

## Updates to W.T. Wooten sections of management plan

### **UPDATES / CHANGES**

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 put together the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan*. Funding was given to relocate 2 campgrounds out of the floodplain in 2014. The subcommittee resubmitted a package of projects to the Capital Request process for funding to begin repairing the issues with the lakes.

Tucannon Power Line: WDFW is still looking for funding options to bury the power line from the Hatchery to Camp Wooten. The project is also still included in the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan*.

Tucannon River Large Wood Projects: The Habitat Program has received BPA funding for summer 2015 to place engineered log jams in the Tucannon River from Watson Lake to Deer Lake. AWAM Dingman is continuing to work with the Columbia Conservation District to place engineered log jams in the Tucannon River from the O'Shaughnessy property through the Russell Unit of the Wooten Wildlife Area.

### **NEW ISSUES**

Walla Walla Properties: The Walla Walla properties that were assigned for management under the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area staff in 2013 have significant noxious weed issues that need to be addressed. A lot of time will be focused on those properties in 2015 to try to get the poison hemlock infestation under control.

### **MAJOR STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

McGowan Spring: A new spring box was installed in the spring at the head of McGowan Canyon to capture the water and direct it into the aluminum trough to provide water for wildlife.

### **STATUS REPORT OF 2014 PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

| <b>2014 Performance Measures</b>             | <b>Status of Performance Measures</b>  | <b>Progress/ 2015 Related Activities/ Comments</b>   |
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| Irrigate pastures                            | Headquarters and Hartsock fields irrigated throughout the summer.  | Continue in 2015   |
| Establish and maintain food plots (15 acres) | Hunters Dream and Wildlife Mix seed mixes were planted in the Hartsock fields in 2012. The new food plot on the Hartsock was planted with seed donated by Pheasants Forever. | Continue irrigating food plots in 2015. Look for options to replant food plot at Headquarters. |
| Maintain 8 lakes                             | Water level and inlet/outlet structures were maintained weekly. The <i>W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan</i> was written  | Continue maintenance in 2015. Continue subcommittee work. Start                                |

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|  | in 2012 to provide direction for restructuring the lakes and reconnecting the floodplain.  | feasibility study for lake reconfiguration projects.  |
| Maintain Spring Lake dike, repair damage caused by vegetation          | DOE conducted a dike inspection in fall 2011.  | Continue clearing vegetation off Spring Lake dike in 2015   |
| Maintain four mineral sites  | Sites were replenished with new mineral blocks in 2014.  | Continue maintenance in 2015  |
| Maintain information kiosks  | WLA information was posted throughout the year. New kiosks are now in each campground.   | Continue posting WLA activity information.  |
| Maintain 50 miles of boundary fence                                    | Boundary fences were checked, fixed where needed, and maintained in 2014.  | WLA staff will continue regular maintenance   |
| Maintain western half of elk fence (10 miles)                          | Elk fence was checked, repaired where needed, and maintained in 2014.  | Maintenance will continue in 2015   |
| Maintain or improve 2 seeps on Abels Ridge                             | A new spring box was installed in the spring at the head of McGowan Canyon in 2014. The spring went dry due to the lack of precipitation during the summer months.   | Maintain McGowan spring in 2015. Work on improving another seep in 2015.  |
| Reestablish food plot on Abels Ridge                                   | The food plots on Abels Ridge were planted in October 2009 with a red clover mix. The food plots were disked up in Fall 2014.  | Food plots will be planted with red clover in spring 2015.  |
| Modify Wooten campgrounds  | Funding was secured to relocate 2 campgrounds out of the floodplain in summer 2014. The 2 campgrounds were closed and 3 new campgrounds were constructed. There are now 11 WDFW campgrounds on the Wooten Wildlife Area. | Campground maintenance will continue in 2015.   |
| Monitor existing CREP project  | Monitor riparian planting success and maintain existing CREP project. CREP contract expires in 2017.   | Continue monitoring in 2015.  |
| 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.                                   | Continue weed treatments in 2015. Applied for \$15,275 from REMF and \$1262 from NWTF for 2015.   |
| 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. Power line burial was included in the <i>W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan</i> . |
| Maintain 12  | Several of the guzzlers were damaged   | This task will be   |

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| guzzlers and 6 troughs                                    | during the School fire and others have been damaged from high winds.  | continued in 2015. 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 started visiting the photopoints every other year. Photopoints were visited in 2014. | Visit sites in May 2016  |
| 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 2015   |
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## 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 conduct public meetings and get input and comments on the *W.T. Wooten 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. Remove old and/or unnecessary barbed wire 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.

## **2015 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) Identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area. Address at least 1 barrier annually as funds allow.
- 12) Identify and prioritize riparian areas on the wildlife area that can be enhanced. Address at least 1 area annually as funds allow.
- 13) Identify and restore upland habitats that are in poor condition due to past land practices. Address at least 1 area annually as funds allow.
- 14) Continue working with subcommittee to conduct public meetings and get input and comments on the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan*.

## **WAAC INPUT**

Issue: What money is being used for the upcoming public meetings?

Response: The money left from the campground relocation project.

Issue: What about using goats to control noxious weeds on the wildlife area?

Response: Goats cannot be used for noxious weed control on the Wooten Wildlife Area due to the presence of the bighorn sheep. Domestic goats can expose wild sheep to diseases that they have no immunity to and it can wipe out the population.

Issue: Is Deer Lake going to still be there after the lake upgrades are completed?

Response: Yes, Deer Lake will be kept and will hopefully be improved.

Issue: At what point do we give up on the bighorn sheep and let them die off?

Response: The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) is paying for the research being done (lamb collars, sheep transplants, etc). As long as they have money

and want to put it towards our bighorn sheep then we will continue to spend money on sheep research.

Issue: Is WDFW aware of the domestic sheep in the North Touchet?

Response: Yes, we know they are there and we track our collared sheep closely. So far, none of the bighorns have traveled that far in that direction. They usually stay on Hatchery Ridge and down into Cummings Creek.

Issue: How many bighorn sheep are currently in the Wenaha herd? And how are they doing?

Response: I do not know the answer to that question. I know the herd is still there and being tracked, but I do not know the number of individuals or how the overall herd is doing.

Issue: Do bald eagles nest in the Tucannon?

Response: Yes, we currently have a bald eagle nest near Watson Lake.

Issue: How close are we getting to 15 wolf packs for the state?

Response: We are currently at 11 packs and have 4 more packs to go to reach the target of 15 packs in the state of Washington.

Issue: Large Wood Projects (waste of taxpayer money, worried about movement during large flood event, keep doing more projects without waiting for a flood event to see what is going to happen, etc)

Response: Structures are built to withstand a 20-year flood event. The purpose of the projects is to slow down the water during a high-flow event and increase the water storage, as well as reconnect side channels so the fingerlings and smolt have somewhere to go during high water events to avoid being washed downstream. The young fish are too weak to fight the swift currents and end up being washed away and cannot return to where they need to be. The money is from Bonneville Power Association and is earmarked for habitat improvement for spring chinook and steelhead. Columbia Conservation District is working on LW projects on private land downstream on the Tucannon.

Issue: What if WDFW only gets half of the \$4 million requested for lake repairs and reconstruction?

Response: We will still move forward and get as much done as we can with whatever money we are given. There is also the potential for some matching funds from different places.

Issue: If a drought is declared this year how is that going to affect things? What about the emergency funds from declaring a drought?

Response: Not sure if a drought declaration will affect much. Do not know what the emergency funds can be used for or how to request them.

Issue: Any plans to plant conifers on the hillsides? Replanting the slopes is very important.

Response: WDFW planted ½ million trees and shrubs in spring 2008. Survival was not good in a lot of areas but a lot of areas very rocky and we have had several dry years. Department of Natural Resources is currently working with the WDFW Forester to determine if we need to replant again. There is natural regeneration happening in areas where there are seed trees and soil for seedlings to get established. It is going to take time to the mature stand of timber established again.