

## 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. A subcommittee of the District Team put together the *W.T. Wooten Floodplain Management Plan* in 2012. Funding at the level of \$2 million was given in 2015 to begin repair and restoration on Rainbow Lake. Designs are in the process with construction beginning in 2017.

Tucannon River Large Wood Projects: The Confederated Tribe of the Umatilla Indian Reservation has received BPA funding to place engineered log jams in the Tucannon River in the Hartsock Unit. Design work is currently being done with construction being planned for summer 2017. WDFW Habitat Biologist, Dave Karl, is working on designs for a large wood project between the USFS Tucannon Campground and Big 4 Lake with construction also planned for summer 2017.

Walla Walla Properties: The Walla Walla properties that were assigned for management under the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area staff in 2013 continue to have significant noxious weed issues. Weed control will continue in 2016 to try to get the weed infestations under control.

### **NEW ISSUES**

Headquarters Irrigation: The irrigation pump at the Headquarters quit working during summer 2015. Drought funds were used to re-do the irrigation system at the Headquarters and included moving the pump to the river, rather than utilizing the high maintenance side channel. The work also included a new pump, a new fish screen, and a flow meter.

2015 Fire: The fire that occurred on August 29, 2015 burned approximately 2,800 acres, with 1,765 acres being on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area. The fire damaged some barbed wire boundary fence that will be repaired in 2016. The fire burned through the elk fence and damaged a few wood posts, but overall the fence suffered very little damage from the fire. The damaged posts will be replaced in 2016.

### **MAJOR STEWARDSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Food Plots: The food plot that was created in 2011 was replanted in 2015 using seed donated by the Walla Walla Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Several white-tailed deer were seen using the food plot throughout the year, and pheasants could be found in the food plot in the fall.

### **STATUS REPORT OF 2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

2015 Performance	Status of Performance Measures	Progress/ 2016 Related
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<b>Measures</b>		<b>Activities/ Comments</b>
Irrigate pastures	Headquarters and Hartsock fields irrigated throughout the summer.	Continue in 2016
Establish and maintain food plots (15 acres)	Two of the food plots on the Hartsock were planted with seed donated by Pheasants Forever, and the third was planted with red clover.	Continue irrigating food plots in 2016. 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 in 2012 to provide direction for restructuring the lakes and reconnecting the floodplain.	Continue maintenance in 2016. Continue subcommittee work. Start design and permit work for dredging Rainbow Lake in 2017.
Maintain Spring Lake dam, repair damage caused by vegetation	DOE conducted a dam inspection in fall 2011.	Continue keeping vegetation cleared off the Spring Lake dam in 2016.
Maintain four mineral sites	Sites were replenished with new mineral blocks in 2015.	Continue maintenance in 2016
Maintain information kiosks	WLA information was posted throughout the year. Kiosks are now located in each campground.	Install a new kiosk at the Russell Unit parking area. Continue posting WLA activity information.
Maintain 50 miles of boundary fence	Boundary fences were checked, fixed where needed, and maintained in 2015.	WLA staff will continue regular maintenance
Maintain western half of elk fence (10 miles)	Elk fence was checked, repaired where needed, and maintained in 2015.	Maintenance will continue in 2016
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 2016.
Reestablish food plot on Abels Ridge	The food plots on Abels Ridge were planted in spring 2015 with a red clover mix.	Food plots will be monitored and replanted if necessary.
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 2016. Try to secure grant funds to update and improve Campground 3 in 2017.
Monitor existing CREP project	Monitor riparian planting success and maintain existing CREP project. CREP contract expires in 2017.	Continue monitoring in 2016.

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 2016. Applied for \$4,000 from REMF for 2016.
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 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 continued in 2016. 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 2016

## 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* projects.

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.

## **2016 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**

Marty Hall – Look at spraying burned areas from last summer’s fire with RMEF money to prevent yellow starthistle from invading. Spraying right after a burn is very effective. We will be using \$10,000 from the RMEF grant to spray 285 acres in the burned area this summer.

Joanne Kirkpatrick – Why don’t you inoculate domestic sheep and then use them to control noxious weeds on the wildlife area?

That is a very good question that I do not know the answer to. I will ask the District biologists.

Some general frustration with additional land purchases such as the proposed one in Walla Walla County:

Marty Hall – Why buy??? What is the value in WDFW owning lands?? What is the situation with access on the proposed Walla Walla parcel??

### Large Wood Projects

Marvin Scoggins - If a landowner puts in LW in the creek for a project to benefit salmonids, then are they liable if a flood moves the wood and washes someone out downstream?

Terry Bruegman – according to state law, landowners are not liable for damages (Who is liable then if there is a failure? Does the state assume liability?)

Marty Hall – Interested in information on content of food plot seed mix used at Hartsock last year. Marty also suggested not seeding the area this year and felt that it would re-seed itself. Send Marty a copy of the seed tag.

Marvin Scoggins– Would like to see WDFW manage fuels on its property in places such as Abel's Ridge. He is mainly talking about grass that has been there since the 2005 School Fire. He would like to see some type of managed grazing to address the problem. Some other WAAC members echoed Marvin's suggestion. Marvin also brought up noxious weeds and mentioned annual bugloss.