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# DISTRICT 2 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman counties

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## DISTRICT 2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) District 2 is in eastern Washington, bordering Idaho, and covers Lincoln, Whitman, and Spokane counties. Game management units (GMUs) in District 2 include 124 (Mount Spokane), 127 (Mica Peak), 130 (Cheney), 133 (Roosevelt), 136 (Harrington), 139 (Steptoe), and 142 (Almota) (Figure 1). The majority of the district is in private ownership, so hunters are highly encouraged to secure access prior to the hunting season or applying for special permits.

The geography of District 2 includes the edge of the Rocky Mountain Range in the east, the Columbia Basin in the west, and the Channeled Scablands and Palouse in between. This diverse geography supports a wide range of habitats that include mixed coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir, larch, Ponderosa pine, scattered aspen groves, scabland, sagebrush steppe, grasslands, and extensive agricultural lands. Topography varies from ~500 feet above sea level along the Snake River in the south to the 5883-foot Mount Spokane in the north. Dominant river drainages include the Spokane, Palouse, Columbia, and Snake rivers.

District 2 is best known for its deer hunting opportunities, including white-tailed deer in the Spokane and Palouse agricultural lands and mule deer in the Channeled Scablands and breaks of the Snake River. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including pheasant and elk, if hunters have secured access to private lands. Moose and bighorn sheep hunters can enjoy quality hunts if they are selected for special permit hunts and if they have secured private land access prior to applying.

## CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

CWD continues to expand across the country and in 2019 was detected in Libby, Montana. WDFW will be conducting active surveillance in 2021 for CWD, focusing on GMUs 105 – 127. If you harvest a deer in any of these units please stop by a check station or contact the department to have a sample taken.

If you hunt in any of the CWD-positive States please follow all regulations regarding importing your harvest. A list of CWD-positive States and summary of import regulations can be found here: [Chronic Wasting Disease \(CWD\) | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)

## BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions, and other emergency rules before you head out. In addition to potential wildfires, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) may be conducting prescribed burns and/or forest-thinning projects in your hunt area. For more information, see:

- Wildfire status updates ([InciWeb – Incident Information System](#))
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [WDFW Wildlife Areas](#)

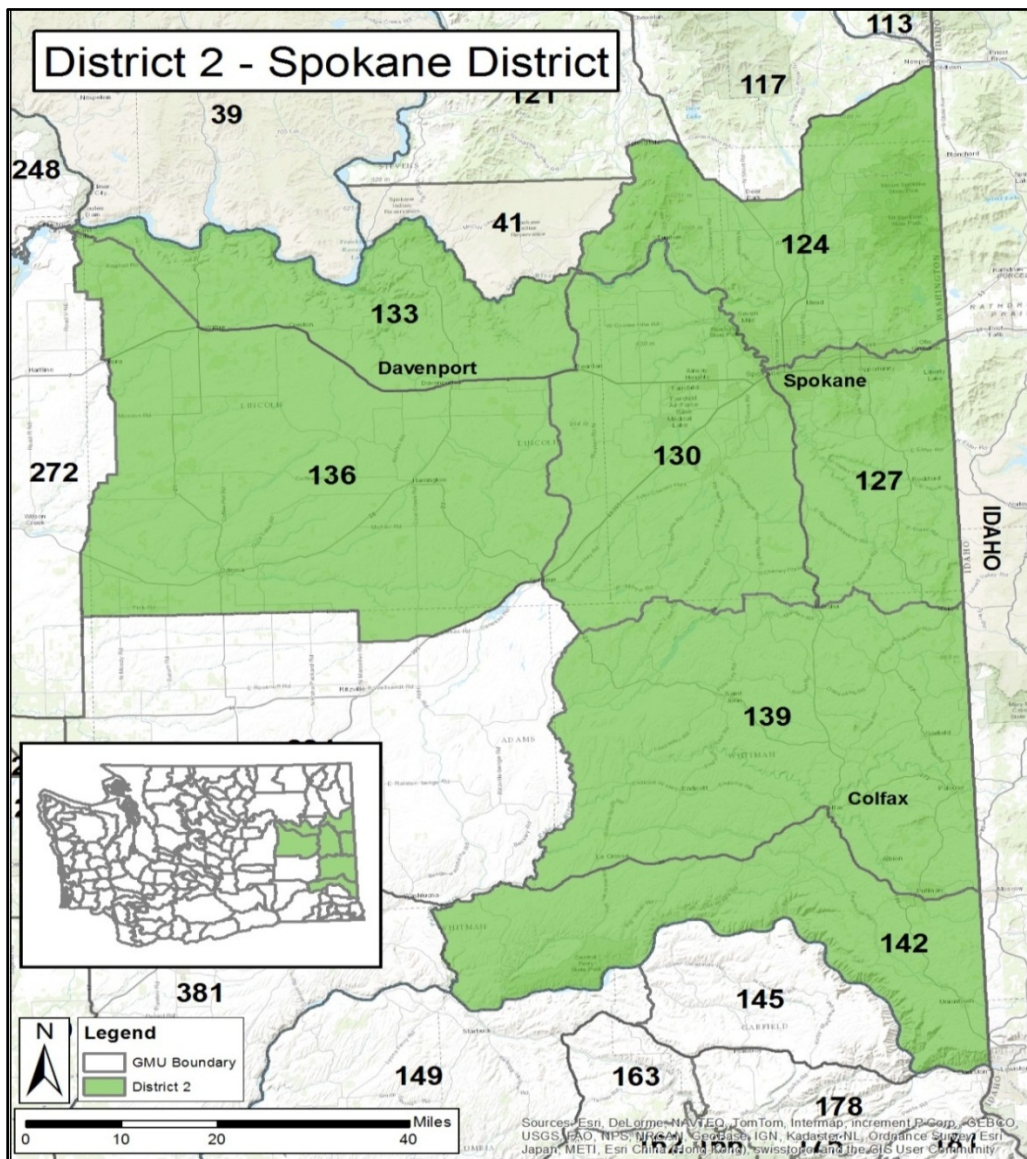


Figure 1. General location and game management units (GMUs) for WDFW District 2.

## ELK

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

All elk that occur in District 2 are Rocky Mountain elk and belong to the Spokane sub-herd of the Selkirk elk herd. The Selkirk herd originated in Pend Oreille County and has expanded its range over the last 40 years to this area. As elk habitat in District 2 continues to be lost to agricultural conversion and urban sprawl, our goal is to maintain the population at its current level (roughly 1000–1500 elk) while limiting agricultural damage and conflict within exurban areas. Consequently, an “any elk” harvest is offered for the general season in all GMUs. The majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, so managing this population requires landowner tolerance and cooperation. Elk in this herd can be highly mobile and difficult to locate, so learning their behavior and gaining access to numerous private lands will greatly increase your chance of success.

Currently, WDFW does not conduct formal population surveys to monitor elk populations in most of District 2. Rather, harvest data, opportunistic surveys, sightings, and damage complaints are used to indicate population trends. The exception to this is the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge located in GMU 130 (Cheney). Aerial surveys have been conducted on and near Turnbull for the last 15 years to obtain herd size and composition data. The survey area only covers a small portion of the Spokane sub-herd range; it is designed to inform management decisions for the Refuge and is not likely representative of the entire area. WDFW’s herd composition objective is to maintain a ratio of 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows pre-hunt and/or 12 to 20 bulls per 100 cows post-hunt. The 2020 pre-hunt aerial survey of Turnbull and the surrounding area within GMU 130 found the bull to cow ratio to be well above this management objective. Also based on the survey, 2020 calf production was above average, with a calf to cow ratio of 60 calves per 100 cows. Combined data sources for the entirety of District 2 over the last ten years indicate an overall stable population with some local populations declining and others increasing. For more detail on the status of elk in Washington, see WDFW’s most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#). Also available is a general how-to guide for elk hunting entitled “The Basics of Elk Hunting in Washington.” You can find this document on the WDFW website [here](#).

### WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

This question does not have an easy answer, because it depends on access to private land, hunting method, and the type of hunting experience desired. For archery hunters, GMUs 124 and 127 provide the best terrain and generally more forested land, irrigated agriculture, small developed lakes, and riparian areas. The terrain in GMUs 136–142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm, with open landscapes predominated by shrub steppe, scablands, and dryland farming

The majority of the district's elk harvest (25-50 percent) is usually in GMU 130, though a high proportion consistently occurs in GMUs 124 and 127 as well. Hunters who gain access to private lands in GMUs 127 and 130 have often had the highest success, though success in GMUs 136 and 139 has been higher the past couple of years. In GMU 130, hunters likely benefit from animals moving on and off Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge during the season. Elk are often targeted by nearby landowners due to seasonal crop, fence, and haystack damage. With one-third of the elk hunters in District 2, GMU 124 (Mt Spokane) sustains the greatest hunting pressure. As a result, overall hunter success is lower there, although the unit periodically produces one of the higher harvests of mature 6-point bulls. Private timber companies, especially Inland Empire Paper (IEP), offer public access in this unit with a paid permit. See IEP - [Recreational Use](#) for their rules and regulations. Hunters should be aware that motorized access may be limited or closed completely on IEP and other timber company lands due to road conditions, logging operations, or fire danger. Hunters are advised to check closures and restrictions before setting out. Quality Services, the property access manager for IEP, provides access updates online. Also be aware that GMU 124 contains several county parks, conservation areas, and state parks, and they do not allow hunting. In addition, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge in GMU 130 is NOT open for hunting except for Turnbull special permit holders.

The information provided in Table 1 provides a quick and general assessment of how GMUs compare regarding harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for each statistic. The table also summarizes the number of elk harvested per square mile and hunters per square mile to account for the variation in sizes between GMUs.

Each GMU was ranked for elk harvested/mile<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mile<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates during the general season. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum, the lower the score the better. Comparisons are most straightforward for modern firearm because seasons are the same across all GMUs. However, when choosing which GMU and/or species to hunt, differences that should be taken into consideration are:

1. In addition to the early general archery season in all GMUs, there is a late archery season in GMUs 124 & 127.
2. In addition to the early general muzzleloader season in all GMUs, there is a late muzzleloader season in GMUs 130-142.
3. There is a late Antlerless Only Master Hunter season for all weapon types in GMUs 127 & 130.
4. There are considerable differences in the sizes of GMUs, so looking at only total harvest or hunter numbers is not always a fair comparison.

MODERN FIREARM											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
			Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	50	0.06	2	554	0.72	7	9%	5	14
127	509	1%	57	0.11	1	310	0.61	6	18%	1	8
130	940	7%	46	0.05	3	283	0.30	5	17%	2	10
133	555	6%	9	0.02	4	96	0.17	4	8%	6	14
136	1586	11%	4	0.00	6	41	0.03	1	9%	5	12
139	1327	3%	10	0.01	5	84	0.06	2	11%	4	11
142	771	8%	13	0.02	4	90	0.12	3	15%	3	10
ARCHERY											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
			Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	12	0.02	2	235	0.30	6	5%	5	13
127	509	1%	13	0.03	1	142	0.28	5	9%	4	10
130	940	7%	10	0.01	3	59	0.06	4	17%	2	9
133	555	6%	1	0.00	4	10	0.02	2	9%	4	10
136	1586	11%	0	0.00	4	6	0.00	1	0%	6	11
139	1327	3%	7	0.01	3	24	0.02	2	33%	1	6
142	771	8%	4	0.01	3	27	0.04	3	13%	3	9
MUZZLELOADER											
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	Harvest			Hunter Density			Hunter Success		Rank Sum
			Total	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	9	0.01	3	84	0.11	3	9%	6	12
127	509	1%	11	0.02	2	60	0.12	4	18%	3	9
130	940	7%	33	0.04	1	246	0.26	5	13%	4	10
133	555	6%	8	0.01	3	68	0.12	4	11%	5	12
136	1586	11%	3	0.00	4	14	0.01	1	19%	2	7
139	1327	3%	20	0.02	2	100	0.08	2	21%	1	5
142	771	8%	7	0.01	3	58	0.08	2	13%	4	9

Table 1. Rank sum analysis that provides a quick and general comparison of how harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern, archery, and muzzleloader elk seasons. As a generalization, the lower the rank, the better the overall elk hunting opportunity is within a GMU. Data presented are based on a five-year average (2016-2020).

## ELK AREAS

Most of the special permit elk hunts available in District 2 occur in Elk Area 1015, which is located within Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Turnbull special permit hunts were created in 2010 to address damage to aspen stands on the refuge and address damage complaints from landowners in the area. These are walk-in only hunts, except for disabled hunt permit holders, and the area open to hunt is limited and determined by Refuge staff. In past years, one Any Bull permit (any weapon type) and 62 Antlerless permits were offered. Beginning in 2019, this was changed to 58 and includes 1 Any Bull, 4 Spike-only, and 53 Antlerless permits. Permits include



each weapon type as well as hunts for youth, master hunters, and hunters with disabilities. Turnbull hunters averaged 12 percent success for antlerless hunts in 2020, compared to the previous 5-year average of 22 percent. The archery hunt has been particularly challenging with an average success rate of 9 percent. In 2020 the Any Bull permittee was successful for the first time since 2017. For more detailed harvest information, see District 2 - 2020 Game Harvest Statistics Online: [Elk Special Permits Harvest](#). For more information about elk management in the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, visit [Turnbull - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#).

To address winter property damage in the area, there are also several late-season raffle permits and one WDFW special permit offered on Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA) properties in areas around Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. See the Private Lands Program section for more information on acreage enrolled and the [CPWMA](#) website for details on their hunt management.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

Harvest of antlered and antlerless elk in the district has been fairly evenly split, with an average of 181 antlered and 154 antlerless elk harvested each year over the past 5 years. In the 2020 season, 21 percent of bulls harvested were 6-point or better, and 27 percent of bulls were 5-point. Across all GMUs, elk hunter success during the general season has averaged 12 percent over the last 10 years, and hunter effort (days/kill) has averaged 42 days/kill. These numbers vary widely by GMU. A good predictor of future harvest during general seasons is the recent trend in the harvest and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill. Figures 2 and 3 below provide trend data for these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where to hunt. As these numbers are highly variable between GMUs, pay attention to the scale of each, as they are not all the same.

Elk in District 2 appear to be expanding into new areas, and harvest in GMUs 139 (Steptoe) and 142 (Almota) has increased over the last five years (Figure 3). Some of these elk appear to move back and forth between Idaho and Washington, so timing and access to private lands will be the key to successful elk hunting in these GMUs. Complaints of agricultural damage have been on the rise, especially in areas where crops have been recently converted to legumes. Scattered groups of 20–100 elk have been reported causing damage in areas including Fairfield south to Tekoa in GMU 127, the area from Dusty east to Palouse, south to Uniontown, and along the Snake River breaks in GMUs 139 and 142, and from Tyler near the Lincoln/Spokane County border to Sprague and north to Edwall in GMU 130. There has also been an increase in reported crop damage by 60-80 elk along the river breaks in northern GMU 133 in recent years.



Figure 2. GMUs 124 – 130. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season elk harvest by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter effort (measured in days per kill) by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). Note the difference in scales for each GMU.

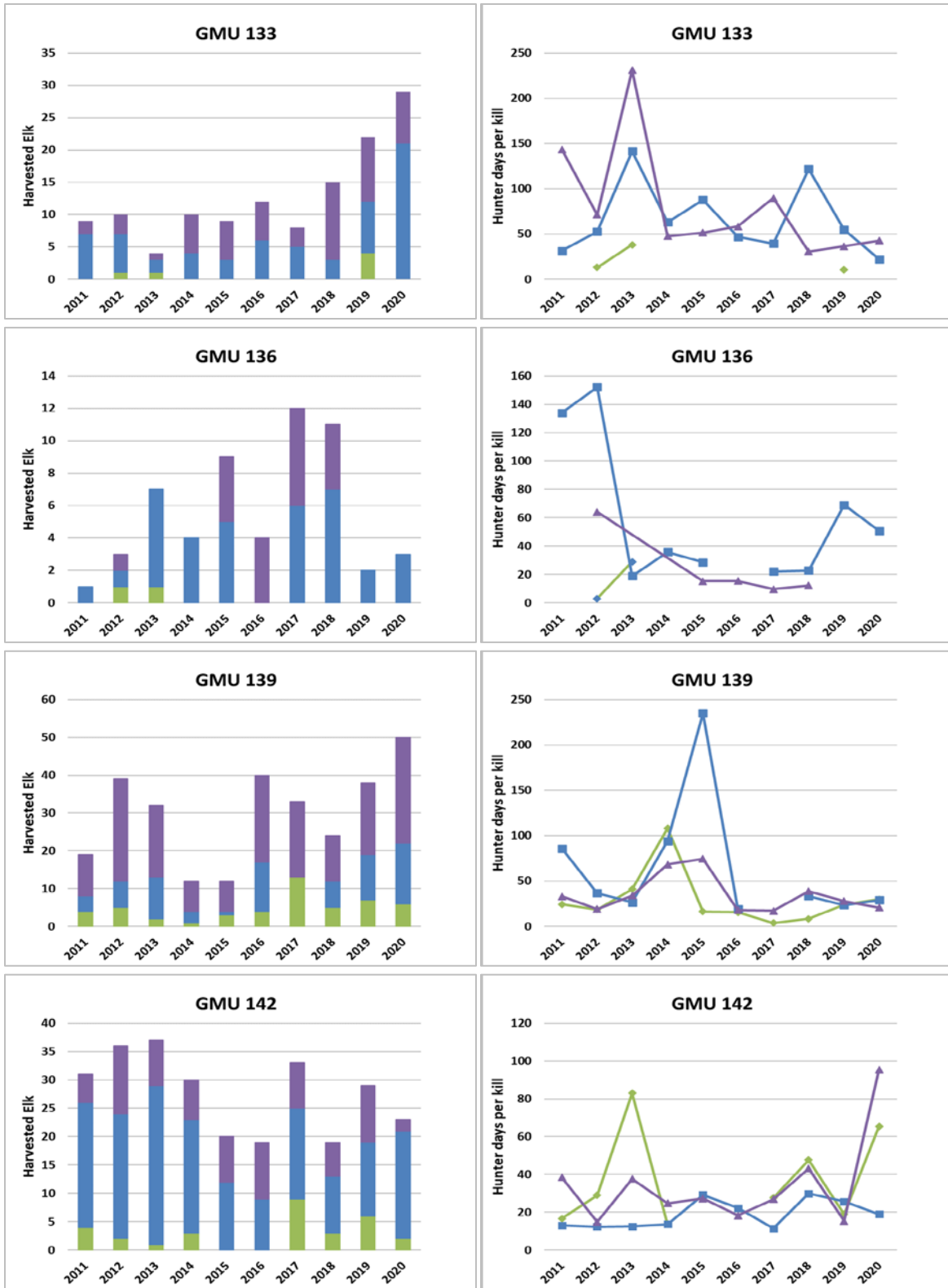


Figure 3. GMUs 133 – 142. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season elk harvest by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter effort (measured in days per kill) by weapon type: modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). Note the difference in scales for each GMU.

Success depends heavily on the work the hunter is willing to put in to obtain access to private property. There are over 100 properties enrolled in WDFW's private land hunting access program in District 2. The majority of these are built around upland game and deer hunting, however, some support elk hunting as well, so opportunities exist for elk hunters who do their research. For locations of these properties, visit our new [Hunt Planner Webmap](#). For more detailed harvest information, see District 2 - 2020 Game Harvest Statistics Online: [Elk General Season Harvest](#)

## **ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)**

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range. While elk are susceptible to many conditions which result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and western Lewis County. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area. It has **NOT** been detected in the Selkirk herd to date.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

### **How hunters can help:**

- **Hunting in areas with NO known TAHD:** If you harvest an elk with abnormal looking hooves (for example, overgrown or broken hoof claws or skin lesions), please keep the

hooves and report your observation to your local WDFW regional office. There are several conditions other than TAHD that may cause hoof deformities, and we may want to examine the hooves and/or arrange for diagnostic testing.

- **Hunting in TAHD positive areas:**

- Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form (link below).
- Clean shoes and tires: Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/). Additional information on TAHD and the west-side incentive program to harvest elk with TAHD, can be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.

## DEER

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 has both white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). White-tailed deer are found predominantly in the north and east portions of the district, in the forests, irrigated ag fields, and along riparian corridors. Mule deer are predominantly found in the west and south of the district, in the shrub steppe, scablands, and farmlands.

Deer population levels are closely tied to droughts, severe winters, disease, and land-use practices. The primary management objective for white-tailed and mule deer in District 2 is to keep the herds stable to slightly increasing and within landowner tolerance. Given that the majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, managing this population without landowner cooperation is impossible.

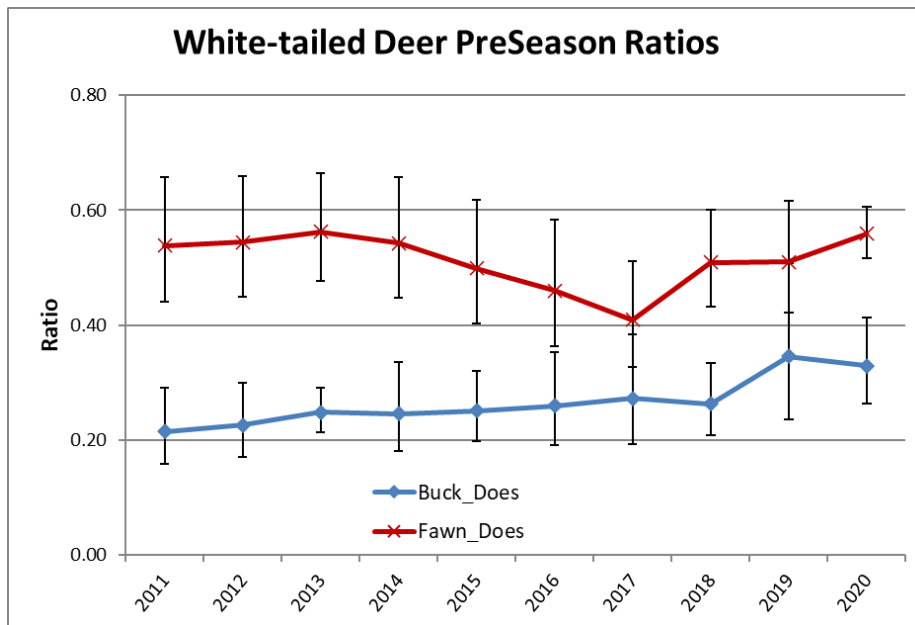


Figure 4. District 2 pre-season buck to doe (August) and fawn to doe (September) ratios (90 percent Confidence Interval in black) for White-tailed deer.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to manage white-tailed deer populations in District 2. Instead, trends in harvest, hunter success, days per kill, and pre-hunting season sex and age ratios are used to monitor populations. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using this data to monitor trends in population size and we are evaluating new approaches to monitoring white-tailed deer populations. In general, the harvest metrics indicate a

decline in the white-tailed deer population from the high in 2014, however, pre-season ground surveys indicate fawn to doe ratios (i.e., recruitment) have rebounded (Figure 4).

The harvest statistics noted above are also used in managing mule deer, but congregations of mule deer on wintering grounds allow for viable postseason aerial surveys to estimate populations. Flights are conducted every three to five years in conjunction with Districts 4 and 5, and ground surveys for ratios are completed every year. The last aerial survey for the Washtucna sub-herd (GMUs 139, 142, 284, & 381) was completed in 2015; biologists were supposed to fly this unit in 2020 but were not able to due to COVID-19 restrictions. In 2015 the population was estimated at ~13,000 mule deer; the 2020 ground survey estimated ~66 fawn per 100 does. The Odessa sub-herd (GMUs 133, 136, & 272) was last flown in 2019 resulting in an estimate of ~12,000 mule deer; the 2020 ground survey estimated ~71 fawn per 100 does. All are in line with previous estimates for these herds, indicating stable to slightly increasing populations.

For more details, please see the Columbia Basin Mule Deer Management Zone section and the Palouse White-tailed Deer Management Zone section of the [2020 Game Status and Trend Report](#).

### **WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?**

Probably the most frequent question from hunters is, “What GMU should I hunt?” This is not always easy to answer because it depends on the hunting method and the type of hunting experience desired. Some hunters are looking for a quality opportunity to harvest a mature buck, while others just want to “fill the freezer,” and still others prefer to hunt an area with few other hunters.

The ideal GMU for most hunters would be entirely or mostly comprised of public land, have high deer densities, low hunter densities, and high hunter success rates. Unfortunately, this scenario does not exist in any GMU that is open during the general modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons in District 2. Instead, because of general season opportunities, the GMUs with the highest deer densities tend to have the highest hunter densities as well. For many hunters, high hunter densities are not enough to deter them from hunting in a GMU where they see lots of deer. While some hunters prefer to hunt in areas with moderate to low numbers of deer if that means there are also very few hunters and it provides a backcountry experience.

The information provided in Table 2 provides a quick and general assessment of how GMUs compare with regard to harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. The values presented are the five-year averages for each statistic. Furthermore, harvest and hunter numbers were divided by the area of each GMU to account for the variation in sizes between GMUs. Mule deer and white-tailed deer are combined in this table. Because both species can be hunted with the same tag, we cannot separate white-tailed deer hunters from mule deer hunters. However, the percentage of mule deer in the total harvest is given to provide a gauge of how prominent each species is in each GMU.

<b>MODERN FIREARM</b>												
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	<u>Harvest</u>				<u>Hunters</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
			Total	% Mule Deer	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	1375	1%	1.78	1	4130	5.35	7	33%	1	<b>9</b>
127	509	1%	151	4%	0.30	4	681	1.34	4	22%	6	<b>14</b>
130	940	7%	146	56%	0.16	7	871	0.93	2	17%	7	<b>16</b>
133	555	6%	222	56%	0.40	3	929	1.67	6	24%	5	<b>14</b>
136	1586	11%	283	90%	0.18	6	943	0.59	1	30%	3	<b>10</b>
139	1327	3%	391	41%	0.29	5	1332	1.00	3	29%	4	<b>12</b>
142	771	8%	381	70%	0.49	2	1197	1.55	5	32%	2	<b>9</b>
<b>ARCHERY</b>												
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	<u>Harvest</u>				<u>Hunters</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
			Total	% Mule Deer	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	416	2%	0.54	1	1216	1.58	7	34%	1	<b>9</b>
127	509	1%	141	1%	0.28	2	437	0.86	6	32%	3	<b>11</b>
130	940	7%	47	69%	0.05	4	189	0.20	4	25%	7	<b>15</b>
133	555	6%	57	80%	0.10	3	170	0.31	5	33%	2	<b>10</b>
136	1586	11%	28	91%	0.02	7	112	0.07	1	25%	6	<b>14</b>
139	1327	3%	25	69%	0.02	6	97	0.07	2	26%	5	<b>13</b>
142	771	8%	16	70%	0.02	5	60	0.08	3	26%	4	<b>12</b>
<b>MUZZLELOADER</b>												
GMU	Size (mi <sup>2</sup> )	% Public Land (Open to Hunting)	<u>Harvest</u>				<u>Hunters</u>			<u>Hunter Success</u>		Rank Sum
			Total	% Mule Deer	Harvest per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Total	Hunters per mi <sup>2</sup>	Rank	Success	Rank	
124	771	4%	45	3%	0.06	3	145	0.19	4	31%	1	<b>8</b>
127	509	1%	7	29%	0.01	7	32	0.06	1	23%	7	<b>15</b>
130	940	7%	117	42%	0.12	2	446	0.48	7	26%	6	<b>15</b>
133	555	6%	79	40%	0.14	1	262	0.47	6	30%	2	<b>9</b>
136	1586	11%	38	83%	0.02	6	132	0.08	2	29%	5	<b>13</b>
139	1327	3%	76	26%	0.06	4	264	0.20	5	29%	4	<b>13</b>
142	771	8%	39	50%	0.05	5	131	0.17	3	30%	3	<b>11</b>

Table 2. Rank sum analysis that provides a quick and general comparison of how harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter success rates compare among GMUs during general modern, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons. As a generalization, the lower the rank, the better the overall deer hunting opportunity is within a GMU. Data presented are based on a five-year average (2016-2020).



Each GMU was ranked for deer harvested/mile<sup>2</sup>, hunters/mile<sup>2</sup>, and hunter success rates. The three ranking values were then summed to produce a final rank sum, the lower the score the better. Comparisons are relatively straightforward because bag limits and seasons are fairly similar between GMUs. However, when choosing which GMU and/or species to hunt, differences that should be taken into consideration are:

1. There is a 3-point minimum harvest restriction for both species in all GMUs, except for white-tailed deer in GMU 124 where “any buck” is legal.
2. There is a late general modern firearm season for white-tailed deer in GMU 124. Late modern firearm season for white-tailed deer is by permit only for all other GMUs.
3. There is a late general muzzleloader season for white-tailed deer in GMUs 130-142.
4. There is a late general archery season for white-tailed deer in GMUs 124 & 127.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON**

Overall, the white-tailed deer population is down in District 2 due to a series of events starting with the drought and blue tongue (BT) outbreak of 2015 that lasted well into October and had deer dying in Region 1 from Canada to Oregon. The relatively mild winter of 2015/16 helped a little, as did more normal precipitation that spring and summer, however, the winter of 2016/17 was one the hardest in the past 10 years and decreased overwinter fawn survival. The population got a break in 2017 and started showing signs of recovery, however, the winter of 2018/19 was another difficult winter (though not as bad as 2016) and there was a small outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in north Lincoln and northwest Spokane counties. The winters of 2019/20 and 2020/21 were mild, which should help the white-tailed deer population start to rebound. However, the lack of precipitation this spring and the high likelihood that this will continue for the rest of the summer does not bode well for white-tailed deer.

Overall, mule deer herds are near their long-term averages. The mule deer populations suffered losses due to the same series of events noted above, however, mule deer do not typically die from BT and EHD, and the snows left the basin a bit sooner than in the northeast. However, the lack of precipitation and the likelihood of continuing drought will hurt our mule deer and especially fawn survival/recruitment. The reduced recruitment will likely not impact this year’s harvest but will be felt in the 2022 season.

In general, the best opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 124 and 127. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 136, 139, and 142. For archery hunters, GMUs 124 and 127 provide the best terrain, whereas the terrain in GMUs 136–142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm.

White-tailed and mule deer hunting opportunities in District 2 vary from marginal to excellent, depending on the GMU and if private land access has been secured. A good predictor of future

harvest during general seasons is recent trends in the harvest and catch per unit effort (CPUE) or its inverse, days per kill. Figures 5 and 6 provide trend data for each of these statistics by GMU and are intended to provide hunters with the best information possible to make an informed decision on where to hunt.

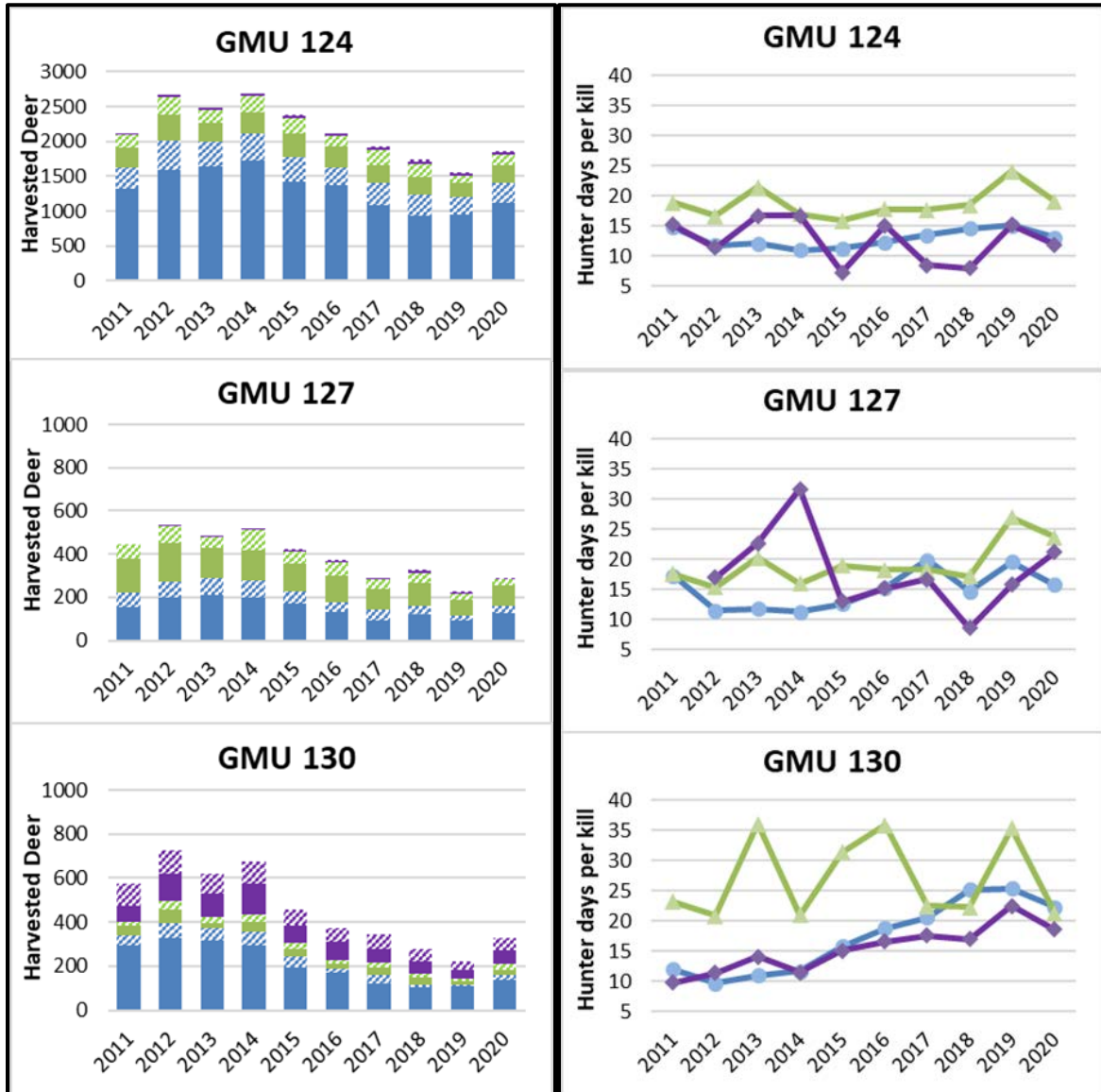


Figure 5. GMUs 124 – 130. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season harvest of deer bucks (solid) and antlerless (slash) by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). Note the different scale for GMU 124. **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter days per kill by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple).

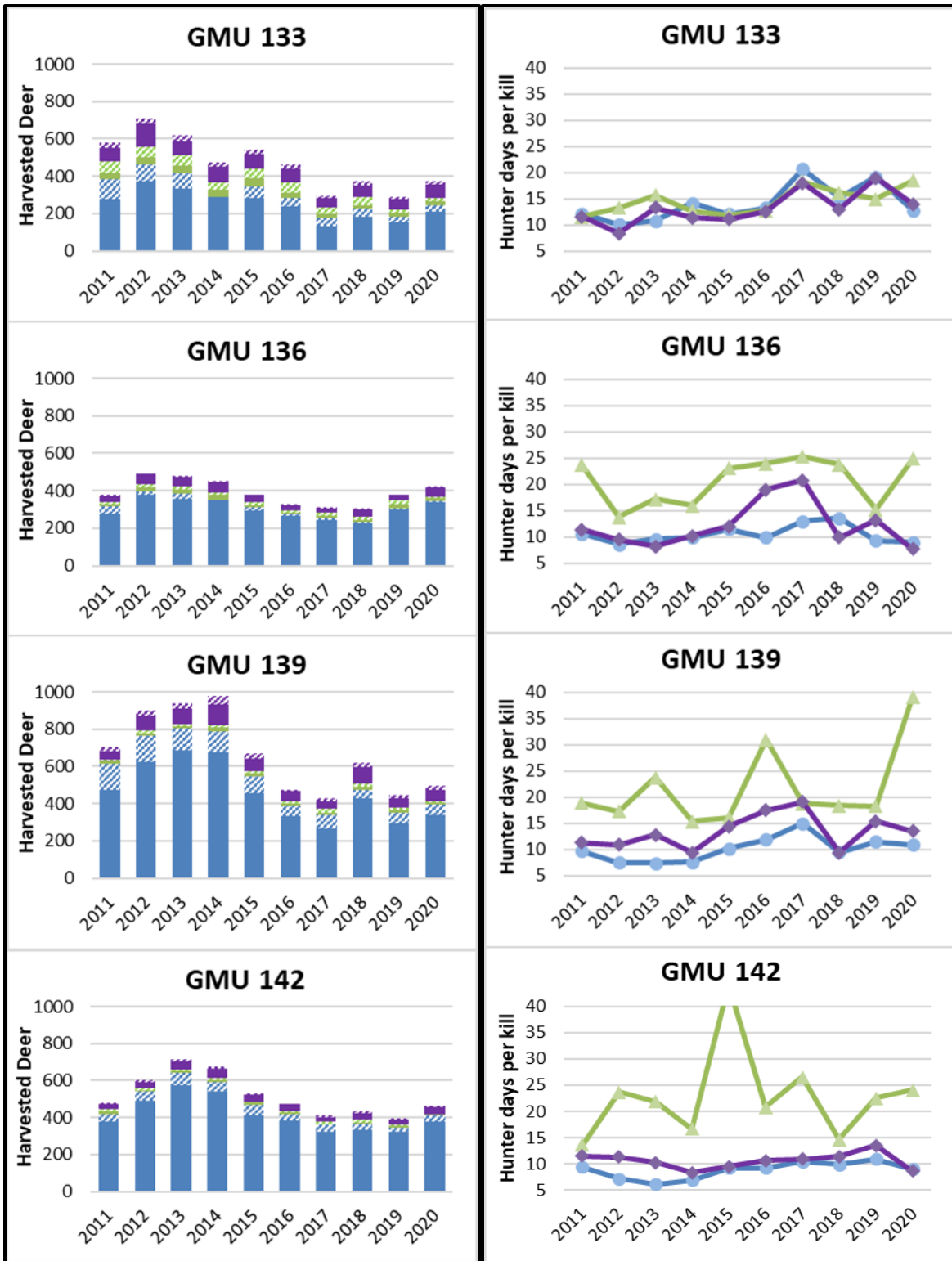


Figure 6. GMUs 133 – 142. **Left column:** Ten-year trends in general season harvest of deer bucks (solid) and antlerless (slash) by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple). **Right column:** Ten-year trends in general season hunter days per kill by weapon type modern firearm (blue), archery (green), and muzzleloader (purple).

There is a 3-point minimum antler point regulation in GMUs 127–142 for white-tailed deer, and the late white-tailed deer season in GMUs 127–142 is by permit only (the Palouse Special Permit Hunt) as of 2006. Hunter success over the past 10 years is, on average, higher for the Palouse hunt (43 percent versus 30 percent in the general season), with 5+ point bucks making up, on average, a greater percentage of the kill (37 percent versus 28 percent in the general season). There are currently 650 permits offered for the Palouse hunt.

Mule and white-tailed deer populations overlap in District 2, so make sure to identify the species before harvesting an animal, as regulations can differ between species within a GMU. The bulk of District 2 is private land, and buck hunters will have to put in time to get access. Doe hunters should have an easier time given the agricultural nature of this district. We have enrolled many cooperators in our hunter access programs in southeastern Washington. See the Private Lands Program section below and note that the locations are mapped on the [WDFW Hunt Planner](#).

For more 2020 harvest information from District 2, see:

- [Deer General Harvest District 2](#)
- [Deer Special Permits Harvest District 2](#)

## BIGHORN SHEEP

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 is home to one herd of California bighorn sheep, the Lincoln Cliffs herd, found in GMU 133 north of Highway 2 in Lincoln County (visit the [Hunt Planner Webmap](#) for a map). These sheep can most often be seen throughout the residential community of Lincoln and the cliffs above it, and in the cliffs around Whitestone Rock approximately seven miles downriver from Lincoln on Lake Roosevelt. Sheep are also observed frequently in the cliffs and canyons above Sterling Valley (the area between Lincoln and Whitestone) and in surrounding agricultural fields, where they are sometimes reported causing crop damage.

WDFW has conducted regular aerial surveys to assess the status of the Lincoln Cliffs herd since 2002, however an aerial survey was not conducted in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. The minimum population size is estimated by the count of rams and ewes observed during these flights (Figure 7). After several years of increase, the population is showing signs of leveling off and has likely reached the largest feasible herd size here due to human tolerance and availability of quality habitat. For more details on the history of the Lincoln Cliffs herd and the status of bighorn sheep in Washington, see WDFW's 2020 Game Status and Trend Report [here](#).

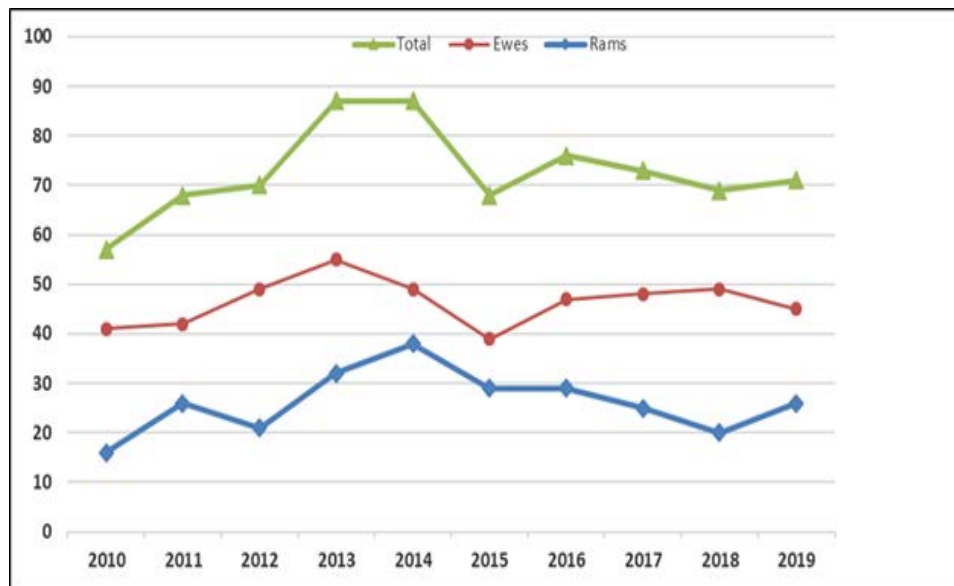


Figure 7. Lincoln Cliffs' minimum population estimate by sex for 2010–2019. Estimated as the maximum adult count from helicopter surveys conducted each year. No survey was conducted in 2020.

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Bighorn sheep hunting in Washington requires a special permit. One ram permit for the Lincoln Cliffs herd was offered each year from 1997–2013 and in 2017. Based on ram numbers and population size, this was increased to two permits in 2014–16 and again starting in 2018. The average number of applicants for this ram hunt over the last five years is 2203 and harvest success has been 100 percent. Neither ram permittee reported in 2020, although one ram is known to have been harvested. Ewe permits were introduced in 2018, with two offered– one in the Whitestone Unit and one in the Lincoln Cliffs Unit. Only one ewe permit, in the Whitestone Unit was available for the 2020 season; for the first time the ewe hunter was unsuccessful. Again in 2021 there will be only one ewe permit in the Whitestone Unit. The area is almost entirely private property and permittees will need to obtain permission to access these properties for their hunt.

## MOOSE

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Moose in northeast Washington are Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*), the smallest of the four subspecies of moose in North America. Moose were not believed to be common or widely distributed in the Rocky Mountain states in the 1800s, and it was not until 1908, when explorer George Shiras III found a fairly large population in Yellowstone National Park, that this mountain race was described. Shiras moose were only rarely noted in Washington until the late 1950s when distribution began to expand into eastern Pend Oreille County. Moose dramatically increased in number and distribution in the decades that followed and are now relatively common throughout northeast Washington.

Statewide moose management goals are to 1) Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage moose and their habitats to ensure healthy productive populations; 2) Manage for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes; and 3) Manage statewide moose populations for a sustained yield. The proximity of a moose population near the Spokane metropolitan area adds the challenge of balancing population objectives with human safety and the community's tolerance of moose.

From 2013-16, WDFW completed a project to develop a new survey methodology that would produce a reliable population estimate over the entire northeast (GMUs 101–130). This project resulted in an estimate of 5,169 (3,510 to 7,034) moose in the northeast in 2015. Though the estimate produced by the new method was less variable than previous methods, the larger area of coverage made it impractical to apply the results to individual hunt units and the cost makes it unviable to repeat annually.

Currently, WDFW uses harvest, success, and hunter effort to monitor and manage moose populations in District 2. Based on these harvest metrics and results from a WDFW/University of Montana partner study from 2014-2018 in northeast Washington, it appears that the ~5000 moose in 2015 was a high point in the moose population in northeast Washington and now we are seeing a decline. Primary drivers of this decline are the poor condition of cows and reduced calf survival. Poor cow condition is likely caused by reduced habitat quality and quantity due to reduced timber harvests, increased tick infestations due to warmer winters and more hosts (i.e., moose), and decreased foraging by cows in winter due to high temperatures (moose become thermally stressed at 28°F once in their winter coats). Reduced calf survival is due to increased predation likely tied to the recent re-establishment of wolves in the northeast. However, the effects of predation (wolf and otherwise) are exacerbated by the impact of poor cow condition on their young nursing calves and poor habitat quality (i.e., forage) for older calves.

Harvest management emphasizes quality hunting opportunities through limited special permits drawn by lottery each year. A total of 34 permits are offered in District 2 in a variety of categories (Table 3). Prior to 2012, District 2 had two moose hunt units (MHU), Mount Spokane (GMU 124 east of Highway 395), and Hangman (GMUs 127 and 130). In 2012, the Mount Spokane MHU was split into Mount Spokane North and Mount Spokane South Moose Areas (maps found [here](#)) to help distribute hunters more evenly across the area and increase hunter opportunity. In 2015, the Hangman MHU was split into the Mica Peak (GMU 127) and Cheney (GMU 130) MHUs for the antlerless hunts to better distribute hunters and try to address increasing moose conflict in Cheney. Additionally, in 2015, the Spokane West MHU was split off from the Huckleberry MHU to distribute hunters and increase opportunity.

Table 3. Permits offered in District 2 by moose hunt unit for 2021.

Moose Unit	Antlered Bull	Antlerless Only		
	General	General	Disabled	Youth
Mount Spokane North	8	2	1	0
Mount Spokane South	8	2	0	1
Spokane West	2	2	0	0
Hangman	4	0	0	0
Mica Peak	0	2	0	0
Cheney	0	2	0	0

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Hunters should take note that moose are by nature a solitary animal and are scattered over very wide areas as individuals or in small groups. While they can be found at any elevation, they are most likely found between 3,000 and 5,000 feet. In the fall they are looking for deciduous browse, primarily willow brush, alder, serviceberry, ceanothus, and other shrubs in clear-cuts or burns 10–20 years old. Moose seek out cool, moist drainage basins and slopes, and generally prefer north slopes or east-flowing drainages. Moose are still in the rut in early October and some hunters have been effective with calls. By November, snow is common, and locating moose tracks and seeing these dark animals with a snow background is much easier. However, by mid to late November, there is usually enough snow that motor vehicle access can be limited.

Moose seek out snow rather than avoid it in late fall and early winter because they are in their winter coats and start to experience thermal stress at temperatures exceeding 28°F. In years without much snow, they are typically found at a higher elevation and on north slopes with tree cover. In years with a lot of snow, they move down to the foothills of the mountains. Moose habitat in District 2 is largely located on private timber company lands, but smaller private ownerships can also harbor good moose concentrations. Permit holders should exercise caution and know where they and the targeted moose are at all times given the percentage of private land



ownership, proximity to Idaho, and non-hunting lands (State and County parks, National Wildlife Refuge) within the moose hunting units. WDFW requires all successful moose hunters to submit tooth samples in the envelopes provided with their informational packet. Tooth samples allow us to get an overview of the age structure of the moose population, which will help inform future management decisions.

See below for specific harvest metrics and access for each MHU:

### **Mount Spokane North Moose Area**

The success rate for the eight Bull Moose permits in this unit was 86 percent in 2020 and has averaged 92 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have spent eight days per kill on average, but the trend is increasing with hunters spending on average 12 days per kill in the last four years of the hunt compared to just five days per kill in the first five years. The average spread of bulls harvested is 35 inches, with the largest bull harvested measuring 49 inches.

Success rates for the Antlerless Only hunt in this unit was 100 percent in 2020 and has averaged 87 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have spent seven days per kill on average, though it reached as high as 19 days per kill in 2016. Decreasing hunter success rates and increasing hunter effort combined with low pregnancy rates and low calf survival in a local study have led the department to reduce antlerless opportunity in this area to two permits starting in 2020. We also offer one antlerless permit to disabled hunters in this unit.

Access in this unit is primarily on timber company lands, Inland Empire Paper (IEP) and Hancock Timber, and DNR lands around the [E Blanchard Rd area](#). The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be careful and read signage at gates—they might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. IEP allows vehicular access but will close gates to full-sized rigs once there has been enough rain to soften the roads (typically in late October or early November). IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepc.com/forestry/rec-use/>). Hancock has traditionally had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with WDFW to allow **non-motorized** access for free to our hunters, but please check with Hancock or WDFW to confirm this MOU is still in place prior to hunting their properties. WDFW Enforcement monitors their property and will ticket offenders. Please respect the agreement or this access could be lost. Hancock does not supply a map of their property; we recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify Hancock ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps).

### **Mount Spokane South Moose Area**

The success rate for the eight Bull Moose permits in this unit was 100 percent in 2020 and has averaged 94 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters spent 13 days per kill on average in 2020,

the average for this hunt since its creation is seven days, but has been in the low teens the last three years. The average spread of bulls harvested is 34 inches, with the largest bull harvested measuring 48 inches.

Success rates for the Antlerless Only hunt in this unit was 100 percent in 2020 and has averaged 86 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have spent seven days per kill on average, though it has been as high as 16 days per kill. Decreasing hunter success rates and increasing hunter effort combined with low pregnancy rates and low calf survival in a local study have led the department to reduce antlerless opportunity in this area to two permits starting in 2020. We also offer one antlerless permit to youth hunters in this unit.

Access in this unit is primarily on Inland Empire Paper (IEP) timber company lands in [Thompson Creek](#) and [Brickel Creek](#). There is a small chunk of DNR lands north of the Brickel Creek area as well. The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be careful and read signage at gates—they might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. IEP allows vehicular access but will close gates to full-sized rigs once there has been enough rain to soften the roads (typically in late October or early November). IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. IEP lands are adjacent to Mount Spokane State Park, which is not open to hunting, and the border with Idaho, so hunters need to know where they are before taking a shot. We recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps). For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepc.com/forestry/rec-use/>).

### **Spokane West Moose Hunt Area**

This Hunt Area was split off from the Huckleberry GMU 121 in 2015, so there is little historic data for comparison. The 2015 Any Moose permittee harvested a 32-inch bull in one day of hunting. The 2016 permittee harvested a 44-inch bull in five days. The 2017 Any Moose permittee did not report their hunt. The 2018 permittee harvested a 43-inch bull in one day. The 2019 permittee harvested a 30-inch bull in five days. The 2020 permittee harvested a 48-inch bull in seven days.

For the two antlerless permits offered each year both hunters were successful in 2015, 16, and 17. In both 2018 and 19 only one of the two hunters reported, but each was successful. In 2020 both hunters reported, but only one was successful. Average days per kill have ranged from 2 to 10 days. Based on harvest stats and limited composition flights the moose population in this unit is doing better than the other units in District 2. However, most of the access is non-motorized, so do not apply if you are not in good physical condition or do not have private land access.

Access in this unit is primarily on Hancock Timber Company lands and scattered DNR parcels. The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be

careful and read signage at gates-they might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. Hancock has traditionally had an MOU with WDFW to allow **non-motorized** access for free to our hunters, but please check with Hancock or WDFW to confirm this MOU is still in place prior to hunting their properties. WDFW Enforcement monitors their property and will ticket offenders. Please respect the agreement or this access could be lost. Hancock does not supply a map of their property; we recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify Hancock ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps). Access to Hancock lands in this unit are from the gate east off [Hwy 231 just south of the intersection with Reservation Road](#).

### **Hangman Moose Hunt GMUs 127 and 130**

The number of Bull Moose permits offered for this hunt was reduced from seven to four in 2017, due to reduced success, ≤86 percent, and increased effort (as high as 23 days) observed the previous four years. Since this reduction success has averaged 88 percent and effort has averaged 7 days per harvest. The average spread of bulls harvested in the last 10 years is 37 inches, with the largest bull ever harvested measuring 52 inches. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears to be declining in areas open to general hunting access (e.g., DNR and Inland Empire Paper Company), but increasing in areas closed to hunting or where access is limited (Conservation Areas and suburban Spokane). Hunters are strongly encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt before applying.

Access in this unit is primarily on Inland Empire Paper (IEP) timber company lands on Mica Peak and scattered sections of DNR throughout. The DNR lands are free to hunt, though full-sized vehicles are not typically allowed, so be careful and read signage at gates before entering. They might be open in the morning if crews are working but you might get locked in that evening. IEP does NOT allow vehicular access on their lands in this unit due to a history of road damage. IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. IEP lands are adjacent to Spokane County Parks lands, which are not open to hunting, and the border with Idaho, so hunters need to know where they are before taking a shot. We recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's [online parcel map](#) to identify ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g., OnX maps). For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepc.com/forestry/rec-use/>). Two primary entry points for this hunt are the [Belmont Road County Park](#) trailhead and [FAA Starr Road gate](#).

### **Mica Peak Moose Hunt GMU 127**

There are no Bull Moose permits specific to just this unit (Hangman MHU incorporates both Mica Peak and Cheney MHUs). The following Antlerless harvest statistics include the Hangman Unit data because the vast majority of permittees prior to 2015 harvested their animals in Mica Peak. Due to declining hunter success, Antlerless Only permits were reduced from seven to four in 2017. The success rate for this hunt increased to 100 percent in 2017, up significantly from the

previous 5-year average of 69 percent and remained at 100 percent in 2018. However, success dropped to 50 percent in 2019 and effort spiked to an all-time high of 21 days/kill on average. Permits were reduced to two in 2020; hunter success rebounded to 100% and hunter's effort came back into line with the 5-day average observed prior to the more recent increase. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears to be declining in areas open to general hunting access (e.g., DNR and Inland Empire Paper), but increasing in areas closed to hunting or where access is limited. Hunters are encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt if they want to increase their odds of success.

See the Hangman unit above for more access information.

### **Cheney Moose Hunt GMU 130**

There are no Bull Moose permits specific to just this unit (Hangman MHU incorporates both Mica Peak and Cheney MHUs). This MHU was split off from the Hangman MHU in 2015 for Antlerless only hunts because very few permittees hunted it while the number of complaints regarding moose in the unit's suburban/rural areas increased. This unit is almost entirely private land. The larger blocks of public land are NOT open to hunting, and the moose are dispersed and highly mobile. Only one of the two Antlerless Only permittees reported for this hunt in 2015. The permittee was successful after 15 days of hunting. In 2016, neither permittee was successful after spending a combined 20 days hunting. In 2017, one permittee did not hunt, while the other was successful after nine days of hunting. In 2018, both hunters were successful after spending a combined 36 days hunting. In 2019 both hunters were successful after spending a combined 20 days hunting. In 2020 only one hunter reported and they were successful after four days of hunting.

Hunters are **STRONGLY** encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt prior to applying for the permit.

## COUGAR

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars may be found in varying densities throughout District 2, depending on habitat availability. Cougars are managed to provide maximum harvest opportunity while promoting population stability and social structure and minimizing human-cougar conflict.

Beginning with the 2012 season, WDFW shifted away from using season length and/or permits to manage cougar harvest and instead divided the state into cougar hunt areas and implemented a standard early general season with no harvest limit across all hunt areas from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, followed by a late season (Jan. 1 to Apr. 30) the duration of which is dependent on a harvest guideline. The harvest guideline is 12-16 percent of a hunt area's estimated population (not including kittens). Starting Jan. 1, harvest numbers and composition of the harvest in each hunt area are evaluated, and hunt areas may be closed for meeting or exceeding the guideline with relatively short notice. Hunters that plan on hunting cougar after Jan 1 are responsible for knowing if their hunt area is open or closed; to confirm hunt area status, hunters must call the cougar hotline (1-866-364-4868) or [check online](#). In order to facilitate implementation of the guideline all successful cougar hunters must report their harvest to WDFW within 72 hours of harvest. A pelt sealing must also be scheduled within 5 days of the notification of kill.

GMUs 124, 127, and 130 comprise a single hunt area with a harvest guideline of 7–9 adults. Therefore, if you would like to hunt cougar in GMUs 124–130 after Jan. 1, you will have to verify the unit is still open. Harvest in this unit has met or exceeded the guideline for the past 4 seasons and has been closed prior to April 30. GMUs 133–142 are part of the Columbia Basin Hunt Area that has no harvest guideline due to limited cougar habitat and corresponding lower cougar population.

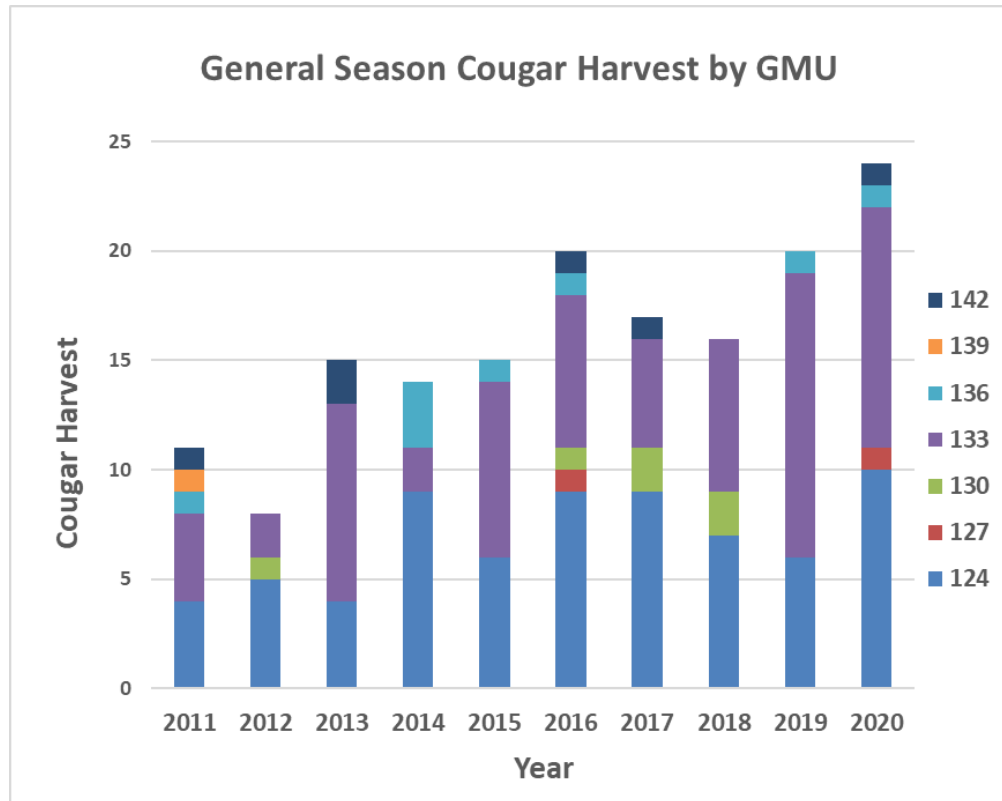


Figure 8. General season cougar harvest by GMU for license years 2011–2020.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Starting in 2017, the cougar season was extended until April 30. If you hunt in a unit that has not been closed to harvest, **you will have to purchase a 2022 hunting license and cougar tag to hunt cougar after March 31, 2022.**

In general cougar harvest has been increasing in District 2 over the last 10 years, with the highest reported harvest of 24 cougars occurring in the 2020 license year (Figure 8). The average harvest across the district over the last 10 license years is 16. Harvest is consistently the highest in GMUs 124 and 133, and sightings in these units are also common. Cougar harvest in all other GMUs in District 2 is usually very low (Figure 8). Most of the general season cougar harvest in the district is opportunistic, occurring most often while hunters are seeking deer or elk. The proportion of males and females in the harvest varies each year, but the typical age at harvest is three years or younger. For harvest details by GMU, see the [Game Harvest Reports](#). For information on reporting and pelt-sealing requirements visit this [link](#).

## BLACK BEAR

### GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Black bears in Washington are managed with the goal of ensuring healthy and productive populations while minimizing conflict with people. The state is divided into nine Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs); District 2 is part of both the Northeastern BBMU (GMUs 124–130) and the Columbia Basin BBMU (GMUs 133–142). Harvest levels vary within and between BBMUs depending on local habitat conditions and corresponding bear densities, as well as hunter effort and access limitations. We do not currently conduct annual surveys or have formal population estimates for bear but rely on harvest statistics to infer population trends and evaluate management decisions.

Bear harvest in District 2 is substantially lower than in the rest of the Northeastern BBMU, likely due to habitat and hunter access limitations. Bear harvest in District 2 also varies widely year by year, as bears are most often harvested by deer and elk hunters when they come across one during their general seasons (Figure 9). The proportion of males and females in the harvest is also highly variable from year to year, likely for the same reason (Figure 10). Most of the harvest usually occurs in GMUs 124 and 127. Although the Columbia Basin BBMU is not thought to support resident black bear populations due to lack of forested habitat, GMU 133 has averaged 6 bears per year over the past 10 years. Harvest in the other GMUs in the Basin (136–142) is very low or nonexistent and would not be worthwhile to hunt for this species.

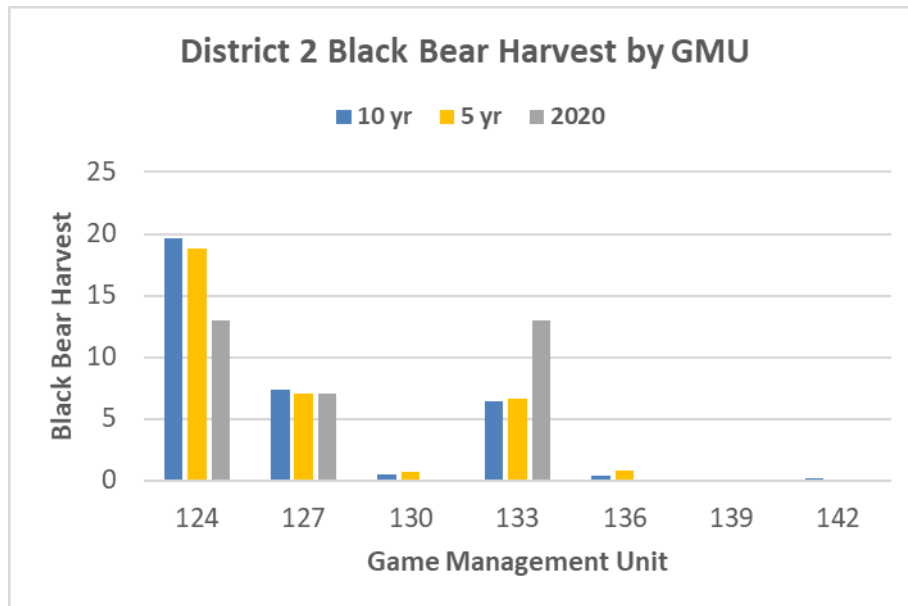


Figure 9. The number of black bears harvested in each GMU during the 2020 general season in District 2. Also included are the 10-year (2011-2020) and 5-year (2016-2020) average for the total number of bears harvested in each GMU.

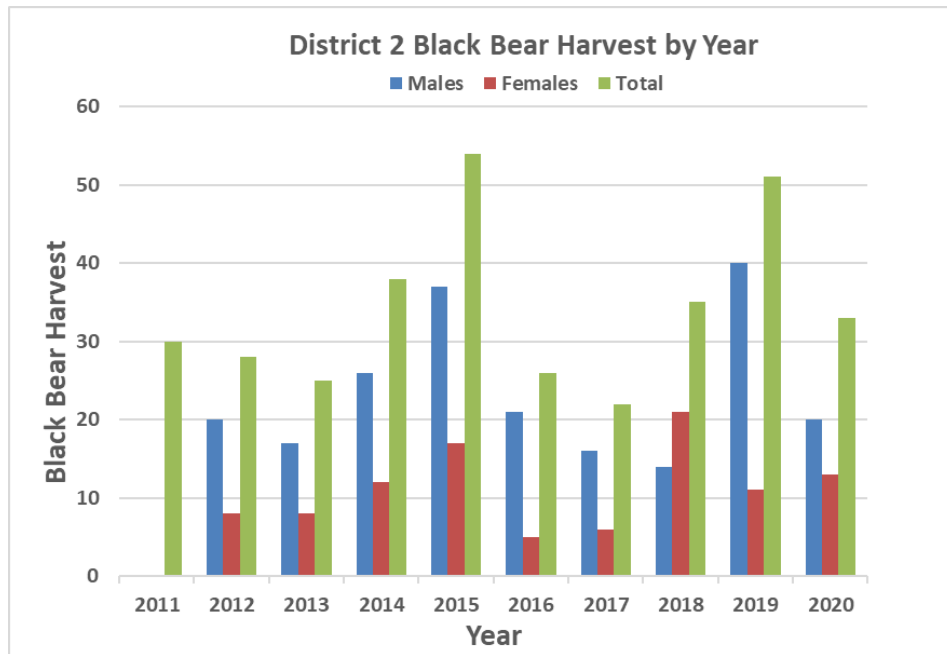


Figure 10. Black bear total harvest in District 2, 2011–2020. The sex of harvested bears is not available for 2011.

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2021 SEASON

Beginning in 2019, the fall general season dates were standardized statewide, allowing eastside hunters to start hunting August 1 in all GMUs. Additionally, the bag limit was increased to two bears, regardless of location. Hunters must purchase a second bear tag to harvest a second bear. There are no spring permits for bear in District 2. District 2 is not known for black bear hunting, though an increase in harvest in recent years suggests the local population is doing well, especially in the forested areas of Spokane and Lincoln counties.

Scouting and securing private land access are extremely important factors that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 2. Although black bears are fairly common in some areas, they are seen infrequently because they tend to spend most of their time in forest cover and limit their time in the open to cooler times of the day. Much of the bear habitat in the district is either in State or County parks (which are not open to hunt), or private timber company land (where you may need an access permit).

Bear hunters are strongly urged not to shoot females with cubs. In the fall, cubs are 30 to 50 pounds and tend to lag behind when traveling. Please be patient and spend time watching for cubs before shooting a bear. All successful Spring bear hunters must submit the raw pelt with proof of sex attached and the skull for inspection and tooth removal. Please contact the Region 1 office (509)892-1001 to schedule an appointment. In addition, remember that it is **mandatory** to submit a premolar tooth from all fall season harvested bears. Tooth envelopes are available at



WDFW offices, and hunters are welcome to make an appointment for help with pulling the tooth if needed. If you are unable to reach a regional WDFW office for a tooth envelope, contact the Wildlife Program at (360) 902-2515. Hunters that submitted a tooth can look up the age of their harvest several months after the close of the season on our website [here](#).

## WATERFOWL

At the statewide level, District 2 is not known for its duck hunting and is not a large duck production area due to the ephemeral nature of the water bodies in the Channeled Scablands. Local surveys indicate brood production has dropped back to pre-2016 levels (Figure 11). In 2016 and 2017 we had especially high precipitation in the winter and spring, resulting in dramatic increases in wetland size and numbers and increased nesting and broods. The most common breeding duck species in the area are mallard, gadwall, green-winged teal, and redhead. Other common waterfowl species in District 2 include coot, ruddy duck, and northern pintail and American wigeon during migration. Aerial breeding population surveys (BPOP) for the entire Potholes region of eastern Washington show similar trends in ducks as seen in our District ground surveys (Figure 12). However, the BPOP coot numbers remain relatively stable, while our coot brood numbers have spiked. BPOP flights in 2020 and 2021 were canceled due to COVID-19.

Given the limited number of local nesting ducks, the waterfowl hunting opportunity in this district is dependent upon the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska, the amount of precipitation, and how long waterbodies remain ice-free. With little to no spring rain, waterbody numbers and size are down this year and with the drought forecasted to continue through fall, it does not look good for duck hunting this season in District 2. Hunters should focus their efforts on larger perennial waterbodies unless fall rains are significant, then shallow, flooded agricultural fields become duck and goose hot spots. For more information on waterfowl hunting techniques and waterfowl hunting areas in Region 1, see the [WDFW waterfowl webpage](#).

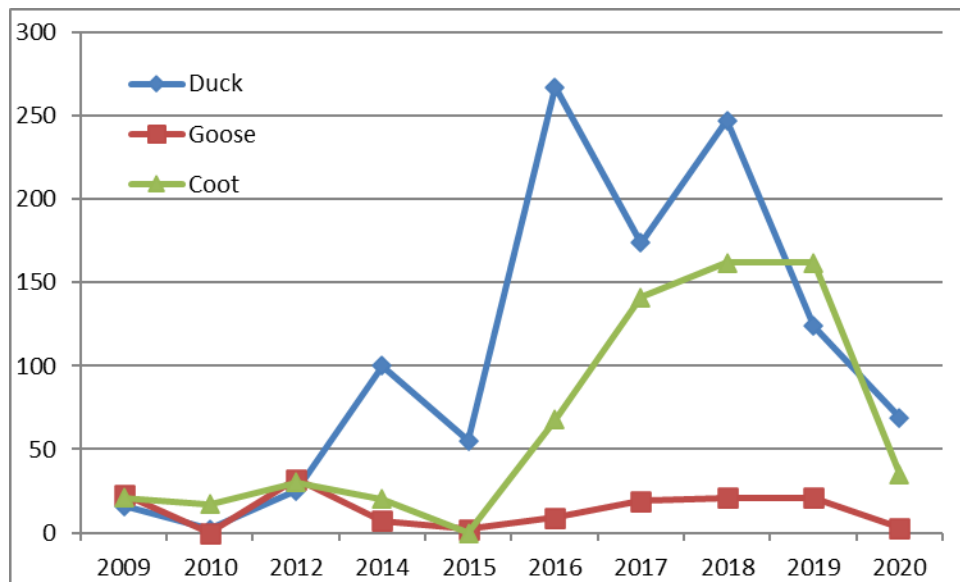


Figure 11. Total number of young of the year observed on District 2 brood ground survey routes.

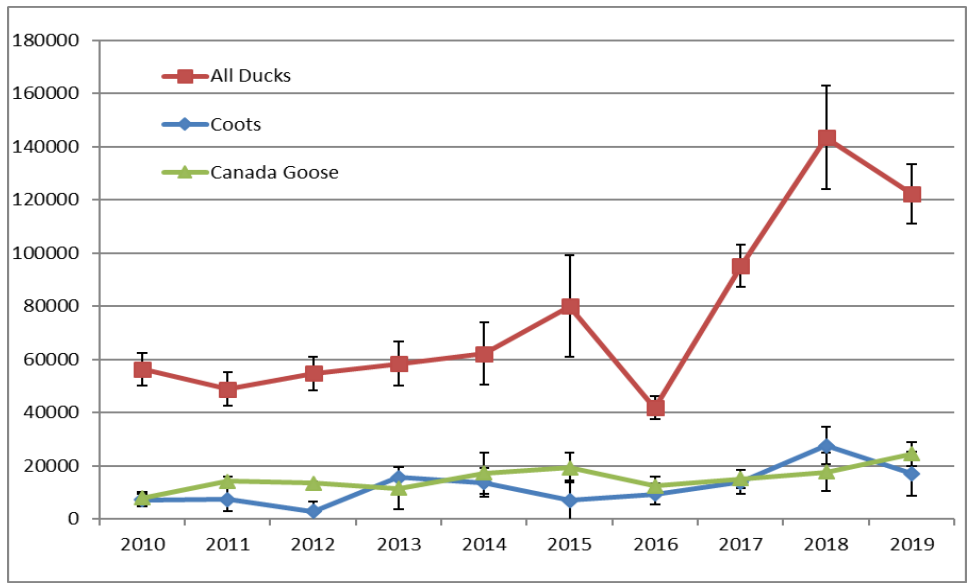


Figure 12. Waterfowl estimates from aerial breeding population surveys for the Potholes region of eastern Washington. BPOP flights were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19.

## PHEASANT

The pheasant population available for harvest in the fall is highly dependent on annual recruitment. The mild 2020/21 winter should have resulted in increased overwinter adult survival and thus more hens available to nest this spring. However, the lack of spring precipitation and likelihood of the drought continuing through summer will decrease the availability of forbs and insects, resulting in reduced chick survival and recruitment.

District-wide harvest has been increasing the past four years, reaching a 10-year high in 2020 (Figure 13, top). Hunter numbers have been relatively stable (Figure 13, top), mirroring statewide trends. Days per hunter and harvest per hunter have remained relatively stable in the district, with a slight increase in both in 2020 (Figure 13, bottom). The majority of pheasant hunting occurs in Whitman County, which has about three times the harvest and about two times more hunters than Lincoln or Spokane counties. For more information on the harvest statistics see the most recent Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics here: [Pheasant - Statewide and by County](#). For more information on pheasant status in Washington, see the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

Overall, pheasant populations are experiencing long-term declines. This is a trend seen across the country and it is likely associated with current cleaner farming practices and habitat loss. Examples of this include the switch to large-scale monoculture farming, removal of hedgerow (farming through small creeks beds and up into the gravel of the road), the more efficient harvest machinery leaving less waste grain, increased use of herbicides and pesticides, and more recently the use of neonicotinoid insecticides. All of these combine to reduce adult, nest, and chick survival through less food (fewer insects and forbs) and less cover, and in the case of neonicotinoids, potential direct mortality of individuals that consume the coated seeds.

Since most of the land in this district is private, hunters will need to spend some time knocking on doors to get access to the better sites. Many private landowners have enrolled in WDFW hunter access programs recently in southeast Washington. See the Private Lands Program section below for access program acres by GMU, and the [Hunt Planner Webmap](#) for mapped locations.

For tips on pheasant hunting in general, visit this [link](#) and the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#).

WDFW will be releasing game farm-produced roosters once again this fall at the traditional release sites, which are also mapped on the Hunt Planner Webmap and the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#) publication.

A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).

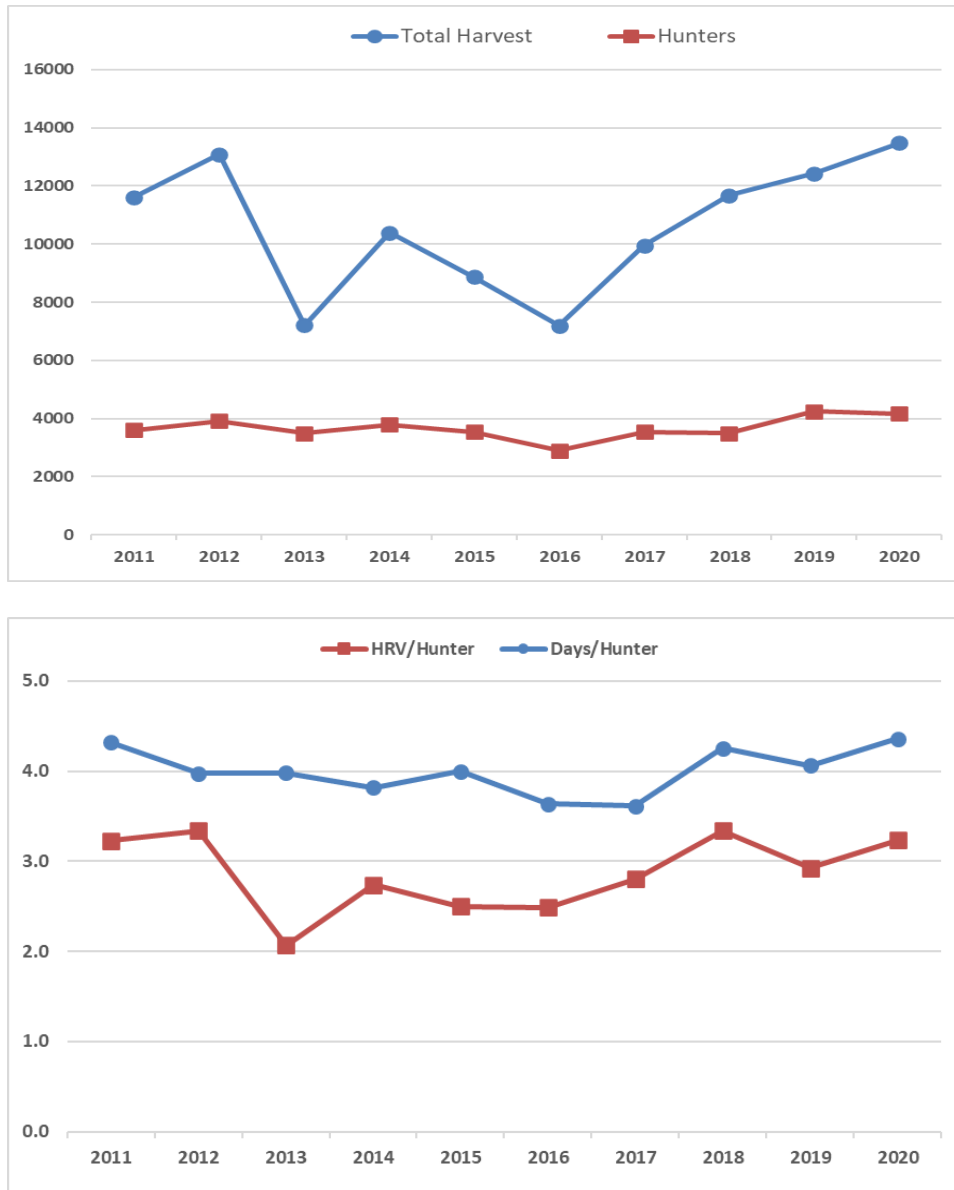


Figure 13. Top graph: Pheasant harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Pheasant harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## CHUKAR AND GRAY PARTRIDGE

Although the winter was mild, nest and early chick survival for chukar and partridge likely suffered from the prolonged spring and summer drought and heat in the region. Except for the spikes in 2012 and 2018, harvest has been fairly stable over the past ten years, averaging 1687 birds a year (Figure 14). Harvest did drop in 2020 to 1127, the lowest it has been in the last 10 years. Hunter numbers did not change, but those hunters put in a lot of effort (measured by days per hunter); harvest per hunter also dropped in 2020 after remaining relatively stable for the past six years (Figure 14).

Partridge are most common in Lincoln and Whitman counties and are most often seen in, and adjacent to, agricultural fields. When hunting for partridge in Lincoln County please be sure to identify your bird before pulling the trigger. There are populations of Sage grouse and Sharp-tailed grouse in the county and both are State Endangered species.

There are very few chukar in District 2. They are predominantly found along the breaks of the Snake River, where the terrain is steep and rocky with limited public access from above. There is some access via the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land along the Snake River from below, but not all the Corps lands allow hunting. See their [website](#) for details.

For more information on gray partridge and chukar harvest, see the [Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by County](#), and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

For tips on chukar and gray partridge hunting in general, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds> as well as the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#).

A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).

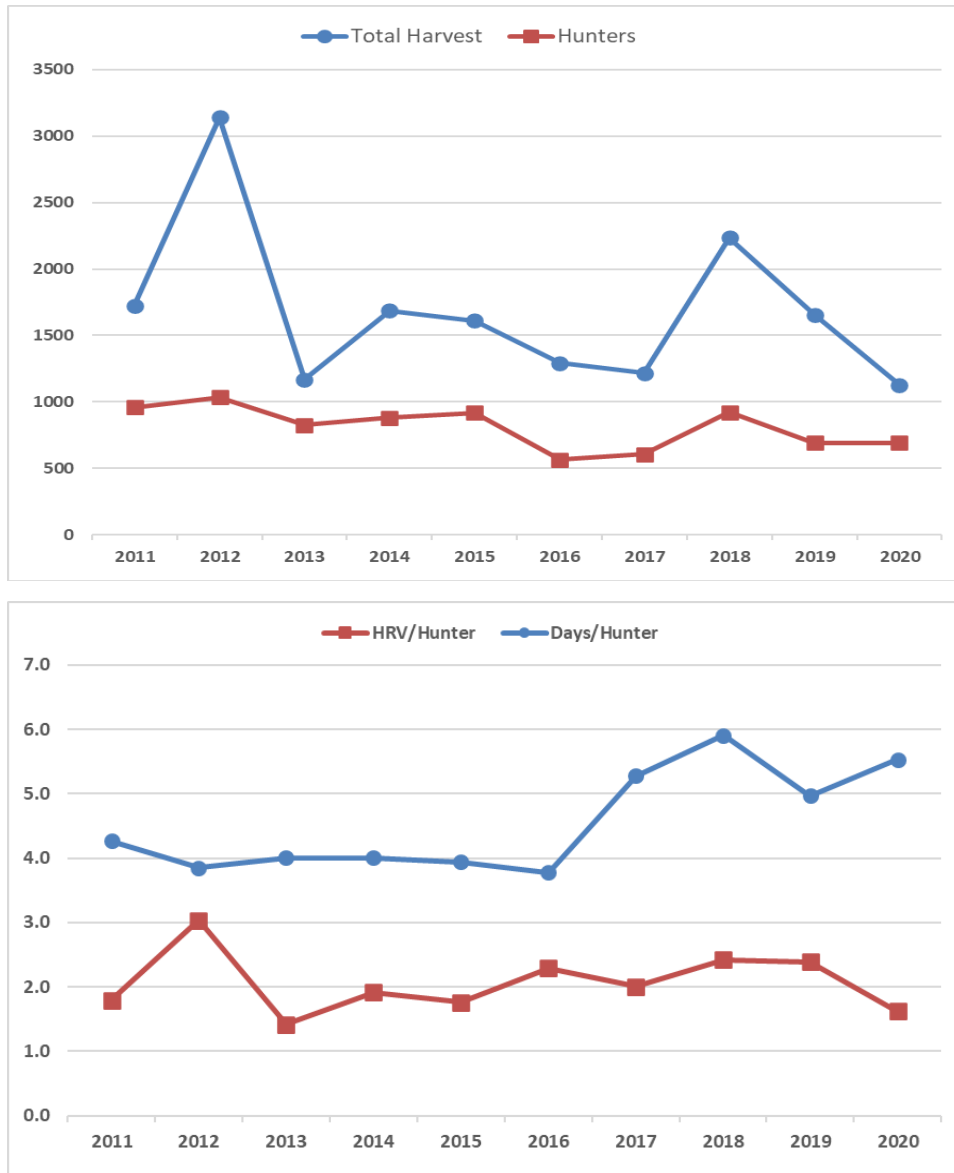


Figure 14. Top graph: Chukar and partridge harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Chukar and partridge harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## FOREST GROUSE

The forest grouse season opener will be delayed to September 15<sup>th</sup> starting in 2021. Statewide harvest data indicates a declining trend in the forest grouse population. Wing barrel data indicates that our early season harvest is biased towards young of the year and brood hens (successful hens are the engine of population growth). This delay is being implemented to allow for more brood break up to occur, thereby reducing brood hen vulnerability to harvest and ultimately result in population growth.

Overall, forest grouse populations appear to be low but stable in District 2, with the best success found in the forested portions of GMUs 124, 127, and 133. Of the four forest grouse species, only ruffed and dusky grouse are found in District 2. Ruffed grouse are by far the most common of the two, but dusky grouse can be found in GMUs 124, 127, and 133. Despite another mild winter, the lack of spring precipitation, likelihood of the drought continuing, and prolonged heat in the region will likely result in reduced chick survival and recruitment this year.

Hunter numbers are down relative to long term averages but have been stable over the past few years (Figure 15, top). Hunter effort in 2020 was 5.2 days per hunter, which is the also the five-year average. Total grouse harvested and hunter success (harvest per hunter) both increased in 2020, with an average of 2 birds per hunter (Figure 15, bottom).

For more information on forest grouse, see the [Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by County](#), and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#). For tips on hunting forest grouse, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds> as well as the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#). A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).

To evaluate population trends and harvest changes, WDFW began collecting forest grouse wings and tails from hunters in 2016 and will continue these in 2021. Collection barrels will be distributed at various hunting access points, as well as WDFW offices throughout Region 1. You can help with this effort by dropping off a wing and tail from each forest grouse you harvest, following the instructions at the barrel. Locations of wing barrels and other information about this sampling effort can be found [here](#).





Figure 15. Top graph: Forest grouse harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Forest grouse harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## QUAIL

Similar to pheasant and partridge, the mild 2020/21 winter should have been good for adult survival and increase nest initiation this spring. However, the lack of spring precipitation and the likely continuation of the drought through this summer will impact chick survival and recruitment, decreasing the available population for harvest this fall.

Harvest and hunter numbers in 2020 were both in line with ten-year average (Figure 16, top). Hunter success (harvest/hunter) was slightly below average and hunter effort (days/hunter) was average (Figure 16, bottom). Access can be challenging, especially with most of the good quail habitat occurring in and around farmsteads and towns. For more information on harvest statistics, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics here: [Quail - Statewide and by County](#). For more information on quail status in Washington, see the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

For tips on quail hunting in general, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds> as well as the “Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington” publication available on the WDFW website [here](#).

A summary of upland game bird seasons can be found [here](#).

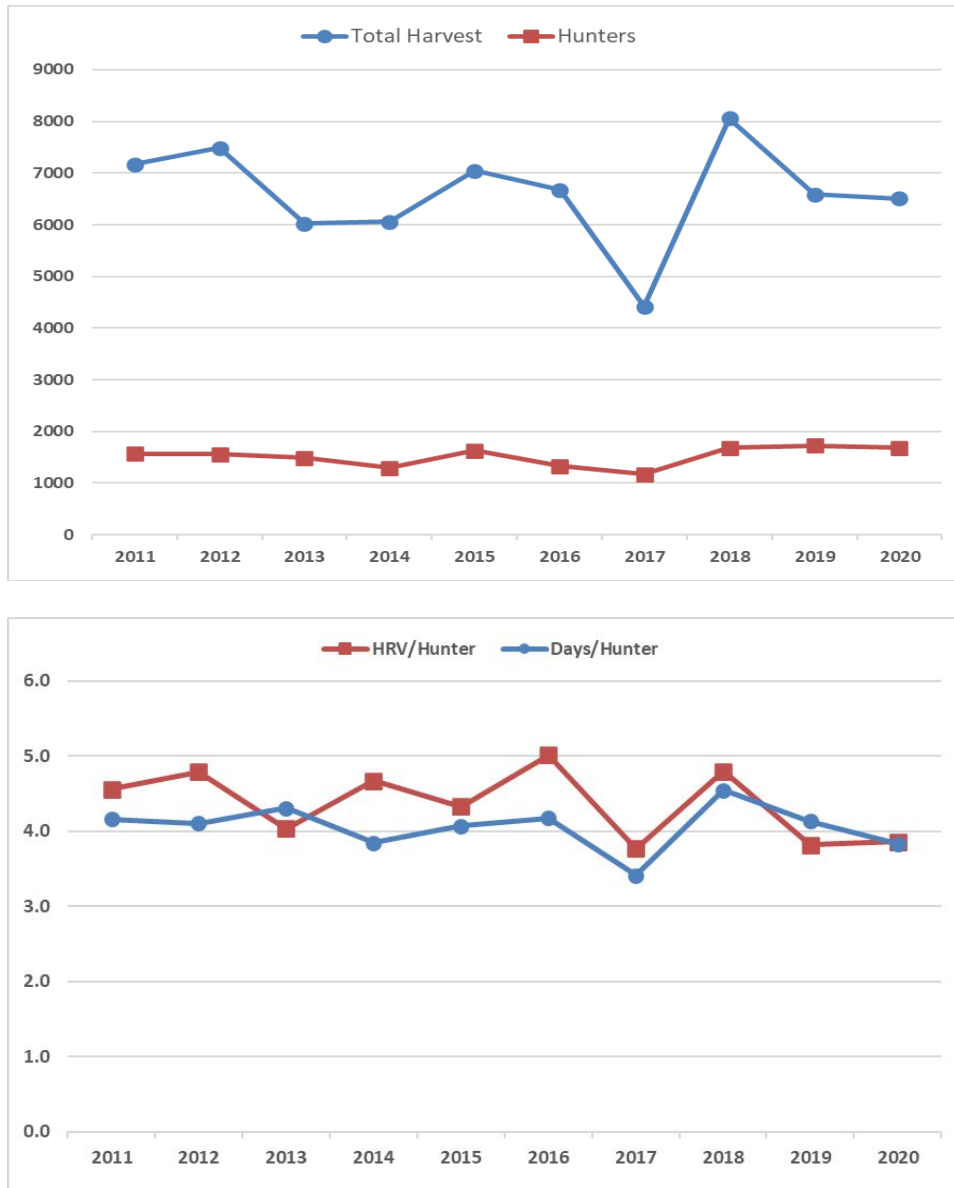


Figure 16. Top graph: Quail harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Quail harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## TURKEY

Opportunistic observations during fieldwork, public reports, and damage claims all indicate that the turkey population is doing very well in GMUs 124–133 and stable in GMUs 136–142. Spring harvest and hunter numbers dropped in 2020 due to the COVID shutdown, but numbers rebounded in the fall (Figure 17). Hunter effort in 2020 was 8 days/kill in spring and 10 days/kill in fall, in line with the previous 5-year average of 9 days for both seasons. GMU 124 has by far the most turkeys and the most turkey harvested (1268 on average for the past 5yrs), but with this comes the most hunters (1320 in spring and 733 in fall on average for the past 5yrs). GMUs 130 and 133 come in a distant second for turkey harvest (around 475 on average) followed closely by GMU 127 (214 on average). GMUs 136, 139, and 142 have relatively few turkeys compared to these other units, but hunting can be very good in some areas within these GMUs.

Again, the district is predominantly private land and hunters will need to secure access. Access during the spring hunt can be competitive, but access should be easier to acquire in GMU 124 for the fall hen season, given the extensive turkey damage complaints the department has received from this area. Many private landowners have enrolled in WDFW hunter access programs recently in southeast Washington. See the Private Lands Program section below for access program acres by GMU, and the [Hunt Planner map](#) for mapped locations.

For more information on turkey harvest in Washington, see the [Turkey Game Harvest Statistics](#) and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

For more information and tips on hunting turkey in Washington check out [“The Basics of Turkey Hunting In Washington”](#) publication from WDFW.

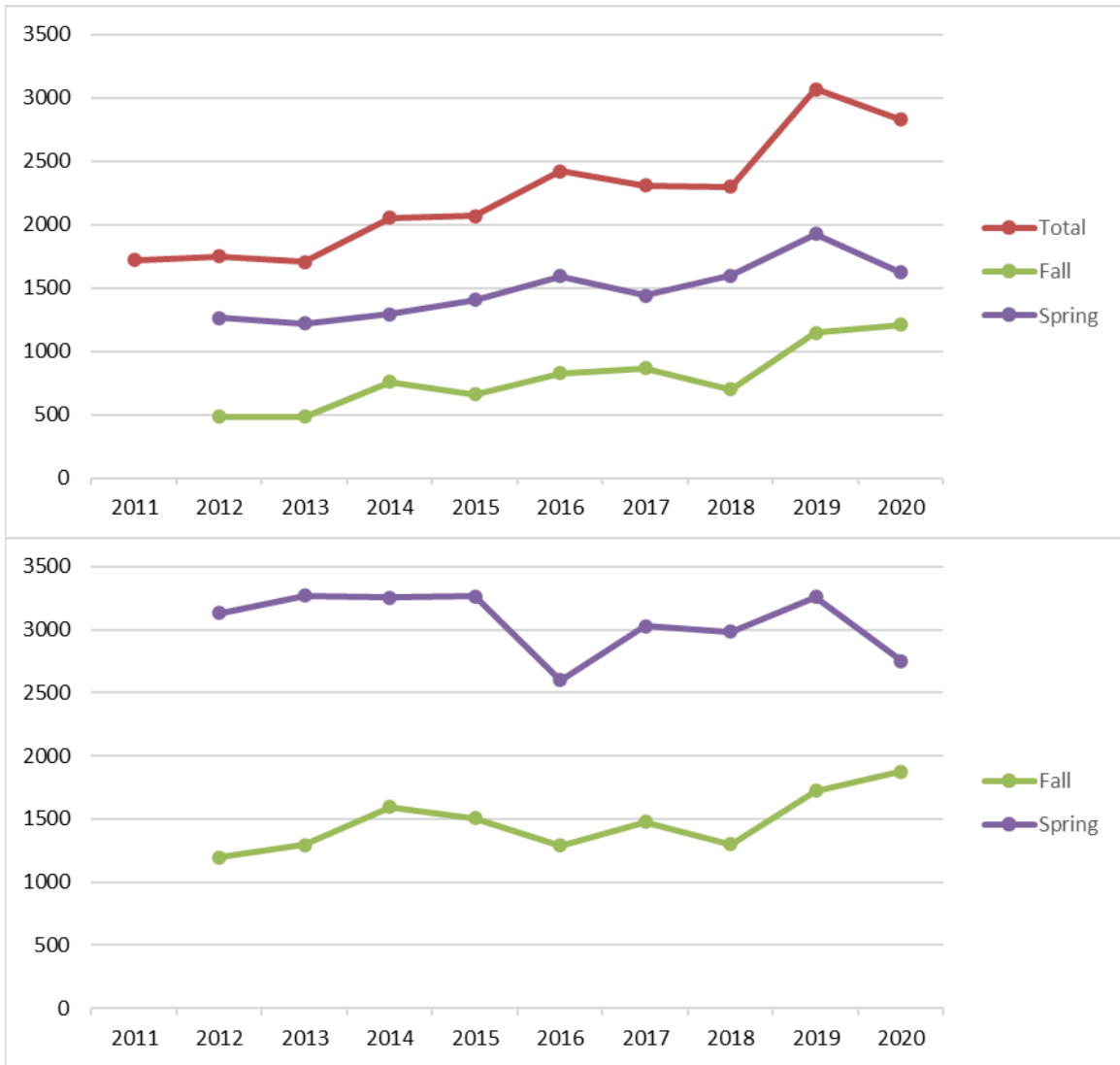


Figure 17. **Top graph:** Turkey harvest (spring, fall, & total) for District 2 from 2011-2020. **Bottom graph:** Turkey hunters (spring & fall) for District 2 from 2012-2020.

## DOVE

Doves in District 2 occur at low population densities relative to the Columbia Basin and similar regions. As often as not, cool temperatures just prior to or during the dove season push many doves further south out of the district. Hunter harvest metrics have been highly variable (Figure 18, top), with harvest averaging about 3200 birds a year by about 370 hunters. Hunter effort (days per hunter) has not changed much over the past ten years, although harvest per hunter spiked in 2020, to 10 birds (Figure 18, bottom). It is important to note that eastside hunters have an additional dove opportunity – the Eurasian collared dove. This dove is an exotic dove that has invaded most of eastern Washington. It can be hunted and trapped with a license year-round. Eurasian collared doves are commonly found in and around towns and around grain elevators.

For more information on doves, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: [Statewide and by County](#), and the most recent [Game Status and Trend Report](#).

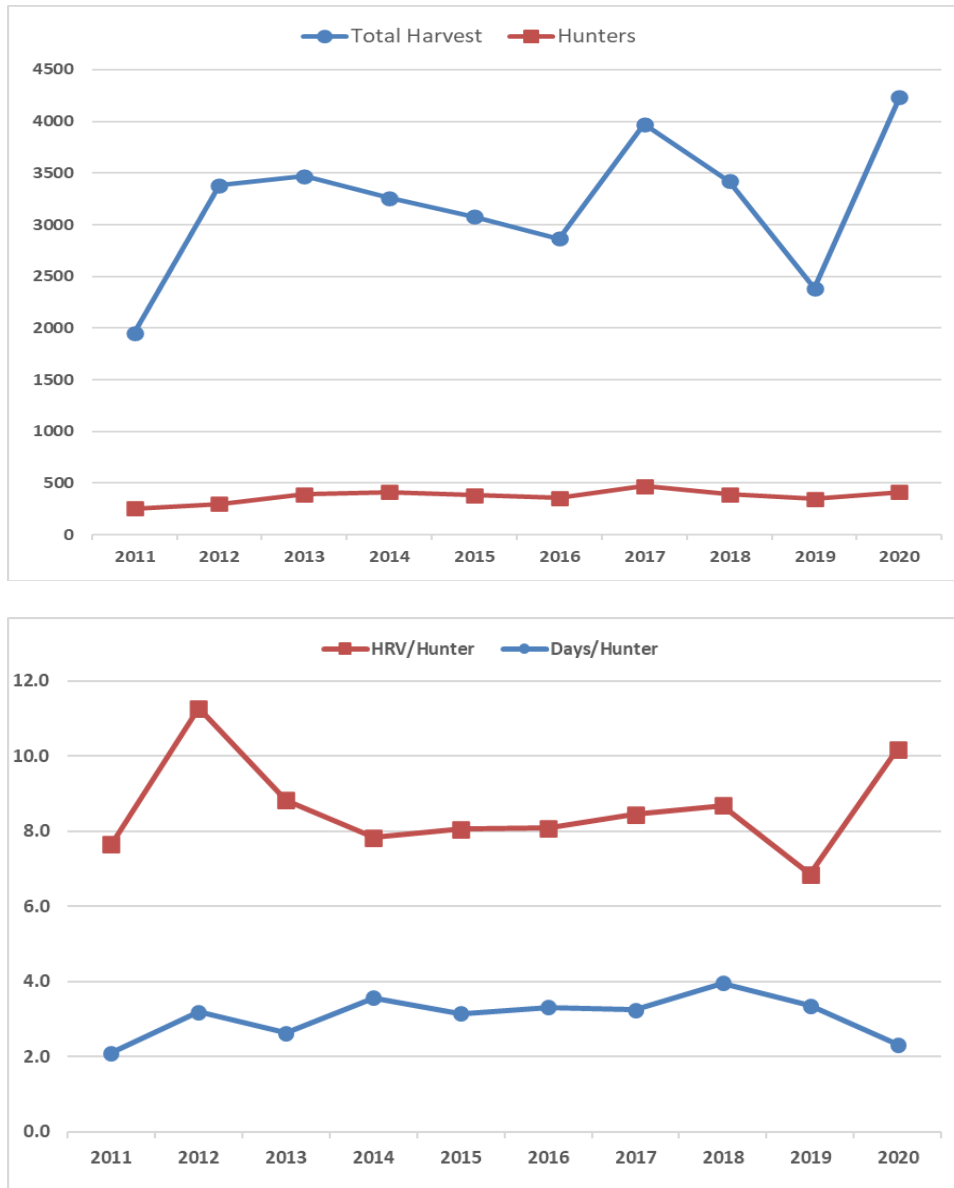


Figure 18. Top graph: Dove harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2011–2020. Bottom graph: Dove harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2011–2020.

## MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

The majority of the district is privately owned. However, WDFW and BLM own about 60,000 acres in the center of Lincoln County and about 15,000 acres in northwest Whitman County. For more information on BLM property, or to order maps, please visit the [BLM](#) website. To hunt on WDFW wildlife areas, you will need to display a WDFW Vehicle Access Pass (free with hunting or fishing license purchase) or a Discover Pass. For more information on WDFW lands, see the [wildlife areas webpage](#).

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maintains land open to the public for recreational purposes. Visitors to DNR land should be aware that a [Discover Pass](#) is required for access. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on DNR land can be found on the [DNR website](#).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also maintains lands associated with the Snake River open to the public for recreational purposes. Not all of these lands are open to hunting, so hunters will want to research beforehand. More information can be found [here](#).

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) has a limited entry youth waterfowl hunt (details available through [TNWR](#)) and allows elk hunting by permit only (permits allotted via WDFW special permit draw in June).

Riverside State Park and Mount Spokane State Park, along with all county parks and conservation areas in Spokane County, are open to public access, but NOT to hunting.

Several private timber companies allow hunting in Spokane County. The largest of these is Inland Empire Paper (IEP), which does allow vehicular access but will close gates to full-sized vehicles once there has been enough rain to soften the roads (typically in late October or early November). IEP does charge an access fee, but it is reasonable and comes in daily and annual versions. For more information on IEP and maps of their property please visit their website (<https://iepco.com/forestry/rec-use/>). Hancock is another large timber company in Spokane County, and at this time has signed a MOU with WDFW to allow non-motorized access for free to our hunters. WDFW Enforcement monitors their property. Please respect the agreement or this access could be lost. Hancock does not supply a map of their property; we recommend hunters use the Spokane County Assessor's online parcel map to identify Hancock ownership or invest in third-party software (e.g. OnX maps).

Throughout the district there are private landowners enrolled in WDFW hunt access programs (see Private Lands Program below and visit the [WDFW Private Lands Access](#) website).



## PRIVATE LANDS

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through a negotiated agreement. Landowners participating in a WDFW cooperative agreement retain liability protection provided under RCW 4.24.210. Landowners receive technical services, materials for posting (signs and posts), and in some cases, monetary compensation. In addition, lands under the agreement are well known by WDFW Enforcement.

Currently, the private lands access program includes five basic access agreement types: Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP), Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH), Hunt by Reservation (HBR), Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP), and Register to Hunt (RTH). As of July 2021, the total accessible acreage in District 2 is 16,572 acres in Spokane County, 38,260 in Lincoln County, and 79,454 in Whitman County. A summary of these acres by GMU and the program are in Table 4 below. The LHP in GMU 130 is managed by the Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA). Access to the LHP is only available through WDFW special permitting and CPWMA raffle permit hunts (see WDFW's 2021 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet). More information on the other four access programs and where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's [Hunt Planner Webmap](#) and the [WDFW Private Lands Access](#) page.

Stimson and Hancock timber companies have traditionally had MOUs with WDFW to allow for **non-motorized** access for free to our hunters, but please check with each company or WDFW to confirm these MOUs are still in place prior to hunting their properties. WDFW Enforcement monitors their properties and will ticket offenders. Please respect the non-motorized access agreement or this access could be lost.

Table 4. Acres of private land enrolled in WDFW access programs by GMU in District 2 as of July 2021.

Game Management Unit (GMU)	Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP)		Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH)		Hunt by Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)		Register to Hunt (RTH)	
	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres	Properties	Acres
124 Mt Spokane	3	428	Multiple Private Timber Parcels	~3000	2	370	0	0	0	0
127 Mica Peak	3	2,620			1	1,800	0	0	0	0
130 Cheney	9	5,476			0	0	1	2,878	0	0
133 Roosevelt	15	20,992	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
136 Harrington	14	17,268	6	5,509	0	0	0	0	0	0
139 Steptoe	16	14,192	5	6,151	34	26,139	0	0	0	0
142 Almota	12	16,666	1	336	20	22,457	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>77,642</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14,996</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50,766</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2,878</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>