sites were replenished with new mineral blocks in 2009	Continue maintenance in 2010
Maintain information kiosk	WLA information was posted throughout the year.	Continue posting WLA activity information
Maintain 50 miles of boundary fence	Boundary fences were checked, fixed where needed, and maintained in 2009	WLA staff will continue regular maintenance
Maintain western half of elk fence (10 miles)	Appx 13 miles of elk fence burned in the School Fire. WDFW received a settlement in summer 2008 and set-up an agreement with DNR to use inmate work crews. Fence construction was completed in June 2009.	Maintenance will continue in 2010
Maintain seeps on Abels Ridge	The spring at the head of McGowan Canyon was tapped and a new trough installed in July 2008. No other seep has been located to improve.	Maintain McGowan spring in 2010
Reestablish food plot on Abels Ridge	Hunters Dream seed mix was planted in the food plots on Abels Ridge in October 2008, but the planting failed. The food plots were replanted in October 2009 with a clover mix.	Food plots will be monitored in 2010 and replanted if necessary

Maintain existing CREP projects along the Tucannon River	An existing CREP project at Deer Lake was replanted in spring 2009 to maintain the required stem count.	Monitor riparian planting success and maintain existing CREP project
Annually treat 50 acres of weeds, including roadsides and access sites	WLA staff sprayed weeds along Tucannon Road, Hartsock Grade, Blind Grade, and Cummings Creek road. Also treated Hartsock fields, Blind Grade fields, Blue Lake field, and campgrounds. Access Technician sprays weeds in campgrounds and access areas weekly.	Continue weed treatments in 2010
Seek funding to bury the Columbia REA power line	Burying the power line will reduce the chances of another fire on the Wildlife Area.	Habitat Biologist Schirm began work on this in summer 2008. Unknown where project currently stands.
Maintain 12 guzzlers and 6 troughs	Several of the guzzlers were damaged during the School fire and others have been damaged from high winds.	This task will be pursued in 2010. Need to find location information and determine if some guzzlers should be replaced or removed.
Revisit 33 post-fire monitoring photopoints	Photopoints were established following the 2005 School Fire to monitor vegetation regeneration.	Visit sites in May 2010
Establish a forest bird survey transect	Due to changing of staff at the WT Wooten Wildlife Area this task was not accomplished.	Pursue this task in 2010
Maintain/install 25 bluebird boxes and 10 wood duck boxes	Two wood duck boxes were built and installed near Deer Lake in 2009. One old wood duck box was refurbished. A wood duck box was hung on the Russell Property in October 2009.	Continue this task in 2010
Prescribed burns	Due to the amount of downed trees and debris, the WA is primed for another catastrophic fire. A prescribed burning plan would allow small areas to be burned over time to reduce the fuel load and prevent another large-scale fire.	Work with USFS to write a prescribed burning plan in 2010.

NEW STRATEGIES

Objective: Improve and Maintain Fish Populations

1. Work cooperatively with other watershed managers to identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area.
2. Improve one passage barrier annually as funds allow.
3. Identify and enhance one riparian area annually as funds allow.
4. Look for options to add large woody debris to streams, and do so as time and funds allow.
5. Prioritize Tucannon Lakes to close, fix, and rehabilitate as necessary.
6. Identify ways to decrease or minimize soil erosion and/or soil delivery to streams. Close roads, reseed roads, or rock roads as necessary to achieve goal.
7. Improve water temperatures for native fish species by improving shading or by increasing low flows (e.g. by developing springs or other methods) in small tributaries.

Objective: Provide sound operational management of WDFW lands

1. Pursue funding and support to bury the power line that runs from the Tucannon Hatchery up to Camp Wooten.
2. Look at options to utilize wildlife friendly fence when replacing existing boundary fences.
3. Implement a permanent annual sensitive period closure in Cummings Creek to reduce stress on wildlife during critical time periods.

Objective: Protect, enhance and restore function and structure of native habitats

1. Annually revisit 33 photo-monitoring sites to assess post-fire and post-logging habitat recovery.
2. Identify and restore native grasslands that are in poor condition due to past land practices with native grasses and forbs. Rehabilitate one area annually as funds allow.
3. Control noxious weeds on the wildlife area.

Objective: Use prescribed burning to reduce fuel loads to avoid another catastrophic fire.

1. Complete the necessary WDFW steps to implement a prescribed burning plan.
2. Write up a prescribed burning plan to reduce fuel loads.
3. Coordinate with USFS and DNR to plan prescribed burns to reduce fuel loads.

2010 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 1) Irrigate Headquarters and Hartsock pastures in summer months
- 2) Maintain 6 lakes by monitoring inlet/outlet structures twice weekly and regulating water levels (2 lakes are maintained by the Hatchery)
- 3) Maintain 50 miles of boundary fence
- 4) Maintain 10 miles of elk fence. Look at ways to provide a fire barrier along fence.
- 5) Maintain seeps on Abels Ridge
- 6) Stock mineral blocks at four sites on Abels Ridge
- 7) Maintain 12 guzzlers and 6 troughs
- 8) Maintain/install 25 bluebird boxes and 10 wood duck boxes
- 9) Annually treat 50 acres of weeds, including roadsides and access sites
- 10) Seek funding and support to bury the power line between Tucannon Hatchery and Camp Wooten
- 11) Revisit 33 post-fire monitoring photopoints in May
- 12) Identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area. Address at least 1 barrier annually as funds allow.
- 13) Identify and prioritize riparian areas on the wildlife area that can be enhanced. Address at least 1 area annually as funds allow.
- 14) Identify and restore native grasslands that are in poor condition due to past land practices. Address at least 1 area annually as funds allow.
- 15) Review state of Tucannon Lakes and prioritize lakes in need of maintenance. Work towards closing, repairing, or rehabbing lakes as needed.
- 16) Implement a prescribed burning plan to reduce fuel loads on the Wildlife Area.

CAG INPUT

Issue: Why are river otters allowed to eat all the fish stocked in the lakes?

Response: The Wooten WA is managed for all wildlife species. Work on educating the public as to the importance that river otters play in the ecosystem. WDFW cannot be selective in which wildlife species we allow to live on the Wildlife Area.

Issue: What are the bird surveys discussed in the Management Plan Updates? Are they being done?

Response: The bird surveys are breeding bird surveys to see what species of birds (mostly song birds) are utilizing the Wooten Wildlife Area for nesting. Surveys are not currently being done because the Assistant Wildlife Area Manager is not good with her bird calls and is looking for someone to assist with the surveys.