

2024 District 16 Hunting Prospects

Clallam and west Jefferson counties



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Department of
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WILDLIFE**

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2024 District 16 Hunting Prospects

Chelan and Douglas counties

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Biologist Shelly Ament with a deer fawn collared for research within District 16. Photo by Tim Cullinan.

Cover photo by Shelly Ament.

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District 16 general overview

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 District 16 GMU had a 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 forestlands and Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed lands.

Figure 1. District 16 GMUs. GMUs 624 Coyle and 621 Olympic extend into District 15.

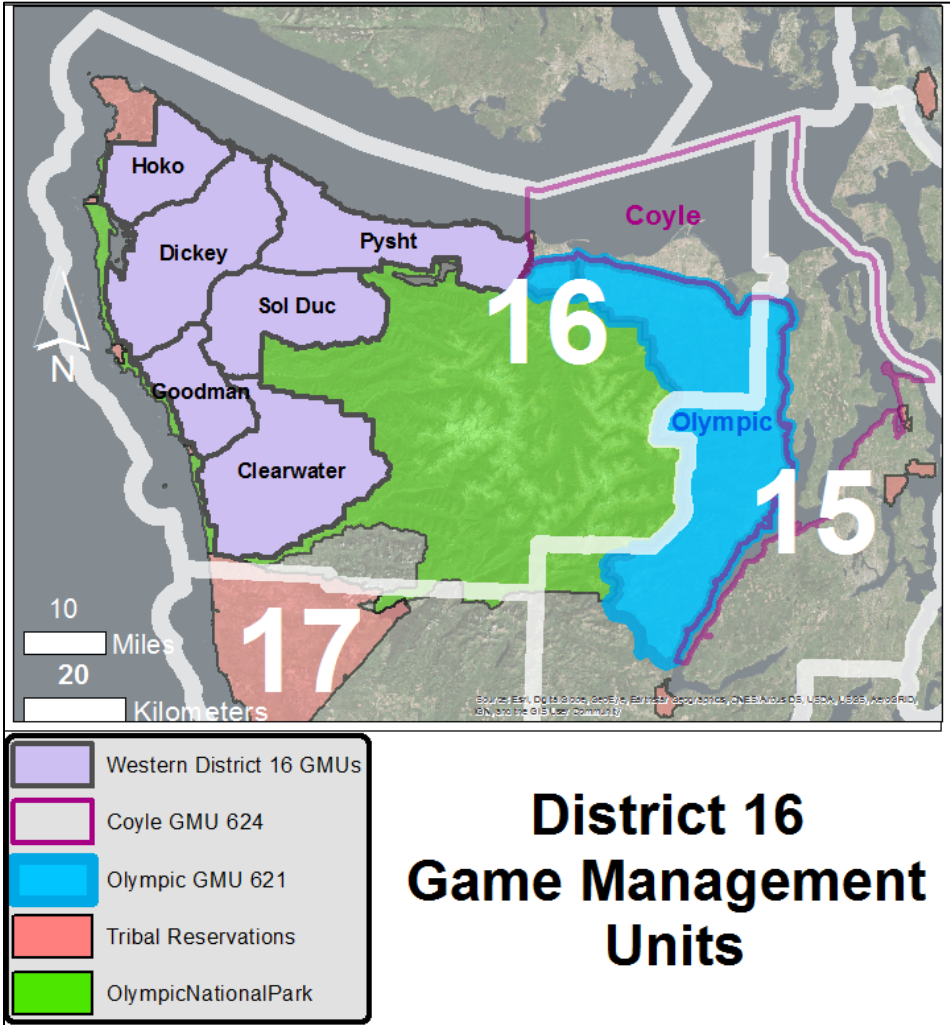


Table 1. District 16 game species annual harvest, 2015 - 2023. (Tribal harvest not included.)

| Species | 2023 | 2022 | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|---------------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|--------|--------|
| Elk | 97 | 173 | 139 | 211 | 249 | 246 | 132 | 138 | 179 |
| Deer | 285 | 268 | 344 | 400 | 468 | 347 | 329 | 418 | 339 |
| Black bear | 107 | 118 | 90 | 119 | 152 | 94 | 101 | 87 | 66 |
| Cougar | 11 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 2 | 8 | 5 |
| Ducks | 4893 | 5744 | 10365 | 7208 | 8682 | 6999 | 6057 | 11540 | 8093 |
| Geese (Sept.) | 55 | 88 | 84 | 388 | 96 | 154 | 149 | 272 | 97 |
| Geese | 172 | 223 | 432 | 353 | 364 | 318 | 183 | 713 | 355 |
| Brant | 43 | 90 | 180 | 156 | 46 | 89 | 90 | Closed | Closed |
| Forest grouse | 3739 | 1761 | 3814 | 3153 | 6868 | 2958 | 2590 | 4374 | 4794 |
| Mourning dove | 0 | 8 | 0 | 30 | 51 | 36 | 0 | 54 | 67 |
| Quail | 109 | 17 | 22 | 101 | 43 | 31 | 150 | 236 | 164 |
| Snipe | 0 | 0 | 77 | 213 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 45 | 4 |
| Hare/rabbit | 43 | 15 | 20 | 185 | 32 | 71 | 54 | 60 | 45 |

East District 16

The eastern portion of the district is the Dungeness Basin (western Coyle GMU 624 and northern Olympic GMU 621). 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. In the Dungeness Basin and the smaller watersheds east of the Elwha, deer abundance results in frequent complaints. Highly visible deer occur in the Coyle GMU 624 and Olympic GMU 621 as well as lower- elevation forestlands with an ideal ratio of forest openings. Olympic GMU 621 habitat includes large areas of USFS mature forest that offers less forage for ungulates. Deer Area 6020, where there are “any deer” regular seasons, typically features more deer for harvest. Private land access poses a challenge for District 16 hunters, who must obtain permission to access target properties.

West District 16

The west end (Hoko GMU 601), Dickey GMU 602, Sol Duc GMU 607, Goodman GMU 612, and Clearwater GMU 615) 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 in ONP. Hunters will likely find harvest opportunities as elk move out of ONP during the hunting season.

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 on designated shoreline and wetland areas along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to forest grouse, deer, elk, bear, and cougar on private commercial and public forestland. Both state (DNR) and federal (USFS) lands provide hunting opportunities.

Elk

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 10 herds identified in the state. Elk numbers peaked in the late 1970s, with a conservative estimate of about 12,000 elk outside of ONP 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 fall 2000 population estimate of about 8,600 in the GMUs surrounding ONP. The Olympic elk herd's current population is likely lower.

Overall, the elk harvest opportunity is for three-point minimum bull elk. Much of the elk hunting within the eastern portion of the district is restricted to a limited entry (state hunters – permit only, three--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 access permits. 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 ONP 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 wildlife conflict specialists manage 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](#).

Radio-collars and markers: Local elk studies and ongoing monitoring require transmitting markers or other tags. Radio-collars and ear tags should have contact information identifying them 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 [2024 Washington Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#).

Which GMU should elk hunters hunt?

Hunters can harvest elk from any District 16 GMUs. Past harvest records can help to inform which areas hunters should consider for future harvests. Harvest has been a reliable measurement 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 [2023 Game Status and Trend Report](#) 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 harvests in District 16. These units contain large areas of public land, much of it without restricted access. 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 the Pysht GMU 603 have increased slightly in recent years. A thesis developed from research conducted in the Hoko GMU 601 and Dickey GMU 602 on movements and habitat use of elk in relation to human disturbance is available [online](#).



Group of elk in the Hoh River observed during an aerial composition survey. Photo by Kristin Phillips.

East District 16

The Olympic GMU 621 is limited to state permit elk and tribal elk harvest. WDFW doesn't recommend the Coyle GMU as an elk hunting destination because of limited opportunities. The season remains open for three -point minimum. Elk population and associated hunting opportunities may increase in the Coyle 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 habitat use patterns within the district. The Department designed Elk Area 6071 within Olympic GMU 621 and Coyle GMU 624, to specifically address challenges with the Dungeness/Sequim 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. 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

Olympic Peninsula elk harvest distribution 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 Olympic GMU 621 is permit only for state hunter elk harvest.

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, and 624) consistently have low bull harvest levels, rarely reaching a GMU harvest of 20 bull elk annually.

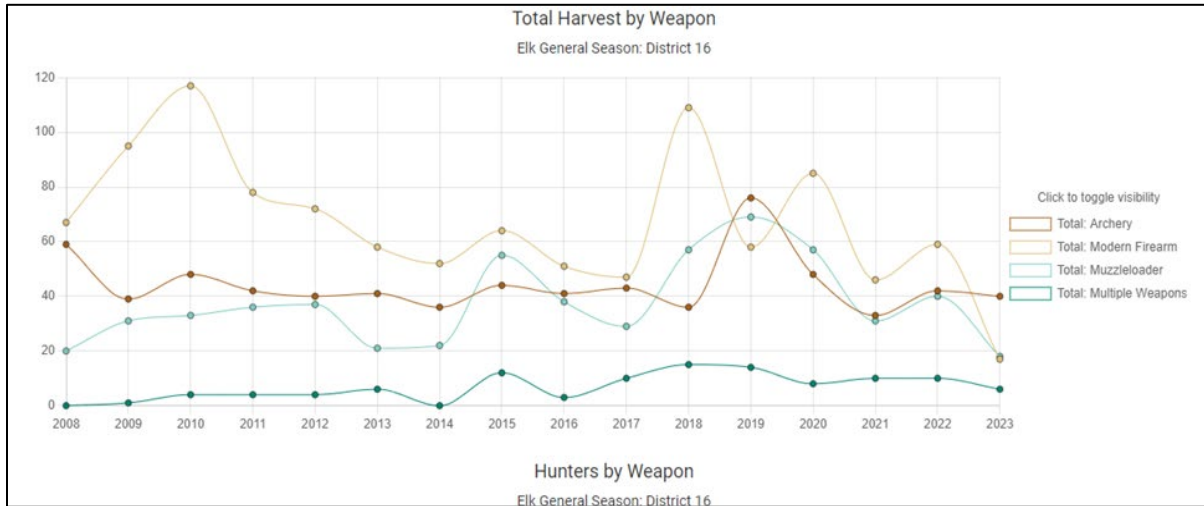
Hunting methods

Archery elk hunting in District 16 predominately occurs in Clearwater GMU 615. Dickey GMU 602, Pysht GMU 603, and Goodman GMU 612 have much fewer archery hunter days, ranging between 200 and 400 days annually. Hoko GMU 601, Olympic GMU 621, and Coyle GMU 624 had the lowest level of archery hunter days at fewer than 200.

Muzzleloader elk hunting was concentrated in Dickey GMU 602 and Sol Duc GMU 607 for many years. This changed in 2015 when muzzleloader elk hunting opened in Clearwater GMU 615 and Goodman GMU 612. As the total days spent in these GMU's increased, so did the overall trend in muzzleloader elk hunter days. Clearwater GMU 615 has more hunter days than Goodman GMU 612.

Total modern firearm elk hunting in District 16 peaked in 2010 and again in 2018 but has since decreased (Figure 2). Clearwater GMU 615 modern firearm hunting pressure dropped in half from a 2014 high to a 2017 low. Simultaneously, there was a 600-day increase in muzzleloader hunting and a 200-day increase in archery hunting during that period. The number of elk harvested by modern firearm and muzzleloader decreased during the 2023 season, but archery hunting success was similar to the previous season (Figure 2).

Figure 2. General season total elk harvest by weapon type in District 16, 2008-2023.



Hoko GMU 601 elk hunting

Since 2014, the Hoko GMU 601 bull elk harvest has generally remained between 25-30 elk but increased in 2021 and last season (Figure 3). Overall state hunter participation in Hoko GMU 601 is primarily modern firearm and muzzleloader (Figure 4). Muzzleloader harvest increased for 2023.

Figure 3. Hoko GMU 601 state elk harvest. Bar is general season bull harvest, all weapon types. Line is total harvest including general season, permit, and tribal harvest. Tribal harvest from 2023 not available. No general season cow harvest.

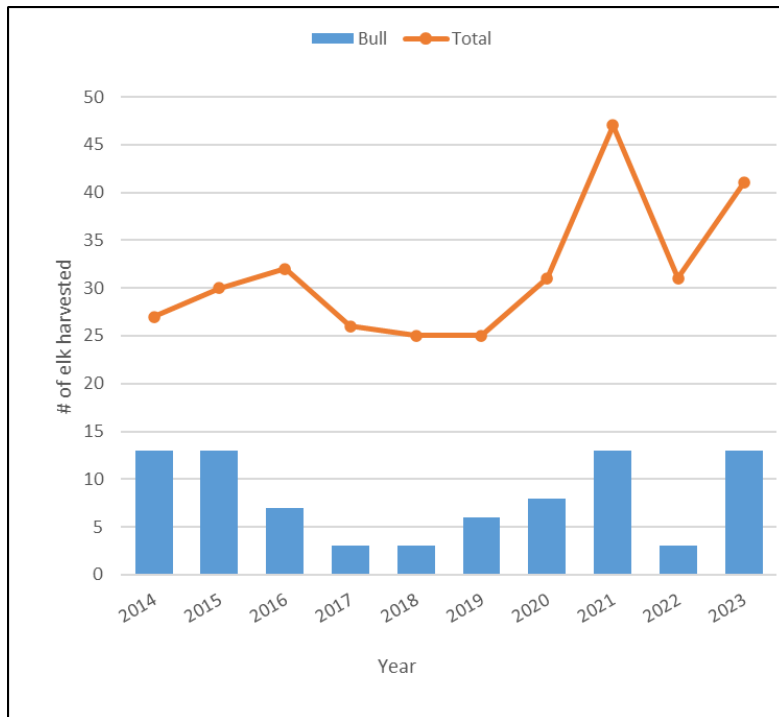
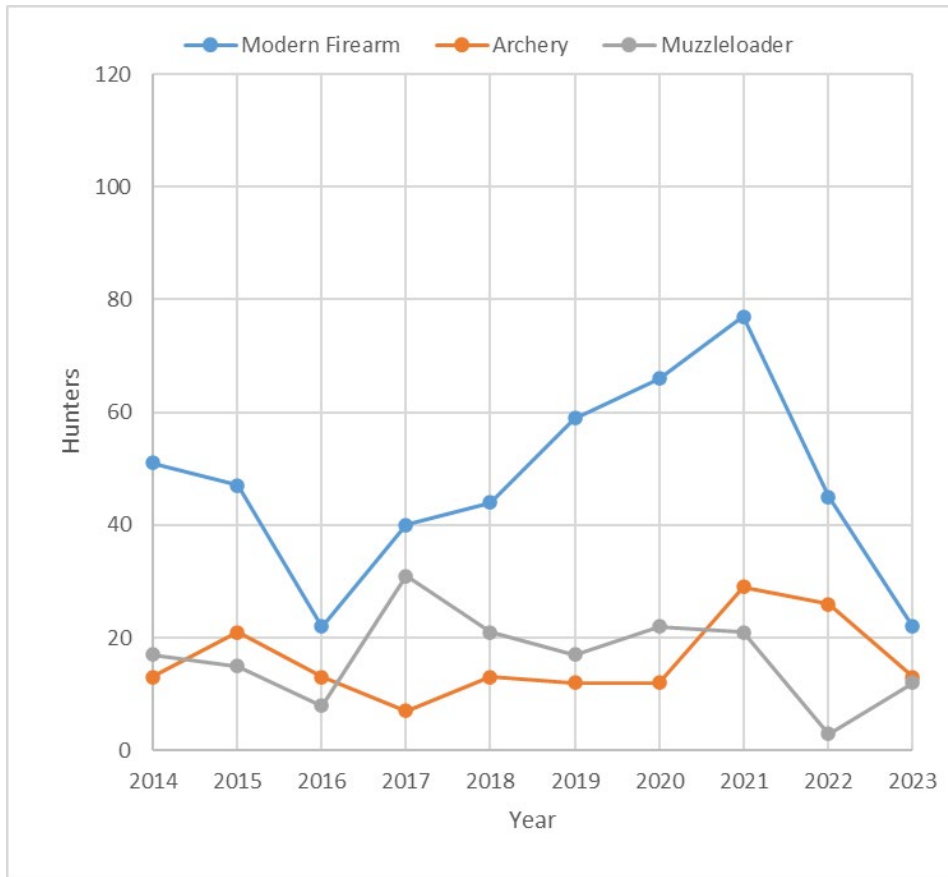


Figure 4. Hoko GMU 601 elk hunters by weapon type, 2014-2023.



Dickey GMU 602 elk hunting

The Dickey GMU 602 total bull harvest peaked in 2019 but has decreased significantly the past four hunting seasons (Figure 5). From 2022 to 2023, the number of modern firearms hunters increased while the number of archery and muzzleloader hunters increased within the unit (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Dickey GMU 602 state elk harvest. Bar is general season bull harvest, all weapon types. Line is total harvest including general season, permit, and tribal harvest. Tribal harvest from 2023 not available. No general season cow harvest.

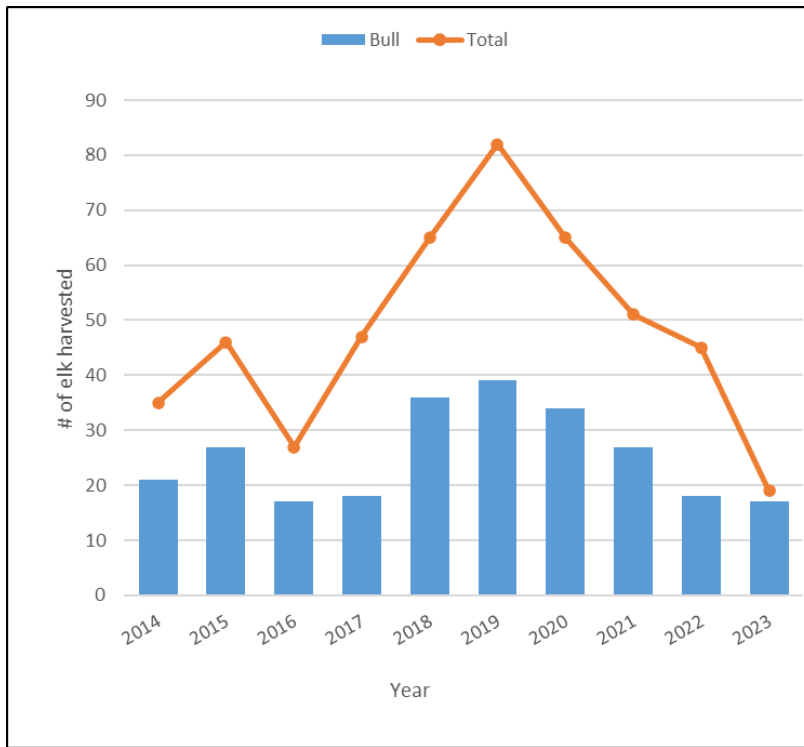
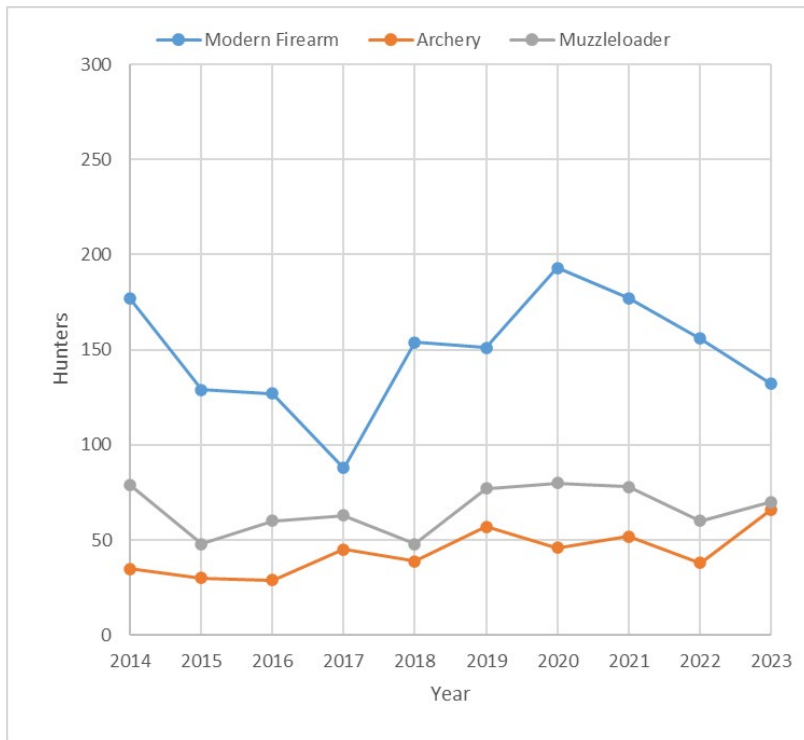


Figure 6. Dickey GMU 602 elk hunters by weapon type, 2014-2023.

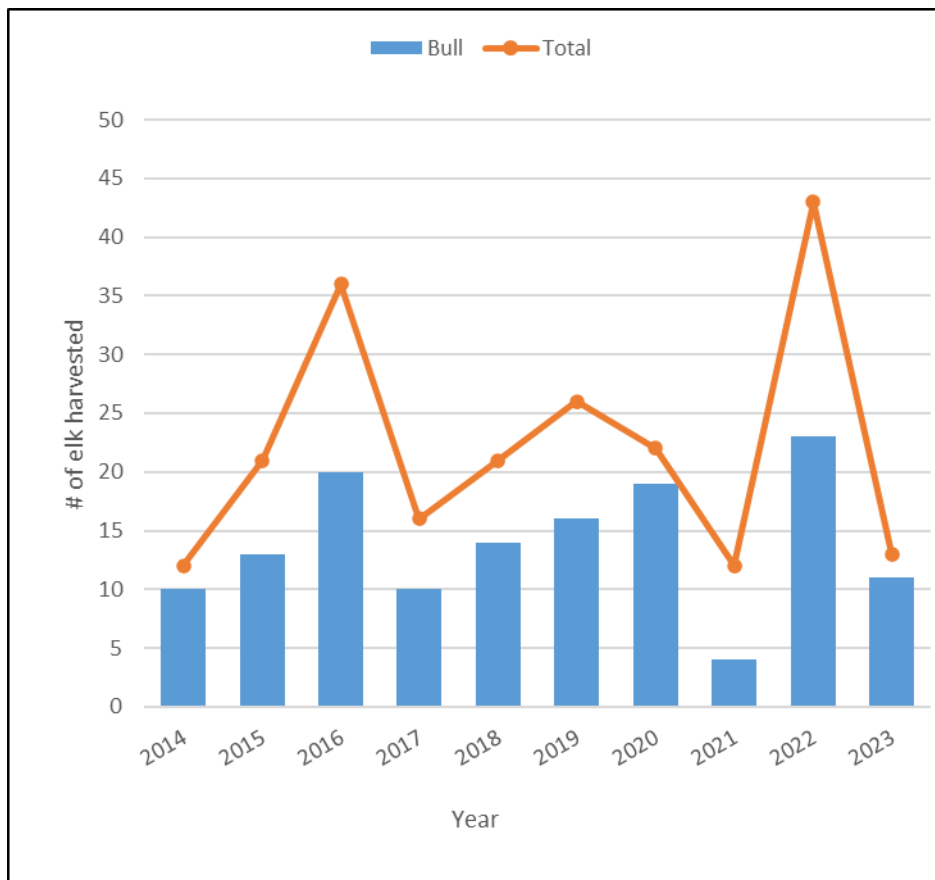


Pysht GMU 603 elk hunting

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, and WDFW's wildlife conflict staff have started issuing special damage hunt permits for this GMU.

Modern firearm hunters maintain a success rate of around 5 - 10%. Hunter pressure has remained relatively constant since 2001, with bull harvest peaking in 2022 but decreasing significantly last season (Figure 7). This GMU consistently has a higher number of archery hunters than muzzleloader hunters (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Pysht GMU 603 state elk harvest. Bar is general season bull harvest, all weapon types. Line is total harvest including general season, permit, and tribal harvest.

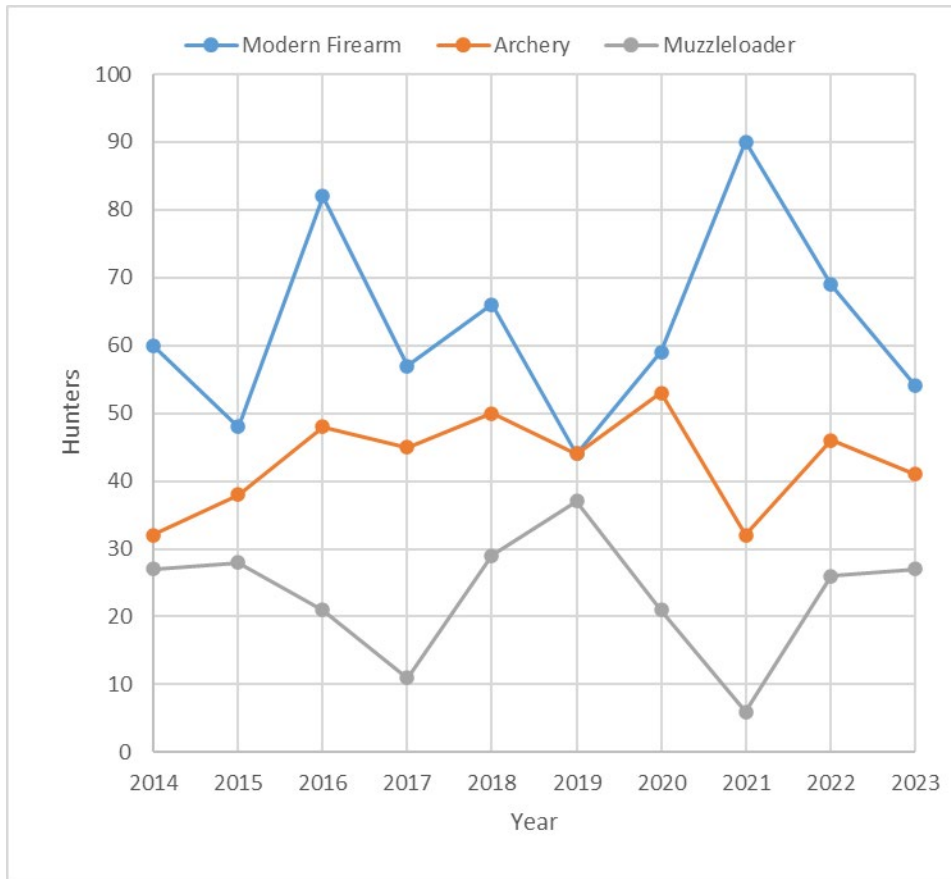


Tribal harvest from 2023 not available. No general season cow harvest.



Two bull elk spar in a field in the Dungeness Valley. Photo by Anita McMillan.

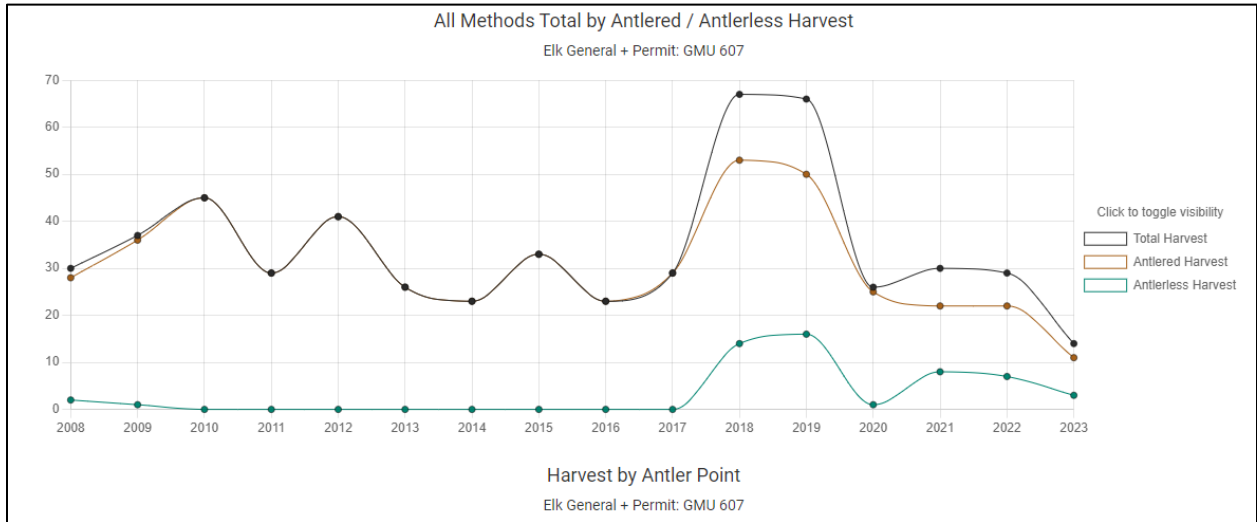
Figure 8. Pysht GMU 603 elk hunters by weapon type, 2014-2023.



Sol Duc GMU 607 elk hunting

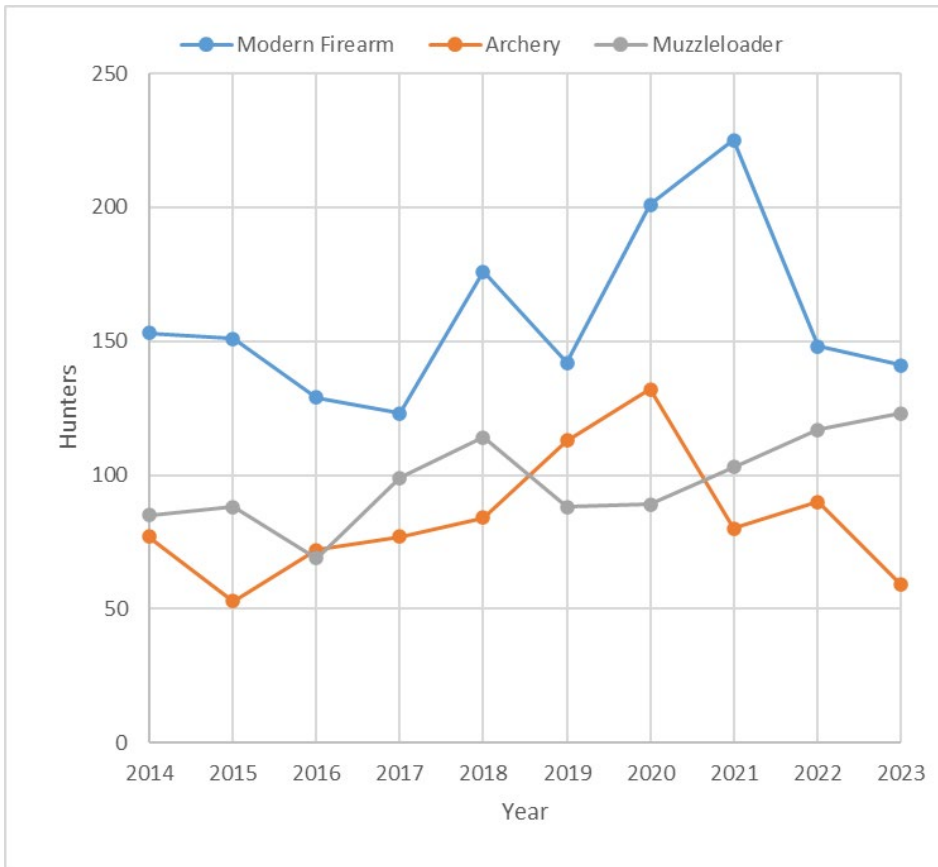
State hunters account for most Sol Duc GMU 607 bull elk harvest, with tribal hunters accounting for a portion. State hunters harvest about 30 bulls annually, and tribal hunters take fewer than 10 bulls annually. State bull harvest topped at 53 in 2018 and 48 in 2019, but the number of bulls harvested in 2023 was significantly lower at fewer than 10 (Figure 9). In 2018, a new antlerless elk permit opportunity was provided within this GMU to help manage damage complaints in the Forks area. Modern firearm is the method used by most hunters in the Sol Duc GMU 607, but the concentration of archery and muzzleloader hunters has fluctuated consistently. Since 2020, the number of muzzleloader hunters has increased while the number of archery hunters has decreased (Figure 10).

Figure 9. Sol Duc GMU 607 state elk harvest. Total elk harvest, general season bull harvest, and permit antlerless harvest for all weapon types.



Tribal harvest from 2023 not available.

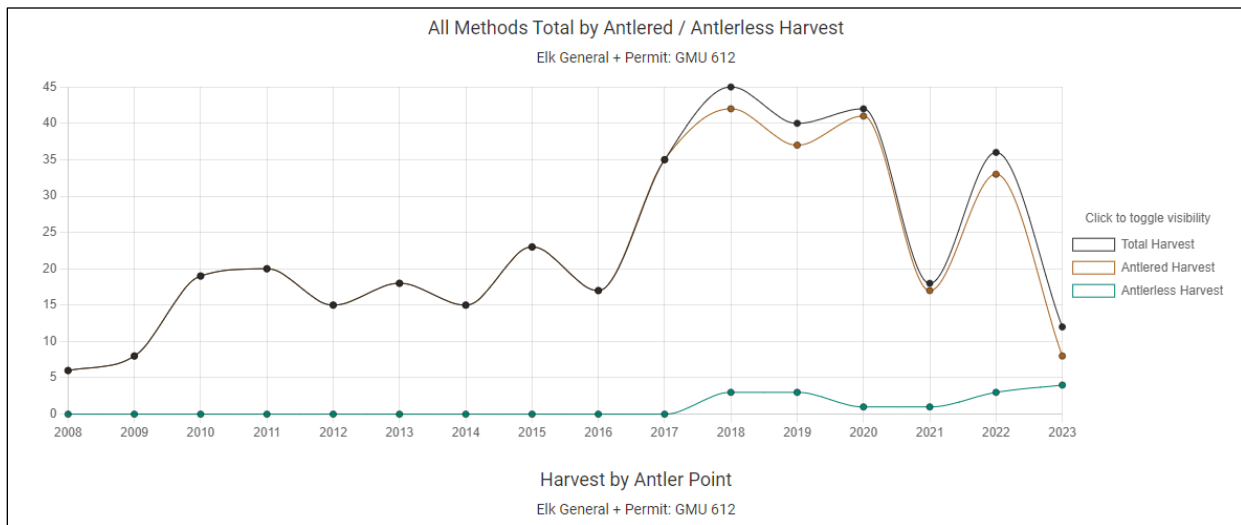
Figure 10. Sol Duc GMU 607 elk hunters by weapon type, 2014-2023.



Goodman GMU 612 elk hunting

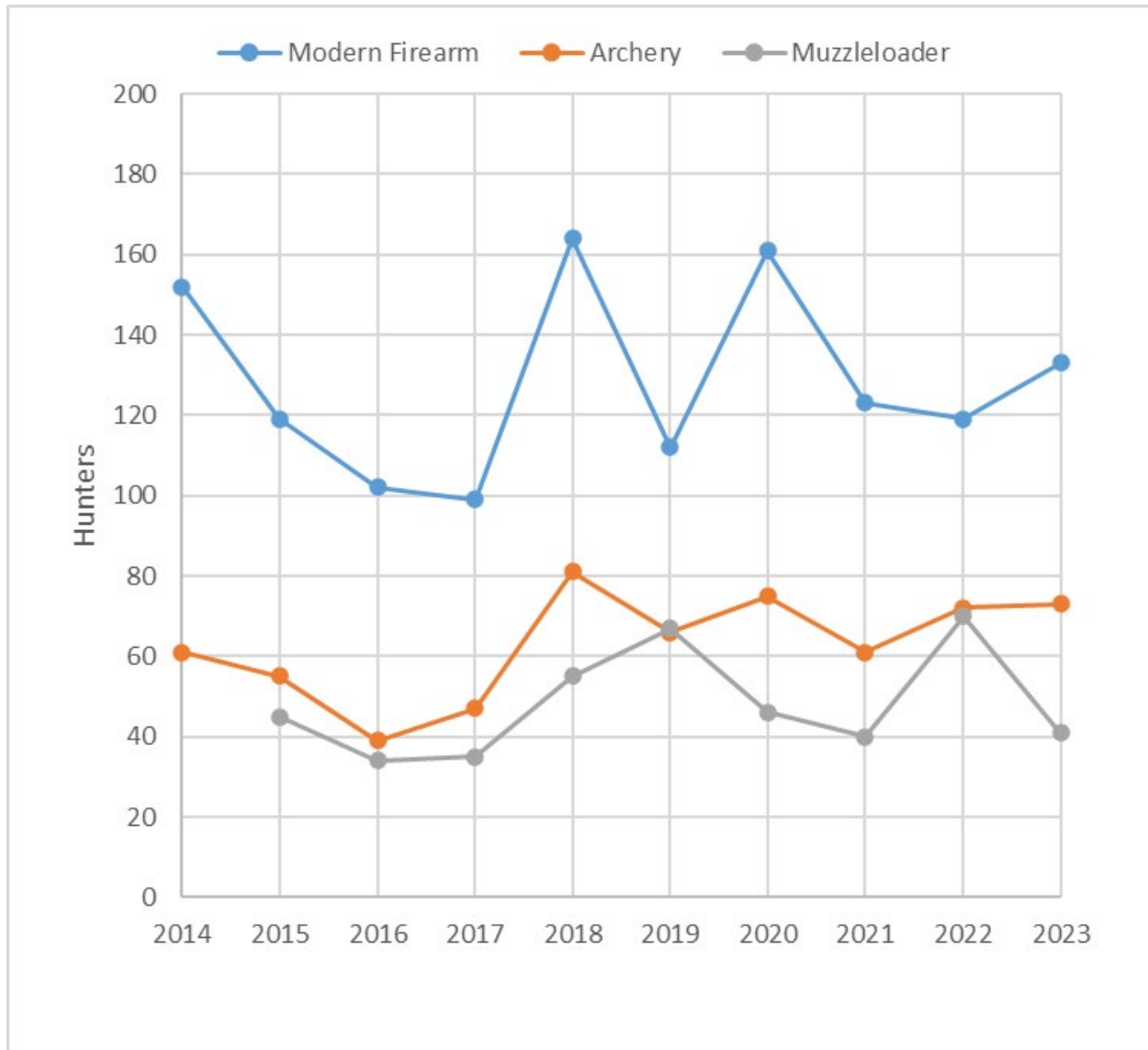
State bull harvest in Goodman GMU 612 has maintained harvest numbers between 15-25 elk from 2010 to 2016, but harvest increased between 2017 and 2020. Bull harvest in this GMU dropped significantly from 2022 to 2023 (Figure 11). Muzzleloader season was initiated with the Goodman GMU 612 in 2015. In 2018, a new antlerless elk permit opportunity was provided within this GMU to help manage for damage complaints in the Forks area. Modern firearm is the method used by most hunters in Goodman GMU 612, with the number of archery and muzzleloader hunters remaining constant (Figure 12).

Figure 11. Goodman GMU 612 state elk harvest. Total elk harvest, general season bull harvest, and permit antlerless harvest for all weapon types.



Tribal harvest from 2023 not available.

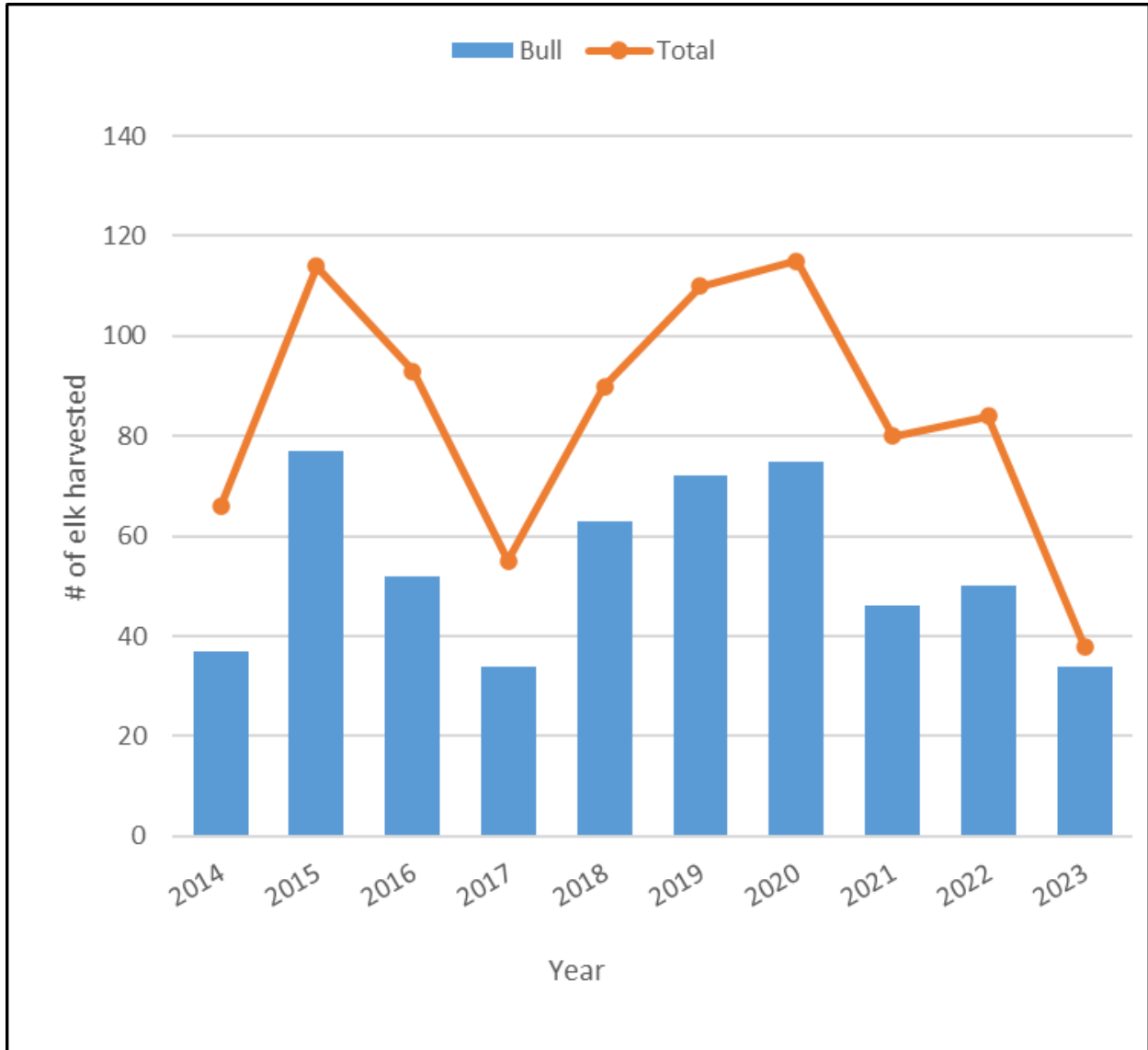
Figure 12. Goodman GMU 612 elk hunters by weapon type, 2014-2023.



Clearwater GMU 615 elk hunting

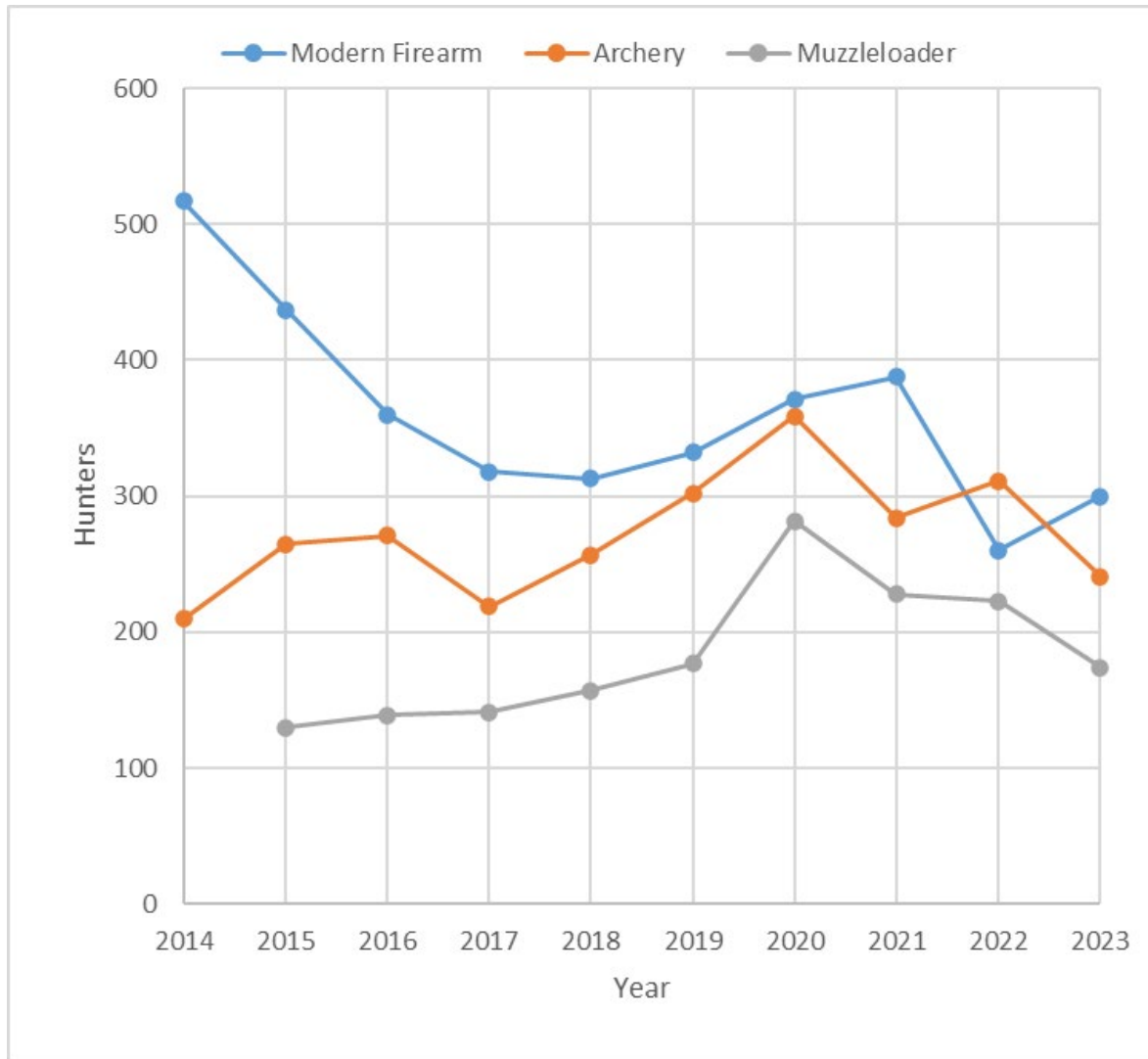
Clearwater GMU 615 has had the most elk harvest of all District 16 GMUs since 2003. Bull harvest has fluctuated considerably in recent years, with a low of 46 in 2017 and a high of 102 in 2020. It dropped significantly from 2022 to 2023 (Figure 13). The number of muzzleloader and archery hunters within this unit has decreased since 2020. The number of modern firearm hunters dropped significantly from 2021 to 2022 but increased during the 2023 season (Figure 14).

Figure 13. Clearwater GMU 615 state elk harvest. Bar is general season bull harvest, all weapon types. Line is total harvest including general season, permit, and tribal harvest.



Tribal harvest from 2023 not available. No general season cow harvest.

Figure 14. Clearwater GMU 615 elk hunters by weapon type, 2014-2023.



Olympic GMU 621 and Coyle GMU 624 elk hunting

Olympic GMU 621 elk opportunity is limited to permit hunts and an occasional damage harvest. Permit hunts can be a great opportunity, if the weather and elk use patterns are favorable. Most hunting opportunity in Olympic GMU 621 is within District 15. GMU 624 is not a prime elk hunting unit, with extremely low harvest. Small groups that may have split off from the Dungeness herd or other east Olympic Peninsula herds offer the main source of Coyle GMU 624 elk. Over the years, WDFW has received reports of small groups of elk in various locations within Coyle GMU 624, mostly within District 15. Please review the [Hunting Prospects for District 15](#) for more information on these units.

Notable hunting changes and regulations

Several private timber companies in District 16 are shifting to fee-access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Typically, these companies post signs at primary roadways, but hunters should be aware of changes. WDFW advises hunters to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the individual company's current land access policy. Reference the private lands access section for more information.

WDFW has adopted night hunting and hound hunting regulations during deer and elk seasons in recent years. Reference Page 21 of the 2024 Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

Unmanned Aircraft: (WAC 220-413-070) "Using Aircraft" to include unstaffed aircraft. Page 87 of the 2024 Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

"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) in October or November during dates established for modern firearm deer or elk general seasons is prohibited. Page 87 of the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

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

- Hunting 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 the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

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 Cascades, 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 no evidence shows 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: 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 participate by submitting elk hooves at one of 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 Sept. 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 webpage. Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on Page 65 of the Washington's Big Game Hunting Regulations.

Deer

General information, management goals, and population status

The only deer species found in District 16 is black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*). The Department's objective for deer in District 16 is to maintain productive populations while providing for multiple uses, including recreational, educational, and aesthetic (WDFW Game Management Plan, 2008). Buck harvest is any antlered buck, while antlerless harvest is limited to certain weapon types and/or by permit.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to monitor deer populations in District 16. Instead, harvest trends (harvest, hunters, success, and harvest per unit effort) are used as an index to trends. WDFW recognizes the limitations of this approach and is currently evaluating new techniques for monitoring black-tailed deer populations independent of harvest data. 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 retired WDFW researcher for past black-tailed deer studies, some of the largest does captured in Western Washington were captured west of the Dungeness River on the lower foothills in a mix of DNR and private land.



Black-tailed buck along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Photo by Anita McMillan.

Which GMU should deer hunters hunt?

Western District 16

Western District 16 is generally sparse of deer. This area includes Hoko GMU 601, Dickey GMU 602, Pysht GMU 603, Sol Duc GMU 607, Goodman GMU 612, and Clearwater GMU 615. Observations and published reports indicate 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. Deer research in the Hoko GMU 601 includes:

- [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 portions of Olympic GMU 621 and the northern portion of Coyle GMU 624, which extend east and south into District 15 (eastern Jefferson County). Because WDFW records harvest data by GMU, harvest figures presented here include all Olympic GMU 621 and Coyle 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 near farmland. In these areas, deer are often considered a nuisance by property owners and agricultural operations, especially in Coyle GMU 624. Reference the Special Deer Permits section of the 2024 Washington Big Game Hunting Regulations for more information about Deer Area 6020.

Coyle GMU 624 has firearm restrictions, with no centerfire or rimfire rifles allowed. Read more about that on Page 90 of the 2024 Washington Big Game Hunting Regulations.

The mid and lower elevations of Olympic GMU 621 have high densities of deer, 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 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 before the hunting season. Hunters who intend to target deer in developed areas should 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 deer harvest in Olympic GMU 621 and Coyle GMU 624.

Buck harvest is highest on the eastern half of the district and decreases farther west. The five GMUs with low buck harvest in the district are Hoko, Dickey, Sol Duc, Goodman, and Clearwater. Buck harvest in the Pysht GMU 603 has increased in recent years. The GMU's with consistently higher buck harvest in the district are Coyle 624 and Olympic 621. The 2023 buck harvest is presented in Table 2. Tribal deer harvest ranges within 5% to 20% of the total deer harvest in District 16 GMUs.

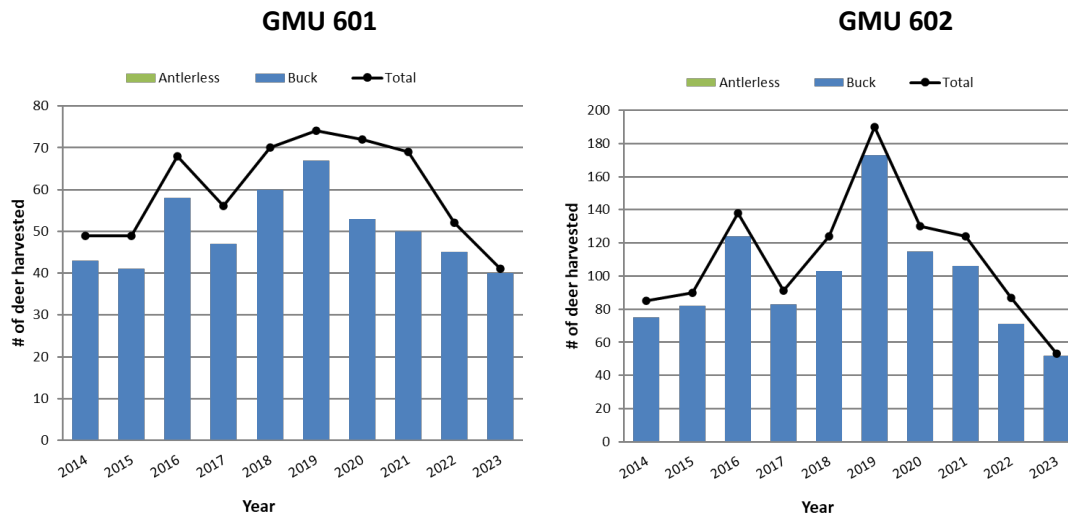
Table 2. Total state buck harvest in 2023 for District 16 GMU's.

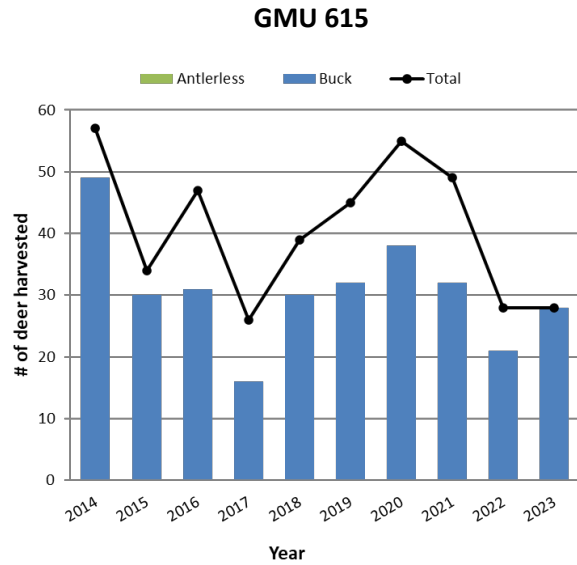
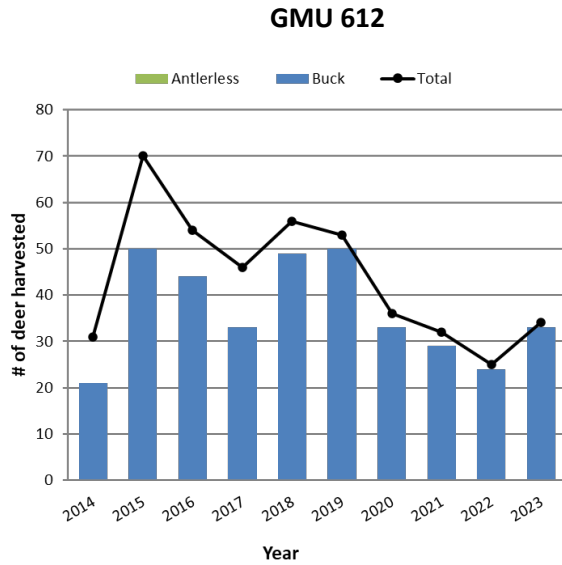
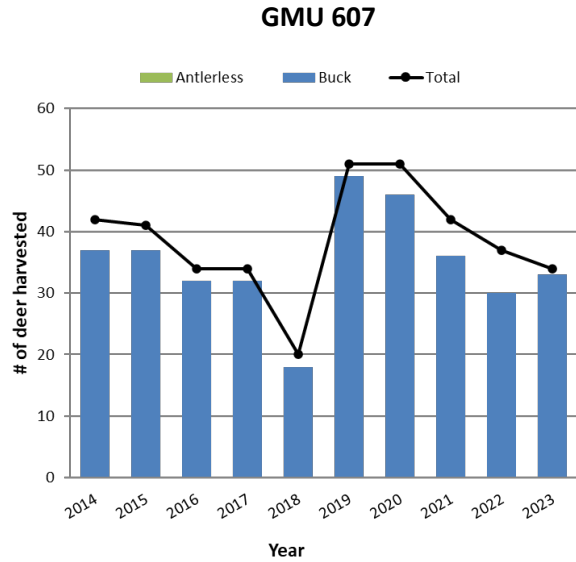
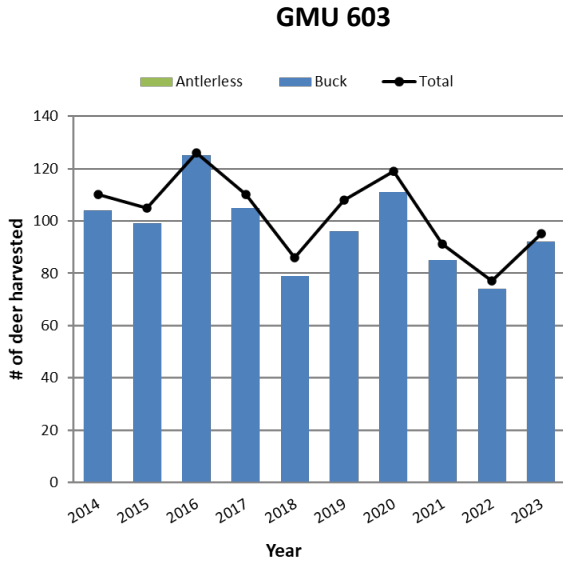
| Number of bucks harvested | Game Management Unit (GMU) |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 41 | 601 |
| 53 | 602 |
| 95 | 603 |
| 34 | 607 |
| 34 | 612 |
| 28 | 615 |
| 305 | 621 |
| 285 | 624 |

Permit and tribal harvest numbers not included.

Deer populations rarely fluctuate dramatically from year to year in District 16, since severe weather does not normally occur that might lead to large die-offs. Hunter numbers have not typically changed dramatically from one year to the next within the district. Consequently, the best predictors of future harvest during general seasons are recent harvest trends, hunter numbers, and hunter success. Figures 15 and 16 (below) provide trend data for deer harvest and hunter numbers for weapon type by GMU. This information is intended to provide hunters with the best information to make an informed decision on where to hunt in District 16, as well as what they can expect to encounter regarding hunter numbers.

Figure 15. Trends in the total number of buck (blue) and antlerless (green) deer harvested in District 16 GMU's during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader deer seasons combined, 2014–2023. Total deer harvest (black line) includes harvest from state general and permit seasons plus tribal harvest. (Tribal harvest from 2023 not included).

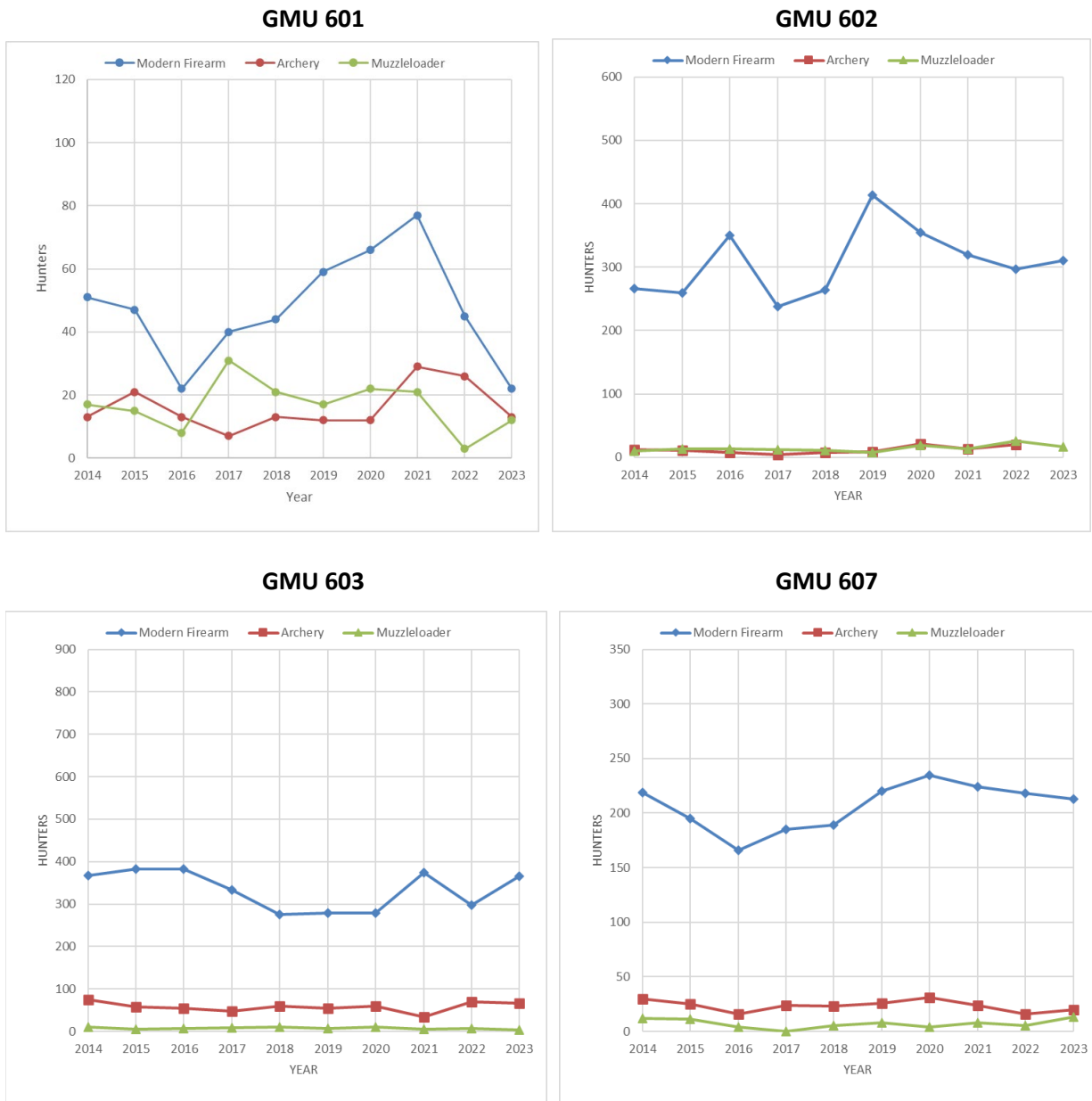




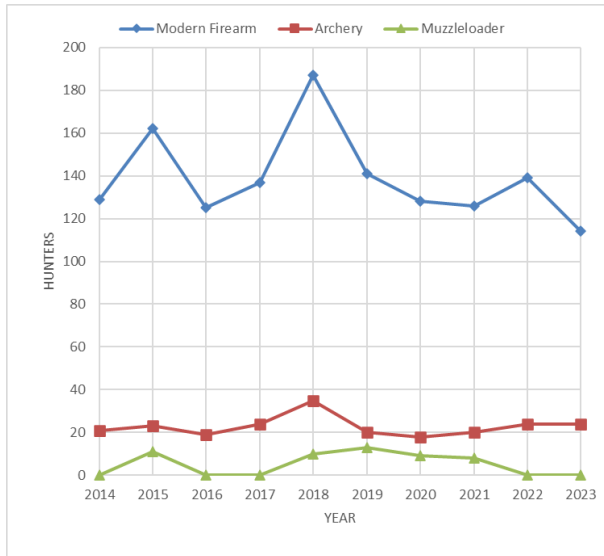
Hunting methods

Archery deer hunting in District 16 is concentrated in Olympic GMU 621 and Coyle GMU 624 (these are in both Districts 15 and 16). Modern firearm hunters have maintained a steady participation level in the District 16 GMUs. Muzzleloader deer hunting has recently increased in Olympic GMU 621, while all other District 16 GMUs reportedly receive fewer than 200 hunter days annually. Other GMUs remain consistent with the amount of muzzleloader hunter days.

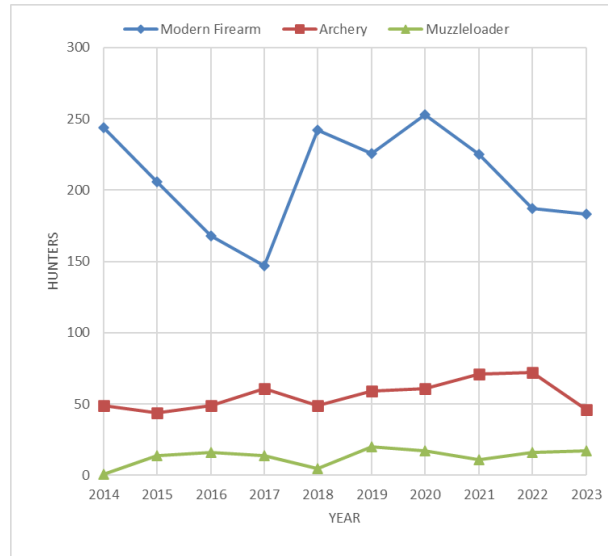
Figure 16. Trends in hunter numbers for District 16 GMU's during general modern firearm (blue diamond), archery (orange square), and muzzleloader (gray triangle) deer seasons, 2014–2023.



GMU 612



GMU 615



Deer areas

WDFW established Deer Area 6020 over 20 years ago to allow for doe harvest 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. 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 entire Coyle GMU 624 within District 16 (Clallam County) has firearm restrictions. Refer to [Clallam County Code](#) [Clallam County Firearms Discharge Restrictions](#). No hunting is allowed with centerfire or rimfire rifles.

Notable hunting changes

Several private timber companies in District 16 are shifting to fee-access programs in areas where they historically offered free access. Typically, these companies post signs at primary roadways, but hunters should be aware of changes. WDFW advises hunters to contact landowners in areas where they hunt to determine the individual company’s current land access policy. Reference the private lands access section for more information.

WDFW adopted night hunting and hound hunting restrictions as well as permits during deer and elk seasons in recent years. Reference Page 87 of the 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 regulations referenced on Page 92 of the Washington’s Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

Black bear



Black bear that was immobilized and relocated by WDFW staff in the Dungeness River drainage. Photo by Dale Metzger.

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 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. 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 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 District 16 GMUs. 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, 2024. Hunters can buy up to two bear tags each license year. A spring bear hunt season is currently not provided in Washington.

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 black bear populations are stable in District 16. Black bears occur throughout the district, 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 per 100 square kilometers in the western Cascades and 19 bears per 100 square kilometers in the 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 per 100 square kilometers). Because these results showed density could vary widely by habitat types within limited areas, WDFW determined density should not be extrapolated statewide or even region wide. 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. Biologists conducted this hair collection effort within the Clearwater GMU in June and July 2022. Over 1,000 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 was able to determine the density of bears was 25 per 100 square kilometers for this managed forestland. This was determined to be one of the highest bear densities for the state. Black bear research will continue on the Olympic

Peninsula. Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe biologists collected bear hair samples within the Pysht GMU 603 during this past spring/summer. With multiple density estimates in a variety of habitats, WDFW can examine what habitat and human factors are associated with black bear density across Washington 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 2024 season

District 16 black bear harvesting prospects remain good to excellent. Although some hunters specifically target black bears, most harvest 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 2023 season, hunters harvested 60 bears within District 16 GMUs. Hunters harvested an additional 18 bears in Olympic GMU 621 and 9 in Coyle GMU 624, both of which include a portion of District 15. Hunter success during the 2023 season ranged from 6% in Goodman GMU 612 to 15% in Clearwater GMU 615. Many GMUs saw a decrease in the number of bears harvested last season. The district's highest black bear harvest occurred in Sol Duc GMU 607 and Clearwater GMU 615. During the 2023 fall hunt, 13 bears were harvested in Sol Duc GMU 607 and 37 bears were harvested in Clearwater GMU 615. Hunters can reference summaries of BBMU 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.



Successful hunter with harvested black bear. Photo by WDFW.

Table 3. Black bear 2023 harvest and hunter effort for District 16 GMUs.

| BBMU | Black Bear Management Unit | Total harvest | Number of hunters | Hunter success rate | Hunter days | Days per kill |
|------|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | Coastal | 357 | 3899 | 9% | 37252 | 104 |
| 2 | Puget Sound | 137 | 1817 | 8% | 16861 | 123 |

Table 4. Black bear 2023 harvest reports for District 16 GMUs.

| BBMU | GMU | Fall male harvest | Fall female harvest | Total harvest | Number of hunters | Hunter success (%) | Hunter days | Days per kill |
|------|-----|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | 601 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 62 | 8 | 315 | 63 |
| 1 | 602 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 139 | 6 | 1066 | 118 |
| 1 | 603 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 79 | 14 | 543 | 49 |
| 1 | 607 | 8 | 5 | 13 | 114 | 11 | 715 | 55 |
| 1 | 612 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 80 | 6 | 890 | 178 |
| 1 | 615 | 17 | 20 | 37 | 255 | 15 | 2065 | 56 |
| 1 | 618 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 36 | 6 | 213 | 107 |
| 1 | 621 | 15 | 3 | 18 | 300 | 6 | 2302 | 128 |
| 2 | 624 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 132 | 7 | 988 | 110 |

How to locate and harvest a black bear

DNR and 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 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 habitats, 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 a bear is 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, 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 may lag behind their mothers and may not be obvious to hunters. Bear cubs (weighing 30-50 pounds) may also be present in trees or well-hidden in dense vegetation nearby. 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

All successful bear hunters must submit a premolar tooth with a tooth envelope, available at WDFW offices ([WAC 220-415-090](#)). 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, 2024.

Cougar



Cougar that was treed as part of a WDFW research project. Photo by Rich Beausoleil.

General information, management goals, and population status

Cougars occur throughout District 16, but densities can vary among GMUs. WDFW manages cougars in District 16 to maintain a stable 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 guideline. WDFW administers this hunt structure within 50 population management units (PMUs). District 16 includes PMUs 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 Sept. 1 through Dec. 31, and no harvest limits apply even if harvest exceeds the guideline. Beginning in the 2015 season and continuing until last season, WDFW extended cougar season dates through April 30. In this late season, (Jan. 1 through April 30), harvest guidelines applied for hunter-harvested cougars only. However, to hunt cougars after March 31 in a unit open for cougar harvest, hunters needed to buy a new license and cougar tag. WDFW examined harvest numbers starting Jan. 1. If the guideline was met or exceeded, the PMU would not open for the late season. Cougar harvest was monitored during the late season, and managers closed any hunt areas that met or exceeded the harvest guideline. Over the past six years, an average of 74% of PMUs remained open to hunters through April 30. Closures occurred on the PMU level, resulting in less impact to hunter opportunity.

New for the 2024-2025 season

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission recently approved changes to cougar hunting for the 2024-2025 season. The new [rule](#) establishes the Washington cougar hunting season from Sept. 1 to March 31, sets a cap of 13% of each PMU using a specific statewide density, and includes all known human-caused cougar mortalities of cougars (18 months old and older) to determine when to close a PMU during the season.

The Commission incorporated an amendment in the cougar hunting rule to clarify that all known human-caused cougar mortalities of cougars (18 months old and older) will contribute to the 13% cap. Mortalities will be counted between April 1 of the current year through March 31 of the subsequent year. Additionally, the Commission decided that, in PMUs that reach the 13% cap before the cougar hunting season starting on Sept. 1, the cap would increase to 20% of the population to provide hunting opportunity. The rule proposal also eliminates the allowance for harvesting a second cougar within the same license year statewide. The Commission also directed staff to initiate rule making for the 2025-26 cougar season.

Hunters should call 1-866-364-4868 to determine if a specific hunt area is open. For more information related to the harvest guidelines management approach, please visit WDFW's [cougar hunting areas openings and closures](#) page. 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 2024 - 2025. No harvest guideline was established for PMU 45 due to the higher potential for human-cougar conflicts in these more urban GMU's.

Table 5. Cougar harvest guidelines for 2024-2025 for District 16 GMUs.

| Hunt area | 13% harvest cap | 20% harvest cap |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| PMU 42 - 601, 602, 603, 612 | 6 | 9 |
| PMU 43 - 607, 615 | 4 | 6 |
| PMU 45 - 621, 624, 627, 633 | None | None |

What to expect during the 2024-2025 season

Most cougar harvest within the district comes from opportunistic encounters while hunters are pursuing deer, elk, or other activities. Total cougar harvest can vary from year to year. Tables 6-8 presents total cougar hunting and other mortality for all PMUs in the district. Table 9 presents status and trend report information as well as harvest totals and mean averages for the past three hunting seasons. Hunters harvested 11 cougars within the district during the 2023-2024 general cougar season. During the general season, hunters harvested two male cougars in PMU 42, one female cougar in PMU 43, and eight cougars in PMU 45, which includes a portion of District 15. Totals don't include tribal harvest and other mortality. Nine cougars were removed within the district due to public safety concerns. Reference the 2024-2025 [Washington Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#) for more information regarding cougar hunting in specific GMUs.

Cougars are widespread in the forestlands 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 past harvest management guidelines, the two district hunt areas, PMU 42 and PMU 43, did not meet their harvest guideline in the past 10 seasons. However, during the 2020-2021 late season 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.

Table 6. Total cougar harvest 2023 – 2024 for PMU 42 within District 16 by state hunters and other mortality.

| Mortality cause | Male | Female | Unknown | Total |
|-----------------|------|--------|---------|-------|
| General hunting | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Other | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 4 | 1 | 0 | 5 |

The harvest of male and female cougars is represented. Tribal hunting not included.

Table 7. Total cougar harvest 2023 – 2024 for PMU 43 within District 16 by state hunters and other mortality.

| Mortality cause | Male | Female | Unknown | Total |
|-----------------|------|--------|---------|-------|
| General hunting | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

The harvest of male and female cougars is represented. Tribal hunting not included.

Table 8. Total cougar harvest 2023 – 2024 for PMU 45 within District 16 by state hunters and other mortality.

| Mortality cause | Male | Female | Unknown | Total |
|-----------------|------|--------|---------|-------|
| General hunting | 5 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| Other | 6 | 3 | 0 | 9 |
| Total | 11 | 6 | 0 | 17 |

The harvest of male and female cougars is represented. Tribal hunting not included.

Table 9. Cougar harvest in District 16 (and portion of District 15) for 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24.

| GMUs | Harvest 2021 - 2022 | Harvest 2022 - 2023 | Harvest 2023 - 2024 | Three-year mean harvest |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 601, 602, 603, 612 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2.33 |
| 607, 615 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 621, 624, 627, 633 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 4 |
| Total | 9 | 2 | 11 | n/a |

Tribal harvest or other sources of mortality not included.

Hunters harvest most cougars while 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 locations within Clearwater 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 cougars were removed in Coyle GMU 624, two in Olympic GMU 621, and three in Pysht GMU 603. Conflict has consistently been higher in Coyle GMU 624 and Pysht GMU 603 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 check for multiple sets of 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 captured two orphaned cougar kittens near Joyce. One later died, and the other 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 dogs is prohibited statewide except during cougar management removals authorized by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission and for research purposes.



Two cougar kittens rescued near Joyce after mother was killed. Photo by WDFW.



Cougar kitten from research project on the Olympic Peninsula. Photo by Shannon Murphie.

Notable changes

New rule changes in effect for cougar harvest in the 2024-2025 season were previously described. See a more complete description of these rule changes on the WDFW [website](#). This rule is responding to and supporting a [rule petition \(PDF\)](#) that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission accepted Dec. 15, 2023. The petition requests that the Department revisit the topic of cougar hunting seasons and a previous rule that was adopted in 2020. The rule amends WAC 220-415-100 based on the petition.

Mandatory reporting/sealing

Successful cougar hunters must report their 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. A premolar tooth and tissue sample will be taken. Reference page 69 of the 2024-2025 [Washington Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations](#) for details about cougar sealing requirements.



Biologist Shelly Ament removes the canine tooth of a harvested cougar. Photo by Gail Weger.



Close up of removed canine tooth of a harvested cougar. Photo by Gail Weger.

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 and 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. 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

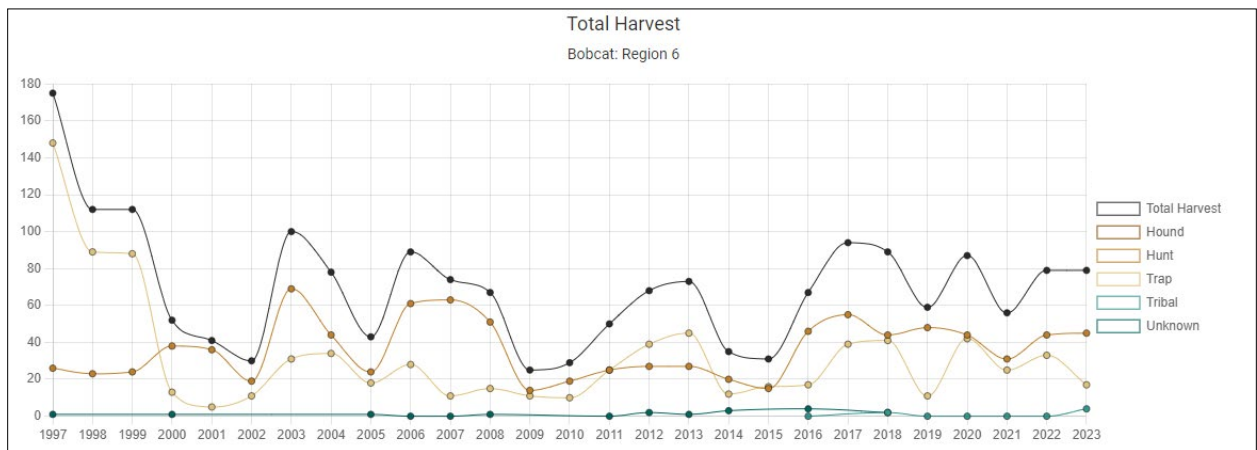
Bobcats

Bobcats are plentiful in the wooded lands across District 16, and many hunters successfully harvest bobcat each season. Bobcat may be hunted statewide with a small game license and no bag limit from Sept. 1 through March 15. Bobcats are exempt from hunting hour restrictions, except it is unlawful to hunt bobcat at night during modern firearm deer or elk general seasons in October and November. 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 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.

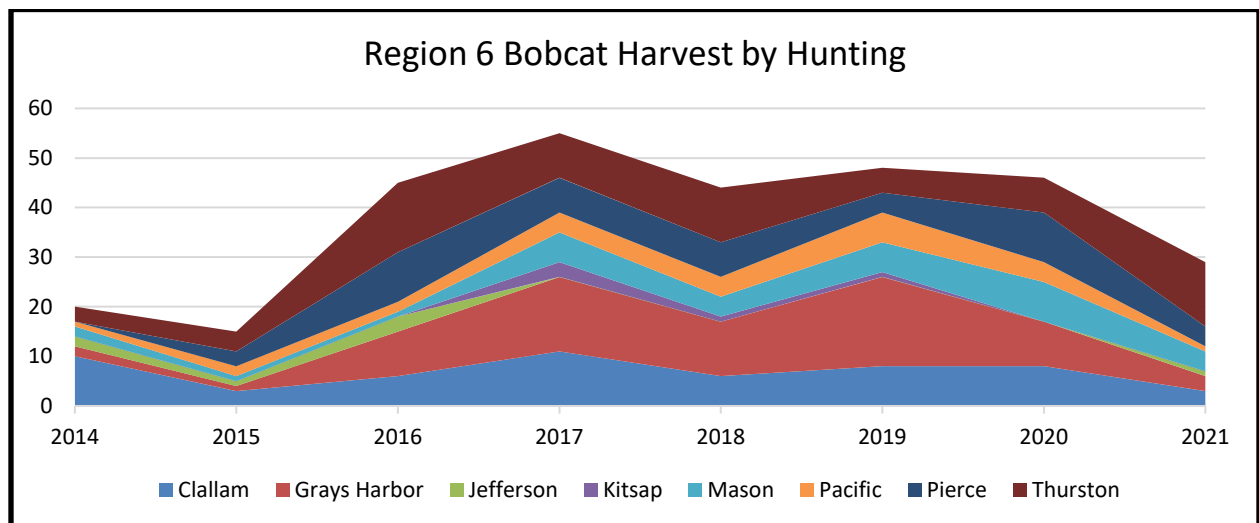
Bobcat harvest through trapping in Region 6, which includes District 16, had trended upward since 2014 until the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in trappers either not trapping or not having access to public and private properties. Harvest then peaked in 2020, possibly since Covid provided the public more recreation time, but declined significantly in 2021. Generally, more bobcats are harvested through hunting in Region 6 than through trapping (Figure 17). Clallam and Jefferson counties provide great opportunity for harvesting bobcat. However, bobcat harvest in Clallam County has consistently been lower than other counties (Figure 18). Prospects for hunting or trapping bobcat in 2024 and 2025 remain steady. Public and private forest remain the best locations for locating and harvesting bobcat.

Figure 17. Region 6 bobcat harvest by all methods, 1997 – 2023.



Tribal harvest included.

Figure 18. Region 6 bobcat harvest by hunting for all counties, 2014 – 2021.



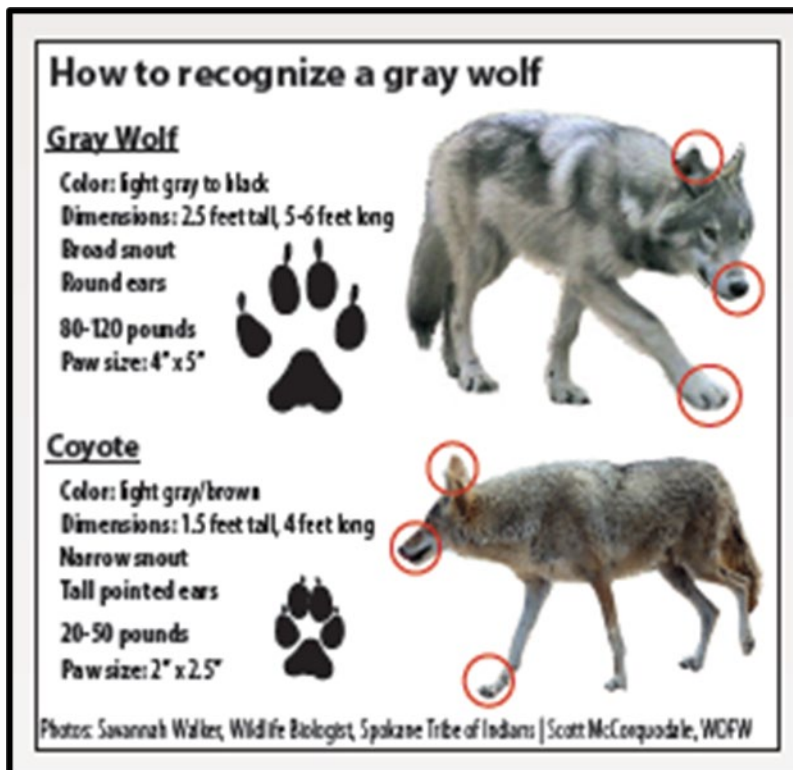
Raccoons

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

Coyotes

Coyotes are another small game animal abundant across District 16, both in urban and non-urban areas. They have also benefitted from a lack of large predators in urban and suburban areas. Hunters may harvest coyotes without a bag limit year-round under a small game or big game license. They can also hunt coyotes at night with lights year-round. It is unlawful to hunt coyote at night during modern firearm deer or elk general seasons in October and November. The use of dogs to hunt coyote is prohibited. Wolves are protected under 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 (Figure 19). Report all wolf observations.

Figure 19. Identifying wolves and coyotes in the field.



Snowshoe hare and cottontail rabbits

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

Estimates of hunters and harvest for 2023 are as follows:

- Snowshoe hare harvest
 - Clallam County – two harvested with 10 hunters that hunted for 12 days.
 - Jefferson County – two harvested with 10 hunters that hunted for 9 days.
- Cottontail rabbit harvest
 - Clallam County – thirty-six harvested with 31 hunters that hunted for 257 days.
 - Jefferson County – seven harvested with 13 hunters that hunted for 52 days.

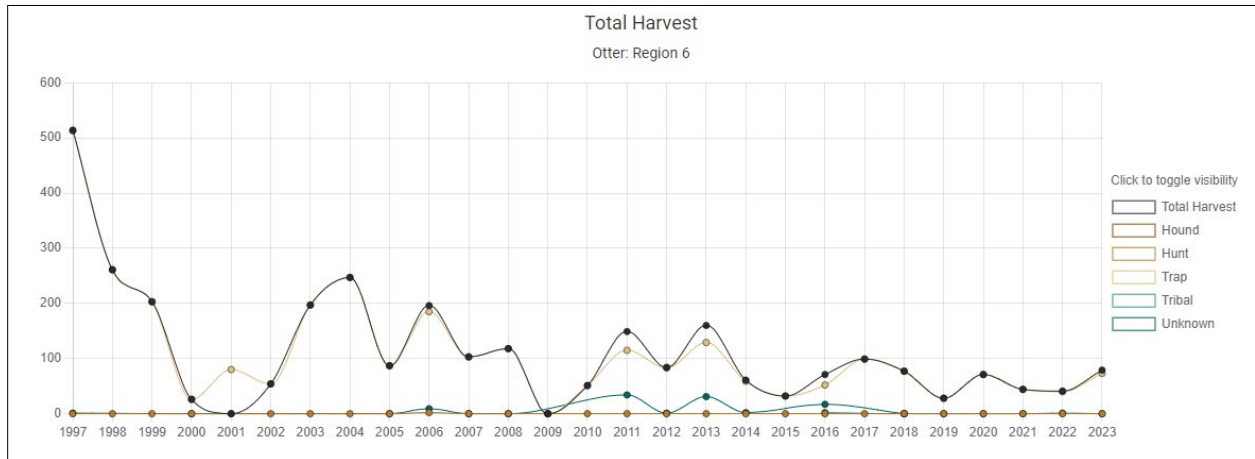
More information on the snowshoe hare and other rabbits can be found at the following links:

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

Beaver, weasel, mink, muskrat, and river otter

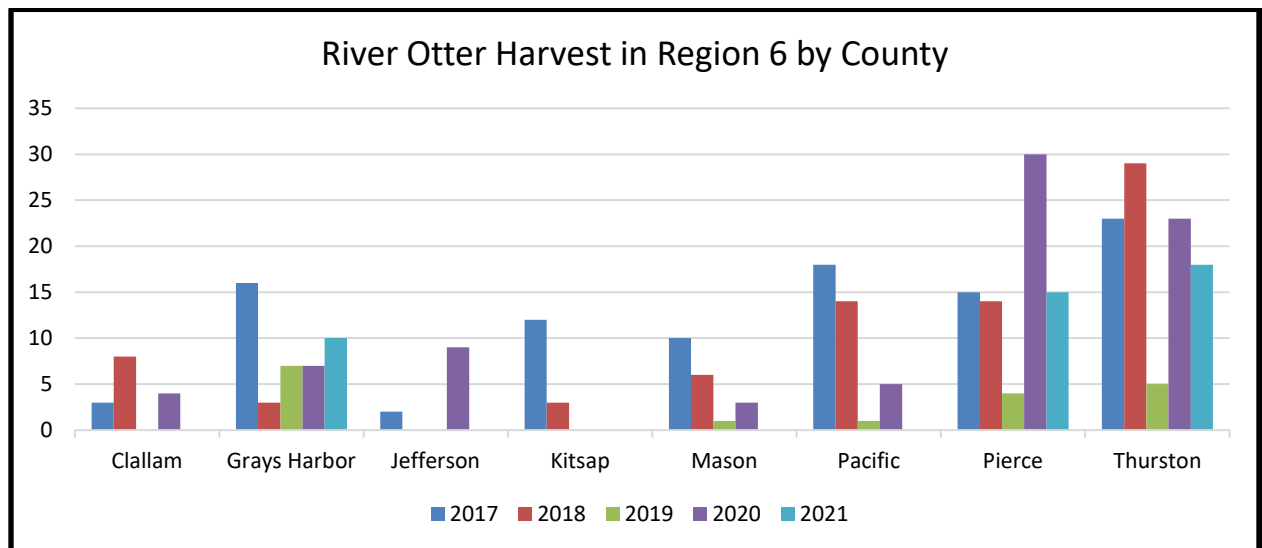
These species are all plentiful across Region 6, including District 16. Martens are less common. Long-tailed weasels occur primarily on pasture, cropland, fields, and grasslands. River otter (*Lutra canadensis*) are plentiful in freshwater lakes, streams, and wetlands across District 16 and are frequently 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 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 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](#)). River otter harvest in Region 6 dropped significantly from over 500 otters harvested in 1997 to fewer than 100 since 2018 (Figure 20). 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 20. Region 6 river otter harvest by all methods, 1997 – 2023.



Tribal harvest included.

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



Marten

American marten sightings are quite rare in District 16. Marten trapping is closed 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 USFS and others to document and monitor fisher and marten on the Olympic Peninsula. They are both difficult species to find. Fishers may be misidentified as martens (Figure 22). Fishers are protected under federal and state law and MAY NOT be trapped or killed. Be sure of identification if you are trapping. Report all fisher observations [online](#) or by emailing wildlife.data@dfw.wa.gov.

Figure 22. Identification of fisher and marten.

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.

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

FISHER





Photo by Paul Bannick

MARTEN

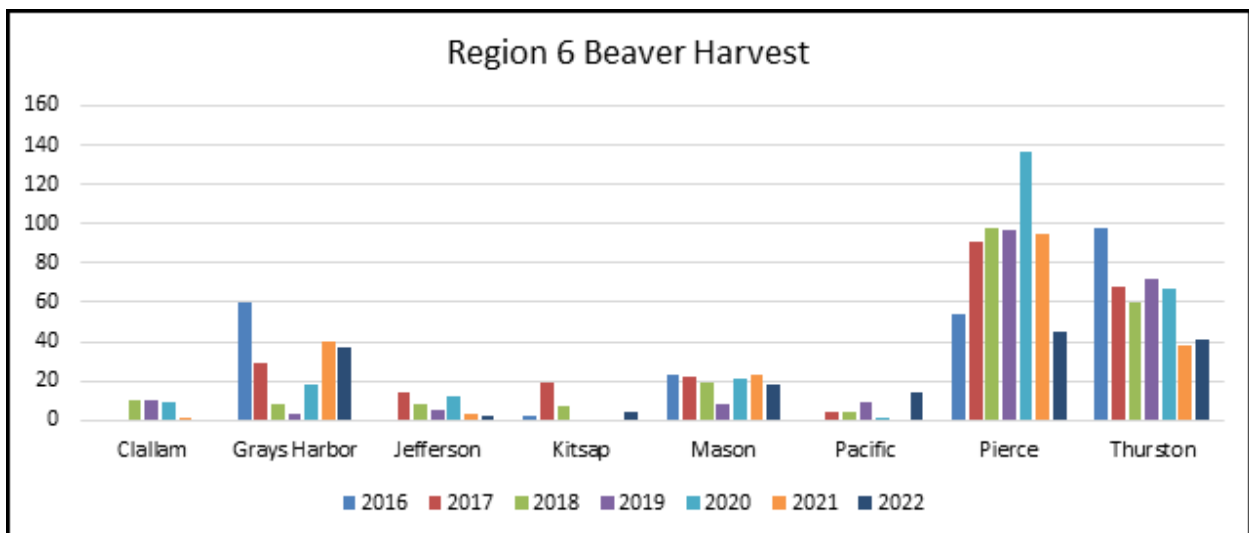


WDFW Staff

Beaver

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. Totals for beaver trapped within the region for the 2023-2024 season are not available at this time.

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



Ducks

Common species

Many duck species are found in District 16. Common dabbling ducks include northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, mallard, green-wing teal, and northern shoveler. 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.

Trumpeter swan numbers have increased in the Dungeness Valley in the past 10 years, and they have been documented near the Dungeness River mouth. Each season, swans usually return to the Dungeness Valley in late October and leave in early March. The highest count from surveyors last season was 89 swans, including nine juveniles. The previous winter season, numbers were higher with a count of 200 trumpeter swans, including eight juveniles. The number of swans counted during weekly, daytime surveys has been stable, suggesting a strong location fidelity for the population in the Dungeness Valley. The percentage of juveniles observed, around 15% average in recent years, was low the last two winters, ranging from 5% to 10%. We understand the late wet springs in trumpeter swan breeding grounds delayed nesting in recent years. 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

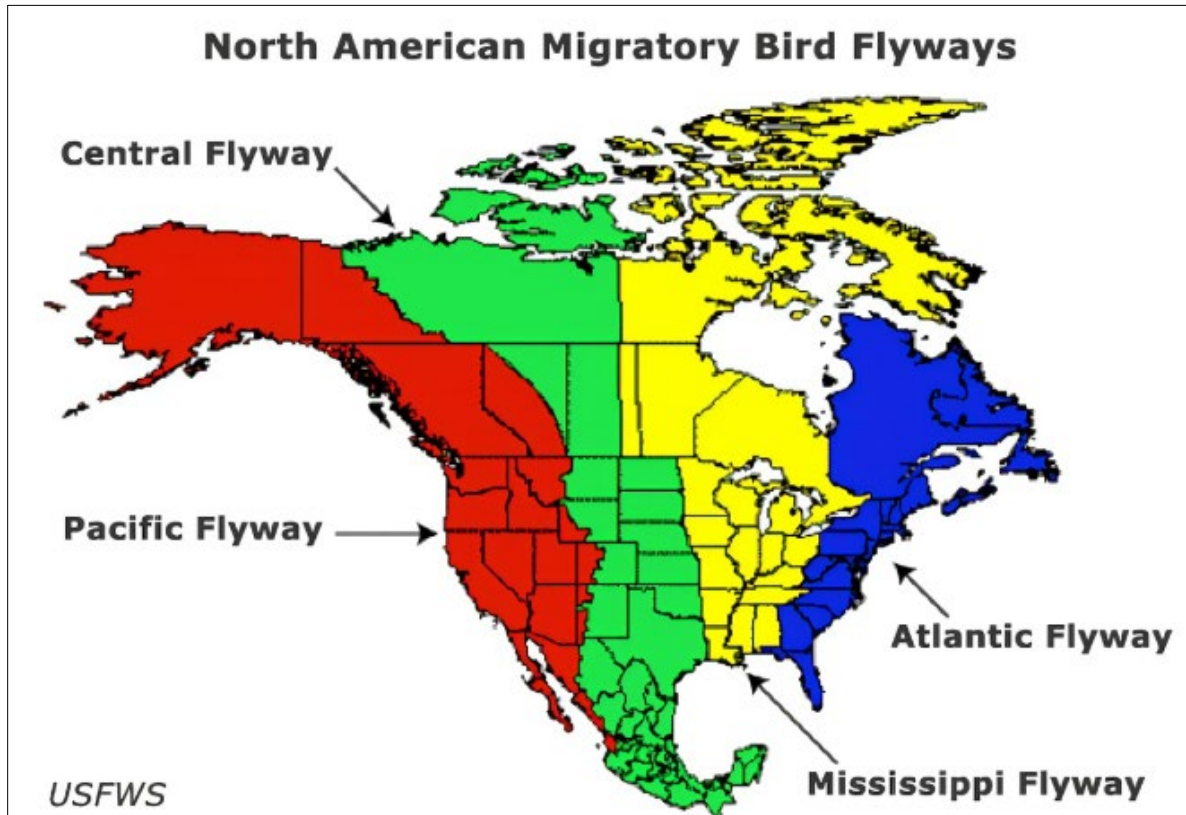
Much of the waterfowl hunting opportunity in District 16 is east of Port Angeles, centered in the Lower Dungeness Basin. The basin has a high density of wintering waterfowl and holds about 7% of the Western Washington breeding waterfowl population, even amid ongoing development of open space habitats. 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 2023 report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) detailing

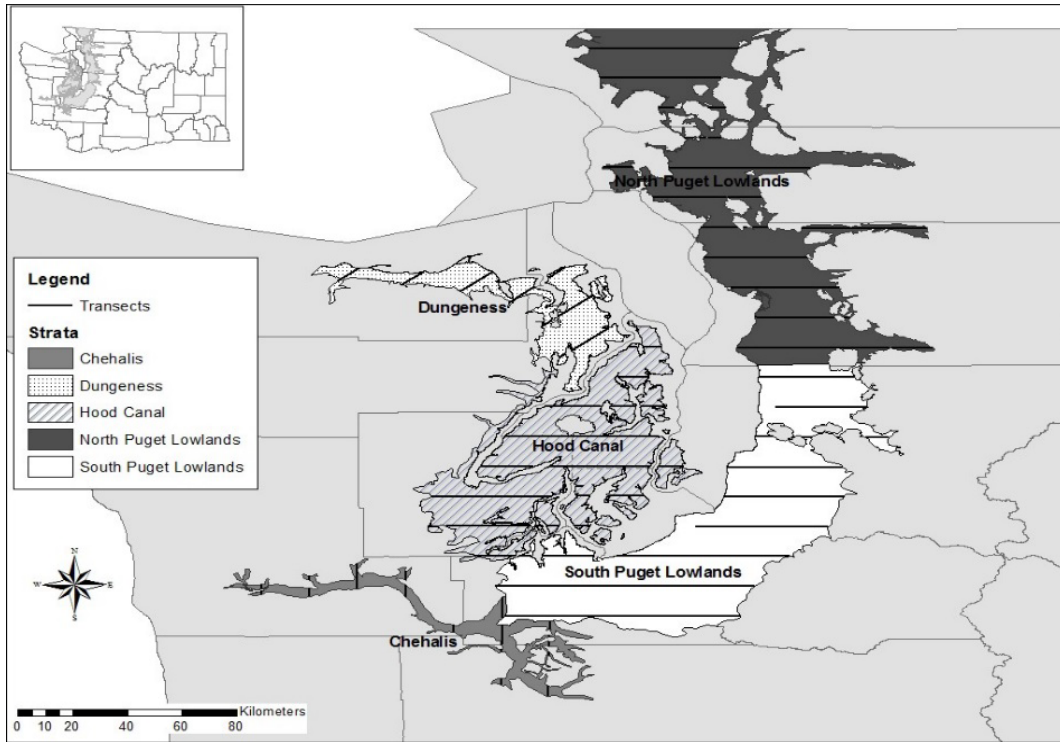
population status for the Pacific Flyway: [fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/waterfowl-population-status-report-2023.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/waterfowl-population-status-report-2023.pdf). This report summarizes the most recent information about the status of North American 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.

Figure 24. North American migratory bird flyways.



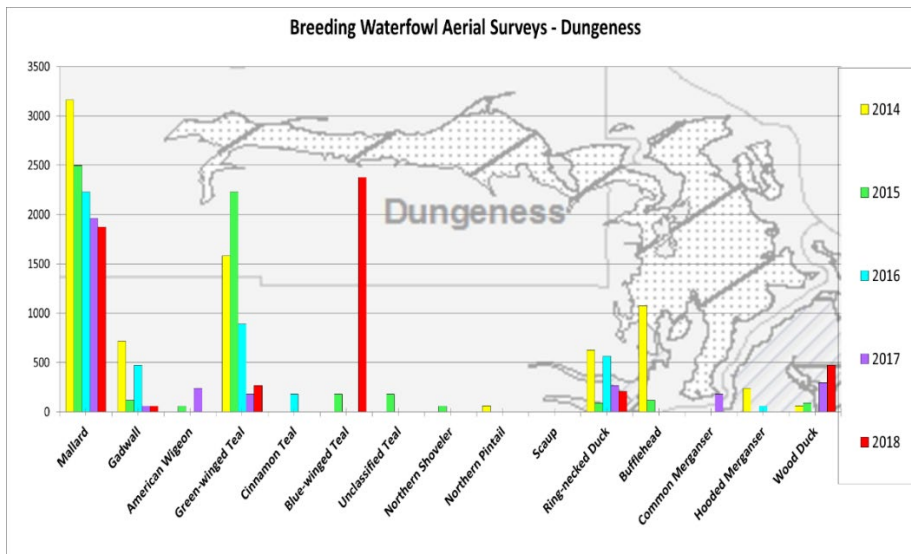
In the past, district biologists focused on conducting mid-winter ground count surveys to document high waterfowl concentration areas in Clallam County. Breeding duck populations in Western Washington were not monitored until 2010, when WDFW developed and began flying established transects in five areas. 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 COVID-19 impacts. In April 2023, WDFW estimated the duck breeding population in the Dungeness area was 7,843, 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 WDFW estimated 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.



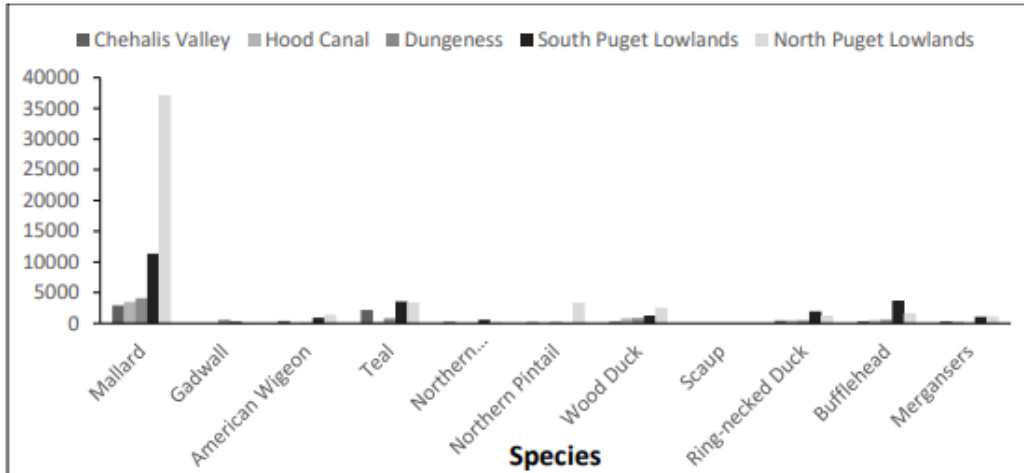
The Dungeness count has been 4% to 15% of the total breeding ducks in Western Washington from 2010 to 2016. The counts (by species) of the Dungeness area from 2014 to 2018 are provided in Figure 26.

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



The most recently revised survey design for Western Washington in 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, bufflehead 6,826, wood duck 5,752, and ring-necked duck 4,666. The North Puget Lowlands stratum held the majority of breeding ducks in 2023 (53.2%), followed by the South Puget Lowlands (25.3%), Dungeness (8.0%), Chehalis River Valley (7.5%), and Hood Canal (5.9%) (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Western Washington duck breeding population survey results by species and strata, 2023.



More recent data for Washington breeding waterfowl population monitoring can be found in the Waterfowl Section of the [2023 Status and Trends Report](#). 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](#).

Sea ducks have had restrictive bag limits due to concerns about low recruitment rates, increasing interest in hunting, and the unknown impact of reduced sea duck bag limits on compensatory species, particularly Barrow's goldeneyes.

Harlequin duck: Harlequin duck harvest had significantly increased for the few seasons before 2022 in Clallam and Jefferson counties. Due to management concerns over population health, harlequin duck hunting was not allowed the past two hunting seasons. A limited permit hunt will occur this season for harlequin ducks. Thirty-eight permits were made available to eligible applicants through an August drawing; the application period was July 1 to Aug. 14. To apply for a Harlequin duck permit, each applicant must have a valid Washington small game hunting license, migratory bird permit, AND migratory bird authorization. For more information, visit the WDFW Harlequin duck hunting permit page: wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/hunting/small-game/harlequin-duck-permit.

Harvest trends and 2024 prospects

Washington duck harvest declined steadily from over 1 million in the late 1960s, to a low of 242,516 in 1993-1994. However, it has stabilized over the past 10 years, averaging about 438,170 ducks annually. The 2020-2021 Washington duck harvest of 426,092 was a 20.9% increase from the 2019-2020 harvest of 352,347, which was the lowest since the 2004-2005 season. The 2022-2023 Washington duck harvest of 431,574 increased by 7.3% compared to the 2021-2022 harvest of 402,158.

During the 2023-2024 season, 230 hunters, who spent 1,589 days afield in Clallam County, harvested 2,491 ducks. For Jefferson County, 224 hunters spent 1,009 days afield and harvested 2,402 ducks. **Estimates are not comparable to all past years due to the new voluntary online reporting WDFW piloted in 2022-2023.** District 16 hunters can expect similar hunting opportunities during the 2024-2025 season.

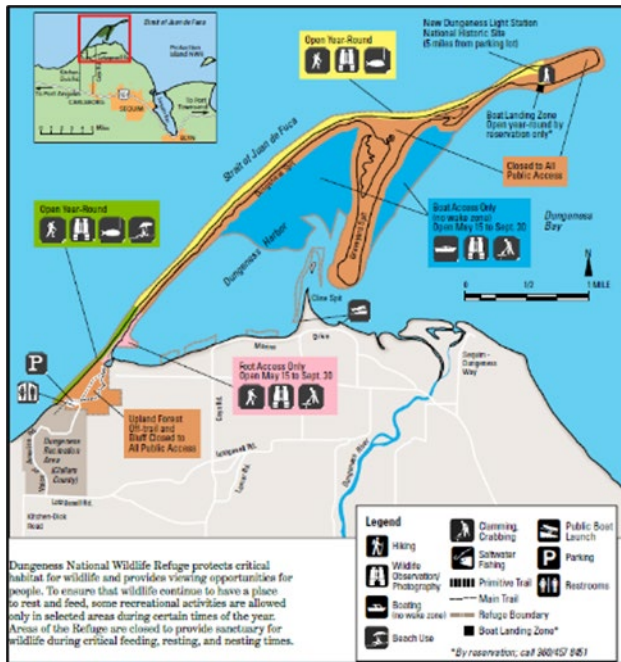
Restrictive bag limits for most sea ducks were maintained for Western Washington in 2023-2024. The 2023-2024 harvest survey indicated 1,062 sea ducks were harvested, compared to 1,729 from last season. Number of hunter days was estimated at 1,304 days afield, which was lower than the 2,153 days afield last season. For the 2023-2024 season, species composition, based on compliant and noncompliant harvest report components, was estimated as: 622 scoters (surf 450, white-winged 106, and black 66), 62 long-tailed ducks, and 370 goldeneyes (Barrow's 202 and common 168). Primary harvest areas included Island, Mason, and Whatcom counties. Last season, 82 sea ducks were harvested in Clallam County and 79 sea ducks were harvested in Jefferson County. These numbers were both slightly lower than the 2022-2023 season. Be sure to check the [Game bird and small game regulations](#) in the 2024 season pamphlet for additional requirements before hunting sea ducks (long-tailed ducks, scoter, harlequin, and goldeneye) in western Washington.

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 rivers, along with other small ponds and flooded gravel pits. As in recent years, hunter success often depends on rainfall and storm events during the waterfowl season. A lack of flooded farm fields can sharply reduce hunting opportunities within the district.

Hunting techniques

Public saltwater hunting opportunities are more numerous than freshwater options in District 16, albeit more difficult in many ways. Regulations and landownerships, including tideland ownerships, make it necessary to plan ahead. Dungeness National 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 hunting from a boat

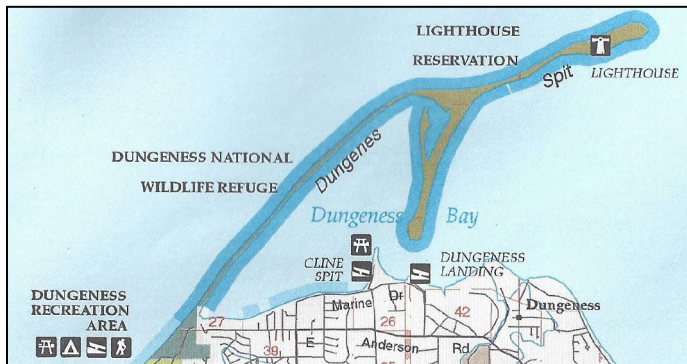
When hunting from a boat, ensure the boat anchor is not down on private tidelands without permission. Boat hunters shouldn't go onto private land without permission to retrieve waterfowl. However, hunters could risk violating the wastage law if they do not retrieve waterfowl. Therefore, it is essential hunters be aware of property ownership, especially when hunting from a boat.

Shoreline and tidelines

Some private landowners allow limited hunting access along the saltwater shoreline. Typically, local signs refer to a phone number or other contact information, and in some cases signs detail conditions of access. Because these vary from year to year, hunters must tour the area and find out 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.

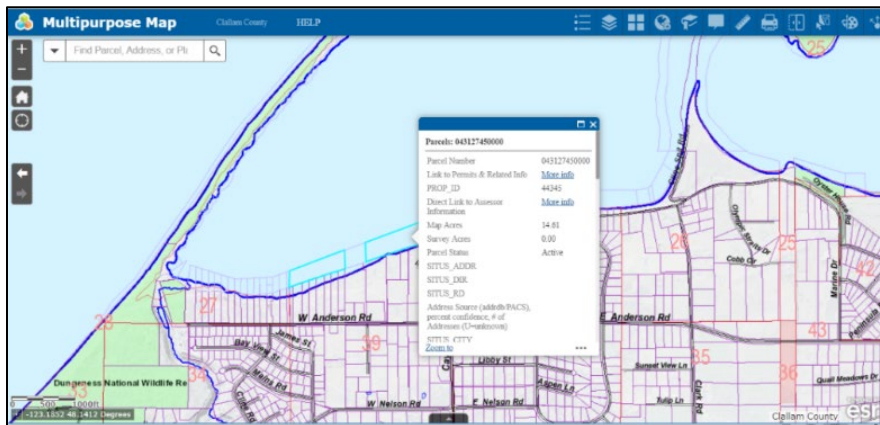
DNR quadrangle maps display the category of tidelands, with different shades of blue for different public tideland ownerships (Figure 29).

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



For Clallam County, hunters can use the county assessor maps to determine tideland ownership (Figure 30).

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



Public land opportunities

Most 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 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 saltwater shorelines. WDFW urges hunters to obey all state and county regulations at sites near residential areas to avoid potential future closures.

North Olympic Wildlife Area

The North Olympic Wildlife Area includes the [Dungeness Unit](#). This unit contains multiple disjointed parcels about 5 miles north of Sequim (Figure 31). Hunting opportunities are offered ONLY at the River's End property. Access to private lands is no longer available. WDFW is still evaluating the hunting activity the reduced area can accommodate. Consult the [wildlife area](#) webpage for information updates. The River's End property is located 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.

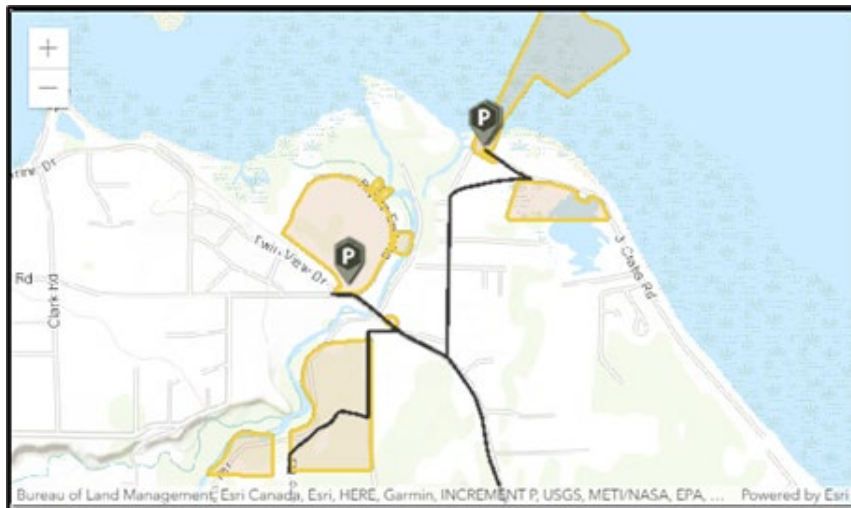
Be advised:

- 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 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 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.

Figure 31. WDFW parcels located in the Dungeness Wildlife Area Unit.



Notable hunting changes

The limited permit hunt for harlequin ducks was described above.

Geese and brant

Common species

Canada goose

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 10 years, the Department has noticed a Canada goose expansion into wetlands that geese previously didn't use to WDFW knowledge.

Population status

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

Harvest trends and 2024-2025 prospects

During the 2023-2024 season, 137 Canada geese were harvested in Clallam County (42 during September hunt and 95 during late hunt). In Jefferson County, 90 geese were harvested (13 during September hunt and 77 during the late hunt). Goose numbers are increasing year-round, providing more hunter opportunity by the local production. District 16 is in Goose Management Area 3. The 2024-2025 early season for Canada geese will be Sept. 7-12 with a daily bag limit of five geese and possession limit of fifteen. The late season will be Oct. 12-24 and Nov. 2 to Jan. 26 with a daily bag limit of four geese and possession limit of twelve.

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 restrictions for Clallam and Jefferson counties. 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.

Brant



Brant geese forage on eel grass at the Three Crabs property within WDFW's Dungeness Wildlife Area Unit. Photo by Shelly Ament.

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 online [here](#). January 2018 was the first season 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 brant season has continued the past few years, after winter counts 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 43 brant during the January 2024 season. This was considerably lower than the previous season when 90 brant were harvested. WDFW biologists checked and measured many harvested brant from Clallam County during the 2018-2020 seasons to further assess populations. WDFW also collected feathers for DNA analysis during the 2018-2020 seasons. District biologists assisted researchers last season by collecting tongue tissue samples from harvested brant. These samples will determine genetic diversity and assist with identifying the nesting locations of sampled brant.

If brant numbers are sufficient, brant hunting this upcoming season will be open Jan. 18, 22, and 25 with a daily bag limit of two brant and possession limit of six. The date for youth, veterans, and active military brant hunters in Clallam County will be Feb. 1 with a daily bag limit of two brant and possession limit of two.



Successful Clallam County brant hunters. Photos by Shelly Ament.

Forest grouse

Species and general habitat characteristics

Any forestland throughout District 16 should offer good opportunities for harvesting grouse. Hunters may find prime forest grouse hunting on DNR and USFS lands. Clallam County usually has one of the highest totals for grouse harvested within Region 6.

Ruffed and sooty (formerly classified as blue) grouse are present throughout public and private forestlands 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 (5 to 25 years old), and deciduous-conifer mixed forests.

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 to 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 affect populations and harvest opportunities.

Harvest trends and 2024-2025 prospects

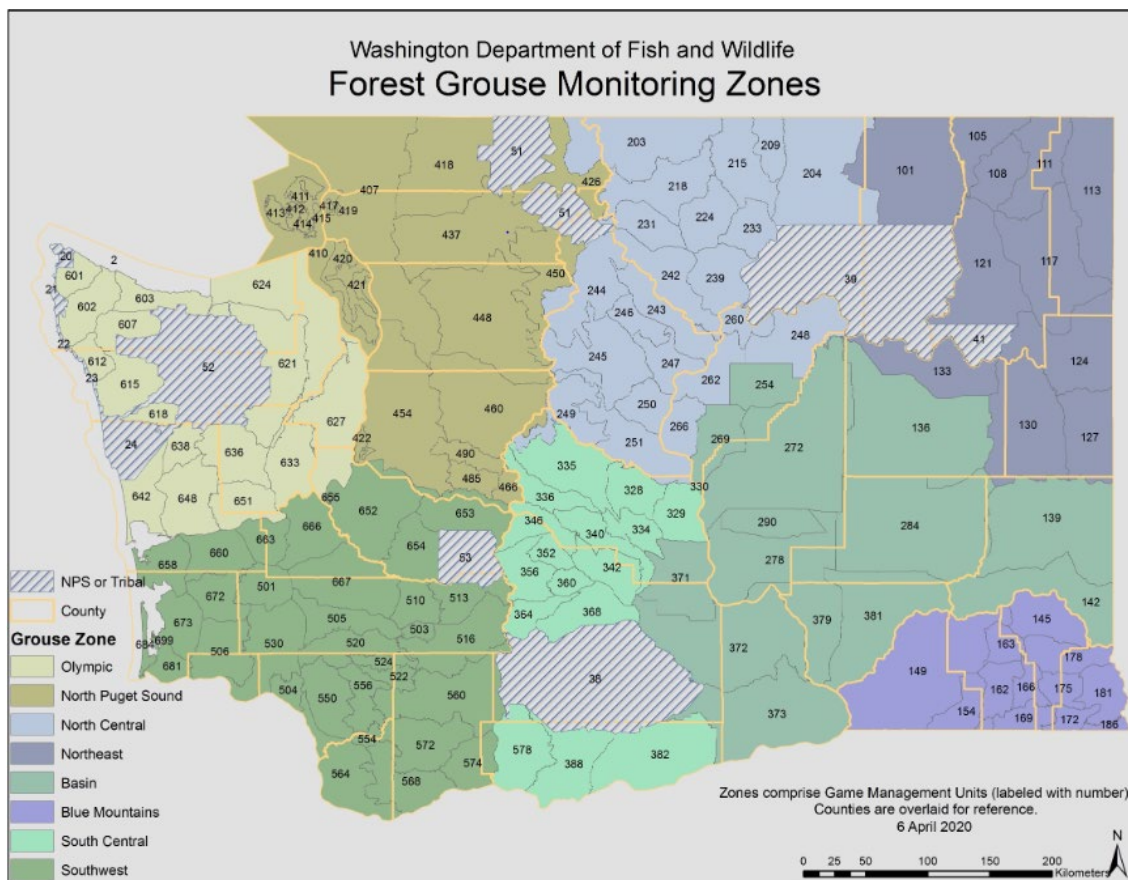
Grouse hunting in District 16 continues to decline, a trend WDFW has documented since 2009. Clallam County grouse harvest peaked in 2009 at 6,350 by 1,202 hunters, with Jefferson County 2009 harvest at 3,839 grouse by 1,502 hunters. The 2023-2024 harvest total for Clallam County was 2,272 grouse. A total

of 860 hunters spent 5,574 days hunting. A total of 1,467 grouse were harvested in Jefferson County during the 2023-2024 hunting season. A total of 401 hunters spent 2,825 days hunting.

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 season start 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 increased population abundance and hunter opportunity.

Samples collected from 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. District 16 is within the Olympic Forest Grouse Monitoring Zone (Figure 32). During the 2021-2022 season, within the Olympic Monitoring Zone, 56% of the harvest were ruffed grouse and 44% of the harvest were sooty grouse. A higher number of sooty grouse were also harvested the past two seasons within the district.

Figure 32. Forest grouse monitoring zones.



District 16 biologists will collect grouse wings and tails again during the 2024-2025 season to help evaluate harvested populations. Hunters will need to include date and location (GMU) of harvest on provided envelopes. Hunters can contribute their harvested grouse wing and tail in various ways. One option is to bring the wing and tail of harvested grouse to the nearest WDFW district or regional office. Another option is to drop them off (with completed envelopes), at wing/tail barrels in the field. Four grouse wing/tail collection barrels will be set up within District 16 during the grouse hunting season. Site locations can be found on WDFW's page. Thanks in advance for helping WDFW with grouse monitoring.



Grouse wing/tail collection barrel in Clallam County. Photo by Shelly Ament.

There have been concerns about the declining population of sooty grouse in Western Washington. WDFW initiated a pilot project in 2022 to monitor the abundance of hooting male sooty grouse and fully implemented the project during the spring of 2023. Listening stops were conducted on established transects within suitable sooty grouse habitat. Five survey routes were established and surveyed in District 16 in May. Three acoustic recorder units (ARU) were also deployed on hooting males in the district to improve our understanding of sooty grouse daily and seasonal activity patterns (Figure 15). Data from the 2023 survey transects and ARU's have not yet been analyzed. Survey results will help with future management of this species. This project will continue for several more years.



An acoustic recording unit deployed to record hooting male sooty grouse. Photo by Shelly Ament.

Pheasant

Western Washington does not support self-sustaining pheasant populations, primarily due to the wet climate and lack of grain farming. Hunting in Western Washington depends on fall pheasant releases. 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 is available at: wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/pheasant-release.

Quail

There is a fair abundance of California (valley) quail in eastern District 16. They are quite common in the Dungeness Valley, but hunting can be challenging due to predominately private ownership. Quail, like 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 early successional habitats. During 2023, hunters harvested 88 quail in Clallam County, and 21 in Jefferson County. The 2024 Western Washington California (valley) quail season runs from Sept. 21 through Nov. 30 with a daily mixed bag limit of 10 and a possession mixed bag limit of 30. Reference the [Washington Game Bird and Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) for more information.

Turkeys

WDFW doesn't manage District 16 for wild turkeys, and the species remains relatively rare in the district. WDFW receives occasional reports of individuals or small groups of turkeys within GMU 603. These are likely domestic turkeys that escaped from a farm in the Joyce area. District 16 biologists received 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, no prospects for hunting wild turkeys exist in District 16.

Mourning dove

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 eastern Clallam County. There was no reported harvest of mourning doves in Clallam or Jefferson counties during the 2023 season. However, during the 2022 season, eight mourning doves were harvested in Clallam County. The 2023 [USFWS Mourning Dove Population Status report](#) contains more information.

Band-tailed pigeons

General description

Band-tailed pigeons are the largest pigeon species in North America. They inhabit mountainous forests in the western United States, with large coastal populations occurring from British Columbia to northern California. During the breeding season (April to September), band-tailed pigeons are primarily found below 1,000 feet 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 in the 1950s. Hunters 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-plus mineral sites where band-tails are known to congregate. 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 2024 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 10 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. Band-tailed pigeon harvest in Clallam County has averaged nine birds per year for 2004-2020. During the same period for Jefferson County, total average harvest per year is seven birds. There was no band-tailed pigeon harvest reported during the 2022 season. Total harvest for the 2023 season for Clallam and Jefferson counties was unavailable at the time of publication.

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 5 to 10-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. Hunters must locate feeding, roosting, and watering sites. Upon finding a good site, hunters should sit patiently and wait for possible shooting opportunities.

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 initiated in 2021. Please contact District 16 biologists if you know of any sites where band-tailed pigeons obtain minerals in Clallam or Jefferson counties.

Special regulations

The 2024 hunting season for band-tailed pigeons will be Sept. 15-23. Since band-tailed pigeon seasons reopened in 2002, hunters must buy a migratory bird authorization, along with all required hunting licenses and the band-tailed pigeon harvest card. Hunters must report all band-tailed pigeon harvest to WDFW after the season has closed. Review the 2024 Game Bird and Small Game Regulations to confirm season dates and any regulation changes. More information about population monitoring and harvests is available in the 2023 [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 Districts 15, 16, and 17 (Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, and Pacific counties). The Department has fitted 36 pigeons with transmitters that are programmed to obtain multiple locations throughout the day and periodically upload those locations via the cell tower network (Figure 16).



Band-tailed pigeon fitted with a satellite transmitter. Photo by Anthony Novack.

The goal is to conduct research on band-tailed pigeons in areas where mineral sites have not been identified, allowing WDFW to fulfill the following objectives:

- More accurately index our statewide population via mineral site surveys.
- More expertly manage our band-tailed seasons to potentially allow expanded hunting opportunity.
- Provide details on resource selection to inform managing habitat to increase the statewide population.

This research project led to the discovery of new mineral sites in Grays Harbor County. Three locations in Clallam County have been identified as possible new mineral sites. A USFWS biologist joined WDFW biologists in July 2023 to further investigate these sites. Hunters and members of the public fund 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 may be looking for new trapping locations. Please contact District 16 or 17 biologists if you know of concentrations of band-tailed pigeons.

Major public lands

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, 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](#).

Interagency passes include access on National Park Service, USFS, USFWS, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation lands. Many public lands on the Olympic Peninsula are not open to hunting, including Olympic National Park, Washington state parks, and Clallam County parks.

Private industrial forestlands

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 several years ago and will not allow deer hunting. They issue a small number of access permits for elk season through a lottery system. Other forest industry ownerships have various access systems in place. Hunters are encouraged to scout the areas they are considering and pay close attention to signs on all roads. Signs are often the landowner’s primary method of informing the public of 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

For information on Rayonier access permits: rayonierhunting.com

Green Crow

- Website: greencrow.comhttps://opengovwa.com/corporation/601759478
- 360-452-3325
- 727 E. 8th St., Port Angeles, WA 98362

Merrill and Ring

Website: merrillring.com/contact-us

360-452-2367

Email: contact@merrillring.com

813 E. 8th St., Port Angeles, WA 98362

Other major landowners

Hoh River Trust

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

Hunting organizations

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 Road, Port Angeles, WA 98362

Eyes in the Woods

Website: facebook.com/groups/eyesinthewoods/about

P.O. Box 2406, Olympia, WA 98507

West End Sportsmen's Club-Forks

Facebook: 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

Max Cole, West Side Co-Chair

Email: washington@backcountryhunters.org

Ducks Unlimited Olympic District

Website: ducks.org/washington <http://www.ducks.org/washington/wa-content/state-contacts/?poe=stateHomelcon>

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 Lane N.E., Sammamish, WA 98074

Washington Brant Foundation

Website: wabrant.org

Maynard Axelson

Phone: 360-445-6681

Email: info@wabrant.org

15929 Fir Island Road, Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Washington Outdoor Women (WOW)

Website: washingtonoutdoorwomen.org

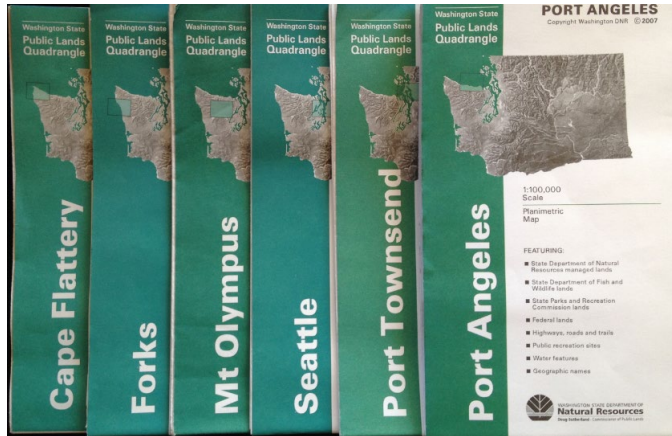
Workshops: washingtonoutdoorwomen.org/workshops

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.

Online tools and maps

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. Photo by Anita McMillan.

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

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 application 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.