

2023



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH &  
WILDLIFE**

KURT LICENCE, District Wildlife Biologist



Figure 1: Blakely Island black-tailed deer. Photo by Bruce Congdon

# 2023 DISTRICT 13 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Snohomish, San Juan, and Island Counties; Skagit County  
Islands

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## DISTRICT 13 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 13 contains all of Snohomish, Island, and San Juan counties, along with the islands of Skagit County (Figure 2). This includes most of Game Management Unit (GMU) 448 (Stillaguamish), the southern section of GMU 450 (Cascade), and the southern section of GMU 407 (North Sound) in Snohomish County. The San Juan Islands and Island County are divided into several GMUs including 411 (Orcas), 412 (Shaw), 413 (San Juan), 414 (Lopez), 415 (Blakely), 416 (Decatur), 417 (Cypress), 419 (Guemes), 420 (Whidbey), 421(Camano), 423 (Henry), and 424 (Stuart). GMU 410 contains all other San Juan County islands not already listed above.

District Wildlife Biologist Kurt Licence was welcomed to the district in 2022. Kurt studied Animal Physiology and Behavior at Arizona State University and has managed a variety of game and non-game species in Arizona, Oregon, and Washington. He looks forward to serving all hunters of District 13, so please don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or just want to say hello at (360) 503-1086. **Additionally, if you have photos of harvested or free-ranging wildlife in the district or have contacts to share regarding potential hunting access opportunities in District 13 please send them to [kurt.licence@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:kurt.licence@dfw.wa.gov).**

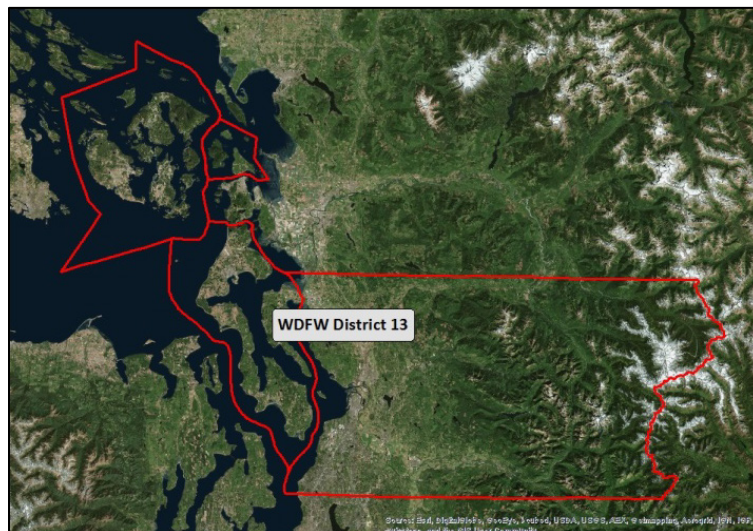
The 2022-23 winter trended cooler than average years and closely resembled the previous two winter outlooks consistent with La Nina conditions. Cool wet weather and snowpack in the North Puget Sound region remained near 100% of the 30-year median until March. In May, a sudden warming trend melted much of the snowpack in Washington which is in stark contrast to last year's spring storms that boosted the region to 143% of normal snowpack. As such, an increased risk of wildfires earlier in the summer and into the fall is predicted and supported by the evidence of an early wildfire season in Canada. Hunters should pay close attention to all rules on public lands and watch for any closures that might be implemented at the last minute if fire dangers get too high. If this happens, notices may be posted at property gates and on land manager/incident management websites ([Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Fire Management](#), [InciWeb](#), [Washington DNR Wildfires](#), [WDFW wildfire information](#)).



**Remember to be a good hunting and outdoor recreation steward. Be respectful of others. Don't hunt areas where there is heavy, regular recreation use. Please pick up after yourself and don't leave a gut pile out in the open – cover, bury, or hike it out and dispose of it properly.** For the benefit of all fish and wildlife, strongly consider voluntarily utilizing non-toxic ammunition even in locations and for game species where it is not required. Similarly, shotgun shells with biodegradable wads are becoming more available and are less harmful to the environment. Also avoid using natural deer/elk urine scent lures to limit the spread of communicable wildlife diseases like [Chronic Wasting Disease \(CWD\)](#). Although CWD has not been detected in Washington, natural deer/elk scent lures could be a source of CWD entry into the state. CWD is spread through infected animal body fluids and natural scent lures can be produced from high-risk sources (commercial cervid facilities in CWD positive areas).

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting for various species and game management units are available online at [Game Harvest Reports](#).

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Private Lands Access Program partners with landowners to provide the public with hunting access on private property. District 13 Private Lands Access Program sites are focused on providing waterfowl hunting opportunity through the Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program, and deer hunting access in District 13. We are continuously seeking to increase deer hunting access to private properties in San Juan and Island counties. WDFW will post sites as they become available [online](#). Hunters interested in waterfowl and deer hunting access should check the website regularly for updates.



**Figure 2: Map of District 13 in Washington State**

## SNOHOMISH COUNTY

In Snohomish County, a great online mapping tool called [SCOPI](#) can help hunters determine property ownership and boundaries.

Much of the eastern part of District 13 is public land, managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Two USFS ranger districts will have information on [road and trail conditions](#) for GMUs 448 and 450: the Darrington Ranger District (360-436-1155, north county) and the Skykomish Ranger District (360-677-2414, south county). Many roads have been decommissioned or are not maintained regularly; visitors should check the status of roads before heading to the National Forest. Trail conditions also vary, and information on specific trails, as well as many useful maps, are on the [Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Recreation webpage](#).

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northwest Region (360-856-3500) manages the rest of the open public land for hunting in Snohomish County. Hunters should be aware that many access roads to DNR lands have gates, and they should contact DNR to get the latest information about gates, available access routes, and road conditions. DNR land at Ebey Hill near the Jim Creek Naval Station is surrounded by private property and therefore, is largely inaccessible to the public. Hunters can find additional information about this site on the [DNR Recreation webpage](#).

Several private industrial timberland owners also manage land in GMU 448 (Stillaguamish). Their ownerships are shown on the Snohomish County Assessor's maps (SCOPI). Many roads are closed to motorized vehicle traffic, but some allow free walk-in or bike-in access. Hunters should scout areas early and be aware that parking at access gates may be very limited. Never block gates or drive beyond any open gate unless you are certain the gate will stay open until you return. Active logging is happening in some areas, so gates may be open in the morning, but closed and locked later in the day. Some access gates on private industrial timberlands will have signs that specify ownership and the rules that apply to the property. Hunters should follow all "No Parking" signs, as local landowners will tow vehicles found on their property.

Industrial timberlands in Snohomish County previously owned by the Weyerhaeuser Cooperation were sold to Hampton Lumber last year. Hunters should visit the [Hampton Lumber website](#) for more information regarding access to these lands.

Much of the Snohomish County portion of GMU 407 (North Sound) is dominated by homes on small acreages or farms. Hunters should secure permission from landowners to hunt on private land and should be mindful of where houses, livestock, outbuildings, and high human use areas are in relation to where hunting will take place. Portions of GMU 407 west of Highway 9 and Highway 203 are under firearm restrictions. Hunters should research land ownership and understand firearm limitations prior to hunting. A complete description of firearm restricted areas is on page 90 of Washington's 2023 [Big Game Hunting Regulations](#). A map showing no shooting areas and shotgun only areas within Snohomish County is available [online](#).

### **SAN JUAN AND ISLAND COUNTIES; SKAGIT COUNTY ISLANDS**

Very little public land exists within San Juan or Island counties or the islands of Skagit County, and firearm restrictions are in place in each jurisdiction. Ownership maps for San Juan County are available online from the [county assessor's office](#).

Hunting within San Juan County requires written permission from the landowner by county ordinance. In the San Juan Islands, access to islands not served by the Washington State Department of Transportation ferry system is by private boat or commercial water taxi. Private boat owners should check in advance on ownership and rules that may apply to docks and landings within the San Juan Islands, as most are privately owned. San Juan County owns and maintains eight docks with floats and eight boat ramps, and leases two outer island moorage docks. The San Juan County Visitor's Bureau provides a variety of road and dock maps [online](#).

Small groups of feral mouflon sheep have moved to Stuart Island. Mouflon are classified as harmful exotic wildlife ([WAC 220-640-200](#)). European rabbits occur on Orcas, San Juan, and Lopez islands. European rabbits are feral domestic mammals and thus are not under the authority of WDFW. WDFW does not regulate hunting mouflon or European rabbits. If hunters get written landowner permission and follow all local ordinances, these species may be hunted at any time, and there is no bag limit; however, firearm restrictions still apply.

Ownership maps for Island County are available through the [Island County assessor's office](#). Ownership maps for Skagit County islands are available [online](#).

## ELK



Figure 3: Photo by Karen Schmoll.

District 13 does not have an established elk (*Cervus canadensis*) herd within GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) or GMU 450 (Cascade) boundaries. Individual elk are seen occasionally in Island County and the eastern part of Snohomish County. Small bands occur infrequently along Highway 2 at the south end of GMU 448. These groups typically range between the towns of Baring and Grotto, but sometimes move as far west as Sultan.

Elk sometimes travel south of GMU 437 (Sauk) onto the Sauk Prairie and areas west of Darrington and east of Highway 9 in the north end of GMU 448. However, their presence is occasional and unpredictable. Elk harvest in GMU 448 is restricted to three point minimum, bull only.

Twenty-four hunters reported hunting in GMU 448 in 2021, but no elk were harvested. The last elk harvested in this unit were in 2018. Hunters planning to hunt in GMU 448 should plan on careful scouting and be aware that elk in the unit are presumed to be tied to the North Cascades elk groups to the north and the North Bend groups to the south and are thus only present sporadically in areas of GMU 448 within District 13.

GMU 450 is not open for elk hunting, although small groups may spend some time at the higher elevations found in the GMU, most likely in summer months.



## DEER



Figure 4: Whidbey Island Black-tailed deer; Photo by Tasha Bunch

### ADENOVIRUS HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE

As of mid-June of 2023, Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease (AHD) has not been detected in District 13. In 2021, an AHD outbreak impacted black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) in several of the district's GMUs. AHD is caused by a viral infection and is transmitted by direct contact between deer, either through bodily fluids or possibly airborne routes. This makes it more likely for the virus to spread in areas with high deer concentrations.

AHD was detected on British Columbia's Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island during the fall of 2020. AHD was then found on Orcas and San Juan islands during May and June 2021. The disease impacted deer on other islands in the San Juan Archipelago, including Blakely, Henry, Lopez, Shaw, and Stuart islands. In the fall of 2021, WDFW confirmed AHD on Whidbey Island.

Deer populations in impacted areas may appear noticeably smaller in some GMUs and unchanged in others compared to previous years. For example, deer harvest success on San Juan and Orcas islands dropped significantly (84% and 93% respectively) between 2020 and 2021, while harvest on Blakely Island increased slightly (Figure 5). In 2022, harvest increased slightly or stayed the same for all GMUs previously documented to have AHD. Deer have historically been overabundant in the San Juan Islands and on Whidbey Island creating wildlife management concerns associated with habitat degradation and disease dynamics. As such, reduction in deer abundance in these areas continues to be a district goal. WDFW will therefore



be maintaining all scheduled deer hunting seasons in AHD-impacted areas for the 2023 hunting season.

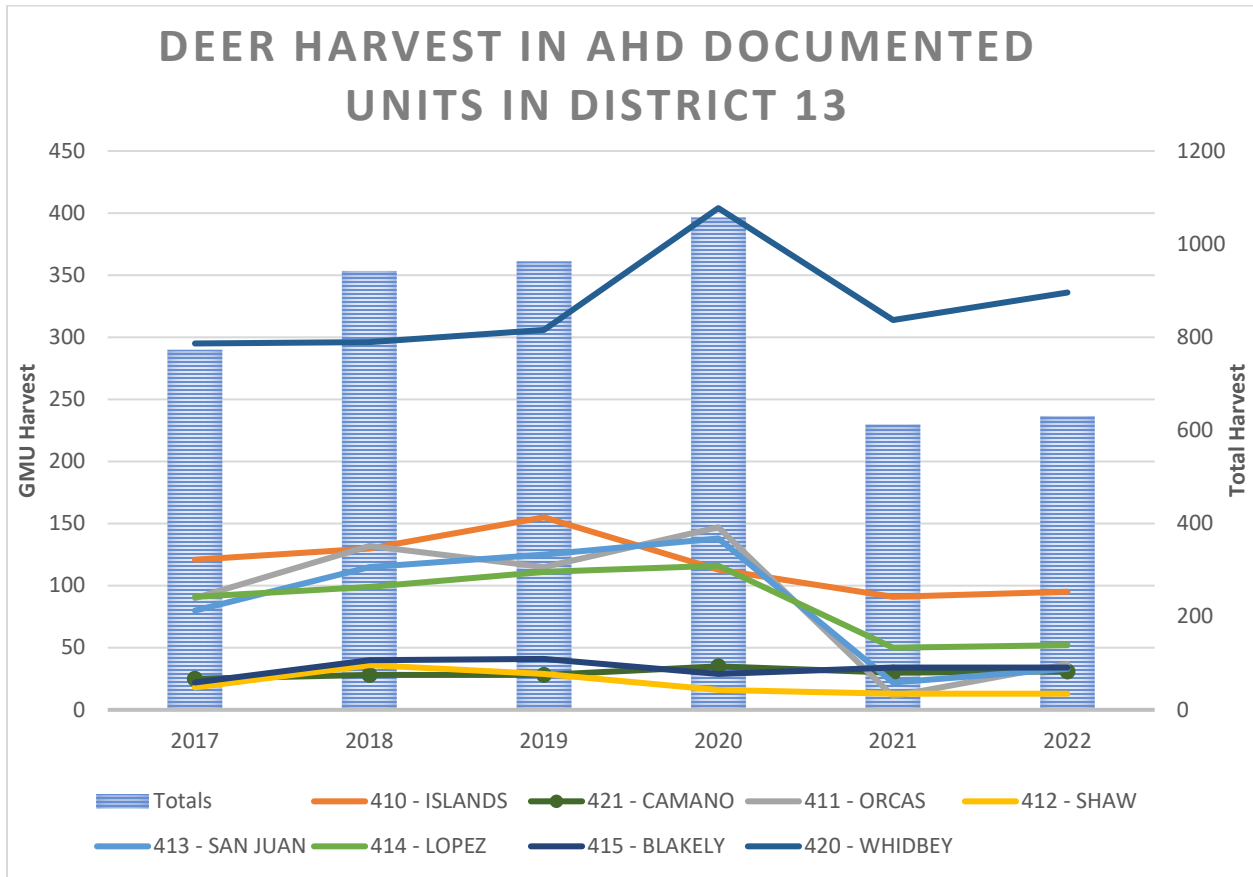


Figure 5: Deer harvest in AHD impacted GMUs in District 13 2017-2022

AHD does not pose a risk to livestock, pets, or people from contact or by consuming the meat. However, the use of disposable gloves is always recommended for handling any wildlife carcass. To reduce the risk of spreading AHD to new areas, hunters should use discretion before harvesting deer in AHD-impacted areas to avoid harvesting AHD-infected deer.

AHD symptoms include rapid or open mouth breathing, foaming, or drooling at the mouth, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), weakness, and emaciation. For more information on AHD, please visit the WDFW [website](#). If you suspect AHD in a deer you've encountered, please report your sightings [here](#). To limit further transmission of AHD, potentially infected carcasses should be disposed of by checking with local municipalities for disposal locations and methods, or by burying the carcass. Please do not haul the carcass to a different place on the landscape and dump it, as it risks spreading the disease to new areas. Feeding of deer should also be avoided.

## BLACK-TAILED DEER GMUS 407, 448, 450

District 13 includes GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) and portions of GMU 450 (Cascade) and 407 (North Sound). In 2022, 1,028 people reported hunting during the general deer seasons in GMU 448 and had a 14% success rate for a total of 119 harvested animals. Hunters who take the time to scout and learn the area will increase their likelihood of success. Hunters should plan and familiarize themselves with local conditions, including weather well in advance of hunting season.

Parking and walk-in access to DNR and private forest land is available at the intersection of Menzel Lake Road and the P-5000 Road. This gate is 4.6 miles south of the intersection of Alder Place and Menzel Lake Road in Granite Falls. Parking may be limited at other gated access areas in this general area. Hunters need to obey “No Parking” signs, as these signs are on private property and owners may tow vehicles found on their property.

At the south end of GMU 448, walk-in access is off the Sultan Basin Road. This area has mixed public and private ownership, and hunters should pay close attention to signs showing areas where discharging firearms is prohibited. Access to DNR lands requires a Discover Pass, as noted on signs and most DNR properties are gated (Figure 6).

Vehicle access is available on USFS roads throughout Snohomish County, but hunters should consult the [USFS website](#) for information on road conditions and closures.



Figure 6 : Typical DNR signs

GMU 450 includes portions of Districts 13 and 14. In 2022, 83 people reported hunting in the unit, and only two deer were harvested. Both deer were harvested using modern firearms. GMU 407 includes portions of Districts 12, 13, and 14. Most of the unit is private land, and some areas are firearm restricted. Hunters should consult page 90 of Washington’s 2023 [Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#) for more details on firearm restrictions in Snohomish

County. [The Snohomish County map](#) shows county ordinance no shooting areas and shotgun-only areas.

### **BLACK-TAILED DEER ISLAND UNITS**

Beginning in 2013, WDFW divided GMU 410 into several new units assigned to individual islands to provide more accurate harvest information and assist with developing management strategies for each island. GMU 410 now includes those few remaining islands that were not assigned an individual unit number. Islands in GMU 410 are not accessible by ferry, some do not have deer, and others are privately owned and prohibit public hunting. The GMU numbers for each island are as follows.

GMU 411—Orcas Island	GMU 412—Shaw Island
GMU 413—San Juan Island	GMU 414—Lopez Island
GMU 415—Blakely Island	GMU 416—Decatur Island
GMU 417—Cypress Island	GMU 419—Guemes Island
GMU 420—Whidbey Island	GMU 421—Camano Island
GMU 423—Henry Island	GMU 424—Stuart Island

Although accurate reporting for the island GMUs is improving, some hunters continue to misreport their hunt unit. This makes it extremely difficult to assess accurate harvest numbers for each island. We ask that hunters carefully review their harvest reports prior to submitting them. Accurately reporting the correct GMU, will advance our understanding of harvest on each island so that we can improve deer management.

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS 410-419



**Figure 7: Blakely Island Buck; Photo by Eric Long**

Public access within the San Juan Islands (San Juan and Skagit counties) is extremely limited, especially on Shaw, Blakely, Decatur and Guemes islands. Deer on the islands have historically been plentiful but typically smaller than their mainland relatives. Most hunting occurs on private property. In San Juan County, by county ordinance, written landowner permission is needed to hunt on private property.



WDFW is negotiating hunting access on some islands and will post properties as they are enrolled. We anticipate having at least seven properties available between Orcas, Lopez, and San Juan islands in 2023. More properties may be enrolled by the beginning of the season, check the WDFW Private Lands Access Program website for updated information. Enrolled properties will be open for the modern firearm season and run through the end of the year. Available sites will be posted by mid-September. Sites will include Mt. Grant on San Juan Island, owned by the San Juan County Land Bank. The Hunt by Reservation system offers a quality hunt experience by limiting the number of days a site is hunted while guaranteeing the site will be available to the reservation holder. To make a reservation and see available sites, visit the [WDFW hunting access link](#), create an account, choose a hunting site that is in the Hunt by Reservation category, and book the reservation. Reservations become available two weeks prior to the hunt day at 8 a.m. A fast internet connection improves the chances of securing a reservation. For questions about the Private Lands Access Program (PLAP), contact Rob Wingard, WDFW Private Lands Access Program biologist, at 360-755-7608.

Small parcels of public land are open to hunting on Lopez Island (GMU 414) and Stuart Island (GMU 424) on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands within the San Juan Islands National Monument. Hunters should call Brie Chartier 509-220-5976 for information.

The San Juan County Land Bank manages Lopez Hill on Lopez Island, which continues to allow limited hunting. Lopez Hill will be open for hunting from Sept. 1 through Oct. 31. More information is on the [Lopez Hill website](#) and the [San Juan County Land Bank website](#). For questions and county-required written permission, contact Outreach Coordinator Tanja Williamson at [tanjaw@sjclandbank.org](mailto:tanjaw@sjclandbank.org).

WDFW manages about 157 acres around, and including, Killebrew Lake on Orcas Island (GMU 411). Much of the property is made up of the lake itself or associated wetlands. Hunting is allowed on this property, but hunters should be aware of property boundaries and stay within WDFW boundaries (Figure 8). Parking is limited to a small pull-off area on Killebrew Lake Road.

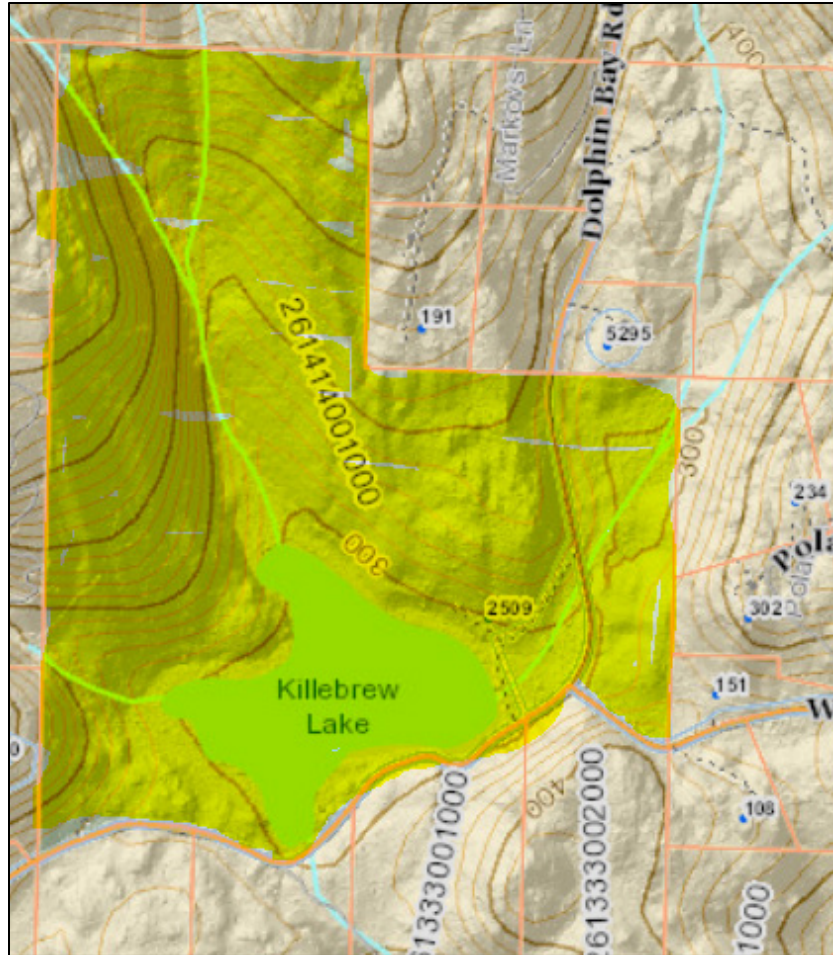


Figure 8: WDFW Killebrew Lake ownership highlighted in yellow

Overnight camping is not allowed in the National Monument, at Lopez Hill, or Killebrew Lake. Please check [Washington State Parks](#) and [San Juan County Parks](#) for camping information.

Cypress Island (GMU 417) is mostly owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), but some parcels are privately owned. Deer hunting is permitted on the DNR-owned land but hunting for other species is prohibited. Also note that Cypress Island is not included in the firearm restriction areas. Maps, trails, and access rules are [online](#). Cypress Island is not serviced by a ferry. Boat moorage and camping is available at several DNR maintained sites. Additional information is available on DNR's [website](#). DNR also owns a relatively small parcel at Cattle Point on San Juan Island (GMU 413); hunting is prohibited at this site.

## GMU 420 (WHIDBEY ISLAND) AND 421 (CAMANO ISLAND)

Deer are abundant, but very little public land is available for hunting on either Whidbey or Camano islands. Hunters should get permission from landowners before hunting on private property. [The Island County Public Works Department](#) owns a few small parcels that make up most of the public hunting lands on Whidbey and Camano islands. Hunters should contact them directly for maps and restrictions at 360-679-7331.

WDFW partnered with Whidbey Camano Land Trust to allow deer hunting on the Trillium Community Forest property. The Trillium Community Forest is open to hunting for the modern firearm, late modern firearm, late archery, and late muzzleloader seasons. The Trillium Community Forest is closed to other recreational activities when it is open to hunting. Hunters should contact the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#) for additional information regarding maps and more information. A [map](#) that can be filtered to show properties open to hunting is also available on the Whidbey Camano Land Trust website.

Island County Parks manages several properties that allow hunting. These include Camano Ridge, Putney Woods, Portions of the Greenbank area, and the Kettles Trails area. [Use the Island County Parks webmap](#) and filter by hunting available to view these areas. Be very careful with property boundaries, especially at Kettles because the western boundary is shared with Fort Ebey State Park where hunting is not allowed.

Deer hunting at Naval Air Station Whidbey (WNAS) is open for archery only to military personnel. All hunters need to buy the installation hunting permit (\$13) and pass a background check. This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. For more information, contact WNAS Biologist John Phillips at 360-257-4024. Additional information is also available [online](#).

## BEAR



Figure 9: Photo by Greg Greene

Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) can be found throughout Snohomish County and hunters can pursue a range of hunting experiences in the district during the long season. WDFW encourages hunters to carefully observe bears prior to shooting to ensure there are no dependent cubs with the targeted bear. Successful bear hunters must submit an upper premolar tooth from the harvested bear to WDFW by Dec. 1, 2023. The Department uses the collected tooth samples to determine the age of harvested bears which helps inform bear harvest management. Hunters can also look up the age of their harvested bear [online](#). Tooth collection envelopes are available at all

[WDFW regional offices](#). Additional information on black bear hunting regulations and tooth submission requirements can be found on page 68 of Washington's [2023 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet](#).

Black bears spend most of their time in heavily forested areas, however, most harvests occur in open areas such as clear-cuts and alpine meadows. Harvest opportunities in these open areas are often driven by berry production which can vary annually by location and elevation. In lower elevations, successful hunters often access gated timberlands on foot or by mountain bike where they focus on clear-cuts and decommissioned logging roads. Hunters also find success and memorable experiences pursuing black bears in high elevation alpine meadows by targeting bears feeding on huckleberries.

Black bear harvest and success rates were slightly above the previous year during the 2022 season in GMUs 407, 448, and 450. During the 2022 season, 264 hunters harvested 26 bears in GMU 407 (10% success), 556 hunters harvested 66 bears in GMU 448 (12% success), and 76 hunters harvested 24 bears in GMU 450 (32% success). Males comprised over 60% of the harvest in the three GMUs combined.



## COUGAR



Figure 10: Photo by Rich Beausoleil

GMUs 448 and 450 are hunt areas with a harvest guideline of eight to 11 cougars (*Puma concolor*) for 2023. In these GMUs, the WDFW Director may close the cougar late hunting season after Jan. 1 if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. Cougar hunters may hunt from Jan. 1 until the hunt area harvest guideline is reached and the GMU is closed by the Director, or until April 30, whichever occurs first. Each cougar hunter must verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in GMUs 448 and 450 by calling the toll-free cougar hunting hotline at 1-866-364-4868 or visiting our [website](#). The hotline and website will be updated weekly. Hunters need a 2024-2025 cougar tag to hunt cougars in April 2024.

## MOUNTAIN GOAT

Due to declines in annual mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) population estimates, special permits are no longer available for the 2023 hunt season in the Boulder River North goat hunt area, which is within the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. All goat permit holders in the nine years the unit was open were successful, except last two years. In 2018, 2019, and 2020 hundreds of [mountain goats were moved from Olympic National Park and released into the North Cascades](#) (Figure 11). These goats are wearing radio collars, and some may move into the Boulder River North Unit.



Figure 11: Mountain goat translocation; Photos by Matt Hamer

## PHEASANT

Pen-raised pheasants will be released this fall on release sites, which are mapped in the [Western Washington Pheasant Program booklet](#). In Snohomish County, public pheasant and waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the [Snoqualmie Wildlife Area](#). There are two access sites on the Ebey Island Unit (Figure 12). The primary access site is off Home Acres Road just off Highway 2 (marked 'Main Parking Lot' below). The west side of the property can be accessed through the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. Pheasants will be released on both the west and east parcels of the unit. The middle portion is open for hunting, but a motorless watercraft is required. The public is not allowed on the dike. This is private property owned by Drainage District 1.

The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road. The Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units will each get 35-45 birds. They will be released on Friday and Saturday evenings, and on a varied schedule for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. All pheasant release sites on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be open and follow the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. hours. Early entry and late exit are not allowed. The Ebey Island Unit has limited public access during the non-hunting season and bird dog training is not permitted. Dogs are not allowed except while hunting. Bird dog training is allowed on the Crescent Lake Unit at designated sites.



**Figure 12: Parking and pheasant release areas available at Ebey Island**



In Island County, pheasant release sites on Whidbey Island include Bayview, Outlying Field (OLF) Coupeville, and Sea Plane Base (SPB) sites. WDFW partners with private landowners to provide pheasant release sites at Bayview, Arnold Farm and Zylstra Road. Hunters should check [online](#) for the location of specific sites. Fifteen to 20 birds will be released on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings, except for Bayview, where releases will be Saturday and Sunday mornings. The Bayview pheasant release site is only open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays.

The SPB (Upper and Lower Game Ranges) and OLF Coupeville on the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station will be open this year. Access to the SPB pheasant release site is open to all hunters. All hunters (military and civilian) need to buy the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Check in at the Torpedo Road gate and sign in and out of the logbook for the Sea Plane Base and at the logbook in the parking lot for OLF Coupeville. Civilian hunters will need to submit to a background check before hunting Navy property. As a result, people should plan well in advance and all hunters should check with WNAS Biologist John Phillips at 360- 257-1009 for updated rules and requirements and to be sure that no sites are closed for safety and security reasons during the pheasant season.



## BAND-TAILED PIGEON



Figure 13: Band-tailed pigeon roost by Creative Commons Zero

Hunters can harvest band-tailed pigeons (*Patagioenas fasciata*) Sep. 17 through Sep. 25 in the 2023-24 hunting season. A migratory bird authorization card is required, and the daily bag limit is two birds. The birds are in managed forest lands, coastal shorelines, and alpine habitats with mixed conifer age classes that provide feeding areas next to roosting areas. These types of habitats are often on private timberlands, federal forests, or DNR lands so expect the same gated conditions described above. Band-tailed pigeons have strong affinities for the same areas, so scouting before your hunt is important. Mandatory harvest reporting deadline for band-tailed pigeon is Sep. 30, 2023.

## GROUSE

Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) is the most common grouse species in District 13, with sooty (blue) grouse (*Dendragapus fuliginosus*) found at higher elevations. Ruffed grouse are found at elevations below 2,500 feet. Both species favor mixed timber habitats, often near water and ridgelines. Hunters should look for mixed conifer and hardwood areas, especially in riparian areas, to find grouse. Abandoned or low use logging roads are good places to look for grouse as well.

In 2019, WDFW's Region 4 (North Puget Sound) began collecting the wings and tail fans of harvested grouse. From the collected wings and tail fans, biologists can infer the sex, age, and species of the harvested grouse. This information will increase our understanding of grouse harvest trends and will be used to inform future grouse management decisions. Hunters are encouraged to voluntarily submit wings and tail fans at collection sites (Figure 14). Collection site locations are listed on WDFW's [website](#).

Grouse season dates for the 2023 season will open on Sep. 15 and will remain open until Jan. 15, 2024. This adjustment to season dates was made to limit the harvest of adult female and juvenile grouse which are especially vulnerable during early September.



Figure 14: Ruffed grouse and grouse wing collection site



## WATERFOWL



Figure 15: Spencer Island hunt; Photo by Kory Vaught

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, refer to WDFW's Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting webpage. WDFW recently published a [web map application](#) depicting the abundance of marine birds throughout Washington's Salish Sea waters. The application also details abundance trends for game and non-game focal species. Hunters may find the application valuable when planning future outings.

Annual breeding waterfowl surveys were completed this year for the second time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Surface feature and mallard counts were high in the Northern Puget Lowlands this year, signaling that local breeding conditions were favorable because of the cool, wet spring. As always, weather conditions during the fall and winter will influence where birds congregate and how the waterfowl migration progresses. Waterfowl hunting in District 13 should be productive if weather conditions are favorable. Typically, we see a slow start to the hunting season. During mild winters, ducks tend to stay in more northerly areas of British Columbia. However, as colder fronts move in and conditions become colder and wetter, hunters can expect increasing numbers of waterfowl to arrive in District 13.

### **AVIAN INFLUENZA**

Avian Influenza (bird flu) is a viral illness commonly found in birds. Wild birds can carry several avian influenza viruses, many of which do not seriously affect them. Several different bird flu strains have been identified around the world, including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) strains. During spring of 2022, HPAI spread quickly in all four flyways, including the Pacific Flyway which includes District 13. This strain of HPAI has been found in backyard poultry flocks, commercial poultry, wild waterfowl, and wild and captive raptors (hawks, falcons, etc.).

The risk to human health from avian influenza strains is believed to be minimal. However, it is important to note that there have been no known cases of humans contracting the HPAI virus from healthy, free-flying wild birds anywhere in the world. Also, there is no evidence that properly cooked waterfowl (or domestic poultry) can sicken people. While it is unlikely that hunters could contract HPAI from wild birds, bird hunters who have domestic poultry or other birds at home, or who may visit domestic poultry markets or exhibitions (such as fairs), are asked to take special precautions to ensure that all equipment (boots, clothes, vehicles, dogs, etc.) are cleaned and disinfected to prevent the spread of diseases like HPAI.

If you observe sick or dead wild birds, report it on [WDFW's online reporting tool](#). Hunter harvested birds will be tested during fall hunting seasons. Please cooperate with biologists if they should ask to test your harvested birds and see page 32 of the [2022-2023 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) for more information.



## **SNOHOMISH COUNTY**

Public waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. There are two access sites for the Ebey Island Unit. The first access site is off Home Acres Road near Highway 2, known as the Main Parking Lot. Access the west side of the property by using the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. During pheasant hunting season, waterfowl hunters and all other users may only enter and hunt the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Early entry and late exit are not allowed. The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road that provide access. The Ebey Island Unit has limited public access during the non-hunting season. Bird dog training is not permitted, and dogs are not allowed at the Ebey Island Unit during the nonhunting season. Bird dog training is allowed on the Crescent Lake Unit at designated sites.

The Spencer Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area is accessible by boat and walk-in access. Parking for the Spencer Island Unit will be a quarter mile back from the bridge to the island near the sewage treatment facility buildings. Parking is not allowed on the road or areas near the bridge. There is a 15 shot (on person) limit per hunter in this unit.

Smith Island Estuary Restoration site is owned by Snohomish County who has partnered with WDFW to provide waterfowl hunting access to the intertidal 270 acres. The parking lot has seven spots available, and the site is “Register to Hunt” to track the amount of use at the property. Please be mindful that the property is tidally influenced, and water levels can change dramatically. A small hand launch is available. Please check the [WDFW Private Lands website](#) for more detailed information about the property.

The [Leque Island Tidal Restoration project](#) was completed during the fall of 2019 and the unit is open again for waterfowl hunting. Hunters with small boats that can be hand-launched can access the unit from the western parking lot south of SR 532 along Davis Slough. There is an additional parking lot and walking path along Eide road on the eastern edge of the unit for hunting access. Be sure to observe the “No Shooting Safety Area” along the eastern walking path and be courteous to the variety of users in this area. The city of Stanwood is currently building an additional boat launch at Hamilton Landing Park that will provide access to the unit for larger boats.



**Figure 16: Snohomish County Leucistic Mallard; Photo by Kyle Probst**

At this time, we have tentative agreements with landowners for eight Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program sites, located primarily in the Stillaguamish Delta. These sites are all found on private lands enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. Two Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program sites will be “Hunt by Reservation” and one of these sites was planted with barley. More sites may be added in the fall. More information about individual sites, including maps and access rules, are on the [WDFW Hunting Access website](#). Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program sites on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every site will be available on opening day. We expect all sites will be open by mid-November. For questions about the Private Lands Access Program (PLAP), contact Rob Wingard, WDFW Private Lands Access Program biologist, at 360-755-7608.

The Hunt by Reservation program offers a quality hunt experience by limiting the number of days a site is hunted while guaranteeing the site will be available to the reservation holder. To make a reservation, visit the [WDFW hunting access link](#), create an account, choose a hunting site that is in the “Hunt by Reservation” category, and book the reservation. Reservations become available two weeks prior to the hunt day at 8 a.m. A fast internet connection improves the chances of securing a reservation.

Robust numbers of snow geese coming into Washington are likely this winter. In addition to the traditional high concentrations in the Stanwood area, snow geese are expanding in Snohomish County, and we expect that at least 5,000 to 10,000 birds will spend some time in the Snohomish River system. The 2022-23 snow goose season is Oct. 15 – Nov. 27; Dec. 10 – Jan. 29; and Feb. 11 – 21. However, Leque Island and that portion of Snohomish County east of Interstate 5 will be closed Feb. 11 – 21, 2023. The Port Susan Game Reserve, which restricted Canada goose hunting, was eliminated in 2016. Hunters should consult page 26 of the [Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game pamphlet](#) for additional closures on state-managed lands and should check the [WDFW Hunting Access website](#) for potential additions to snow goose sites that may be added to the Private Lands Access Program.

## PORT SUSAN BAY

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) allows hunting over tidelands under their ownership at Port Susan Bay. However, the restored area and a 150-yard buffer around it is off-limits to hunting, and there is no hunting access from TNC property (Figure 17). For further information regarding hunting TNC ownership, contact the TNC Puget Sound Stewardship Coordinator at 360-419-3140 or [washington@tnc.org](mailto:washington@tnc.org).

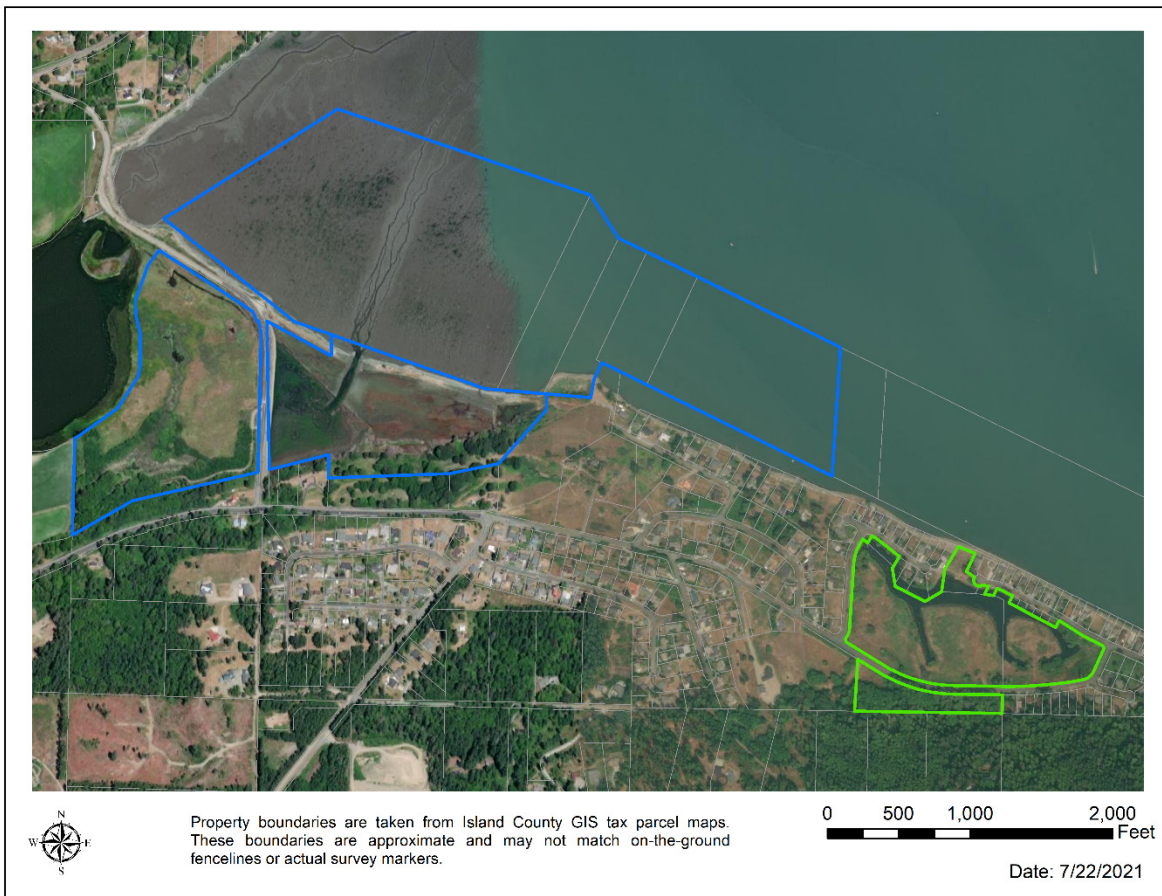


Figure 17: Map of restricted hunting area owned by The Nature Conservancy



## WHIDBEY ISLAND

Access to public lands on Whidbey Island is extremely limited. Hunters should be aware that Deer Lagoon is closed to hunting by a county ordinance that restricts the discharge of firearms. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust owns parcels at Crockett Lake and Dugualla Bay, and their ownerships are closed to hunting. Land Trust Dugualla Bay parcels are shown in Figure 18 below. Hunters should contact the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#) with any questions about boundaries and ownership at Crockett Lake.



**Figure 18: Whidbey Camano Land Trust (blue) and Dugualla Community (green) parcels closed to hunting at Dugualla Bay**

Waterfowl hunting on Naval Air Station Whidbey Island is open to military personnel and their guests. All hunters (military and civilian) need to buy the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Access the duck blinds by entering the Sea Plane Base (SPB) gate. Non-military guests must be in the same vehicle as the military hunter. For more information, contact WNAS Biologist John Phillips at 360-257-4024.

## CAMANO ISLAND

Iverson Spit Preserve is managed by Island County Parks, within the Island County Public Works Department (Figure 19). Hunting is allowed at Iverson Spit outside of the dike in the intertidal area. Questions about the preserve should be directed to the Island County Public Works Department at 360-679-7331.



Figure 19: Iverson Spit Preserve Park boundaries

The tidelands near English Boom County Park on the north end of Camano Island include some privately-owned parcels. Hunters wanting to access tidelands in this area must obey all signs showing private ownership, no trespassing, or no hunting. These signs are legitimate, legal, and show which parcels are privately owned and therefore not open to the public.