

Forest Management Program Update



Washington Department of
FISH and WILDLIFE

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Wildlife Program

Wildlife Areas Forest Management Spring 2018 Update

Mission:

- Preserve, protect and perpetuate our forests as fish and wildlife habitat, while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.

Approaches:

- Pre-commercial, commercial thinning, and prescribed fire to
- Maintain or improve ecological integrity.
- Restore priority species habitat.
- Reduce risk (wildfire, insects, and disease).



Largest Issue: Counteracting the Effects of Prolonged Fire Suppression



Currently 3% - should be 40-70%

The Dry Forest Fire Deficit

- Pre-modern era estimate: 11% of dry forests burned per year - most fires were mild and maintained largely open, resilient forests.
- 2013-present: 3.9% burned per year - mostly in uncharacteristically intense megafires.
- We recently tripled our treatment level, and are up to 1.2% per year.
- Current treatments and wildfires combined are still not enough to counter the growing fire deficit.

Secondary Issue: Fixing Plantations



We have a Great Team of Foresters

- Rod Pfeifle: Statewide - Ellensburg
- Sara Ashiglar: Statewide - Clarkston
- Benjamin Hartmann - Oak Creek
- Hiring another soon

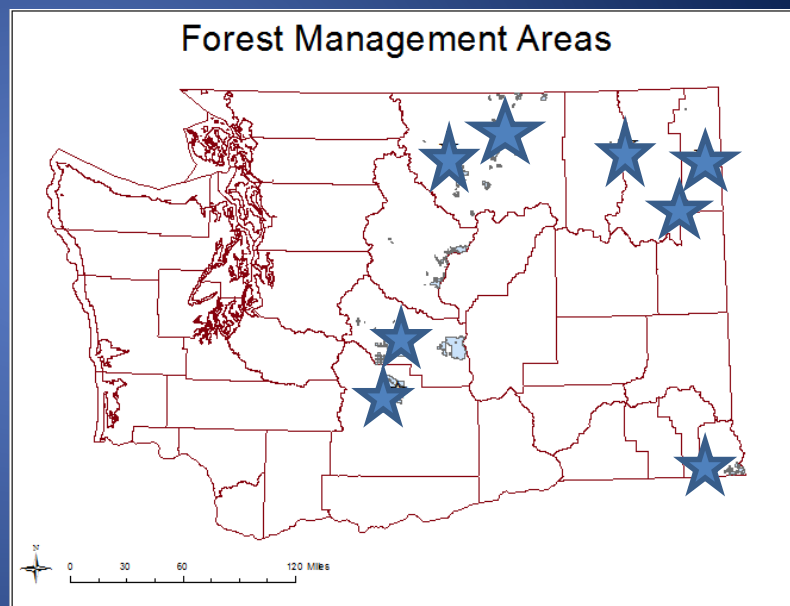
Funding Situation

- 2015-2017 Capital funding (\$300K to thin and \$500K to burn)
- RCO (Sinlahekin, Methow, Oak Creek, and LT Murray)
- USFS/NRCS will fund 500 acres of work (Colockum)
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation \$80K (St. Helens, Colockum, Weatherly, and 4-O Ranch)
- 2017 timber revenue: Approx. \$500K
- \$5 Million 17-19 capital budget

Accomplishments Since The Forest Management Strategy Was Approved in June, 2014

Thinned 5,257 acres (2/3 commercial and 1/3 pre-commercial)

- Oak Creek – 1,813
- LT Murray – 1,501
- Rustler's Gulch – 762
- Methow – 581
- Grouse Flats – 285
- Sinlahekin – 204
- LeClerc – 130
- Sherman Creek – 120



During the same time period about 13,800 acres of WDFW forest burned; some restorative and some not.

Commercial Thinning Examples



Grouse Flats: 285 Acres Thinned in 2017

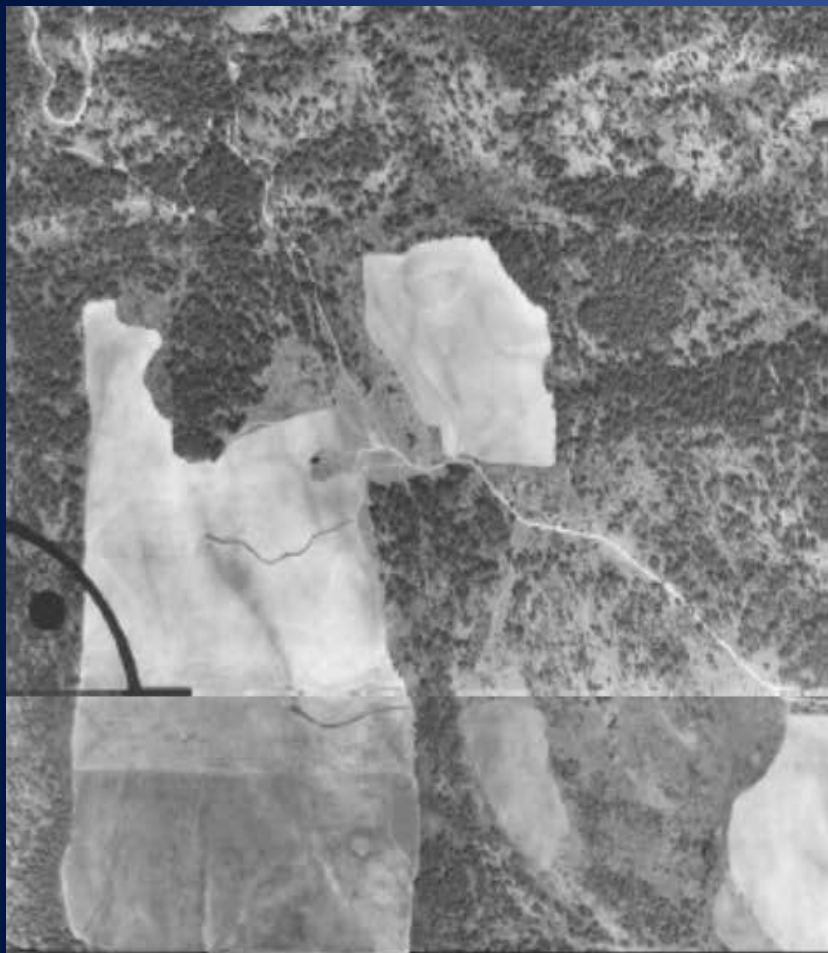
Untreated



Treated



Why We Treated Grouse Flats

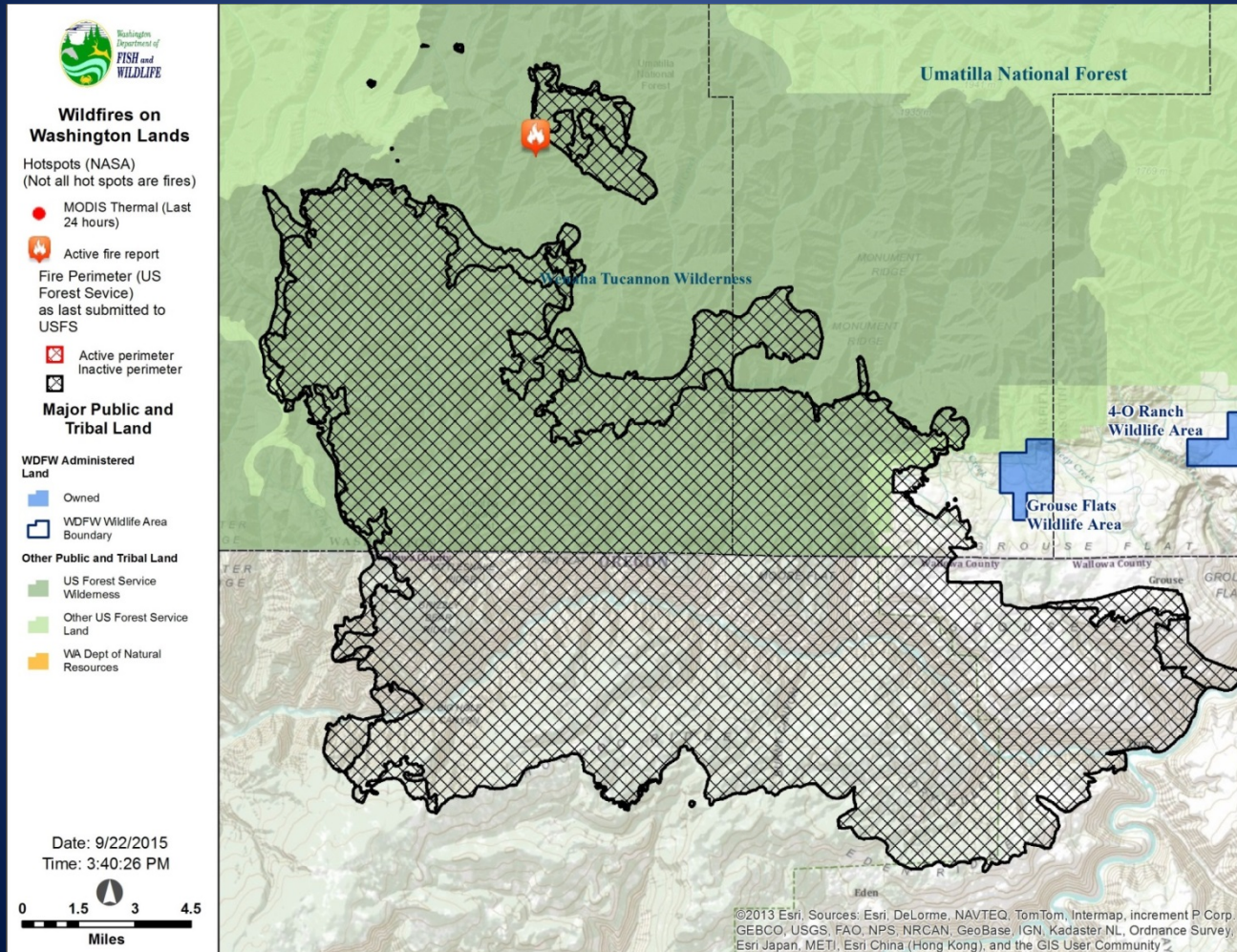


1971



Today

Almost Burned in 77,000 Acre Wildfire Shortly Before Treatment



LT Murray 2017: 1,274 Acres Treated

Untreated



Treated



Treated Areas are Diverse and Patchy



Methow: 350 Acres Treated in 2017



Methow Commercial Thin Treated vs. Untreated



LeClerc: 130 Acres Thinned in 2016-2017

Untreated



Treated



Rustler's Gulch 2015-2017: 850 Acres

Untreated



Treated



Full Disclosure: While we minimize negative short term impacts across treatment areas...



There are short term impacts, especially where logs are processed and loaded on trucks



Major Milestone

We completed our 2007 commitment to pay for 32,600 acres of perpetual timber rights in Region 3 with timber from the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area.

Win-Win: Sherman Creek forests greatly improved (below) and forest management is now possible on the LT Murray, Wenas, and Oak Creek wildlife areas.



Pre-Commercial Thinning Oak Creek: 266 acres



Oak Creek Pre-commercial Treated vs. Untreated 1,200 acres



Methow Pre-commercial Thinning Treated vs. Untreated



Moving Forward

Coordinate with DNR regarding 20-year forest health restoration strategy:

- Will maximize chances of funding.
- Better integrate into larger strategies to address the full range of societal needs including fire safety.

Finishing statewide assessment of our forests:

- Better understanding of needs, feasibility, and landscape patterns will help us be more strategic.

Assessment Categories

No treatment needed



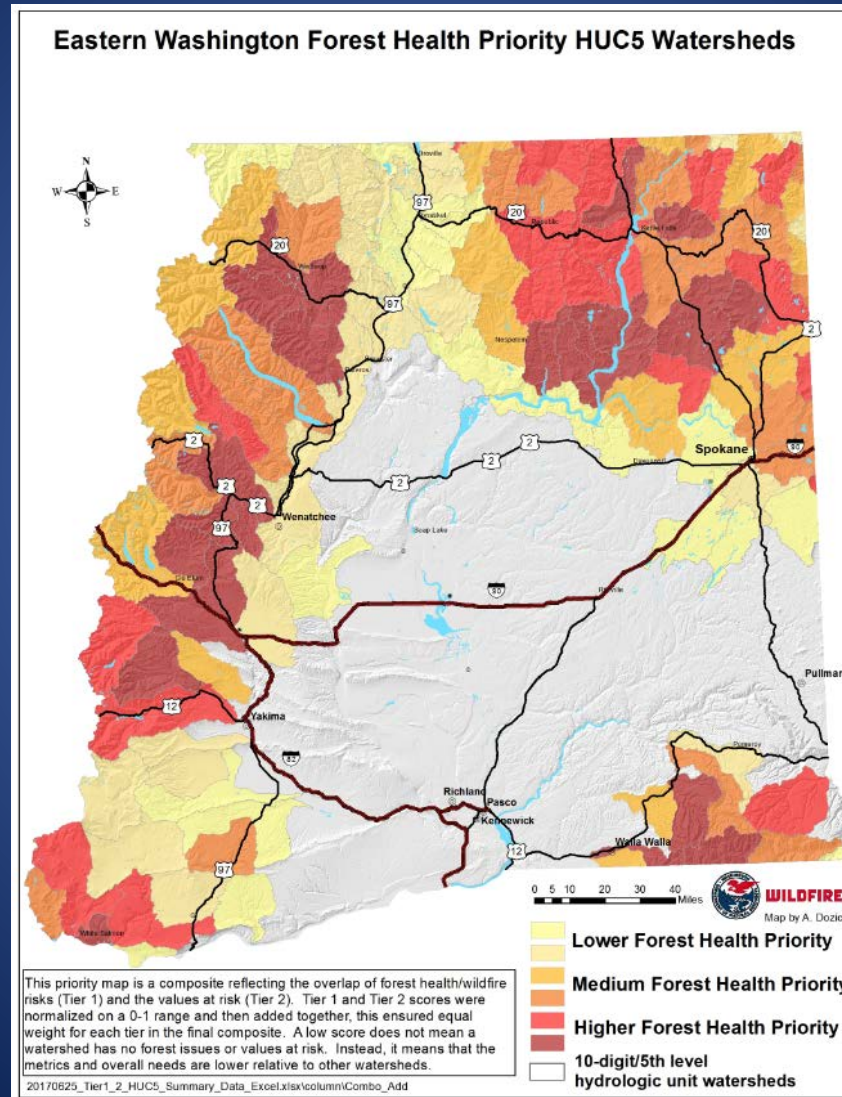
Treatment needed but not feasible



Needs treatment and can be treated



DNR Forest Health Prioritization Map



2018 Treatment Goal: 4,000 acres (60% Pre-commercial thinning)

- East slope of the Cascades – 2,700 Acres
 - Colockum, LT Murray, Oak Creek, Klickitat, Methow, Sinlahekin
- Blue Mountains (4-O Ranch) – 400 acres
- Plantation release (St. Helens & Merrill Lake) – 800 Acres
- Restore Oak woodlands & Prairie (Scatter Creek) – 60 acres
- Northeast Washington (Sherman Creek)– 40 acres

Note: We are almost done with commercial thinning in Northeast Washington/Okanogan and hope to maintain those areas with Rx fire.

Upcoming Project Examples: Eastern Washington Dry forests (4-O Ranch)



Current Condition



Desired Future Condition

Mt. St. Helens Plantation Release



Scatter Creek: Oak Woodland and Prairie Restoration

