

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.

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, with the exception of administrative activities, decreases the extra stress put on the wildlife during that critical time period. Permanent signs were posted in January closing the Cummings Creek area to all human access from January 1 to April 1 of every year. However, WDFW will still enter the closure as needed for administrative activities such as checking the elk fence.

Campgrounds: WDFW renamed the campgrounds back to numbers instead of names. This was done at the request of enforcement to allow less confusion when reporting to an incident and also to differentiate between WDFW campgrounds and USFS campgrounds. WDFW and USFS have different campfire restrictions in the summer and the public was very confused as to who owned what campground. Hopefully these changes will reduce confusion of the public, while allowing enforcement to have faster response times in case of an emergency.

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. A subcommittee of the District Team has been put together to begin addressing the lakes issues. The committee has come up with conceptual designs for enhancing and improving Rainbow Lake, Deer Lake, and Watson & Beaver Lakes. With the enhancement of Deer Lake, Big 4 Lake will eventually be decommissioned and returned to the floodplain.

Tucannon Power Line: A Recreation and Conservation (RCO) grant request form has been submitted to obtain some funds to pursue 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 allow the riparian vegetation to grow along the river where the power line clearing currently is. Any monies obtained through the RCO grant will be used as match against other funds to proceed with burying the power line.

Tucannon River Large Wood Project: The Habitat Program has received funding to put 200 full-size trees with root balls into a stretch of the Tucannon River around the mouth of Waterman Canyon to improve fish habitat and reconnect the floodplain. Part of the project will also involve punching a hole in an old dike along the river north of Campground 5 to free the river and allow it to move. The project is scheduled to take place summer 2012.

MAJOR STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Food Plots: A new food plot was created on the Hartsock Unit of the WT Wooten WLA. Approximately 2 acres was disked up and planted into a mix donated by the Walla Walla Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Several white-tailed deer were seen using the food plot during the fall deer counts.

STATUS REPORT OF 2010 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2010 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measures	Progress/ 2012 Related Activities/ Comments
Irrigate pastures	Headquarters and Hartsock fields irrigated throughout the summer	Continue in 2012
Establish and maintain food plots (15 acres)	Hunters Dream and Wildlife Mix seed mixes were planted in the Hartsock fields. Turnips were planted over the existing Hunters Dream seed mix at the Headquarters.	Continue irrigating food plots in 2012. Look at making food plot at Headquarters smaller.
Maintain 8 lakes	Water level and inlet/outlet structures were maintained weekly. A subcommittee was formed in 2011 to prioritize lakes, develop a Lakes Management Plan, and pursue funding to fix/enhance lakes.	Continue maintenance in 2012. Continue subcommittee work.
Maintain Spring Lake dike, repair damage caused by vegetation	DOE conducted a dike inspection in fall 2011, but results have not yet been received.	Look over DOE dike inspection results in 2012 and make necessary repairs.
Maintain four mineral sites	Sites were replenished with new mineral blocks in 2010 & 2011	Continue maintenance in 2012
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 2010 & 2011	WLA staff will continue regular maintenance
Maintain western half of elk fence (10 miles)	Elk fence was checked, fixed where needed, and maintained in 2010 & 2011	Maintenance will continue in 2012
Maintain or improve 2 seeps on Abels Ridge	The spring at the head of McGowan Canyon was tapped and a new trough installed in August 2011.	Maintain McGowan spring in 2012. Work on improving another seep in 2012.
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 red clover	Food plots will be monitored in 2012 and replanted if necessary

	mix.	
Modify Wooten campgrounds	Fire rings were leveled and set in concrete and designated campsites were created in 2011. Campgrounds were renamed with numbers (ex Campground 1).	Campground maintenance will continue in 2012
Monitor existing CREP project	Monitor riparian planting success and maintain existing CREP project.	Continue monitoring in 2012. Continue work with subcommittee to draft Floodplain Management Plan.
Annually spot treat 50 acres of weeds along 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 2012
Seek funding to bury the Columbia REA power line	Burying the power line will reduce the chances of another fire on the Wildlife Area.	An RCO grant request form was submitted in January 2012. Continue looking for matching funds to bury power line.
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 2012. 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. WDFW has gone to visiting photopoints every other year.	Visit sites in May 2012
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.	Continue this task in 2012

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. 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.
6. Continue work with the subcommittee to draft a Lakes Management Plan and a Floodplain Management Plan.

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. Biennially revisit 33 photo-monitoring sites to assess post-fire and post-logging habitat recovery.
2. Identify and restore upland habitats that are in poor condition due to past land practices. Rehabilitate one area annually as funds allow.

2012 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 1) Irrigate Headquarters and Hartsock pastures in summer months
- 2) Maintain 8 lakes by monitoring inlet/outlet structures twice weekly and regulating water levels.
- 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 or improve 2 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 spot treat 50 acres of weeds along 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 upland habitats 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.

CAG INPUT

Issue:

Response: