



SHERMAN CREEK WILDLIFE AREA/ LECLERC CREEK WILDLIFE AREA 2014 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (WLA) and LeClerc Creek WLA Management Plans http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/. These plans provide management direction for the Sherman Creek WLA located along the west side of Lake Roosevelt in the eastern foothills of the Kettle River Range, and the LeClerc Creek WLA located in Pend Oreille County along the east side of the Pend Oreille River. The Sherman Creek WLA consists of five parcels totaling 8,782 acres, which were purchased with Pittman-Robertson and State Wildlife funds in 1948. The West Branch Little Spokane WLA, managed as a subunit of the Sherman Creek WLA consists of 2,835 acres and is located in southwestern Pend Oreille



A mature white-tailed buck on Sherman Creek WLA

County, situated between Horseshoe Lake and Fan Lake. The LeClerc Creek WLA is located about 25 miles northwest of Newport and 65 miles northwest of Spokane. It consists of four land units totaling 614 acres which were purchased with Pittman-Robertson and State Wildlife funds in 1972. The majority of the areas are forested and managed for a variety of wildlife habitat improvements and public recreation opportunities.

The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the two areas based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) Mission statement: “*Preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities*” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions. Plans are updated biennially as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update also includes 2012-2013 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies, and performance measures for 2014-2015.

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Updates/Changes

Plan Update Consolidation: Management plan activities for the Sherman Creek WLA and the LeClerc Creek WLA continue to be combined into one document.

New Issues

A safety issue was identified during the winter of 2012-2013 as recreational users on the western portion of the West Branch Little Spokane WLA were parking on the Horseshoe Lake Road right-of-way. The wildlife area assistant manager contracted with the Pend Oreille County Public Works Department to grade and maintain snow removal on the pull-out parking area at Beaver Creek so winter-time recreationists could safely park off of the county right-of-way.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Region 1, District 1 staff are in the process of applying to the Recreation and Conservation Office for funding of two acquisition projects in northwestern Ferry County. If the Kettle River Access and Kettle Corridor Conservation Easement acquisitions are successful, management of the properties will fall to Sherman Creek WLA staff.

Additionally, the wildlife area assistant manager is planning and seeking funds for parking area developments on the West Branch Little Spokane WLA. Pend Oreille County is submitting a grant application to the Recreation and Conservation Office for funding of a cooperative parking area that would be situated on county land adjacent to the wildlife area near Fertile Valley Road. If funded, the Rustler's Gulch Cooperative Parking project would provide recreational access to Pend Oreille County park land, as well as the eastern portion of the West Branch Little Spokane WLA. The assistant manager has also submitted a Capital Funds Project request to the department that would provide for development of a parking area to provide recreational access to the southern portion of the West Branch Little Spokane WLA.



Igniters lighting in the Slash 1 Unit on 22 April 2013

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Sherman Creek WLA Habitat Improvement Project:

Work was completed on both components, thinning and prescribed burning, of the Sherman Creek WLA Habitat Improvement Project. Prescribed burning was finally

realized in the spring of 2013, and was continued in the fall. Approximately 160 acres were treated to reduce fuels within thinned units and improve wildlife habitat. Sherman Creek WLA staff joined in with the WDFW Prescribed Fire Team, based out of the Sinlahekin WLA, to implement this important ecological tool.

The Sherman Creek/Oak Creek Perpetual Timber Rights Exchange Timber Sale, which is the thinning component of the habitat improvement project, continues to be active. Boise Cascade is

still the owner of the timber and is completing the harvest. The WDFW state forester Doug Kuehn, Sherman Creek WLA Assistant Manager Daro Palmer, Sherman Creek WLA Natural Resources Technician Jerry Christensen, and Boise Cascade staff have been working together to monitor the thinning activities and resolve issues.

Agriculture Lease:

The agricultural lease at Sherman Creek WLA continued as in previous years, with the five-year lease cycle coming to an end on December 31, 2013. A renewal of the agricultural lease with the current lessee will be processed in the spring of 2014. Wildlife area staff have conducted annual weed control, field preparation and seeding of the wildlife food plots adjacent to the agricultural lease at Sherman Creek WLA, as well as conducted annual roadside and wild land weed control on all areas.



Completed bank stabilization on Trout Creek

Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan:

The Trout Creek sediment delivery issue, identified as an issue by the Department of Natural Resources in 2012, was mitigated in 2013.

WDFW engineers produced plans for re-sloping and bank stabilization of the site. Members of the Department’s construction crew, along with Sherman Creek WLA staff completed the project in the fall of 2013.

Status Report of 2012-2013 Performance Measures

Key performance measures are identified each year to monitor progress and identify any issues that might interfere with planned priority activities. This information will be used to delete, add or alter priority strategies for 2014-2015.

2012-2013 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure / Explanation of Progress	2014-2015 Related Activity/ Comments
Continue to work with WDFW forester and wildlife program staff to monitor and manage the ongoing Sherman Creek WLA Habitat Improvement Project for habitat improvement. <u>Performance goal:</u> at least two field visits by the forester to the logging site per year.	Thinning activities continued through 2013. The forester has visited the logging site several times over the past two years.	Thinning will continue through 2014 with two units remaining to be treated. WDFW forester will continue to monitor progress through visits to the site.
Work with fire fuels management staff on unit	Conditions did allow for prescribed burning to be	Prescribed burning will occur during spring and fall seasons

<p>layout, fire lines, and other needs associated with the prescribed burning component of the Sherman Creek WLA Habitat Improvement Project. <u>Performance goal:</u> implement prescribed burning during the spring and fall of 2012 and 2013 to approximately 300 acres of Sherman Creek WLA.</p>	<p>completed during the spring and fall of 2013. However, the amount of prescribed burning completed was limited by weather to approximately 160 acres.</p>	<p>of 2014-2015 and beyond. A total of 3,329 acres in 38 individual units is planned for prescribed burn treatment.</p>
<p>Monitor and maintain habitat manipulation projects, to provide annual improvements for game birds and deer winter range. <u>Performance goal:</u> maintain two food plots and one grass planting annually.</p>	<p>Maintained three food plots and one grass planting, to improve forage availability for game birds and wintering deer.</p>	<p>Continue in 2014-2015. Prescribed burning as part of the Sherman Creek WLA Habitat Improvement Project is expected to promote sprouting of ceanothus on the uplands.</p>
<p>Maintain/develop one spring or other water source every two years, as staffing allows.</p>	<p>Maintained two springs and other water sources on the WLA. One new water source was developed in 2012.</p>	<p>Continue maintenance in 2014-2015; develop spring or water sources as staffing/funding allows.</p>
<p>Per agreement with Kettle Falls High School, the school's Wildlife Management teacher and students will maintain 100 bluebird boxes that they built and installed.</p>	<p>Bird nest boxes were not maintained by the Kettle Falls High School's Wildlife Management teacher and students in 2012 or 2013 due to conflict with new responsibilities at the Voc-Ed Colville Hatchery.</p>	<p>This cooperative bird box management program will continue in 2014-2015 with either the Kettle Falls High School Wildlife Management teacher and his class, or Master Hunter volunteers.</p>
<p>Appropriate weed control as outlined in the weed management plans for Sherman Creek and LeClerc Creek WLAs.</p>	<p>Sprayed herbicides on approximately 84 acres of weeds in 2012-2013. This includes approximately 16 acres of diffuse knapweed, 15 acres of spotted knapweed, 8 acres of various thistles, 3 acres of hawkweed, 0.5 acre of hoary alyssum, 0.1 acre of leafy spurge, and 41 acres of various weeds including common mullein, St. Johnswort, sulfur cinquefoil, hounds tongue and longspine sandbur. Two release of biological control agents were</p>	<p>Weed control priorities will continue in 2014-2015. Cooperative work will continue with Pend Oreille County Weed board for weed control activities at LeClerc Creek WLA and the West Branch Little Spokane WLA, and with Backcountry Horsemen of Washington at West Branch Little Spokane.</p>

	made on spotted knapweed at Sherman Creek WLA and the West Branch Little Spokane Unit in 2013.	
Conduct at least one project using volunteer or school groups for outreach and education.	Participated in the annual Water Festival outdoor education program for 4 th grade students from various local schools in 2012 & 2013. Became involved with a forest health education program with Kettle Falls 4 th graders and initiated expeditionary learning opportunities for them on the Sherman Creek WLA. Kettle Falls Elementary School will continued Adventure Day activities on Sherman Creek WLA.	Continue in 2014-2015.
Ensure proper precautions were taken around a northern goshawk nesting site on Sherman Creek WLA. <u>Performance measure:</u> Proper “no-logging” zone was determined and instituted.	Thinning around the 90-acre exclusion zone was completed in 2012. WLA staff observed a northern goshawk on the northern boundary of the 90 acre exclusion zone in July 2013.	Check to see if the territory is occupied in 2014-2015.
Wildlife Area staff will jointly monitor golden and bald eagle nest territories with district wildlife biologists. <u>Performance goal:</u> Monitor one golden eagle and two bald eagle nest territories on Sherman Creek WLA.	All eagle territories were occupied in 2012. The golden eagle territory was not occupied, but the bald eagle territories were occupied in 2013.	Check to see if territories are occupied in 2014-2015.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agencies strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species presence, and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed or new issues or changes on the wildlife area. New strategies may also be in response to adaptive management as staff evaluate the impacts of past management activities



This view is from high on Bisbee Mountain looking south during January 2013.

Critical needs for the Sherman Creek WLA have been identified for 2014-2015 and are listed below.

- 1) Secure funding to acquire two parcels along the Kettle River and a conservation easement for a third parcel, all west of the town of Curlew.
- 2) Secure funding for and develop parking areas to provide recreational access to West Branch Little Spokane WLA.
- 3) Secure funding for and implement fuel reduction treatments on boundaries of

West Branch Little Spokane WLA near private residences.

2014-2015 Performance Measures

The projected activities for Sherman Creek and LeClerc Creek Wildlife Areas are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

- 1) Monitor the progress of the ongoing Sherman Creek WLA Habitat Improvement Project to accomplish Priority Habitats and Species and other management objectives specific to the Sherman Creek WLA.
- 2) Seed and maintain 16 acres of wildlife food plots.
- 3) Maintain existing water developments including the upland developments, the hayfield pond and the irrigation diversion system.
- 4) Expand open meadows by 2 acres and install 10 nest boxes for bluebirds, as time and funding allow.
- 5) Appropriate weed control on the wildlife area, focusing on areas adjacent to roads. Meet goals for 2014-2015, outlined in the weed management plan. Concentrate control efforts on hoary alyssum, diffuse knapweed, spotted knapweed, Dalmatian toadflax, and hawkweeds.
- 6) Conduct at least one project using volunteer or school groups for outreach and education. At least one of these projects may be completed under 2014 Performance Measure #5, above, in the case of bluebird nest box installation, by the Kettle Falls High School Wildlife Management class or Master Hunter volunteer.
- 7) Jointly monitor the northern goshawk nesting territory on Sherman Creek WLA with district wildlife biologists for occupancy and reproductive success.
- 8) Jointly monitor the golden and bald eagle nesting territories on Sherman Creek WLA with district wildlife biologists for occupancy and reproductive success.

- 9) Work with district staff to apply for grant funding to the Recreation and Conservation office for the acquisition and development of the Kettle River Access properties and Kettle Corridor Conservation Easement.
- 10) Support Pend Oreille County with their application for grant funding to the Recreation and Conservation Office for funding of a cooperative parking area, located on county land that would provide for recreational access to the eastern portion of the non-motorized West Branch Little Spokane WLA.
- 11) Submit request to the department for a Capital Funds Project to develop a parking area on the southern portion of the non-motorized West Branch Little Spokane WLA.
- 12) Work with Department of Natural Resources to utilize National Fire Plan Wildlands Urban Interface Community Assistance Grant Program funds to conduct fuel reduction treatments on West Branch Little Spokane WLA.

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee

A Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting for Sherman Creek and LeClerc Creek Wildlife Areas was not held since the last management plan update. However, WAAC members had the opportunity to review this management plan update. The only comments received were that the report looked great and they are supportive of the activities described in the update. The next WAAC meeting will be scheduled for fall 2014 or spring 2015.

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to –

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/