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Washington
Department of
**FISH &
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 16 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Clallam and West Jefferson Counties

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District Biologists Shelly Ament and Anita McMillan collaring a deer fawn.

District 16 includes Clallam and western Jefferson counties on the Olympic Peninsula (Figure 1). The district has eight game management units (GMUs). Two eastern GMUs, Coyle GMU 624 and Olympic GMU 621, extend into eastern Jefferson County, which is within District 15. Reference the District 17 Hunting Prospects for information on Matheny GMU 618.

Each GMU in District 16 has its own unique mix of land ownerships: private residential, private agricultural, private forest industrial, state, and federal forest, and park lands. Higher-elevation forestlands are primarily in public ownership: U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Olympic National Park (ONP). Lower elevation foothills are generally private industrial forest lands and Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed lands.

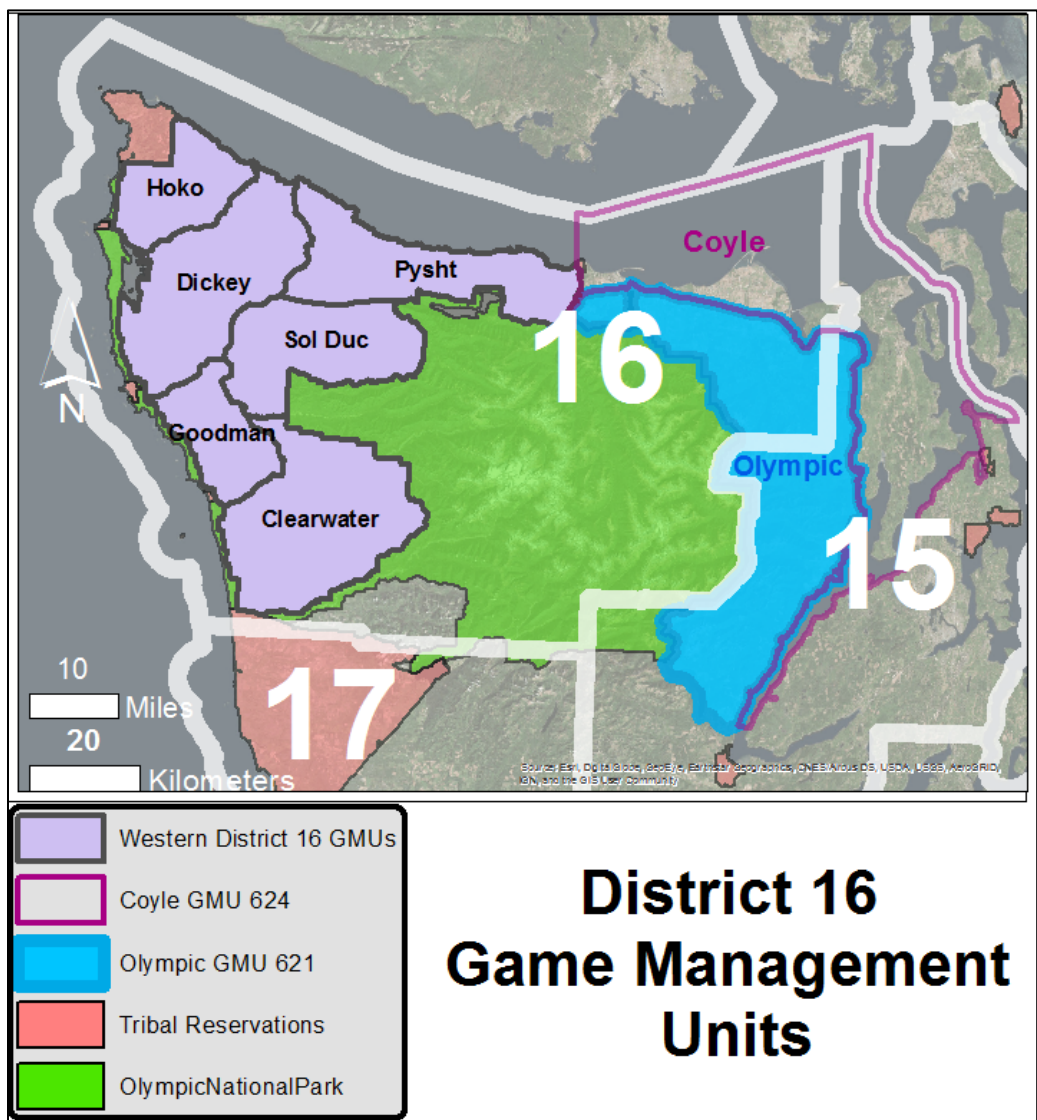


Figure 1. District 16 GMUs. Coyle and Olympic GMUs extend into District 15

Table 1. District 16 Deer and Elk Annual Harvest

District 16* Deer & Elk Annual Harvest									
Species	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Elk - Bulls Total	235	196	281	323	306	213	213	286	213
Elk - Bulls State	160	126	208	226	229	135	141	184	123
Elk - Bulls Tribal	75	70	73	97	77	75	72	101	90
Elk - Antlerless Total	51	51	50	70	50	27	44	29	27
Elk - Antlerless State	20	14	8	28	26	2	3	4	2
Elk - Antlerless Tribal	31	37	42	42	24	25	41	25	25
Deer - Bucks Total	871	1081	1120	1115	967	872	1115	982	987
Deer - Bucks State	771	976	995	1000	867	775	993	884	881
Deer - Bucks Tribal	101	105	125	115	100	97	122	98	106
Deer - Antlerless Total	77	105	110	124	97	149	189	150	130
Deer - Antlerless State	48	69	85	78	66	117	138	115	84
Deer - Antlerless Tribal	29	36	25	46	31	32	51	35	46

*Includes GMU 601, 602, 603, 607, 612, 615, 621, 624 (GMU 621 & 624 are in both District 15 & 16)

Table 2. District 16 Game Species Annual Harvest

District 16 Game Species State Hunter Annual Harvest									
Game Species	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
BEAR	118	90	119	152	94	101	87	66	66
COUGAR	2	9	8	5	12	2	8	5	2
DUCKS (Clallam & Jefferson Co)	5744	10365	7208	8682	6999	6057	11540	8093	7253
GEESE - September (early season)	88	84	388	96	154	149	272	97	136
GEESE (late season)	223	432	353	364	318	183	713	355	331
BRANT - Clallam County	90	180	156	46	89	90	Closed	Closed	Closed
FOREST GROUSE (Clallam & Jefferson Co)	1761	3814	3153	6868	2958	2590	4374	4794	5356
MOURNING DOVE (Clallam & Jefferson Co)	8	0	30	51	36	0	54	67	11
QUAIL (Clallam & Jefferson Co)	17	22	101	43	31	150	236	164	500
SNIFE	0	77	213	0	0	0	45	4	0
HARE/RABBIT (Clallam & Jefferson Co)	15	20	185	32	71	54	60	45	54

Includes GMU 601, 602, 603, 607, 612, 615, 621, 624 (harvest in entire GMU, including harvest in District 15)



EAST DISTRICT 16

The eastern portion of the district is the Dungeness Basin (western GMU 624 Coyle and northern portion of GMU 621 Olympic). The Dungeness watershed offers a rich habitat diversity in high elevation, rain-shadow mountains to lower watershed. The prairie is now a rural mix of small and large farms with scattered developments. The lower basin has some private duck hunting club ownerships and a few public waterfowl hunting areas. Waterfowl hunting opportunities have expanded in the eastern portion of the district in recent years. The Dungeness Basin and the smaller watersheds east of the Elwha are areas where deer abundance results in frequent complaints. Highly visible deer occur in the Coyle and Olympic GMUs as well as lower elevation forestlands with an ideal ratio of forest openings. Some of the Olympic GMU habitat includes large areas of USFS mature forest habitat that offers less forage for ungulates. Deer Area 6020, where there are “any deer” regular seasons, typically features more deer for harvest. Access to private ownership poses a challenge for hunters in District 16 and hunters need to obtain permission to access target properties.

WEST DISTRICT 16

The west end (Hoko, Dickey, Sol Duc, Goodman, and Clearwater) has the bulk of elk in the district, while deer are sparse in these same GMUs. Various sub herds of elk are located within District 16. Many elk herds are year-round residents that remain in lower elevation habitats. Some herds regularly migrate into higher elevations, most always on ONP. Hunters are likely to find harvest opportunities as elk move out of ONP during the hunting season. The ONP areas vary from the Outer Coast Park strip to the eastern portion of the Clearwater (GMU 615), which includes a large block of DNR-managed land that borders ONP.

Varied hunting opportunities exist within District 16, from waterfowl hunting on designated shoreline and wetland areas along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to forest grouse, deer, elk, bear, and cougar hunting on private commercial and public forest land. Both state (DNR) and federal (USFS) lands provide hunting opportunities for a variety of species within the district.

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The elk within District 16 are Roosevelt elk. District 16 encompasses various sub herds of the Olympic elk herd, one of ten herds identified in the state. Elk numbers peaked in the late 1970s, with a conservative estimate of about 12,000 elk outside of Olympic National Park based on historical harvest information. Past elk population estimates were based on a combination of harvest data, telemetry studies, and mark-resight surveys. These techniques yielded a 2000 fall population estimate of about 8,600 in the GMUs surrounding Olympic National Park. The current population of the Olympic elk herd is likely lower.

Overall, the elk harvest opportunity is for 3-point minimum. Much of the elk hunting within the eastern portion of the district is restricted to a limited entry (state hunters – permit only, 3-point minimum, bull-only harvest) with antlerless harvest used as a damage management tool when necessary. Elk hunting opportunities are generally good west of the Elwha River, with possibilities on DNR-managed lands, USFS lands, and private timberlands. However, several areas limit vehicular access or require permits to access. Hunters should obtain permission to hunt on private lands and must obey all posted signs and regulations. Some elk herds migrate down from high alpine meadows in Olympic National Park to lowland winter range. Public lands and private commercial timberlands bordering the park are good prospects. Hunters often scout for elk that leave ONP and travel along major river drainages. Keep in mind that it is unlawful to hunt in ONP.

Along with elk come some challenges with elk damage, some of which WDFW manages using harvest and hunting pressure. WDFW's conflict specialists manage these elk damage areas and frequently use master hunter permittees to put pressure on the herds and encourage habitat use patterns that limit damage and support public safety. If interested, review the information to sign up for the [Master Hunter Permit Program](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/master-hunter). wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/master-hunter

Radio-Collars and Markers: Local elk studies and ongoing monitoring require marking elk using transmitting markers or other tags. The radio-collar or ear tag markers should be marked with contact information identifying it as property of WDFW, university or other researchers. Recovering radio-collars from marked animals can provide biologists with valuable information. Please return any radio-collars from animals you harvest. When drugs are used to capture an animal, it is marked with an ear tag printed with directions to call the Department before consuming the meat. If you harvest an animal that you can't consume due to potential drug residues in the meat, the Department will re-issue your original transport tag, special permit, or special permit points as appropriate. For more information reference page 46 of the 2023 WDFW Big Game pamphlet.

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

Hunters can harvest elk from any of the District 16 GMUs. Past harvest records can help to inform which areas hunters should consider for future harvests. Harvest has been one of the reliable measurements the Department uses to monitor elk on the Olympic Peninsula. WDFW generates game harvest report data using mandatory hunting reports, follow-up phone surveys, and permit reports. For other species, the small game hunter questionnaire, trapper report of catch, and cougar pelt sealing also inform data. The [2022 Game Status and Trend Report](#) wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02367 and [game harvest reports](#) are available on the WDFW website.

West District 16 – The Clearwater (GMU 615), Dickey (GMU 602), Goodman (GMU 612), and Sol Duc (GMU 607) have the highest elk harvest in District 16. These units contain large areas of public land, much of it without restricted access. Be aware that all these GMUs include gated roads, some of which allow hunter access and others that are closed to public access.

The Hoko (GMU 601), Pysht (GMU 603), and Coyle (GMU 624) have very limited opportunities for general season hunters. Most of these units contain private land and many of the roads on timberlands are gated. Elk groups in GMU 603 (Pysht) have increased slightly in the recent years.

A thesis on elk with research conducted in the Hoko (GMU 601) and Dickey (GMU 602) is available [online](#).

East District 16 – The Olympic GMU 621 is limited to state permit elk and tribal elk harvest. WDFW doesn't recommend GMU 624 (Coyle) as an elk hunting destination because it features limited opportunities. The season remains open for 3-point minimum. The elk population and associated hunting opportunities may increase in GMU 624 but are most likely outside of District 16.

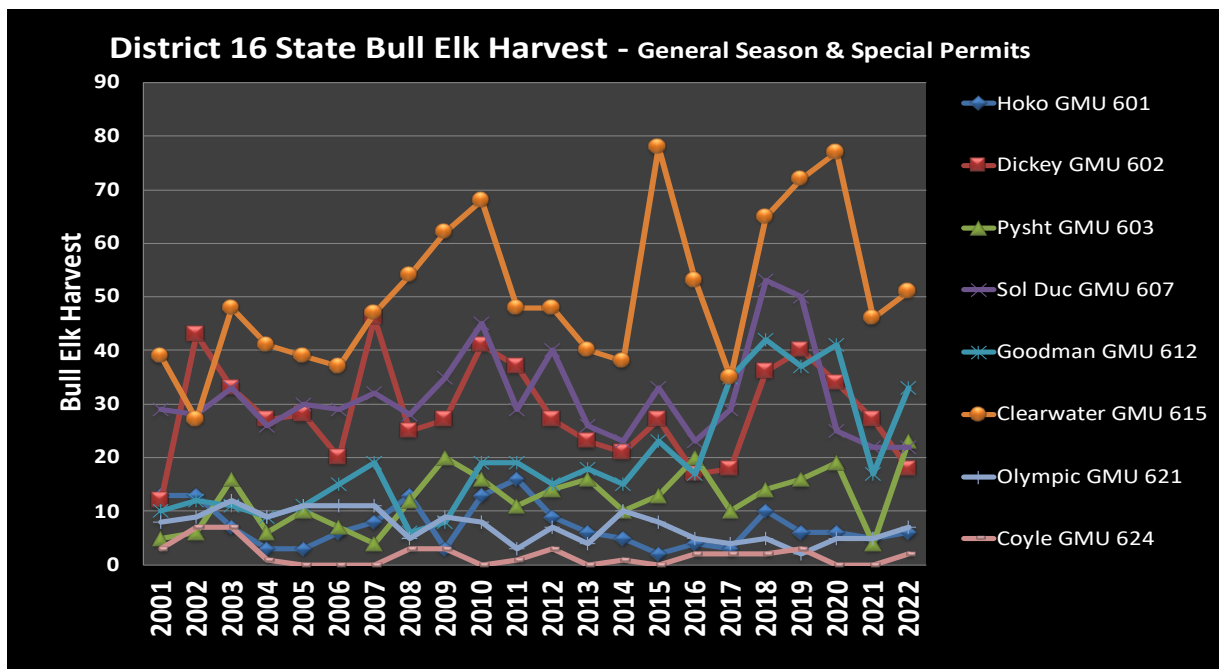
WDFW establishes hunting seasons not only to allow recreational use, but also to manage elk populations' habitat use patterns within the district. The Department designed Elk Area 6071 within GMU 621 and 624, to specifically address challenges with the Dungeness/Sequim elk herd. Harvest within Elk Area 6071 is limited to damage control, occasionally involving Master Hunter elk hunts from the Region 6 permit list. Reference District 15 [Hunting Prospects](#) for more information on elk harvest within GMU 621 and GMU 624.

DISTRICT 16 ELK HUNTING AND HARVEST RECORDS

Hunters can reference [annual harvest reports](#) on the WDFW website. The reports represent harvest, hunting effort, and success, which mandatory hunter reports and follow-up surveys help to inform for a correction factor of non-response bias.

Bull Elk Harvest

The distribution of Olympic Peninsula elk harvest reflects the general elk abundance, with most harvest occurring in the western GMUs. The west end elk are well distributed, with herds scattered throughout the GMUs. The east Olympic Peninsula elk herds are not as well distributed, with herds having distinct use patterns within watersheds. Hunting the east Olympic Peninsula elk takes more deliberate planning to find the herds and make the most of elk harvest opportunities. The entire GMU 621- Olympic is permit only for state hunter elk harvest.



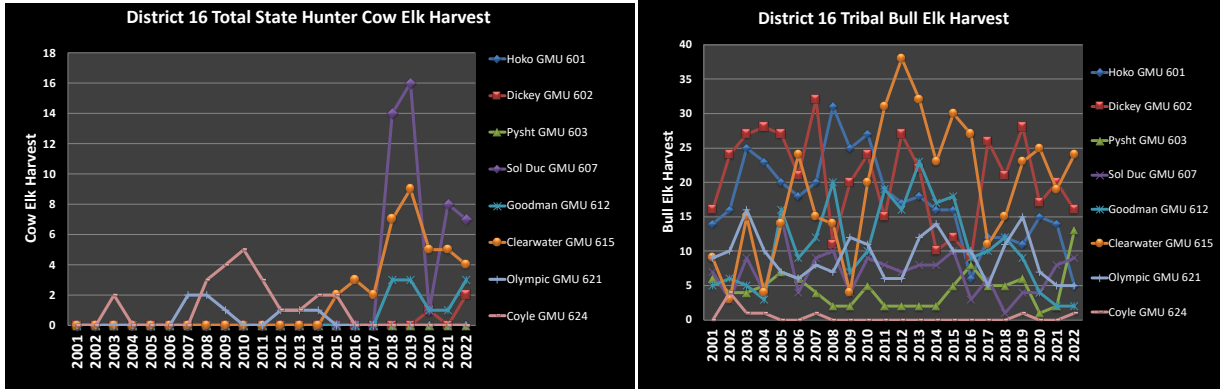
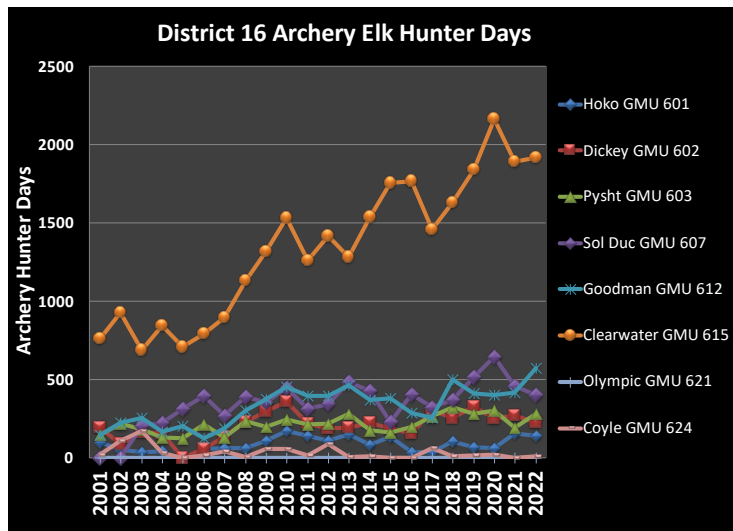


Figure 2. District 16 State Bull and Cow Elk Harvest and Tribal Bull harvest (**DRAFT** for Tribal harvest data; find updates at nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/).

The bull elk harvest within the western GMUs (GMUs 602, 607, 612 and 615) consistently contributes the highest bull harvest levels, while the northwestern to eastern GMUs (GMUs 601, 603, 621, 624,) consistently have low bull harvest levels, rarely reaching a GMU harvest of 20 bull elk annually (Figure 2).

Archery Elk Hunting

Archery elk hunting in District 16 predominately occurs in GMU 615 (Figure 3). GMU 602, GMU 603, and GMU 612 have much fewer archery hunter days, ranging between 200 and 400 days annually. GMU 601, GMU 621, and GMU 624 had the lowest level of archery hunter days at less than 200.



Muzzleloader Elk Hunting

Muzzleloader elk hunting was concentrated in GMU 602 and 607 for many years (Figure 4). This changed in 2015 when muzzleloader elk hunting opened in GMU 615 and GMU 612. As the total days spent in GMU 612 and 615 continue increasing the overall trend in muzzleloader elk hunter days increased. GMU 615 has the bulk of those days.

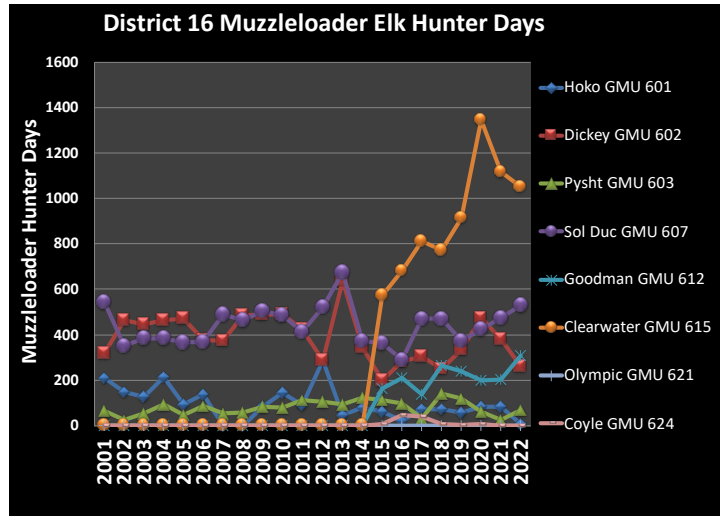
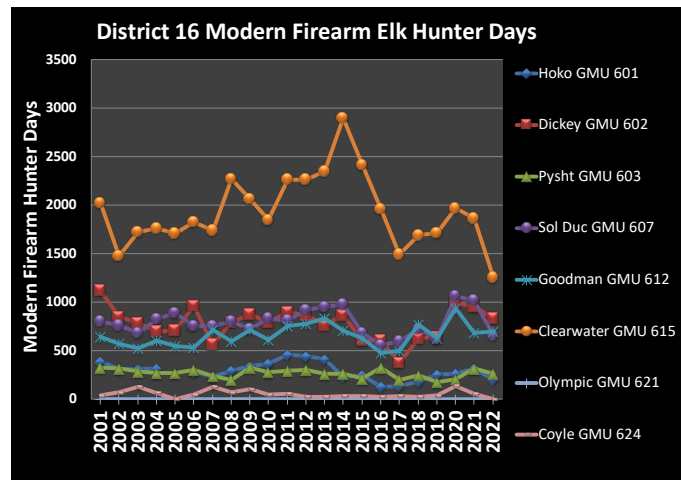


Figure 4. Muzzleloader elk hunter days by GMU.

Modern Firearm Elk Hunting

Total modern firearm elk hunter days decreased since 2014. GMU 615 modern firearm hunting pressure dropped in half from a 2014 high to a 2017 low. Simultaneously there was a noteworthy 600-day increase in muzzleloader hunting and a 200-day increase in archery hunting. The total number of state hunter days remains constant, shifting pressure from modern firearm to archery and muzzleloader.



GMU 601 (Hoko) Elk Hunting

Since 2011, Hoko bull elk harvest has remained below 30, which is typical for this GMU (Figure 6). Overall state hunter participation in GMU 601 is primarily modern firearm and muzzleloader hunters.

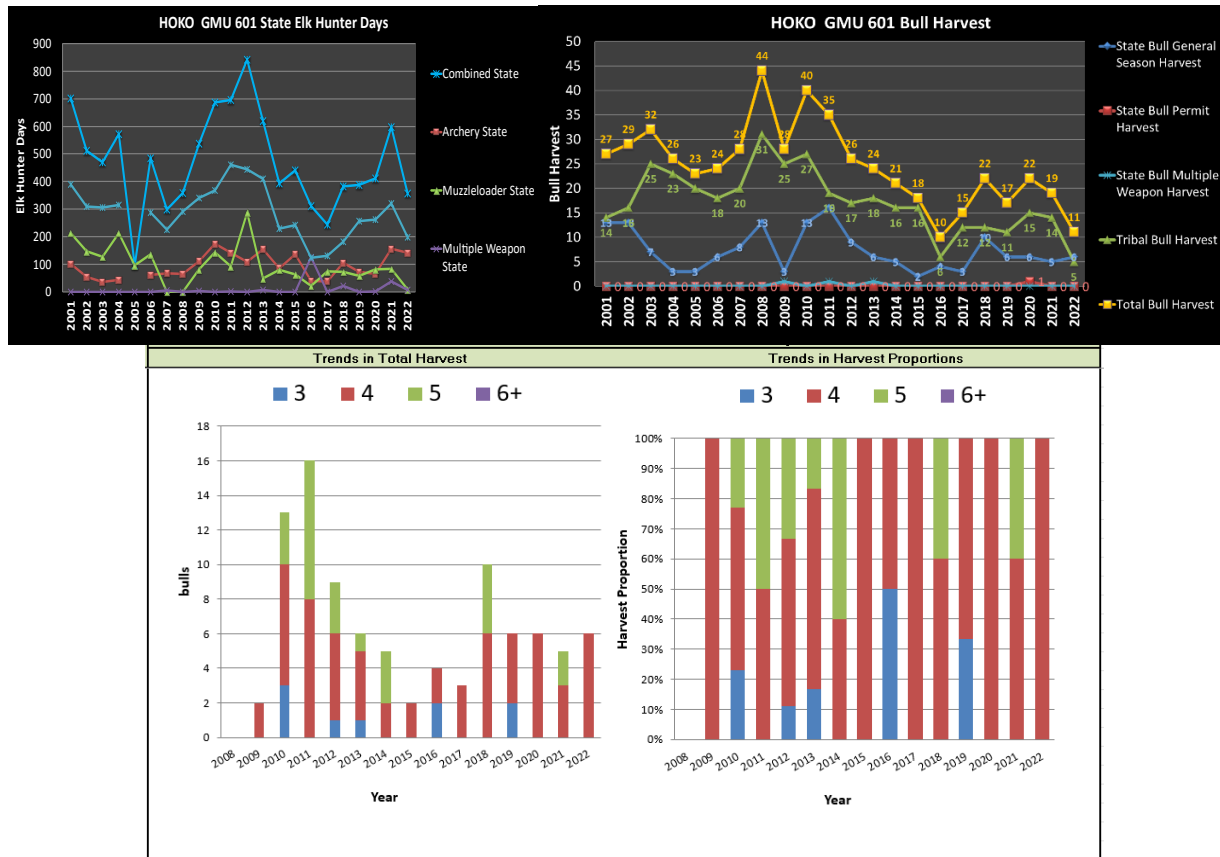


Figure 6. Hoko GMU 601 State elk hunter days, bull harvest and bull elk harvest antler proportions. (DRAFT for Tribal harvest data; find updates at nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/).

GMU 602 (Dickey) Elk Hunting

The Dickey GMU's total bull harvest decreased since 2019 from 68 to 34. State hunter days (combined) ranged from 1000 in 2017 to 1700 in 2020 and 2021 (Figure 7).

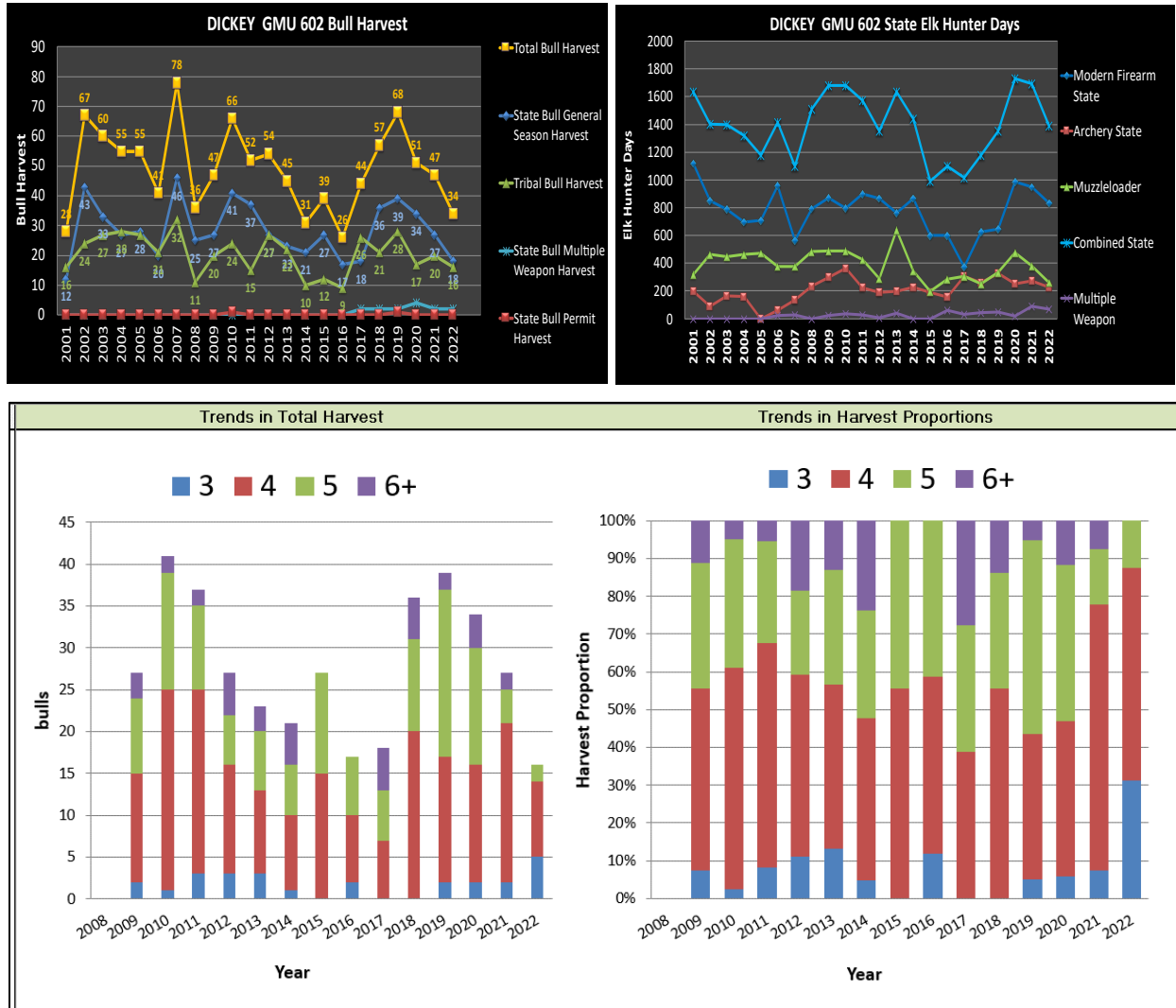


Figure 7. Dickey GMU 602 Bull Elk harvest, State Elk Hunter Days, Harvest Proportions by antler point. (DRAFT for Tribal harvest data; find updates at nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/).

GMU 603 (Pysht) Elk Hunting

Elk abundance in GMU 603 has increased for the last three decades. During the 1990s, it was uncommon to observe elk in GMU 603. As the elk population continues to increase, hunting opportunities are expanding, with the harvest trend increasing since 2001. Most of the elk population increase occurs within the western portion, on Merrill and Ring Pysht Tree Farm and other private forestlands. There are also some herds within the Elwha Watershed, with occasional observations of elk use within the newly formed Elwha floodplains. The Joyce vicinity elk herds have increasing conflict situations arising.

Modern firearm hunters maintain a success rate of around 5 to 10% (Figure 8). Hunter pressure has remained relatively constant since 2001, with the bull harvest rising to 36 in 2022.

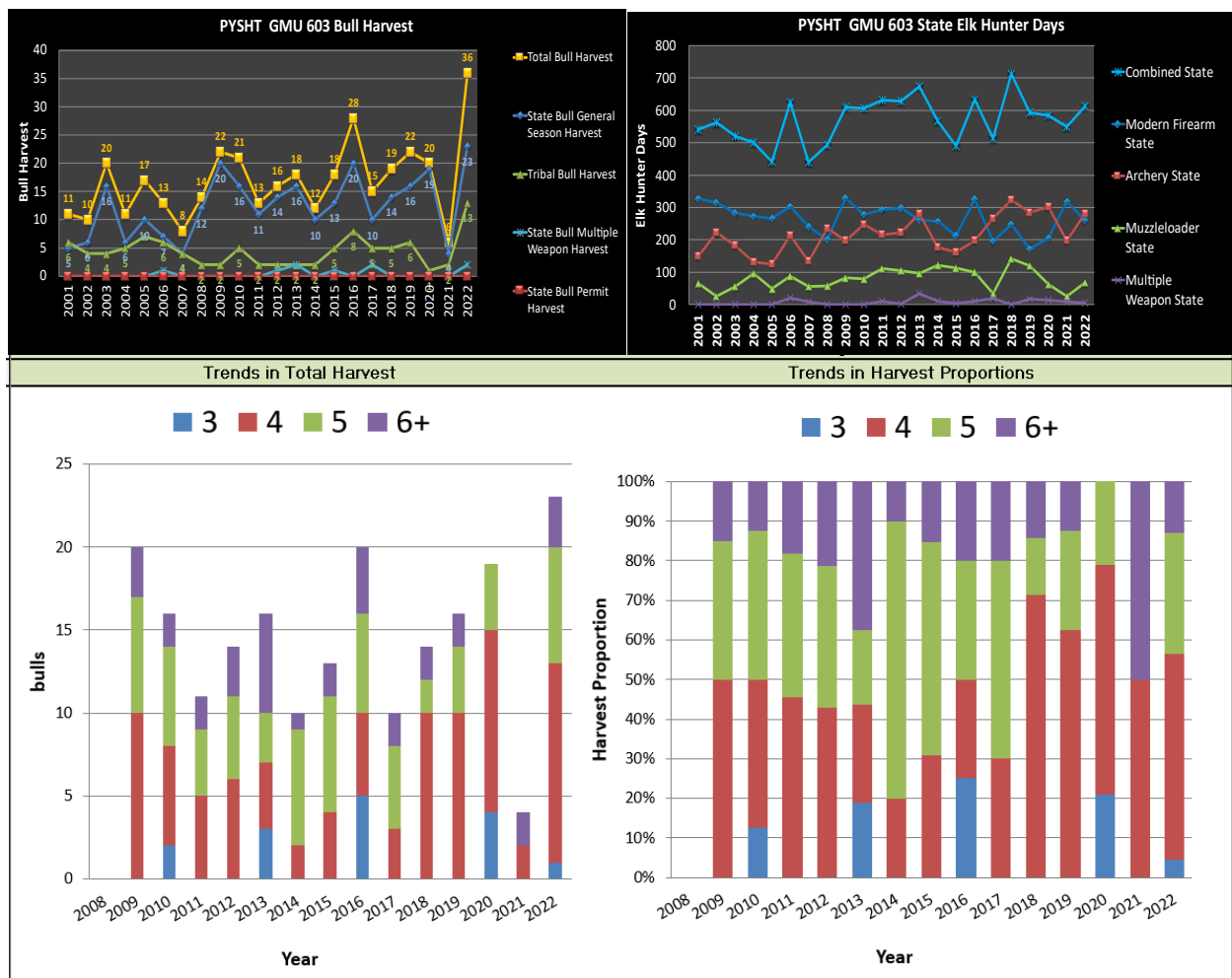


Figure 8. Pysht GMU 603 Bull Elk harvest & state elk hunter days; Antler point proportions in harvest by state hunters. (DRAFT for Tribal harvest data; updates nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/).

GMU 607 (Sol Duc) Elk Hunting

State hunters account for most of GMU 607's bull elk harvest with tribal harvest accounting for 29% in 2022 (Figure 9). State hunters harvest about 30 bulls annually and tribal hunters take less than ten bulls annually. The state bull harvest topped at 53 in 2018 and 48 in 2019. In 2018, with a new antlerless elk permit opportunity, state hunters harvested 14 elk in 2018 and 16 elk in 2019, dropping to 1 elk in 2020.

Hunter success in GMU 607 is usually around 5% to 20% for all participating state hunters with hunter success for all groups dropping in 2020 (Figure 9).

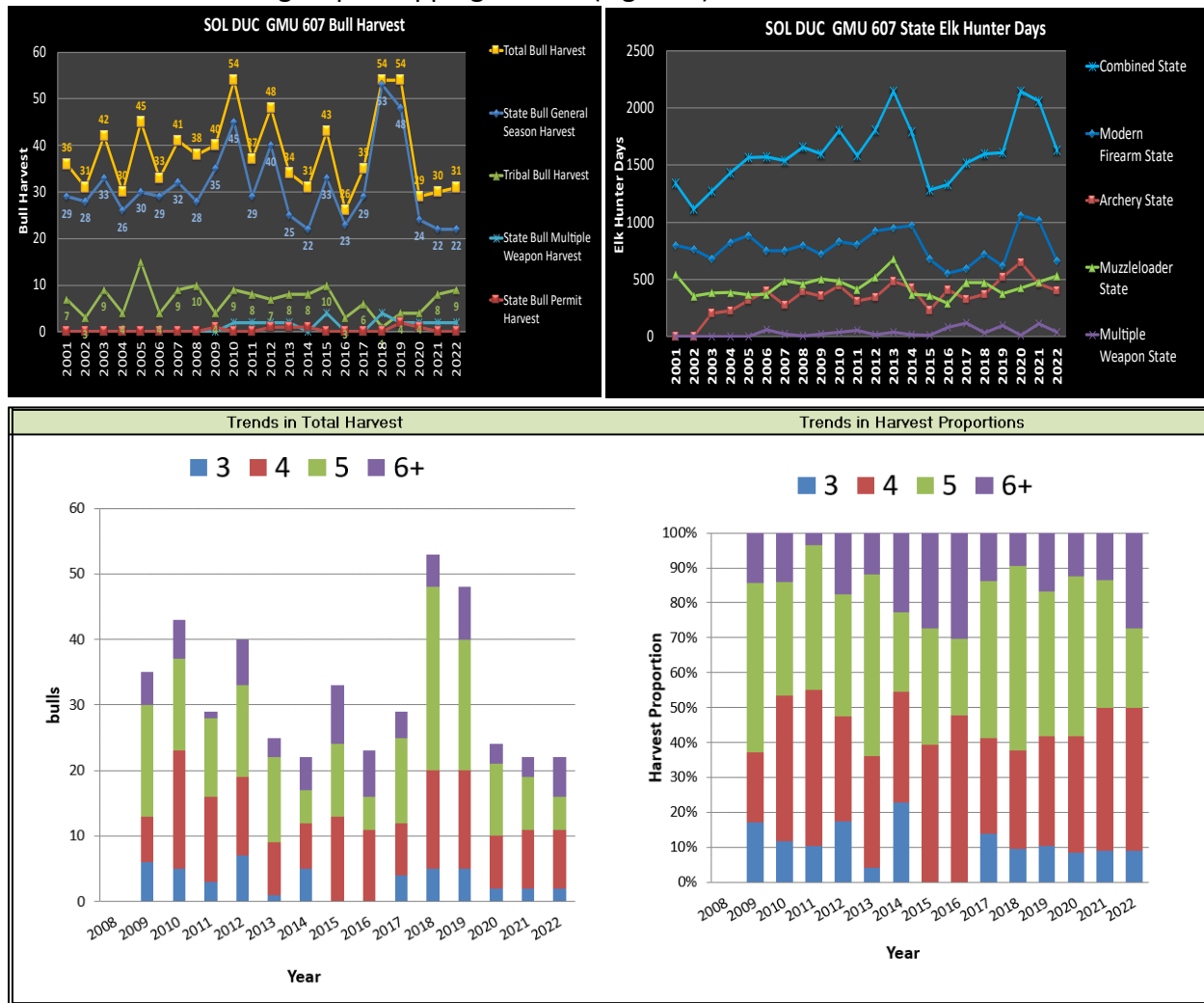


Figure 9. Sol Duc GMU 607 bull and antlerless elk harvest, state elk hunter days, and proportion of state harvest by antler points. Tribal Bull harvest (**DRAFT** for Tribal harvest data; find updates at nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/)

GMU 612 (Goodman) Elk Hunting

State bull harvest in Goodman has maintained harvest numbers between 35 and 41 since 2017, dropping to 16 in 2021 (Figure 10).

Total state hunter days in GMU 612 remains constant over the years. In recent years the total has increased to 1,300-1,600. In 2015, a new Muzzleloader season opened in GMU 612, resulting in a modest amount of muzzleloader hunter days (Figure 10). The antler point proportions are shown in Figure 10.

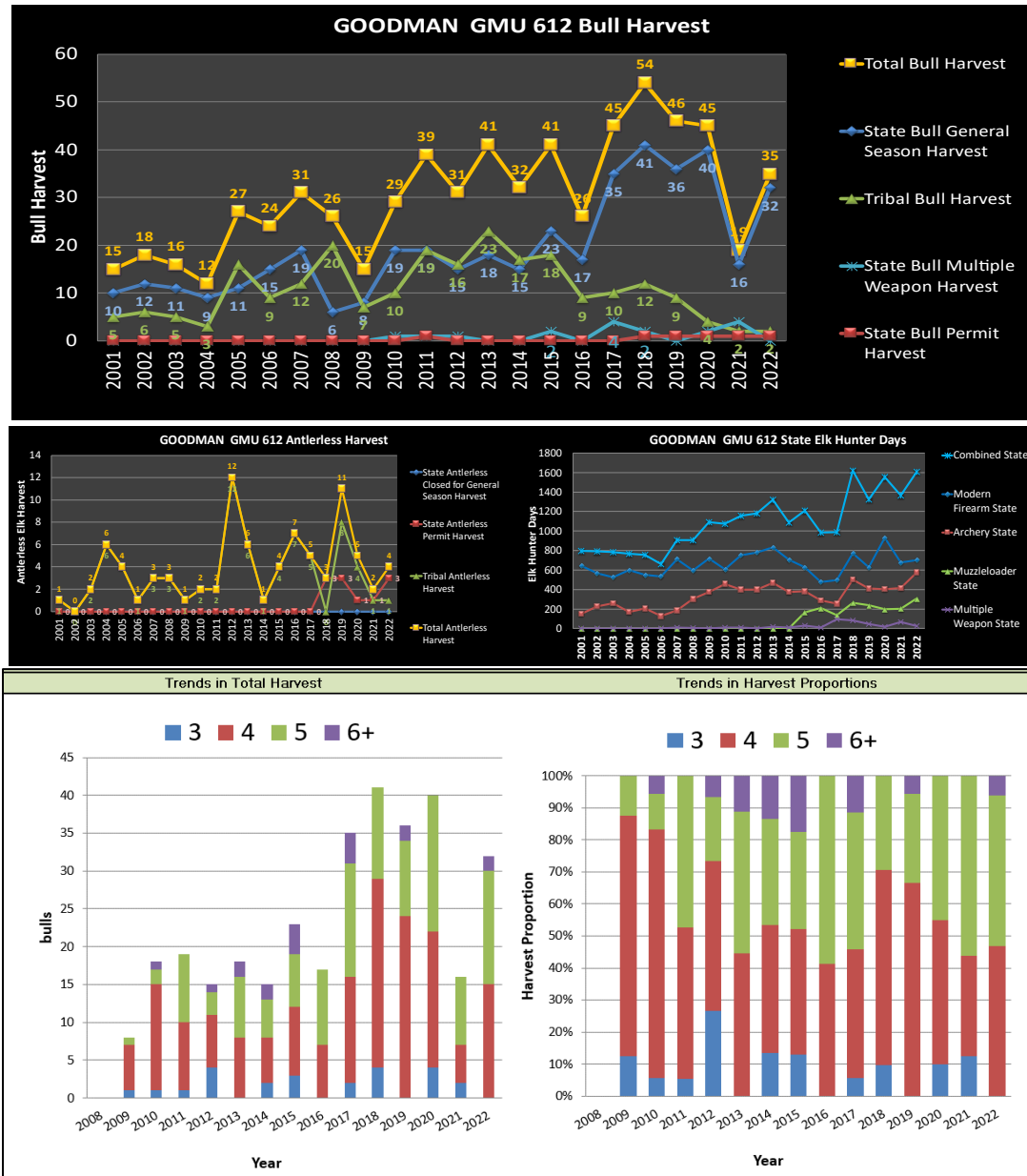


Figure 10. Goodman GMU 612 bull and antlerless harvest, state elk hunter days, and proportion by antler points in state hunter harvest. (DRAFT Tribal harvest data; updates nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/)

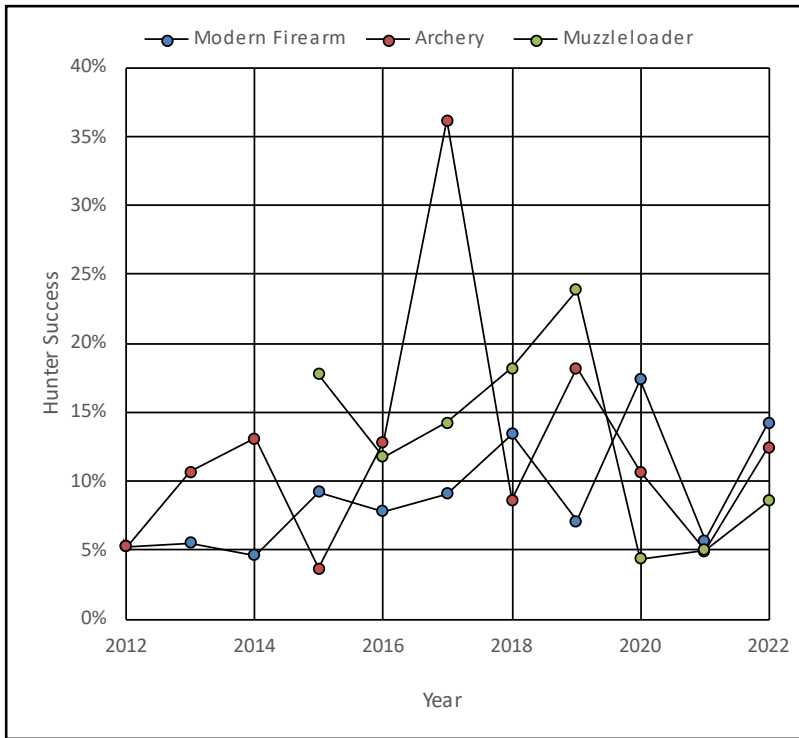


Figure 11. Goodman GMU 612 State Hunter Success.



GMU 615 (Clearwater) Elk Hunting

GMU 615 has had the most elk harvest of all GMUs in District 16 since 2003 (Figure 2). The total elk bull harvest trend has fluctuated considerably in recent years, with a low of 46 in 2017 and a high of 102 in 2020 (Figure 12). The Clearwater total bull harvest was 75 in 2022. State harvest dropped from 75 to 50 between 2020 and 2022.

The overall total number of hunter days has remained constant even after the 2015 Muzzleloader season opened (Figure 12).

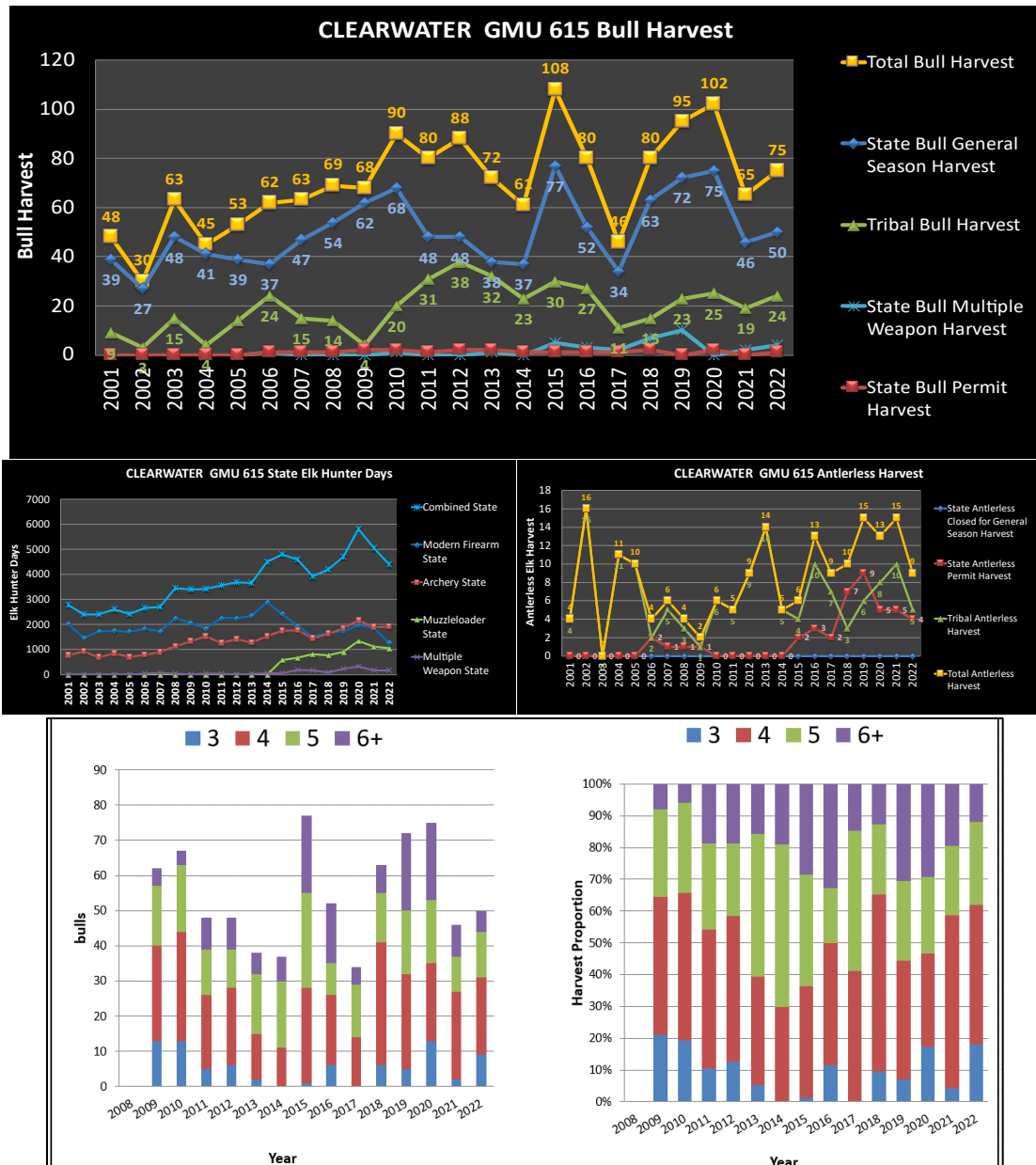


Figure 12. Clearwater GMU 615 bull and antlerless harvest, State elk hunter days & proportion of harvest by antler point; **DRAFT** Tribal harvest data; updates nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/.

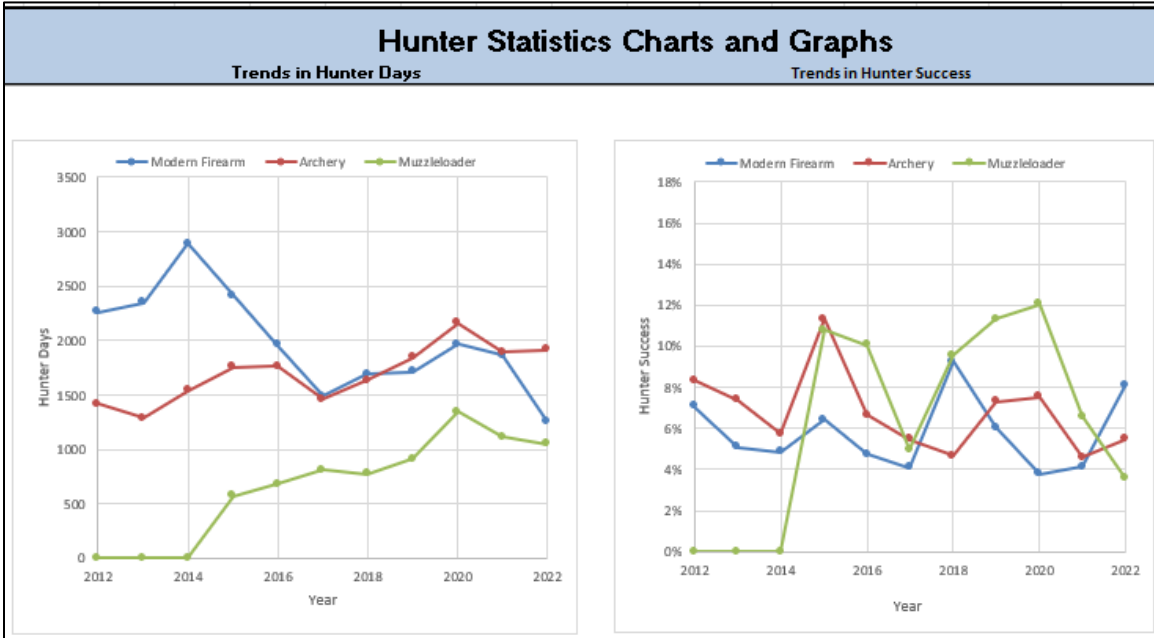


Figure 13. GMU 615 bull elk State hunter days and success.

GMU 621 (Olympic) Elk Hunting

Olympic GMU 621 elk hunt opportunity is limited to permit hunts and an occasional damage hunt harvest. Permit hunts can be a great opportunity, if the weather and elk use patterns are favorable. Most of the hunting opportunity in Olympic GMU 621 is within District 15. Please review the Hunting Prospects for District 15. Harvest is generally between ten and twenty bull elk (Figure 14).

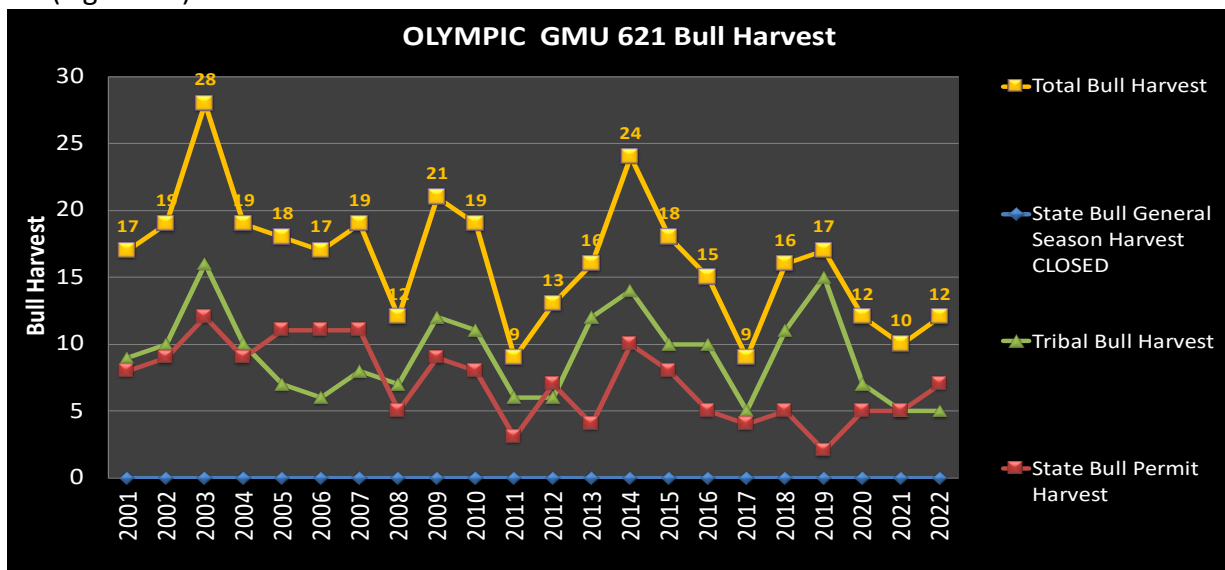


Figure 14. GMU 621 bull harvest from 2001 to 2022. (DRAFT for Tribal harvest data; find updates at nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/)

GMU 624 (Coyle) Elk Hunting

GMU 624 is not a prime elk hunting GMU with extremely low harvest (Figure 15). Small elk groups that may have split off from the Dungeness herd or other east Olympic Peninsula elk herds offer the main source of GMU 624 elk. Over the years, WDFW has received reports of small groups of elk in various locations within GMU 624, mostly within District 15. Reference District 15 [Hunting Prospects](#).

Much of the ownership in these areas is private, typically small farms. Securing permission for hunting in much of this area can be difficult. When the Legislature tasked WDFW to consider closing the GMU to elk hunting due to the lack of opportunity overall, WDFW decided to retain the hunting season, which can be a tool to resolve some damage control. If elk abundance increases in this GMU, elk harvest opportunity should increase as well.

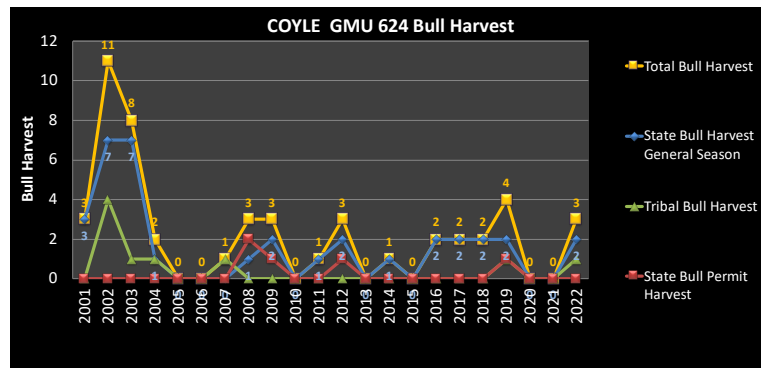


Figure 15. GMU 624 bull harvest from 2001 to 2022. (**DRAFT** for Tribal harvest data; find updates at nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/).

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES AND NOTEWORTHY REGS

WDFW has adopted night hunting and hound hunting regulations during deer and elk hunting seasons in recent years. Reference page 21 of Washington’s Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

Unmanned Aircraft: (WAC 220-413-070) “Using Aircraft” to include unstaffed aircraft. Page 87 of Washington’s Big Game Hunting Regulations.

“It is illegal to:

- Use an aircraft, including unmanned aircraft to spot, locate, or report the location of wildlife for the purpose of hunting.
- Hunt game animals, game birds, or migratory birds on the day one has operated an unmanned aircraft.”

Using Dogs: (WAC 220-413-060) Hunting wild animals (except rabbits and hares) with dogs (hounds) during the months of October or November during the dates established for modern

firearm deer or elk general seasons in Eastern and Western Washington is prohibited. Page 87 of the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations.

Prohibited Hunting Methods: Page 87 of Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations:

- Hunt game birds or game animals with anything other than a firearm, a bow and arrow, a crossbow, or by falconry.

People with disabilities: Note new regulations referenced on page 92 of Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations.

ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)

Since 2008, WDFW has received dramatically increasing reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range, including within the Olympic Elk Herd area. While elk are susceptible to many conditions that 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 counties. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area, including elk from the Olympic herd.

All of District 16 falls within the Olympic elk herd range. TAHD is most prevalent among elk on the southern end of the Olympic Peninsula, however recent detections on the northern end confirm the disease is spreading to other portions of the Olympic elk herd range. WDFW has confirmed the presence of TAHD from elk sampled in GMUs 603, 607, 621, 624, 636, 638, 648, and 651.

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:

- Harvest a limping elk from any 400, 500, 600 series GMUs
- Turn in your elk hooves along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in western Washington.
- Report elk: Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the Department's online reporting form.
- 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.

In 2021, WDFW implemented an incentive-based pilot program to encourage westside (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. This program aims to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can choose to participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in western Washington. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in western Washington with season dates of Sep. 1 through Dec. 31 will be awarded. Additionally, participants will receive a custom, waterproof license holder.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments, and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, reference WDFW's [Elk hoof disease in Washington state](#) webpage. Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations.

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

WDFW monitors black-tailed deer populations by tracking the harvest and hunting effort and gathering data on survivability, recruitment, and mortality rates using collared deer studies and aerial census methods.

According to Dr. Cliff Rice, a lead researcher for western Washington black-tailed deer studies, some of the largest does captured in western Washington were captured west of the Dungeness on the lower foothills in a mix of DNR and private land.



WHICH GMU SHOULD DEER HUNTERS HUNT?

Western District 16

Western District 16 is generally sparse of deer. This area includes GMUs 601 (Hoko), 602 (Dickey), 603 (Pysht), 607 (Sol Duc), 612 (Goodman), and 615 (Clearwater). Observations and published reports indicate that deer population numbers and density are generally low throughout the district west of the Elwha River. West Olympic Peninsula tribes dropped antlerless harvest in the western GMUs in 2010. Following are links to some deer research in the Hoko GMU:

- [Factors affecting the survival of black-tailed deer fawns](#)
- [Abstract of a study on the influence of hair loss syndrome \(HLS\) on black-tailed deer fawn survival](#)

Eastern District 16

Eastern District 16 includes the northwestern portion of GMU 621 (Olympic) and the northern portion of GMU 624 (Coyle), which extend east and south into District 15 (eastern Jefferson County). Because WDFW records the data on harvest by GMU, the harvest figures presented here include all GMU 621 and 624, extending into District 15. The portion of District 16 east of the Elwha River has black-tailed deer populations that are readily observed (presumably due to higher densities) and in many areas can often be observed in groups, especially in the vicinity of farmland. In these areas, the deer are often considered to be a nuisance by property owners and agricultural operations, especially in GMU 624. Reference the [Deer Areas](#) section on Page 40 & 106 for more information about Deer Area 6020.

GMU 624 does have firearm restrictions, with no centerfire or rimfire rifles allowed. Read more about that in the [Firearm Restrictions](#) section on Page 90 of the 2023 Washington Big Game Hunting Regulations.

The mid and lower elevations of GMU 621 have high densities of deer as well, with some scattered blocks of DNR ownership that offer hunting on public land. private industrial timberlands and DNR-managed lands are largely gated due to timber theft, dumping, vandalism, and other problems. However, hunters can access many of these roads on foot or mountain bike. Be sure to check with the appropriate landowner/manager and obey all posted rules and regulations.

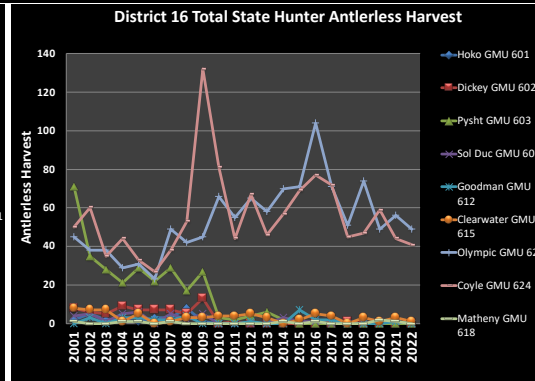
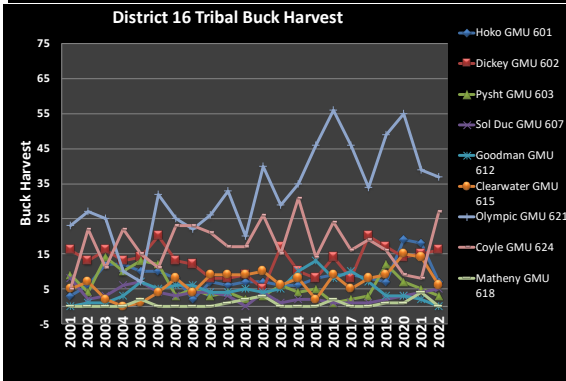
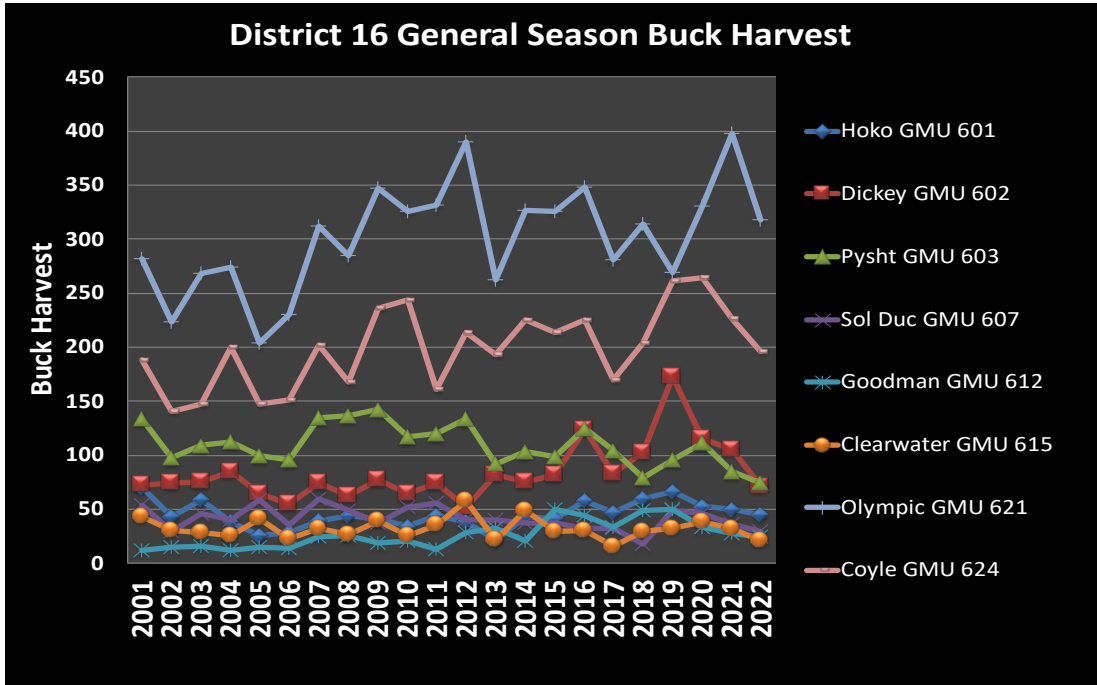
The key to a successful harvest is securing the appropriate permission to hunt on private land and scouting the area prior to the hunting season. Hunters who intend to target deer in developed areas would be well advised to check with local jurisdictions regarding firearm restrictions.

DISTRICT 16 BLACK-TAILED DEER HUNTING AND HARVEST RECORDS

[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website.

Reference the [District 15 Hunting Prospects](#) for more information on GMU 621 and GMU 624.

Buck harvest within District 16 GMUs is highest on the eastern half and lower as one goes further west. The four GMUs with the lowest buck harvest are Clearwater, Goodman, Pysht, and Hoko, the most western GMUs in the District (Figure 16). Tribal harvest ranges within 5% to 20% of the total deer harvest in District 16 GMUs.



Total 2022 Buck Harvest	
200+ bucks	Olympic GMU 621
71-200 bucks (In each GMU)	Coyle GMU 624 Dickey GMU 602 Pysht 603
< 70 bucks (In each GMU)	Hoko GMU 601 Sol Duc GMU 607 Goodman GMU 612 Clearwater GMU 615

Figure 16. District 16 general state season buck harvest, tribal buck harvest, state hunter antlerless harvest; GMU categorized by level of total buck harvest. (**DRAFT** for Tribal harvest data; find updates at nwifc.org/publications/big-game-harvest-reports/)

ARCHERY DEER HUNTING

Archery deer hunting in District 16 is concentrated in GMU 621 and GMU 624 (GMUs 621 and 624 are in both District 15 and 16).

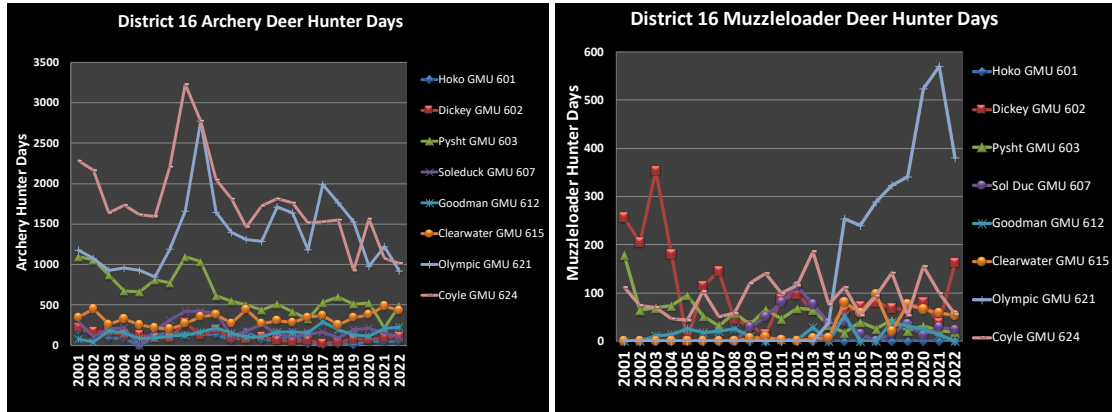


Figure 17. District 16 archery and muzzleloader hunter days.

MUZZLELOADER DEER HUNTING

Muzzleloader deer hunting has recently increased in GMU 621, while all the other GMUs in District 16 reportedly receive less than 200 hunter days annually (Figure 17). Other GMUs remain consistent with the amount of muzzleloader hunter days.

MODERN FIREARM DEER HUNTING

Modern firearm hunters have maintained a steady participation level in the GMUs in District 16 (Figure 18).

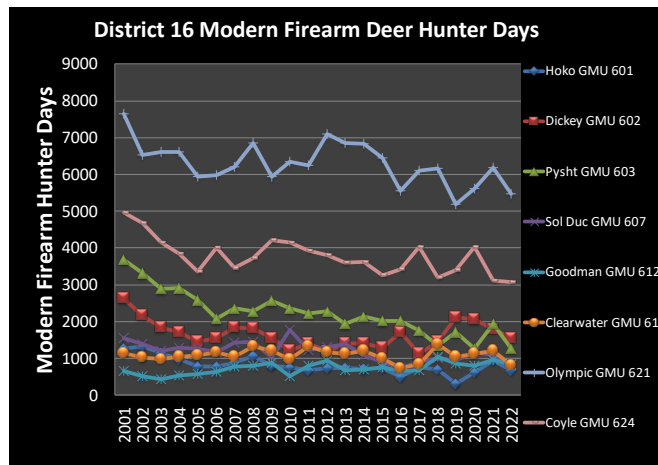


Figure 18. District 16 modern firearm deer hunter days.

DEER AREAS

WDFW established Deer Area 6020 over 20 years ago to allow hunters to harvest does to help reduce deer conflicts north of Highway 101 between Port Angeles and eastern Miller Peninsula. The Department allows doe harvest within Deer Area 6020 during general seasons. This area is primarily private land, but it is worth inquiring with landowners about hunting access. Note that much of the state-managed land on Miller Peninsula is state park land where hunting is not allowed. Refer to the firearm restrictions section of the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet if you are considering this area. The entirety of GMU 624 within District 16 (Clallam County) has [firearm restriction](#) regulations. No hunting is allowed with centerfire or rimfire rifles.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

WDFW adopted night hunting and hound hunting restrictions as well as permits during deer and elk hunting seasons in recent years. Reference page 87 of Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

Unstaffed aircraft: Wording has been added to WAC 220-413-070 "Using Aircraft" to include unstaffed aircraft. Reference page 87 of the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

People with disabilities: Note new regulations referenced on page 92 of the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.



Deer observed walking along a beach grassland.



GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

WDFW's black bear management goals are to:

1. Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage black bear and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations.
2. Minimize threats to public safety from black bears, while at the same time maintaining a sustainable and viable bear population.
3. Manage black bear for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by tribal members, wildlife viewing, and photography.
4. Manage populations statewide for a sustained yield. For management purposes, the state is divided into nine Black Bear Management Units (BBMUs). Harvest levels vary between BBMU depending on local population dynamics and environmental conditions.

District 16 is located nearly entirely within the designated Coastal Black Bear Management Unit (BBMU) except for GMU 624, which is in the Puget Sound BBMU. This area is mostly private land with firearm restrictions. Fall black bear hunting is allowed in all GMUs within the district. The current black bear hunting season guidelines for both the Coastal BBMU and Puget Sound BBMU are designed to maintain black bear populations at their current level. The fall black bear hunting season for all District 16 units is Aug. 1 to Nov. 15, 2023. Hunters can buy up to two bear tags during each license year.

Wildlife managers use three statistics to assess black bear harvest:

- Proportion of females harvested (no more than 35-39% of harvest)
- Median age of harvested females (range no younger than 5-6 years)
- Median age of harvested males (range no younger than 2-4 years)

WDFW doesn't conduct annual surveys to monitor black bear population size trends and instead uses harvest data trends for population estimates or indices. Wildlife managers believe that black bear populations are stable in District 16. Black bears occur throughout District 16, but population densities vary among GMUs.

In 2013, the Department began work to estimate black bear density statewide. This research originated in the North Cascade Mountains using two detection methods, non-invasive DNA collection using barbed-wire hair collection and physical capture and deployment of global positioning system (GPS) collars. Results showed that while density varied by human development and habitat productivity, it averaged 20 bears/100 km² in western Cascades and 19 bears/100 km² in eastern Cascades (Welfelt et al. 2019). In the western Washington study area, average total density estimates (including cubs) were nearly 50% lower than expected prior to this research (20 vs 39/100 km²). Because these results showed that density could vary widely by habitat types within limited areas, WDFW determined that density should not be extrapolated to a statewide or even region-wide black bear density given the variability of habitats. Thus, the Department needs more data to evaluate which habitat and management factors are associated with variations in bear density at a broad scale.

A non-invasive DNA collection project has been conducted in various GMUs within the state. Biologists conducted this hair collection effort within the Clearwater GMU during June and July of 2022. Over 1000 hair samples were collected from bear and other wildlife species. A total of 92 bears (38 female and 54 male) were assigned individual identity from the hair samples collected. The agency will be able to determine the density of bears/100km² for this managed forest land. With multiple density estimates in a variety of habitats, WDFW can examine what habitat and human factors are associated black bear density across Washington State and estimate statewide population abundance more accurately. Continued sampling will also allow for appropriate inferences to be made regarding harvest levels and the effects of management actions.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2023 SEASON

District 16 black bear harvesting prospects remain good to excellent. Although some hunters specifically target black bears, hunters harvest most bears opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons. Consequently, annual harvest and hunter success can vary quite a bit from one year to the next. The variability in the district is likely higher for hunters who specifically hunt black bears versus those who buy a bear tag just in case they see one while deer or elk hunting.

During the 2022 season, hunters harvested 80 bears within District 16 GMUs. Hunters harvested an additional 30 bears in GMU 621 (Olympic) and 14 bears in GMU 624 (Coyle), both of which include a portion of District 15. Hunter success during the 2022 season ranged from 9% in GMU 607 (Sol Duc) to 15.4% in GMU 618 (Methany). There was an increase in the number of bears harvested in GMU 603 (Pysht) and GMU 612 (Goodman) from last season. As usual, the highest black bear harvest in the district occurred in GMU 602 (Dickey) and GMU 615 (Clearwater). During the 2022 fall hunt, a total of 16 bears were harvested in GMU 602 (Dickey) and a total of 22 bears were harvested in GMU 615 (Clearwater). Hunters can reference summaries of BMU and GMU harvest reports in two tables (Table 3 and Table 4). The harvested report table also represents the percentage of male and female black bear harvest.



Table 3. Black bear 2022 harvest and hunter effort for District 16 GMUs.

WASHINGTON						
STATEWIDE BLACK BEAR HARVEST STATISTICS						
FOR THE 2022 HUNTING SEASON						
BMU	Bear Management Unit Name	Total Harvest	Number Hunters	Hunter Success Rate	Hunter Days	Days/Kill
1	Coastal	377	3,335	11%	32,612	87
2	Puget Sound	126	1,413	9%	11,935	95

Table 4. Black bear 2022 harvest reports for District 16 GMUs.

GMU	Fall Male Harvest	Fall Female Harvest	Total Harvest	Number Hunters	Hunter Success	Hunter Days	Days/Kills
BMU 1 (Coastal)							
601 - HOKO	5	2	7	51	13.8%	344	49
602 - DICKEY	13	3	16	125	12.8%	881	55
603 - PYSHT	9	2	11	117	9.4%	974	89
607 - SOL DUC	2	5	7	77	9%	368	53
612 - GOODMAN	11	0	11	87	12.6%	872	79
615 - CLEARWATER	15	7	22	213	10.4%	1,477	67
618 - MATHENY	2	4	6	39	15.4%	214	36
621 - OLYMPIC	21	9	30	261	11.4%	1,757	59
BMU 2 (Puget Sound)							
624 - COYLE	8	6	14	80	17.6%	657	47

HOW TO LOCATE AND HARVEST A BLACK BEAR

DNR and federal (USFS) lands continue to provide the best opportunities for bear hunting within the district. WDFW encourages hunters to scout for signs of bears (scat and tree bark peeling) in regenerating timber stands. Access behind gated roads is largely available to those willing to walk or mountain bike, and there are ample numbers of timber harvests/younger age class regeneration units that will attract bears. At higher elevations, those willing to hike in and pack out can pursue bears in classic environments where spot-and-stalk opportunities await. The USFS website has forest health maps that identify areas where bear damage has been detected from aerial surveys. Hunters can find the [aerial forest health detection maps](#) on the USFS website.

Scouting is an extremely important factor that hunters should consider when specifically hunting for black bears in District 16. Although black bears are common and occur in some areas at high densities, they are seen infrequently because of the thick vegetation that dominates the Olympic Peninsula landscape. Black bears can occur in a variety of habitat types, so it can be difficult to narrow down where to search for them. In the early fall, hunters should focus their efforts at higher elevations and in open terrain (hillsides, etc.) and timber harvest areas. Huckleberries ripen throughout the summer, but in the early fall the most remaining berries are typically at higher elevations. A good berry patch yielding much fruit would be a good place to hunt. Bears can also look in recent timber harvests that contain many berry-producing shrubs, including huckleberries, serviceberries, snowberries, blackberries, salmonberries, thimbleberries, and salal berries. During the fall, hunters need to find openings with these characteristics and hike through them to see if there is any bear sign. If they do find fresh sign, odds are there is a bear frequenting the area. If hunters are patient and sit for extended periods of time watching these areas, they stand a reasonable chance of harvesting a bear. Since the Olympic Peninsula experienced a very cool spring and late summer, it can be expected that bears may move into berry foraging areas later than usual this season.



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

WDFW strongly urges bear hunters not to shoot sows with cubs. Some cubs that accompany their mother's may tend to lag behind and may not be obvious to hunters. Bear cubs (weighing 30-50 lbs.) may also be present in trees or well-hidden in dense vegetation in the vicinity. Please observe and be patient before shooting. In past hunting seasons, WDFW received several reports of orphaned cubs in Region 6. Some of these cubs were captured and taken to rehabilitation facilities. The use of hounds and/or bait to hunt black bear is prohibited statewide ([RCW 77.15.245](#)).

MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF TEETH

It is mandatory (per [WAC 220-415-090](#)) that all successful bear hunters submit a premolar tooth with a tooth envelope, available at WDFW offices. The premolar tooth is located behind the canine tooth (toward the throat) of the upper jaw. The tooth should be submitted within five days of harvest, or by Dec. 1, 2023.



GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Cougars occur throughout District 16, but local densities can vary among GMUs. WDFW manages cougars in District 16 to maintain a stable cougar population. The statewide goals for cougar are:

1. Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage cougar and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations.
2. Minimize human/cougar conflict.
3. Manage cougar for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by tribal members, wildlife viewing, and photography.
4. Manage statewide cougar populations for a sustained yield.
5. Improve WDFW's understanding of predator-prey relationships.

Since the 2012 – 2013 hunting season, WDFW changed cougar harvest management throughout Washington. The biggest change was shifting away from using season length or permit seasons to manage the number of cougars harvested, and instead using a standard liberal season coupled with harvest guidelines. The intent was to have a longer season, without any hunting implement restrictions, and only close cougar seasons in specific areas if harvest reached or exceeded a harvest guideline. WDFW administers this hunt structure within 50 population management units (PMUs). District 16 includes PMU 42, 43, and 45.

To accomplish harvest goals, WDFW established an early and a late general season for defined hunt areas. The early season is Sep. 1 through Dec. 31, and no harvest limits apply even if harvest exceeds the guideline. Beginning in the 2015 hunting season and then continuing in 2021, WDFW extended cougar season dates through April 30. In this late season, (Jan. 1 through April 30), harvest guidelines apply for hunter-harvested cougars only. However, to hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, hunters need to buy a new hunting license and cougar tag. WDFW examines harvest numbers starting Jan. 1. If the guideline is met or exceeded, the PMU may not open for the late season. Cougar harvest is monitored during the late season and managers close any hunt areas that meet or exceed the harvest guideline. Over the past five years, an average of 74% of the PMUs remained open to hunters through April 30. Closures occur on the PMU level, resulting in less impact to hunter opportunity. WDFW advises anyone planning to hunt cougar after Jan. 1 to confirm the cougar season is open in the desired hunting area.

Hunters can call 1-866-364-4868 to determine if a specific hunt area is open after Dec. 31. For more information related to the harvest guidelines management approach, please visit the [Cougar hunting area openings and closures](#) page on the WDFW website. The agency recently formed an internal group to assess the results of implementing the cougar harvest hunting structure. Table 5 provides the harvest guidelines for each District 16 hunt area for 2023 – 2024. This table also provides the cougar harvest for the 2022 – 2023 season for state hunters.

Table 5. Cougar Harvest Guidelines for 2023-2024 and State Hunter Reported Harvest for 2022-2023.

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	
	2023-2024	2022-2023 Harvest
PMU 42 - 601, 602, 603, 612	4-6	1
PMU 43 - 607, 615	3-4	1
PMU 45 - 621, 624, 627, 633	None	0

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2023 - 2024 SEASON

Most cougar harvest within the district comes from opportunistic encounters while hunters are pursuing deer, elk, or other activities. The total cougar harvest in District 16 can vary from year to year. Table 6 presents total cougar hunting and other mortality while Table 7 presents status and trend report information as well as harvest totals and mean averages for the past three seasons (2017 – 2020). Hunters harvested nine cougars within the district during the general cougar hunt last season. During the general hunt, hunters harvested two male cougars in PMU 42, zero cougars in PMU 43, and zero cougars in PMU 45, which includes a portion of District 15. These totals don't include tribal harvest and other mortality. Reference the [Washington Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#) for more information regarding cougar hunting in specific GMUs within the district.

Cougars are widespread in the forest lands of District 16. Areas supporting high numbers of deer and elk provide great opportunity for hunting cougar. GMU 621 consistently has the highest cougar harvest in the district. The other GMUs' cougar harvest numbers fluctuate each year. With the yearly variation, it is hard to predict future harvest, but cougar sightings in the district continue to be somewhat common and there is no reason to suspect much change in the harvest. Under the continuing harvest management guidelines, the two district hunt areas, PMU 42 and PMU 43, have not met their harvest guideline in the past ten seasons. However, during the 2020-2021 late season cougar hunt in PMU 43 the harvest guideline of four cougars was met and the unit was closed to further cougar hunting on Feb. 26, 2021. This highlights that hunters should monitor closures and plan accordingly. One hunter that WDFW's assistant district biologist contacted to seal his cougar was not aware that there was a harvest guideline for the area where he had harvested his cougar.



Table 6. Total cougar harvest 2022 – 2023 for PMUs within District 16 (and a portion of District 15) by state hunters and other mortality. The harvest of male and female cougars is represented. Tribal hunting not included.

PMU 42 – (GMU 601, 602, 603, and 612)										
GENERAL HUNTING				OTHER MORTALITY				COMBINED		
Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Total		
2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3		

PMU 43 – (GMU 607 and 615)										
GENERAL HUNTING				OTHER MORTALITY				COMBINED		
Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Total		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

PMU 45 – (GMU 621, 624, 627, and 633)										
GENERAL HUNTING				OTHER MORTALITY				COMBINED		
Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Total		
0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	3		

Table 7. Cougar harvest in District 16 (and portion of District 15) for 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23.* Tribal harvest or other sources of mortality not included.

Cougar Status and Trend Report				
	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 – 2023	3-Year
	HARVEST	HARVEST	HARVEST	Mean Harvest
GMUs 601, 602, 603, 612	1	3	2	2
GMUs 607, 615	4	2	0	2
GMUs 621, 624, 627, 633	6	4	0	3.33
Total	11	9	2	

Hunters harvest most of the cougars that WDFW seals each season while out deer or elk hunting. However, during the 2019-2020 season, several hunters were successful when specifically targeting cougars after snow events. One hunting team was fortunate to harvest adult male cougars a few weeks apart in two different locations within GMU 615. Enforcement officers in the district report low cougar hunting pressure in most GMUs in previous years. WDFW removed several cougars in District 16 last season due to depredation concerns with livestock and domestic animals. Two male cougars were removed in GMU 624, one male cougar was removed in GMU 621, and one male cougar was removed in GMU 603. Conflict issues were higher in GMU 624 (Coyle) and GMU 603 (Pysht) than other management areas within the district.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

It is unlawful to kill or possess spotted cougar kittens (usually less than 80 pounds) or adult cougars accompanied by spotted kittens. WDFW strongly encourages cougar hunters to search for possible multiple tracks when pursuing an animal. Female cougars may have kittens in trees or in dense vegetation nearby. Please be very observant and patient before shooting. During the 2015 – 2016 season, WDFW enforcement officers and biologists had to capture two orphaned cougar kittens near Joyce. One kitten later died, and the other kitten will remain in captivity at a zoo. Cougar hunters must follow mandatory reporting and sealing requirements. Voter initiative 655 banned the use of hounds to hunt cougars in the state. Hunting with the aid of dogs is prohibited statewide except during cougar management removals authorized by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission and for research purposes.



NOTABLE CHANGES

The Cougar Harvest Guideline for GMUs 601, 602, 603, and 612 was changed three years ago and will remain at four to six. The Cougar Harvest Guideline for GMUs 607 and 615 was also changed from four to a range of three to four and this harvest guideline is still in effect. Subadult cougars no longer count towards the cougar harvest guideline. A valid 2024-25 cougar license and tag is required to hunt cougar in April 2024.

MANDATORY REPORTING/SEALING

Successful cougar hunters must report their cougar harvest to the cougar hotline at: 1-866-364-4868 within 72 hours of harvest and have the cougar pelt sealed within five days of notification. This is the same hotline hunters can use to check if cougar hunt areas are open or closed. A premolar tooth and tissue sample will be taken. Reference the [Washington Big Game Hunting Regulations](#), page 69 in the Washington Big Game Hunting Regulations 2023 for more specific details about cougar sealing requirements.



COUGAR OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

WDFW is committed to minimizing human-wildlife conflict. With the increase of the human population in Washington, there are more recreationists in cougar habitat, an increase in small livestock farms near residences, along with intentional and unintentional feeding of wildlife around homes. It is essential to raise public awareness and keep both people and cougars safe. A young male cougar killed a mountain biker near North Bend in the spring of 2018. This type of incident is extremely rare and was only the second known human fatality from a cougar in Washington state. In late July 2023, an 8-year old boy was attacked by a cougar while camping at Lake Angeles in Olympic National Park. The boy was only slightly hurt and the cougar was never found. Please reference WDFW's [cougar web page](#) to learn more about cougar/human interactions or contact a WDFW Regional Office for a copy of the 2018 "Discover Washington's Cougars" brochure.

SMALL GAME: Bobcat, Raccoon, Coyote, Rabbit

BOBCATS are plentiful in the wooded lands across District 16 and many hunters successfully harvest bobcat each season. Bobcat may be hunted statewide with no bag limit from Sep. 1 through March 15. **A small game license is required to harvest a bobcat.** Bobcats are exempt from hunting hour restrictions except it is unlawful to hunt bobcat at night during modern firearm deer or elk general seasons that occur in October and November in both eastern and western Washington. Hunting or pursuing bobcat with dogs is prohibited in Washington. **Successful bobcat hunters or trappers must contact a WDFW office to have the bobcat pelt sealed and submit the associated harvest report to the WDFW by April 20 of each year.** The bobcat hide must not be frozen so a seal may be attached. No one may possess an open WDFW bobcat seal unless it has been cut by a licensed taxidermist or fur dealer who has received and invoiced the pelt for processing.

Bobcat harvest through trapping in Region 6, which includes District 16, had been trending upwards since 2014 until the Covid 2019 pandemic resulted in trappers either not trapping or not having access to public and private properties (Figure 19). The harvest then peaked in 2020, possibly reflecting trapper effort since Covid provided the public more recreation time but declined significantly in 2021. Generally, more bobcats are harvested through hunting in Region 6 than trapping. Both Clallam and Jefferson counties both provide great opportunity for harvesting bobcat. Within the region, the harvest of bobcats in Clallam County has consistently been lower than other counties (Figure 20). The prospects for hunting or trapping bobcat in 2023 and 2024 remain steady. Public and private forest remain the best locations for locating and harvesting bobcat.

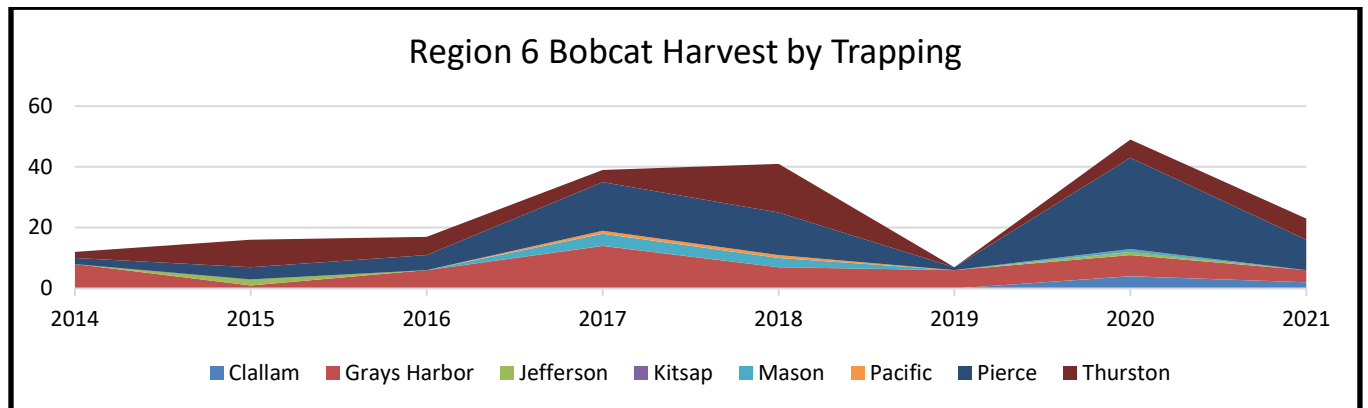


Figure 19. Region 6 bobcat harvest by trapping by county 2015-2021.

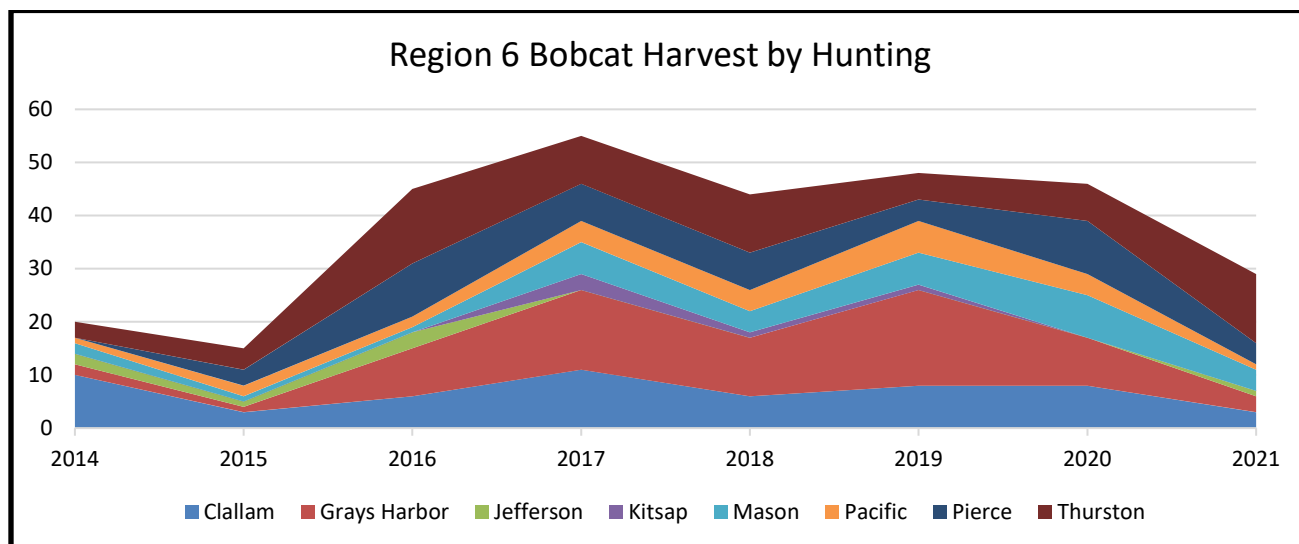
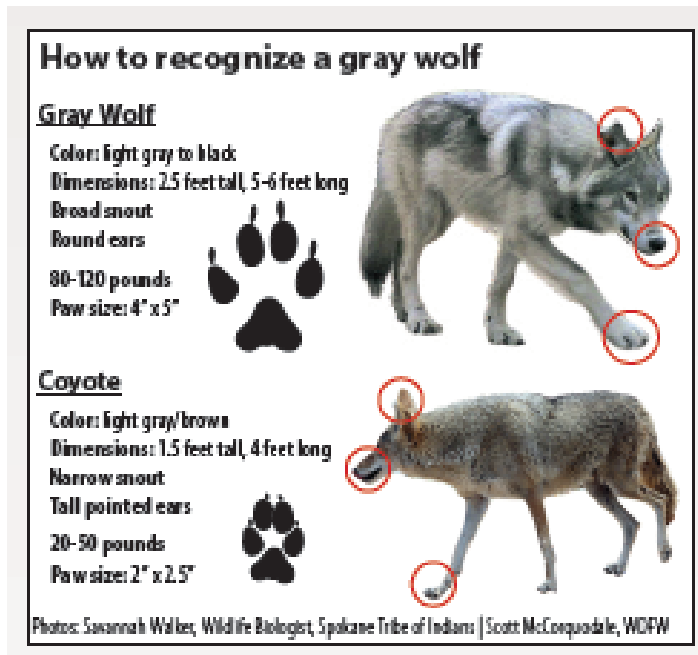


Figure 20. Region 6 bobcat harvest by hunting by county 2014 – 2021..

RACCOONS are also very plentiful across District 16, particularly around suburban neighborhoods where they eat garbage, fallen fruit, dogfood, artificial pond fish, and various other things. A lack of natural predators within these areas helps to perpetuate this. Raccoons are also found in the less developed forests of the western portions of the district. Raccoons can be hunted across District 16 with no bag limit from Sep. 1 through March 15 with a small game license. Hunters may use dogs to hunt raccoon and they may be hunted at night. **Special note:** It is unlawful to hunt with dogs or at night during the months of October or November during the dates established for modern firearm deer and elk general seasons in eastern and western Washington.

COYOTES are another small game animal abundant across District 16, both in the urban and non-urban areas. They have also benefitted from a lack of large predators in the urban and suburban areas. Hunters may hunt coyotes without a bag limit year-round under a small game or big game hunting license. Hunters can also hunt coyotes may be hunted at night with lights year-round. **Special note:** It is unlawful to hunt coyote at night during modern firearm deer or elk general seasons that occur in October and November in eastern and western Washington. The use of dogs to hunt coyote is prohibited. Wolves are back in Washington State and are protected under both federal and state law and MAY NOT be shot or killed. WDFW hasn't confirmed any wolf sightings in District 16. However, be sure of identification if you are hunting coyote or bobcat. Report all wolf observations [here](#).



SNOWSHOE HARE and COTTONTAIL RABBIT: Most of the rabbits encountered on the Olympic Peninsula will be snowshoe hare (reference range maps below). Snowshoe hare are readily observed along forested roads in the western half of District 16, and will be found throughout the district, usually along forested edges. Annual district harvest of hares and rabbits is erratic, ranging from zero to over 300. The opportunity is always there, with a harvest per unit effort expected to range between .25-.70 per day.

During 2022 estimates of hunters and harvest are as follows:

- Snowshoe hare harvest
 - Clallam County - 4 harvested by 11 hunters,
 - Jefferson county - no hunter reports.
- Cottontail rabbit harvest
 - Clallam County - 5 harvested by 11 hunters.
 - Jefferson County – 9 harvested by 17 hunters

More information on the snowshoe hare and other rabbits can be found at the following links:

- [Snowshoe hare](#)
- [Eastern cottontail](#)
- [European rabbit](#)
- [Nuttall's cottontail](#)

SMALL GAME: River Otter, Weasel, Marten, Mink, Muskrat, Beaver

BEAVER, WEASELS, MINK, MUSKRAT, AND RIVER OTTER are all plentiful across Region 6, including District 16. Martens less so. Long-tailed weasels occur in District 16 primarily on pasture, cropland, fields, and grasslands. River otter (*Lutra canadensis*) is plentiful in the freshwater lakes, streams, and wetlands across District 16 and are frequently observed along saltwater shorelines of the coast and Strait of Juan de Fuca. Sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*) are found along the outer coast and occasionally along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. This species is protected and cannot be trapped or hunted. Hunters may only harvest beaver, weasel, marten, muskrat, and river otter by trapping with a [trapping license](#) during the trapping season (Nov. 1 through March 31). **Successful river otter trappers must contact a WDFW office to have their otter pelt(s) sealed and submit the associated harvest report to the WDFW by April 20 of each year.** Pelts must be presented in a way that the hide can be sealed. No frozen hides or carcasses will be accepted (reference [Trapping Regulations](#)). Clallam and Jefferson counties within District 16 generally have some of the lower trap rates for river otter compared to other Region 6 counties (Figure 21).

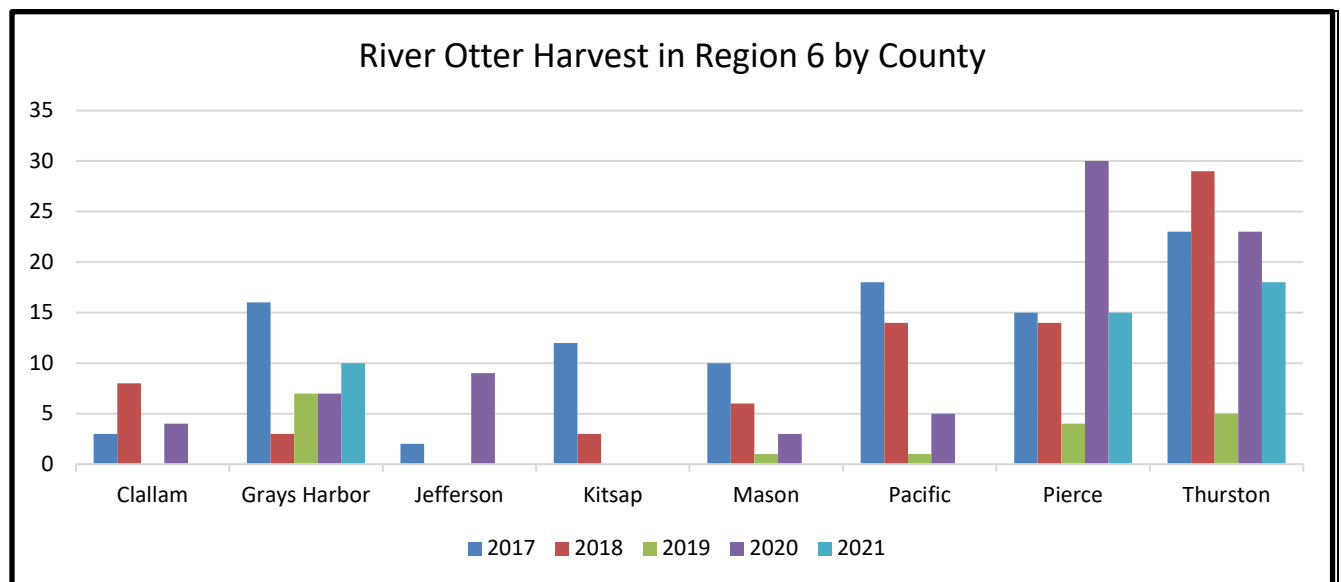


Figure 21. Region 6 river otter harvest by county 2017 – 2021.

AMERICAN MARTEN sightings are quite rare in District 16. There is a closure of marten trapping on the Olympic Peninsula in Clallam, Jefferson, Mason, and Grays Harbor counties to protect low-density coastal Pacific martens (*Martes caurina*). Efforts are underway by the U.S. Forest Service and others to document and monitor fisher on the Olympic Peninsula. They are a very difficult species to find. Fisher may be misidentified as a marten; fishers are a protected species in Washington under both federal and state law and **MAY NOT** be trapped or killed. Be sure of identification if you are trapping marten. Report all fisher observations [online](#) or by emailing wildlife.data@dfw.wa.gov.

Identification of Fisher and Marten in Washington

Fishers are protected under both federal and state law and may not be trapped or killed.
Be sure of identification if you are trapping marten or mink.

Pelage Colors

Fisher — dark brown with lighter shading on head, back of the neck and back.
Marten — light brown to brown (cinnamon, russet), with creamy brown/ beige face and occasionally chest with darker brown legs, feet and end of tail.

Size

Fishers are bigger, darker and have noticeably longer and fuller tails than marten. Fishers tails average 14-15 inches in length and Martens tails average 6.5-7.5 inches in length.

Ear Shape

Fishers — rounded "teddy-bear" shaped ears
Martens — more pointed ears

Elevation

Fishers and martens overlap in elevation. Therefore, elevation should not be used as an indicator of species presence.

FISHER





Photo by Paul Bannick

MARTEN



WDFW Staff

Trapping Information

Use cubby boxes, with a closed front and 2.5 inch entrance hole, to avoid catching fishers.

Figure 22. Identification of fisher and marten.

BEAVER harvest by trapping in Clallam and Jefferson counties has usually been lower in Region 6 compared to more highly urbanized counties such as Pierce and Thurston (Figure 23). Considering lakes, wetlands and waterways exist across the region, the difference is likely due to less hunter participation and less removal of nuisance beaver.

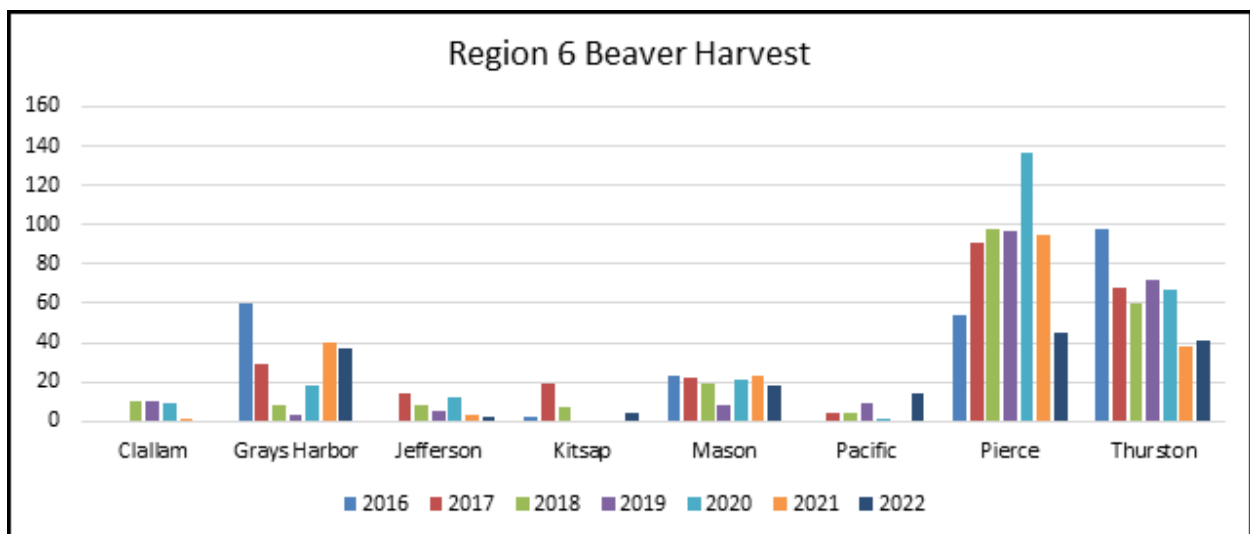


Figure 23. WDFW Region 6 beaver harvest from trapping by county 2016 - 2022.

COMMON SPECIES

Many species of ducks are found in District 16. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. Species of divers, including bufflehead, scaup, ring-necked ducks, and common goldeneye, are also present on fresh and saltwater. Nesting wood ducks can be located throughout the district early in the season and can provide a unique hunting opportunity. Sea ducks, including scoters, Barrow's goldeneye, long-tailed ducks, canvasbacks, and harlequin ducks inhabit the Strait of Juan de Fuca, protected bays, and other saltwater areas.

Keep in mind that trumpeter swan numbers have increased in the Dungeness Valley in the past ten years, and they have been documented near the Dungeness River mouth. Surveyors counted 298 trumpeter swans, including 60 juveniles, in Clallam County in January 2022. The numbers of swans counted during weekly, daytime surveys have been stable December 2022 through January 2023, which suggests a strong location fidelity for the population of swans in the Dungeness Valley. The percent of juveniles observed, around 15% average in recent years, was low last winter, ranging from 5% to 10%. We understand that the late wet spring in the Trumpeter Swans' breeding grounds delayed nesting last season. Freezing temperatures and harsh Arctic conditions may have increased the mortality of juvenile swans before they had fledged or during migration.

WDFW encourages waterfowl hunters to know all identification features for trumpeter swans and snow geese. It is illegal to shoot trumpeter swans. Please reference the [Northwest Swan Conservation website](#) to help with swan identification.

CONCENTRATION AREAS

Much of the waterfowl hunting opportunity in District 16 is east of Port Angeles, centered in the Lower Dungeness Basin. The basin has a high density of wintering waterfowl and holds about 7% of the western Washington breeding waterfowl population, even amidst the ongoing development of open space habitats. Fortunately, a rich mix of farmland, wetlands, coastal habitats, and conserved open space retain the necessary food and cover for many wintering waterfowl. Concentrations of waterfowl in freshwater habitats diminish drastically west of the Elwha and Lyre rivers.

POPULATION STATUS

Pacific Flyway waterfowl populations have remained strong for several years, allowing liberal seasons for many species (Figure 24). Wintering duck populations in Washington usually represent 10% or more of the total flyway population. Midwinter waterfowl survey counts in District 16 represent about 2% of all waterfowl counted in the state. Midwinter populations include resident and migratory populations. The following link provides a report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that details more information on the population status for the Pacific Flyway: [Waterfowl Population Status, 2022 \(fws.gov\)](https://www.fws.gov/waterfowl/population-status-2022). This report summarizes the most recent information about the status of North American waterfowl populations and their habitats to facilitate the development of harvest regulations. The annual status of these populations is monitored and assessed through abundance and harvest surveys. Unfortunately, the 2022 federal report was not available to reference at this time.

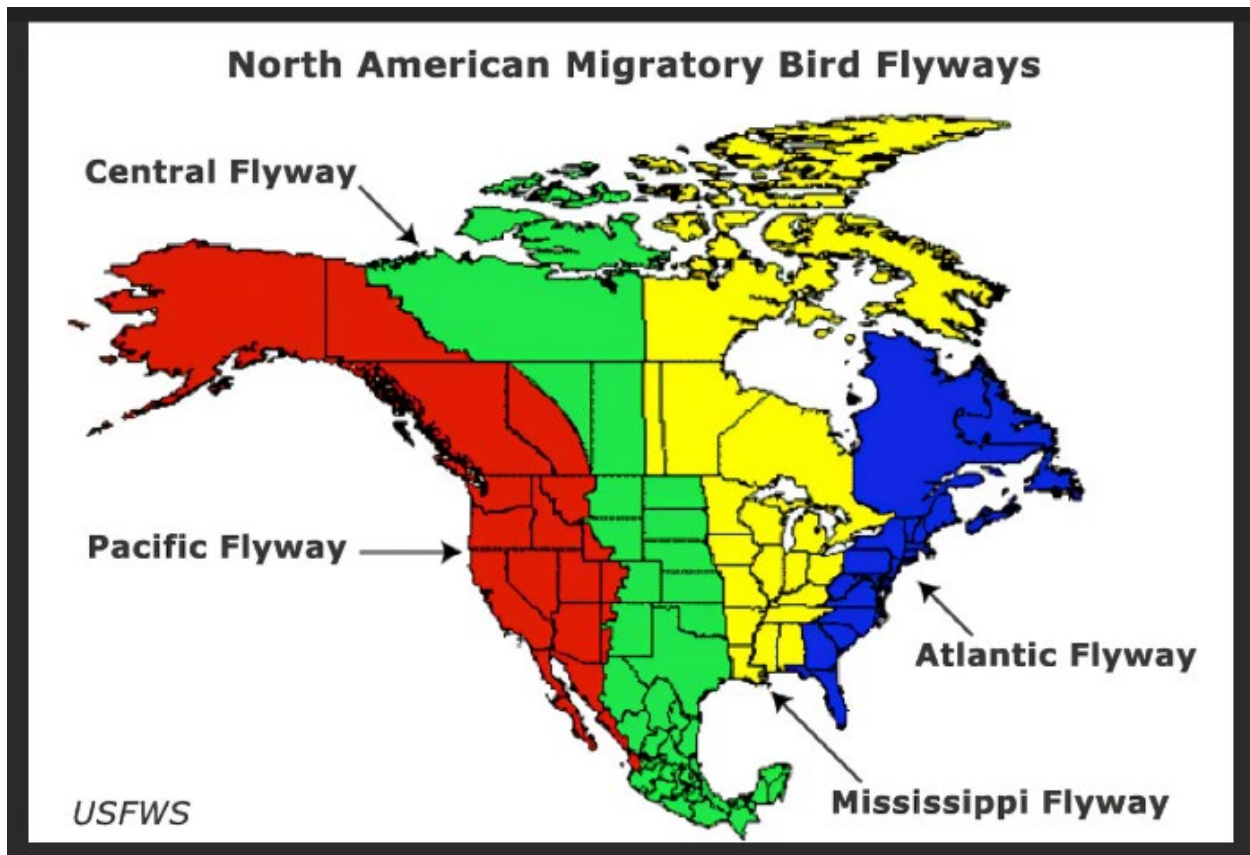


Figure 24. North American migratory bird flyways

In the past, district biologists focused on conducting mid-winter ground count surveys to document high waterfowl concentration areas in Clallam County. Breeding duck populations in western Washington were not monitored until 2010, when WDFW developed and began flying established transects in five select areas of Western Washington. The Department conducts these surveys during April and early May. The survey includes the east and west areas of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The Dungeness area, including the Dungeness National Wildlife Area, is surveyed as part of the East Strait of Juan de Fuca transect route (Figure 25). Surveys did not occur in 2020 and 2021 due to impacts of the coronavirus. In April of 2023, WDFW estimated the total duck breeding population in the Dungeness area was 7,843, which is significantly higher (83%) than the 2022 estimate of 4,278. The four species with the highest numbers observed during the surveys were mallard (4,100), wood ducks (891), green-winged teal (713), and bufflehead (594). The number of mallard ducks estimated in 2023 was a 92% increase than what was estimated by WDFW in 2022. One factor contributing to the high mallard estimate for the Dungeness and all western Washington was the high number of grouped mallards observed.

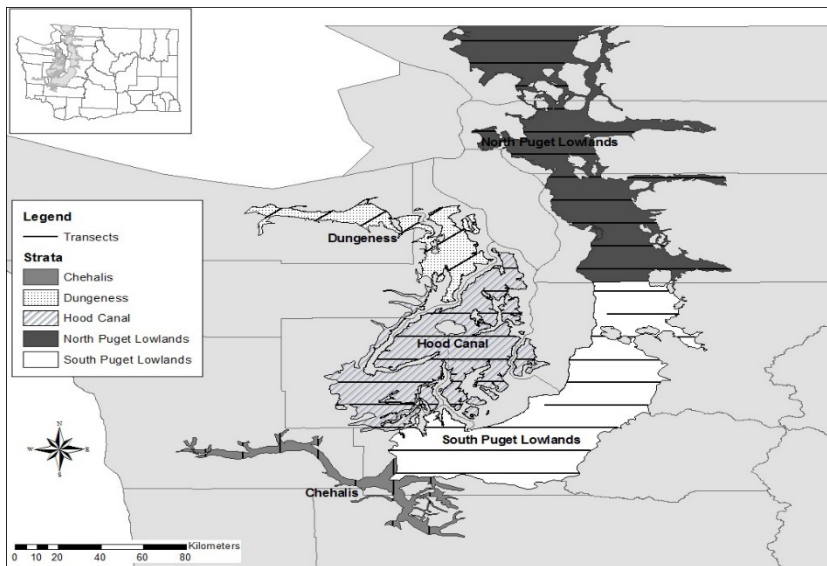


Figure 25. Aerial breeding waterfowl survey transects flown in Western Washington

The Dungeness count has been 4% to 15% of the total breeding ducks in Western Washington from 2010 to 2016. The counts (by species) of the Dungeness area (2014 to 2018) are provided in Figure 26. More recent data for the Washington breeding waterfowl population monitoring can be found in the [2022 Game Status and Trend Report | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). The greatest factor influencing brood production in the district continues to be loss of habitat to development and increasing human disturbance. Waterfowl numbers are expected to remain moderate in District 16. For more information, reference [Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting](#).

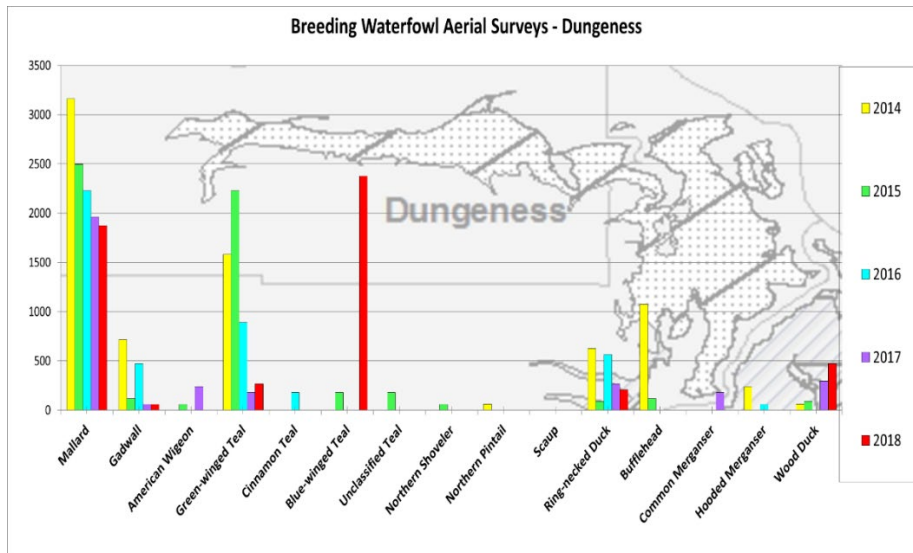


Figure 26. Breeding waterfowl survey counts - with background map showing Dungeness aerial transects, including nearby Elwha, Chimacum, and Quilcene habitats.

Sea ducks have had restrictive bag limits due to concerns about low recruitment rates in sea ducks, increasing interest in sea duck hunting, and the unknown impact of reduced sea duck bag limits on compensatory species, particularly Barrow’s goldeneyes led to the measure. There had been a significant increase in the harvest of harlequin ducks for the few seasons prior to 2022 in Clallam and Jefferson counties. Due to management concerns over the health of the population, the harlequin duck hunting, like initiated last season, will not be allowed during the 2023-2024 season.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2023 PROSPECTS

The duck harvest in Washington declined steadily from over 1 million in the late 1960s, to a low of 242,516 in 1993-94. However, duck harvest rates in Washington have stabilized over the past ten years, averaging about 438,170 ducks annually. The 2020-21 Washington duck harvest of 426,092 was a 20.9% increase compared to the 2019-2020 harvest of 352,347, which was the lowest since the 2004-05 season. The most recent revised survey design for Western Washington conducted in April 2023 estimated the total breeding duck population at 97,823. This was the highest since the survey began in 2010. Mallards numbered 59,012, followed by green-winged teal 9,383, wood duck 5,752, and ring-necked duck 4,666 (Figure 27). For more information reference the Waterfowl Section of [2022 Game Status and Trend Report | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Please check the WDFW website in the future for the 2023 version of this report.

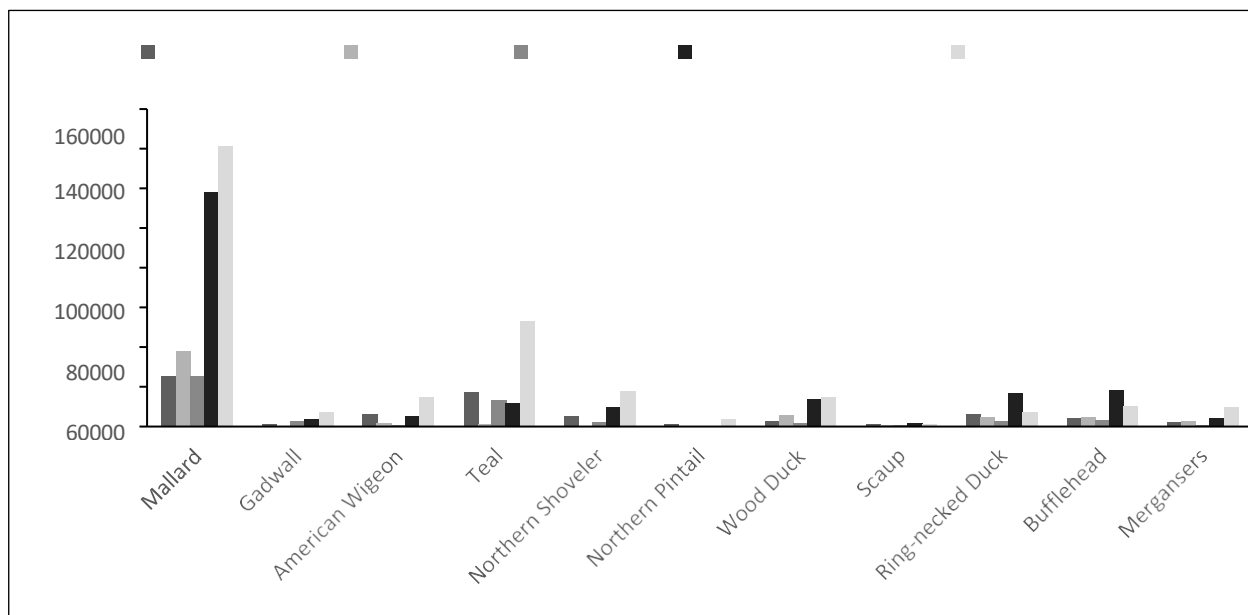


Figure 27. Western Washington duck breeding population survey results by species and strata, 2022.

During the 2022-2023 season 258 hunters who spent 1,533 afield in Clallam County harvested 3,014 ducks. For Jefferson County, 237 hunters who spent 1,431 days afield harvested 2,732 ducks. **It is important to note that estimates are not comparable to the previous years due to the new volunteer reporting online that was piloted by WDFW this past season.** District 16 hunters can expect similar hunting opportunities during the 2023-24 season.

The restrictive bag limits for most sea ducks were maintained for western Washington in 2022-2023. The harvest survey 2020 -2021 indicated a total harvest of 1,729 sea ducks representing a 32.6% decrease from the 2019-20 season. Notably, the number of hunter days was estimated at 2,153 days afield, which would be the third highest estimate since mandatory harvest reporting began in the 2004-05 season. For the 2022-2023 season, species composition, based on compliant and noncompliant harvest report components, was estimated as: 805 scoters (Surf 550, White-winged 170, and Black 85), 139 long-tailed ducks, and 351 goldeneyes (Burrows 179 and Common 172). The primary harvest areas included Island, Mason, and Whatcom counties. A total of 112 sea ducks were harvested in Clallam County and a total of 109 sea ducks were harvested in Jefferson County last season. Be sure to check the [Game bird and small game regulations | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#) in the 2023 season pamphlet for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin, and goldeneye) in western Washington. Hunters can also reference the [sea duck management strategies draft publication](#) from 2013.

District 16 has limited access for waterfowl hunting. Some locals in the western portion of the district jump shoot in pools and side channels of the west end rivers, along with other small ponds and flooded gravel pit areas. As in recent years, hunter success is often dependent on rainfall and storm events during the waterfowl season. A lack of flooded farm fields can sharply reduce hunting opportunities within the district.

Hunters can find the Office of the Washington State Climatologist website [here](#). The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) September temperature outlook has increased chances of above normal temperatures statewide. The outlook for precipitation is less insightful with equal chances of above, below, or near-normal temperatures.

The three-month outlook September through November is indicating higher chances of above normal temperatures across Washington State. The odds are highest in eastern Washington, with chances between 50 and 60% on the three-tiered scale. For September through November precipitation, there are higher chances of below normal precipitation statewide. The odds are slightly higher for Western Washington, between 40 and 50%, compared to eastern Washington.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Public saltwater hunting opportunities are more numerous than freshwater options in District 16, albeit more difficult in many ways. The regulations and landownerships, including tideland ownerships, make it necessary for hunters to plan ahead. The USFS Dungeness Wildlife Refuge has areas that are closed (Figure 28). Hunting is not allowed on the refuge and some of the refuge boundaries can be difficult to determine in the field.

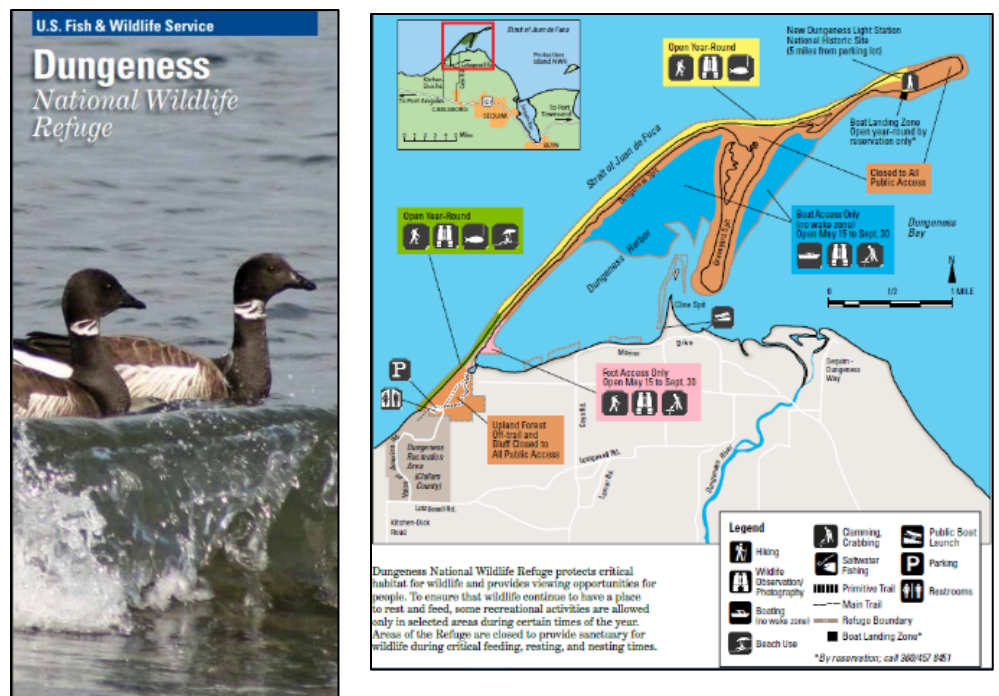


Figure 28. Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge map showing closed areas.

***IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR HUNTERS WHO HUNT FROM A BOAT–** When hunting from a boat, hunters should ensure the boat anchor is not down on private tidelands without permission. Boat hunters shouldn't go onto private land without permission to retrieve any

waterfowl shot. However, hunters should be aware they could run the risk of violating the wastage law if they do not retrieve the waterfowl they have shot. Therefore, it is essential hunters be aware of property ownership, especially when hunting from a boat.

Shoreline and tidelands: There are some private landowners who allow limited hunting access along the saltwater shoreline. Typically, local signs refer to a phone number or contact information, and in some cases the signage spells out the conditions of access. Because these vary from year to year, hunters must make a tour of the area and find out the current arrangements. Hunters should make sure they will have the ability to retrieve ducks, keeping in mind the ownerships where they have permission to hunt and the adjacent ownership where they do not have that permission.

The DNR quadrangle maps display the category of tidelands, with different shades of blue for different public tideland ownerships (Figure 29).



Figure 29. Portion of DNR quadrangle map displaying public tidelands in blue.

For Clallam County, hunters can use the assessor maps to determine tideland ownership. Assessor maps are available online [here](#) (Figure 30).

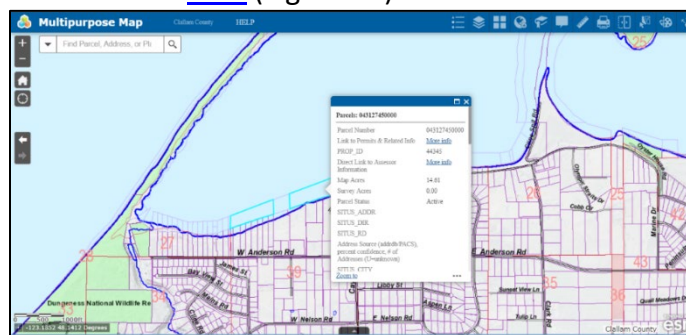


Figure 30. Clallam County website with parcel information on tidelands.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Most all freshwater waterfowl hunting areas in the Dungeness Basin are on private lands. Public land hunting opportunities have changed at the Lower Dungeness Unit at the mouth of the Dungeness River. Some hunters find hunting opportunities in the near-shore areas of bays and along the shoreline of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, both on foot and by boat. Hunting violations remain a concern on small water bodies and along the saltwater shorelines in the district. WDFW urges hunters to obey all state and county regulations at sites near residential areas to avoid potential future closures.

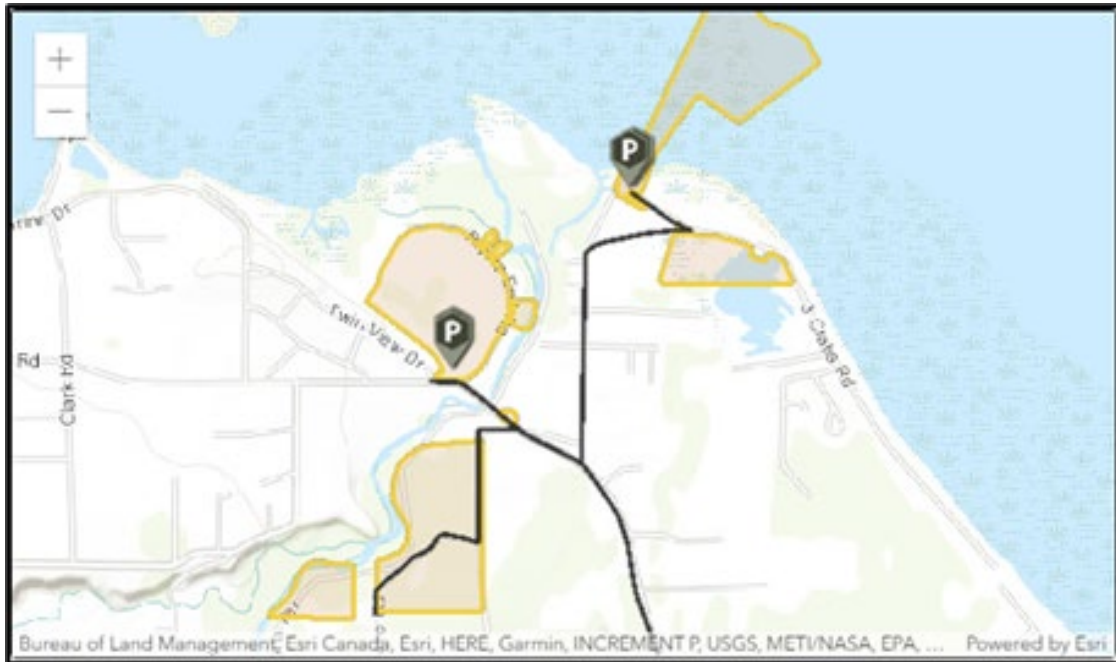
North Olympic Wildlife Area includes the [Dungeness Unit](#). This unit contains multiple disjointed parcels about five miles north of Sequim. Hunting opportunities are offered ONLY at the River's End property. Access to private lands previously available is no longer available. WDFW is still evaluating the hunting activity the reduced size area can accommodate. Consult the wildlife area unit webpage for information updates. River's End Property is located north of East Anderson Road, and west of the Dungeness River. This is about 50 acres north of East Anderson Road and west of the Dungeness River. Public access is supported by a small parking area, an information kiosk containing site rules, and a restroom.

Be advised:

- Due to popularity, waterfowl hunting at this site is subject to several rules. Hunting is restricted to Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, and state and federal holidays. Hunting is restricted to one designated point on WDFW-managed land that is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Occupancy of a hunt point is limited to a maximum of four people.
- River's End: It is unlawful to have in possession more than 15 shotgun shells or to fire (shoot) more than 15 shells in one day on this unit (WAC 220-414-050).
- Firearms Restriction Area: Per Clallam County Regulations Chapter 15.16 FIREARMS DISCHARGE RESTRICTIONS - RESTRICTED SHOOTING AREA 1 (North of 101). The area north of Highway 101, and bounded on the west by the Elwha River, on the south by Highway 101, on the east by the east county line, and on the north by the Strait of Juan de Fuca.
- Towne Road and Three Crabs Properties: Hunting management decisions are on hold until further review and planning.

Useful Links:

- [Dungeness Wildlife Area Unit](#)



- [The Dungeness Recreation Area County Park](#) no longer allows hunting.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Harlequin duck harvest is not allowed during the 2023-24 season. This harvest closure was implemented last season as well. WDFW is evaluating population status and composition. A limited user entry hunt may be established in the future.

COMMON SPECIES

Canada Geese: Most goose hunting opportunity in District 16 is for Canada geese. Resident geese are increasing in distribution, especially within urban and rural areas. Habitats like the Port Angeles Coast Guard base, Civic field, and nearby estuaries have had increased usage by Canada geese. In the last ten years, the Department has noticed a Canada goose expansion into wetlands that geese previously didn't use to WDFW knowledge.

Brant: If brant numbers are sufficient, brant hunting this upcoming season will be open from Jan. 20 to Jan. 27 in Clallam County with a daily bag limit of two brant and a possession limit of six brant. This will be a change from the past four years when the hunting days were three select days (Saturday/Wednesday) during the month of January. The date for the youth, veterans, and active military brant hunters in Clallam County will be a day the first week of February, with a daily and possession bag limit of two brant.

Brant hunting was closed in Clallam and Jefferson counties for many years. Brant management was complicated by the difference in productivity of subpopulations, some enduring high nesting failures that led to restrictions on the hunting grounds. The 2014 report on management of brant in Washington is available [here](#). The January 2018 season was the first season that brant hunting was open in Clallam County for decades. WDFW estimated the harvest within Clallam County to be 90 brant in 2018 and 89 brant in 2019. To compare, the 2019 harvest in Skagit County was estimated to be 241 brant, Whatcom County was 48 brant, and Pacific County was 72 brant. The season for brant has continued the past few years, after winter counts had consistently placed the three-year average above the 1,000 brant winter population threshold required to consider opening a county to potential harvest, per WDFW Game Management Plan objectives. Hunters harvested a total of 90 brant during the January 2023 season. This harvest number was one half of the harvest number reported in 2022. WDFW checked and measured many of the harvested brant from Clallam County during the 2018 –



2020 seasons to further assess the brant populations. WDFW also collected feathers specimens DNA analysis during the 2018 – 2020 seasons.

POPULATION STATUS

Canada geese populations continue to increase on the east side of the district.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2023 PROSPECTS

Twenty-two hunters harvested 61 Canada geese in 33 days afield during the 2022-2023 September hunt. During the regular seasons, 85 hunters harvested 181 Canada geese for 407 days afield. Goose numbers are increasing year-round, providing more hunter opportunity by the local production.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Within small acreages and patchy ownership, WDFW doesn't advise pass shooting geese. Local hunters were quite successful in previous seasons using a decoy spread and blinds. Hunters must obtain permission to hunt on private lands and follow all [firearm regulations](#). Many agricultural fields have residential properties nearby, so hunters must be aware of all safety concerns.

Please be respectful of private landowners and avoid conflicts with other recreational users in the area. Hunters are likely to find brant along the Dungeness shorelines that hold eelgrass. Brant also occur in other locations from Port Angeles to Sequim Bay. It will be worthwhile to become familiar with the other regular uses in potential brant hunting areas to avoid a location that will have conflicting uses on the few days the hunt is open.

PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Most goose hunting opportunities are on private agricultural lands in GMU 624.



SPECIES AND GENERAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Hunting within any of the forest lands throughout District 16 should offer good opportunities for harvesting grouse. Hunters may find prime forest grouse hunting on DNR and USFS lands within the district. Grouse harvest in Clallam County is one of the highest county totals within Region 6.

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout public and private forest lands in District 16. The chances for harvesting sooty grouse increase at higher elevations. Hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000-3,000 feet, within timber stands with huckleberry and other forage plants. Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500 feet, particularly in riparian forest habitats, early seral forests (five to twenty-five years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forest types.

The effect of spring weather on chick production and survival is a well-known factor influencing variation in populations across regions and years. During the peak of hatching (late May-early June), wet and windy weather reduces chick survival due to exposure as well as reducing insect populations at the time when young grouse need a high-protein diet. Conversely, drought conditions can also reduce forage opportunities. Loss or changes in forest habitat may also be affecting populations and harvest opportunities.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2023 PROSPECTS

Grouse hunting in District 16 continues to decline, a trend WDFW has documented since 2009. Clallam County grouse harvest peaked in 2009 at 6,350 by 1,202 hunters, with Jefferson County 2009 harvest at 3,839 grouse by 1,502 hunters. The 2022 harvest totals for Clallam County were 1,184 grouse by 732 hunters. A total of 577 grouse were harvested by 374 hunters in Jefferson County during the 2022 hunting season.

In 2020, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission approved changing the grouse season to Sep. 15 through Jan. 15, beginning with the 2021 season. Delaying the start of the season by two weeks (without reducing the total season length) is intended to increase grouse abundance and availability to hunters by protecting breeding-aged females (hens) while they are still caring for their broods. Forest grouse broods typically become independent of the hen in mid-September. In the early season before broods break up, hens appear to be at higher risk of harvest than breeding aged males based on hunter-submitted wing and tail samples. Increasing hen survival should lead to an increase in population abundance and hunter opportunity.

Samples collected from grouse hunters provide an additional metric for monitoring forest grouse population trends. A wing and tail from a harvested grouse can provide the information necessary to identify species, sex, and age of the bird. District 16 is within the Olympic Forest Grouse Monitoring Zone (Figure 31). During the 2021 season, within the Olympic Monitoring Zone, 56% of the harvest were ruffed grouse and 44% of the harvest were blue grouse.



District 16 biologists will be collecting grouse wings and tails again during the 2023 season to help evaluate the harvested populations. The information for hunters to collect from the harvest is the date and location (GMU). This information will need to be filled out on provided envelopes. There are various ways hunters can contribute their harvested grouse wing and tail. Hunters can contact local WDFW employees to provide their wings/tails. Another option is to drop them off (with filled out envelopes, provided) at these wing/tail barrels. There will be three grouse wing/tail collection barrels set up within District 16 during the grouse hunting season. The locations of these sites can be found on WDFW's [Forest grouse wing and tail collection](#) page. Thanks in advance for helping WDFW with grouse monitoring.

Western Washington does not support self-sustaining populations of pheasants primarily due to the wet climate and lack of grain farming. Hunting pheasant in western Washington is dependent upon releases of pheasants in the fall. District 16 does not have viable populations of wild pheasant and there are no longer any pheasant release sites in the district. Information on current pheasant release sites: wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/pheasant-release

There is a fair abundance of California (valley) quail in the eastern portion of District 16. They are quite common in the Dungeness Valley but hunting opportunities can be challenging due to predominately private ownership. Quail, like the deer, thrive in the Dungeness habitats that include a mix of open grass, shrubs, and forest. Some quail hunting opportunities can be found on public lands located in the lower foothills in clear-cuts or any early successional habitats. During 2022, hunters harvested 9 in Clallam County, and 8 quail were reported harvested in Jefferson County. The western Washington, California (valley) quail season runs end of September through end of November, with a daily mixed bag limit of ten and a possession mixed bag limit of 30. Reference the [Game bird and small game regulations | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#) for more information.

WDFW doesn't manage District 16 for wild turkeys and the species remains relatively rare here. WDFW receives occasional reports of individuals or small groups of turkeys within GMU 603. These are likely domestic turkeys that escaped from a farm that raised turkeys in the Joyce area. District 16 biologists did receive a report of a small flock of turkeys in the Dungeness area in the summer of 2022, but they were also determined to be domestic turkeys. Unfortunately, basically no prospects for hunting wild turkeys exist in District 16.

District 16 has not been a major dove hunting area, although eastern Clallam County has a lot of doves. To complicate matters, the Eurasian collared dove, an introduced species, is becoming very prevalent in east Clallam County. There was no reported harvest of mourning doves in Clallam or Jefferson counties during the 2021 season. However, during the 2022 season, nine hunters reported harvesting eight mourning doves in Clallam County across 14 days. The 2022 USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status report [Mourning Dove Population Status, 2022 | FWS.gov](#) contains more information.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Band-tailed pigeons are the largest species of pigeon in North America. They inhabit mountainous forests in the western United States, with large coastal populations occurring from British Columbia south to northern California. During the breeding season (April to September), band-tailed pigeons are primarily found below 1,000 ft. elevation. In autumn, they eat mainly berries, nuts, grains, acorns, and fruits.

POPULATION STATUS AND TREND

Band-tailed pigeons were quite abundant in District 16 historically. Local hunters reported seeing clouds of band-tailed pigeons in drainages, such as McDonald Creek, on the east side of District 16 back in the 1950s. Hunters will find them throughout the district using forest habitats. WDFW monitors band-tailed pigeon populations using a standardized population index survey. These surveys occur at 16+ mineral sites where band-tails are known to congregate. There is currently only one historic mineral site in District 16. Since WDFW initiated the standardized mineral site survey, the population index indicates band-tail populations have fluctuated through the years but have never declined to levels that would warrant more limited harvest opportunities.

HARVEST TRENDS AND 2023 PROSPECTS

Hunters report relatively low band-tailed pigeon harvest in this district (sometimes zero), but the resource is available throughout the district in good numbers. Bag limits were ten birds per day until 1950, when statewide harvest was estimated at 90,000 birds. However, overharvest and habitat changes caused significant decline in overall numbers. The band-tailed pigeon harvest in Clallam County has averaged nine birds per year for the period 2004-2020. During the same period for Jefferson County, the total average harvest per year is seven birds. There was no band-tailed pigeon harvest reported during the 2022 season.

WHERE AND HOW TO HUNT BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Band-tailed pigeons are most prevalent in District 16 along marine estuaries, shorelines, and forested areas where they forage on berries. They frequently congregate in areas with red elderberry and cascara. These small trees are most abundant in five- to ten-year-old timber harvests where hunting can be exceptionally good. The key to harvesting band-tails is scouting. Identifying specific timber harvests used by band-tails is difficult to predict. Hunters need to locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites. Upon finding a good site, hunters will need to sit patiently and wait for possible shooting opportunities to occur.

Band-tails often congregate at seeps and mineral sites. They show strong site fidelity to these locations and often return to the same seeps year after year. WDFW conducts annual surveys at such mineral sites to assess changes to the band-tailed population. These mineral sites are not abundant and are hard to find. If a hunter is lucky enough to locate a mineral site where band-tails congregate, it is likely to be a successful season.

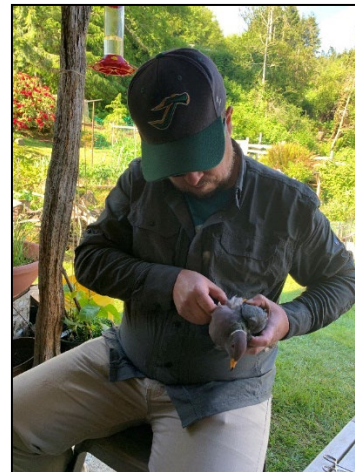
Only one historic mineral site was known to exist within District 16. However, at least three new suspect mineral sites were located during a special research project that was initiated in 2021. Please contact District 16 biologists if you may know the location of any sites where band-tailed pigeons obtain minerals in Clallam or Jefferson counties.

SPECIAL REGULATIONS

Since band-tail seasons re-opened in 2002, hunters are required to buy a migratory bird authorization, along with all required hunting licenses and the band-tailed pigeon harvest card. It is mandatory to report all band-tailed pigeon harvest to WDFW after the season has closed. Hunters should review the [2023 Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) pamphlet to confirm season dates and any other regulation changes. More information about population monitoring and harvests is available in the [2022 USFWS band-tailed pigeon population status report](#).

RESEARCH

Starting in May 2021, WDFW initiated a project to capture and fit band-tailed pigeons with satellite telemetry devices in portions of District 16 and 17 (Grays Harbor and Pacific counties). The Department has fitted a total of 28 birds with transmitters that are programmed to obtain multiple locations throughout the day and periodically upload those locations via the cell tower network.





The goal of this project is to conduct research on band-tailed pigeons in areas where mineral sites have not been identified, which would allow WDFW to fulfill the following objectives:

- More accurately index our statewide population via mineral site surveys.
- More expertly manage our BTP harvest seasons to potentially allow an expanded hunting opportunity.
- Provide detailed information on resource selection to inform how to manage habitat that would increase the statewide population.

This research project has already led to the discovery of new mineral sites in Grays Harbor County. There are now three locations in Clallam County that have been identified as possible new mineral sites. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist joined WDFW biologists in July of 2023 to further investigate these sites. Hunters and members of the public are funding this research via the migratory bird stamp and artwork program. WDFW expects this project to continue through 2025 across various districts within Region 6. WDFW biologists are looking for new trapping locations near Forks or Port Townsend. Please contact District 16 biologists if you may know of concentrations of band-tailed pigeons on properties at these locations.

District 16 is within the ceded area of numerous treaty tribes on the Olympic Peninsula. WDFW and tribes cooperatively manage wildlife populations. Tribal hunting often occurs concurrent with WDFW hunting seasons. Tribal governments set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal Enforcement personnel are responsible for ensuring tribal hunting regulations are followed, which may differ from state regulations.

Tribal big game harvest reports are available on the [Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission website](#).

These diverse mixtures of ownerships and jurisdictions also present different combinations of firearm restriction regulations and ordinances. The three main firearm restriction regulations most relevant to hunters are the following:

- WDFW – Firearm Restriction - unlawful to hunt wildlife with centerfire or rimfire rifles in “The portion of the GMU 624 (Coyle) within Clallam County.” Page 90 in the 2021 Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.
- [Clallam County Code Clallam County Firearms Discharge Restrictions](#)
- [Jefferson County Code Jefferson County Shooting in the County](#)

Make sure you have acquired the necessary permits to drive on public and private land in the area you decide to explore.

Public Access Permits: Here are some public access permits to be aware of and that you may need depending on your destination.

[Discover Pass](#) State parks, DNR, and WDFW



[Federal Agency-Interagency Annual Pass](#)



[Federal Agency Interagency Volunteer Pass](#)



Some landowners have enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program. Those lands provide additional hunting opportunities for the public. Reference the private lands section for more details or visit the [Hunt Planner Webmap](#).

The interagency passes include access on National Park Service, USFS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation lands. Keep in mind that many public lands on the Olympic Peninsula are not open to hunting, including Olympic National Park, Washington State Parks, and Clallam County parks.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Private timberlands have various access and road closure procedures, so it is prudent to determine current ownership for a target location and the requirements to obtain permission to hunt. Merrill and Ring Pysht Tree Farm in GMU 603 made a drastic change a few years ago will not be allowing access for deer hunting. A lottery system is used for the small number of access permits they issue for elk hunting season. The other forest industry ownerships have various access systems in place. Hunters are encouraged to scout the areas they are considering hunting and pay close attention to the signs on all roads. Signs are often the landowner's primary method of informing the public on which areas are open to hunting.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MAJOR TIMBER COMPANIES

Rayonier, Inc.

Website: rayonier.com/

IFP Office 360-452-1351

Forks Office 360-374-6565

Port Angeles 360-457-2329

Information on Rayonier Access Permits:

- property.rayonierhunting.com/Permits/PermitsHome.aspx
- property.rayonierhunting.com/AvailableAreas/FindProperties.aspx

Green Crow

Website: greencrow.com/contact-us/locations/

360-452-3325

727 E. 8th, Port Angeles, WA 98362

Merrill and Ring

Website: merrillring.com/contact-us/

360-452-2367

Email: contact@merrillring.com

813 East 8th Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362

OTHER MAJOR LANDOWNERS

Hoh River Trust

Facebook: facebook.com/The-Hoh-River-Trust-74841050447/

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION – OLYMPIC PENINSULA CHAPTER

Website: rmef.org/where-we-conserve/?state=WA

5705 Grant Creek

Missoula, MT 59808 Phone: (406) 523-4500

JEFFERSON COUNTY SPORTSMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Website: jeffersoncountysportsmen.org/wp/

Email: info@JeffersonCountySportsmen.org

P.O. Box 737, Port Townsend, WA 98368

SPORTSMEN FOR WILD OLYMPICS

Website: SportsmenForWildOlympics.org

Email: info@sportsmenforwildolympics.org

WAPITI BOWMEN ARCHERY CLUB

Facebook: facebook.com/Wapiti-Bowmen-180948655312545/

Email: wapitibowclub@gmail.com

374 E Arnette Rd, Port Angeles, WA 98362

EYES IN THE WOODS

Website: <http://www.eyesinthewoods.org/>

P.O. Box 2406, Olympia, WA 98507

WEST END SPORTSMEN'S CLUB-FORKS

Facebook Website: facebook.com/pg/West-End-Sportsmens-Club-354953248029561/posts/

Phone: (360) 374-5420

Sportsman Club Road, Forks, WA 98331

WASHINGTON BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

Website: backcountryhunters.org/washington_bha

Max Cole, West Side Co-Chair

Email: washington@backcountryhunters.org

DUCKS UNLIMITED OLYMPIC DISTRICT

Website: ducks.org/washington/wa-content/state-contacts/?poe=stateHomeIcon

Chairman Mike Luecht

Email: papaluke@wavecable.com

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA GREATER SEATTLE CHAPTER

Website: iwla.org/local-chapters

A. William Way

Phone: 425-868-4759

Email: bway@watershedco.com

3451 E. Lake Sammamish Ln. N.E., Sammamish, WA 98074

WASHINGTON BRANT FOUNDATION

Website: wabrant.org/

Maynard Axelson

Phone: 360-445-6681

Email: info@wabrant.org

15929 Fir Island Rd, Mt Vernon, WA 98273

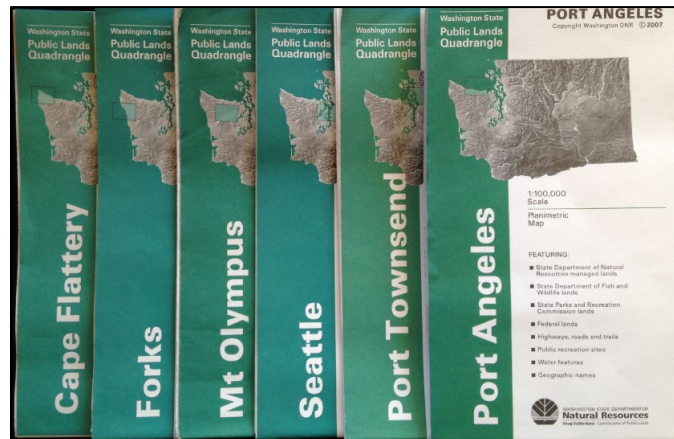
WASHINGTON OUTDOOR WOMEN (WOW)

Website: washingtonoutdoorwomen.org washingtonoutdoorwomen.org/workshops/

P.O. Box 1656, Bellevue, WA 98009-1656

If you know of an organization that should be included in this document, please let us know.

WDFW recommends a set of these DNR maps, which you can order [online](#).



These DNR maps are available to buy at Swains and Browns in Port Angeles and Thriftway in Forks but can also be ordered online or by phone.

These DNR maps have some of the best combination of land ownership and current roads. However, keep in mind there have been several DNR and private forest land ownership exchanges in recent years that won't show up on these maps. [DNR's website](#) has current DNR ownership displayed.

Other maps that can be helpful for select areas include:

[Forest Service Free Online Maps](#)

Forest Service maps can be obtained free online at

[Forest Service Maps to purchase](#)

USFS sells forest district maps that are very useful, as are the custom correct maps shown on the same page.

East end of WDFW District 16 is the Hood Canal Ranger District/North End map.

West end of WDFW District 16 are the Pacific Ranger District/North End and South End maps.

OnX App: The OnX Cellphone App has been the go-to tool for information on land ownership in recent years. One main issue is areas with no cell service could make the tool useless. If you preplan when you have service, you can save the aerial background for the areas you will encounter poor cell coverage and then still use the App without cell service.