

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Jan. 1 to Jan. 15, 2020

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Conservation of Monarch Butterflies: Section Manager Taylor Cotten participated in the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Monarch Conservation Working Group meeting in Monterey, CA. The group discussed goals and priorities in year two for implementation of the Monarch and Pollinator Conservation Plan and upcoming stakeholder engagement meeting in Reno, NV.

Conservation of bird aggregation areas: Staff members from Wildlife Program (Buchanan, Evenson, Spragens) met with Terry Johnson (Habitat Program) to discuss aspects of a new initiative to augment and increase the utility of Priority Habitats and Species (PHS). Specifically, this group met to discuss the attributes of new data after which Johnson will develop the database structure and reporting tools required to establish and update databases that would focus specifically on aggregations of waterfowl (high density areas) and shorebirds (roost sites) in or adjacent to the marine environment. Such information is not currently tracked in PHS. Since this December 2019 meeting, Buchanan has identified over 1000 roost site records for shorebirds from his personal field notes. Evenson will extract additional shorebird roost records from aerial flights of the Salish Sea and Spragens will facilitate transfer of waterfowl data.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Grouse 'Wing Bee': Small Game and Furbearer Specialist Garrison began making arrangements for the annual forest grouse 'wing bee', when statewide staff members will gather to process the forest grouse wing and tail samples submitted by hunters throughout the season (wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/grouse-wing-tail-collection).

She also continued making arrangements for the 2020 Western Wild Turkey Technical Committee Meeting, which Washington is hosting in May. This will be a meeting of staff members from multiple state agencies, land management agencies, and the National Wild Turkey Federation to review and discuss current turkey management issues.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Beaver Relocation Program: Small Game and Furbearer Specialist Garrison continued to manage the beaver relocation program (wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/nuisance-wildlife/beaver-relocation). This included preparing for annual revisions to the program during this pilot phase, exploring opportunities for a research project to monitor the impacts of beaver release, and preliminary planning for the beaver relocation training for new and potential permittees.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Small Game and Furbearer Specialist Garrison attended supervisor training and prepared to hire a short-term position to assist with the beaver relocation program and training. She also responded to a couple Public Records Requests.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Bighorn Sheep Disease Research: District Wildlife Biologist Wik spent four days in upper Hells Canyon assisting with a bighorn capture. Bighorns were captured from herds in Oregon and Idaho, herds that are connected to Washington populations, with the goal of collaring and testing for disease status. The Hells Canyon Restoration Project is in the sixth year of a “Test and Cull” research project. Bighorns that test positive to shedding the *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* bacteria are removed from the population. Six herds in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon have shown positive growth from this experiment.



Two corrals bar where bighorns were flown into for processing

Mule Deer Research: District 3 biologists Wik and Vekasy have been busy preparing for an upcoming mule deer capture. Collars will be placed on mule deer does in three capture sites throughout the district. The capture sites are primarily on private land, requiring biologists to contact every landowner in the area to obtain access permission.

Population Monitoring/ Surveillance: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill snowmobiled through part of the Wedge and historic OPT pack territories in search of wolf sign for the annual wolf population survey effort. No wolf sign was detected up Deadman Creek, Alligator Ridge Road, or Fifteen Mile Creek.

White-tailed Deer Captures: Various District 1 and 2 staff members have assisted Ungulate Research Scientist DeVivo with capturing and collaring white-tailed deer as part of the Predator-Prey Research Project. Recent snow and cold weather have made trapping more productive because deer are more willing to go into a trap or stand under a net to get a free snack. This is the last year of captures and trapping will continue until March of this year.



Biologists with WDFW and the Kalispel Tribe fit two deer with radio collars

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Liberty Lake Access Redevelopment: Work on the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant for the Liberty Lake access site redevelopment has been happening behind the scenes for quite some time. In early January, a well-drilling truck sunk a borehole into the substrate, to determine what was under the top layer. A representative from the Spokane Tribe was on site to check for artifacts during the drilling. This work is preparatory for installation of pilings in the water, for an extended boarding platform.



Setting up the borer



A Spokane Tribe member sifts through the cores, looking for artifacts

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Conflict Prevention: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill worked on developing a Wild Game Donation Program with local food banks in Stevens County. Samsill sent several emails to local agencies within the district to see about recruiting volunteers to process game animals that will be donated to local food banks. Samsill also started incorporating food bank information in landowner kill permits as an option for carcass instructions. Samsill spoke to a couple of interested volunteers via phone calls and also emailed a couple of inquiring volunteers. Ideally,

eligible volunteers will be added to a volunteer contact list that will process game animals for donation to a local food bank. Samsill also contacted Nils Johnson, Agriculture and Food Systems Coordinator for the WSU Extension, to inquire about Hunger Coalition meetings as well as Wild Game Donation Program collaboration.

Three Rivers Grazing Conference: Wildlife conflict specialists Westerman and Wade attended the grazing conference. Westerman gave a presentation of depredation signatures and a brief wolf update.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman giving his presentation

Conflict Prevention: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill responded to a report about a landowner in northern Stevens County who has been experiencing chronic raven damage to her sheep herd. One of her lambs was recently depredated by ravens. Upon arrival Samsill observed roughly 20 ravens around the farm. Samsill and Natural Resource Technician Fish built and installed scare devices out of CDs, swivels, and fishing line. WDFW staff members hung up the scare devices around the reporting party's barns and outbuildings. Samsill provided the landowner with some information about living with ravens and also dropped off a copy of a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement contract for the landowner to review and fill out. Samsill also loaned the landowner some other non-lethal deterrents to haze the offending ravens away from her property.

Possible Cattle Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received another call the next day from the same livestock producer regarding another dead cow, only this one died in an irrigation ditch. Like the cow the day before, both of them had two-month-old calves. The hired man and Rasley were able to determine the cow had somehow injured its back while falling into the irrigation ditch then was able to drag herself downstream for approximately 30 yards before she apparently drowned. First time in almost 40 years Rasley has come across something like this. Rasley pulled the cow out and was able to skin the cow while looking for signs of trauma. None were found.



Dead cow in irrigation ditch



Partial skinning completed

Sheep Missing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley responded to a report of a couple of missing sheep west of Walla Walla. After meeting with the sheep owner Rasley investigated the site and while digging through the wool with no other sign of bones or hide Rasley was able to find a black rubber glove that was cut and torn into several small pieces buried under all the wool and alfalfa. The sheep owner deployed some cameras on his sheep and in one night was able to catch one of his hired men on camera stealing a sheep. The hired man was fired the same day.



Wool and other evidence left in a field

Damage Elk Hunts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley coordinated two crop damage hunts with two local hunters to assist the farmer with their hazing efforts. Two elk were harvested and thanks to our efforts, the large herd of elk are now staying in Oregon.



One of the two elk harvested

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Hunting Clinic: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley reached out to Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Garcia regarding putting on a hunting clinic. They will meet at the end of the month. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley also spoke with Private Lands Biologist Gaston regarding a hunting clinic that he recently hosted and will meet next week to discuss putting on the clinic.

Kettle Falls “Ask an Expert”: Wildlife Biologist Prince, Conflict Specialist Bennett, and Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer helped fourth graders at the Kettle Falls elementary school finish gathering data for their science projects. Groups of students rotated between classrooms to ask the “experts” about cougars, wolves, deer, and eagles.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

HERE’S WHAT WE’VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Chelan County Mule Deer Study: WDFW collared 40 female mule deer on Chelan County winter range in the week of January 13 as part of a study funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior in accordance with Secretarial Order 3362 - Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors. This collaring effort kicks off a four-year movement and migration study of mule deer in the East Slope Cascades Mule Deer Management Zone (MDMZ) in northcentral Washington designed to better understand seasonal movement patterns for mule deer in Chelan, Kittitas, and Okanogan counties. During Jan. 13-17, does in Chelan County were captured and collared via helicopter net gunning performed by an experienced aerial net gun crew contracted by WDFW specifically

for this study. The crew netted individual does from a low-flying helicopter and worked quickly to collect biological samples, take measurements, and fit a GPS collar to each doe before releasing the deer onsite.



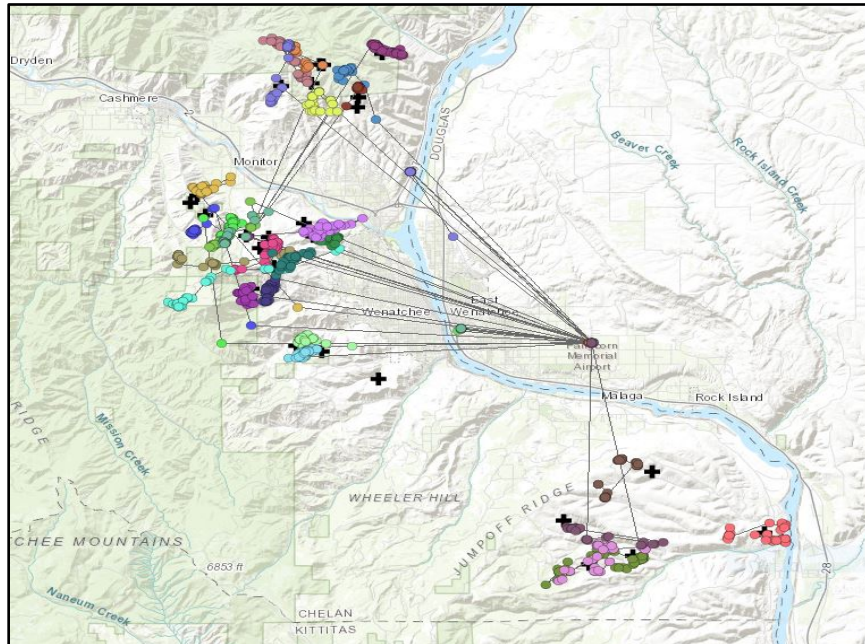
Crew loading net guns for mule deer capture - Photo by Devon Comstock

WDFW Assistant District Biologist Devon Comstock and Statewide Deer Specialist Sara Hansen coordinated these efforts in Chelan County and provided logistical support to the aerial net gun crew throughout captures. District Wildlife Biologist Emily Jeffreys joined them on the ground to assist with preparing capture kits and receiving data and biological samples collected by the capture crew. The goal was to collar 50 mule deer in each county for a total sample size of 150 does to be included in the four-year study. However, the capture crew had to contend with heavy fog throughout much of the week in Chelan County, rendering flight impossible at times. Due to these limitations posed by inclement weather, only 40 deer were captured. The remaining ten collars were added to the 50 collars that biologists in Kittitas County will attempt to deploy in the week of January 20.



Views from Burch Mountain of fog engulfing the Wenatchee Valley – Photos by Emily Jeffreys

The high-resolution data provided by these collars will enhance WDFW’s understanding of the timing of mule deer migration as well as allow for the identification of important migration corridors and potential movement barriers. Each GPS collar will turn on every four or six hours and connect with GPS satellites to create a location for that animal with an accuracy within five meters. Collars will collect 1460-2190 locations per animal per year. The substantial amount of locational data provided by these GPS collars will facilitate improved management of mule deer populations in the East Slope Cascades MDMZ by better enabling WDFW to prioritize land management decisions and conservation actions to benefit deer.



GPS data showing the first five days of locations for all 40 deer captured in Chelan County -
Photo by Devon Comstock

District 5 Deer Management: District biologists from regions one, two and three reviewed deer survey data and discussed a modest reduction in second-deer antlerless modern permits in the Washtucna region for year 2020 due to low deer numbers. Large numbers of deer were found sick or dead in the area in February and March of 2019, and necropsies on a few deer found them to have various infections or poor condition and weight. The area received a great deal of snow and prolonged freezing conditions in February and March of 2019, which likely contributed to - or were the cause of - the winter morbidity and mortalities. Rowan also performed more QA/QC on deer data and reported errors to be rectified.

Northern leopard frog: Northern leopard frogs will continue overwintering for the next few months, so Biologist Grabowsky's focus has been on habitat surveys, grant writing, and prescribed burning planning in the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (CBWA). Habitat and vegetation surveys at the CBWA are almost complete. Once this data is analysed, WDFW should have a better idea of feasible frog habitat in the wildlife area and the most efficient management strategies to improve the habitat. Because the reintroduction program has only focused on a single release location, it is important to identify potential habitat for future expansion of the recovery program. Reintroduction programs are continually evolving, and often lengthy projects. Self-sustaining reintroduced populations are typically not established for several years. This means that WDFW and our partners must secure additional funding to continue our northern leopard frog recovery program and give the released frogs the best chance of survival. Amphibians will continue to overwinter for a few months (also called brumation), but breeding and egg mass surveys will commence once the Columbia Basin reaches average day-time temperatures of roughly 50°F.

Scotch Creek Sharp-tailed Grouse Update: The birds are now visiting their winter habitat almost daily. The extreme cold weather we experienced in Okanogan County, and now the heavy snowfall will drive sharp-tails from their preferred upland grass habitats to the deciduous riparian habitats along waterways and springs. This past week at the Scotch Creek Unit, 35 birds were foraging in the water birch adjacent to the headquarters. We will update this post on other units in Okanogan as we continue winter surveys.

Waterfowl Surveys: Biologist Rowan completed an initial review of footage from Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) surveys that took place in December, and discussed issues with managers. These survey types may benefit WDFW in managing waterfowl populations by assessing abundance of waterfowl species, habitat use, and habitat condition, however WDFW needs to ensure the methods used do not cause disturbance to wildlife. Disturbance can separate parents from offspring, can interfere with foraging, can reduce valuable calories during flee-responses, and can lead to injury and predation when distracted or during escape. Imagery reviewed thus far indicates disturbance to waterfowl does occasionally take place during UAS surveys. Determining the exact variables and conditions related to disturbance would require extensive formal research, but could include flight trajectory, approach speed, approach direction, sun position, time of day, flight pattern, altitude, noise level of the UAS, and other variables. Thankfully, professionals and graduate students are performing this type of research and may have answers soon. A summary of efforts should be completed by the end of January, and results will be provided via an article in the Washington Waterfowl Association Newsletter.



Douglas County pronghorn antelope herd – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Waterfowl hunting around the Basin: The basin has been seeing colder temps recently freezing a majority of wetlands. Most hunting has been focused on waste ways, creeks, large water bodies, fields, and some hunters have had productive hunts breaking open ice. The wildlife area's regulated access areas have still been receiving a good amount of hunter participation but at Winchester and North Potholes hunters have had to break open ice. At Frenchman Regulated Access Area, Specialist McPherson has been able to manipulate water levels enough to allow for open water in cells two, four, five, six, and seven allowing for good opportunity. Harvest at regulated access areas has been low the last couple weeks with the freezing conditions but with scouting and persistence some hunters have been seeing decent harvest. Specialist McPherson opened water control structure at Mansfield Pond as well to increase water velocity to break up ice and keep open water habitat available.



Open water in cell 4 of the Frenchman - Photo by C. McPherson



After opening water control structure Mallards found the open water on Mansfield Pond immediately - Photo by C. McPherson

Hunter Access Program: Biologist Hughes met with a landowner to discuss and update his Hunter Access Program contract to reflect his current phone number. Hughes also updated all the signs for this Hunter Access Program contract in northern Grant County and provided an updated on how pygmy rabbits are doing and future recovery plans that will take place in his area.



Updating signs for hunter access in Grant County - Photo By: Hughes

Quincy Lakes Recreation Planning: Lands Operations Manager Finger hosted a workshop to consider designating and decommissioning of trail systems through the Quincy Lakes Unit. The workshop shared a system of trails that could be observed from aerial imagery and then asked the participants to identify which trails were of importance. Important trails were typically part of a large loop route or had specific destinations such as vistas and interpretive features. Finger created a draft of the group's collective efforts and sent it out to the group for review in ArcMap and Google Earth formats.

Quincy Lakes Mountain Bike Race: Lands Operations Manager Finger and Wildlife Area Manager Eidson held a conference call with an individual interested in having a mountain bike race on the Quincy Lakes Unit in late February. A similar local race, 'the Beezley Burn', attracts about 100 participants annually in recent years but used to draw as many as 300. Finger and Eidson shared concerns (e.g. poor soil conditions, speed and safety, number of participants and distances covered, pre-race route improvements) but generally agreed to proposal under certain restrictions. Once the final proposal is received, we will solidify restrictions and work with the Real Estate Section to issue a permit.

Discover Pass Kiosk: Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in a discussion about potentially installing a Discover Pass kiosk (aka Flowbird machine) at the Frenchmen Coulee climbing area. These machines are programmable for five menu items, and in our case would likely include 1) annual pass, 2) daily pass, and 3) donation (specific to the area). The machines cost \$6,550 each with an \$844/year maintenance package; service is provided through Verizon or AT&T. Though State Parks has not had any vandalism issues with the 77 machines they operate, local staff members expressed concerns about vandalism due to the relatively remote location. To mitigate this risk, the machine could be removed seasonally. If the machine is destroyed,

responsibilities to replace would match the Discover Pass split by the relative allocations of 84/8/8, thus WDFW would be responsible for eight percent of the replacement cost. Further discussions are needed on whether to pursue but local staff members are supportive of giving it a try. If we move forward, local personnel could construct the mountain pad adjacent to the CXTs, within an area already surveyed for Cultural Resources.



3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Depredation Permits: Specialist Heilhecker received calls from two landowners who reported harvesting antlerless elk in GMU 204. Each landowner was issued one landowner kill permit for elk damage to their properties.

Beaver Causing Orchard Damage: Specialist Heilhecker received a call regarding beaver damage to an orchard. The owner stated an individual had damaged a fence, which allowed the beaver to get into the orchard. A trapper had already removed the beaver, but he was curious if financial compensation was available for the damaged trees. Specialist Heilhecker stated there was not.

Dead Sheep Investigation: Specialist Bridges responded to a report of what was originally a wolf being shot in the act of depredating in Adams County. After meeting with the producer, enforcement was able to determine that a wolf was not shot and that a sheep was found dead. Specialist Bridges met with the producer to explain the depredation investigation process and then processed the scene together. After a thorough search, Bridges and the producer were only able to find most of the wool, a three-inch piece of rib bone with small teeth marks, and a three-inch diameter circle of the superior portion of cranium with teeth marks as well. While a determination as to the cause of death was not able to be made, Bridges and the producer did have discussions about methods to reduce the likelihood of further possible depredations into the future, what to do if he suspects another depredation, and where the department can help if he is interested.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Eyhott Island Riparian Planting: Members of the Okanogan district team met with Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) Fisheries Biologists John Rohrback and Chris Fisher on a potential riparian plant and bank stabilization project. The CCT would like to plant riparian vegetation along with stabilizing the bank along a section of Eyhott Island. This would help protect chinook salmon spawning habitat. This was an initial step in starting the pathways process.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Fence Removal Planning: The Methow Wildlife Area has started planning the third annual Golden Doe Fence Removal Volunteer Day with local chapter members of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA), specifically Carmen Vanbianchi and John Rohrer. During the previous two years, with the help of BHA members from all around the west, as well as WDFW master hunters, volunteers and wildlife area personnel have been able to remove over three miles of dilapidated woven wire fencing in a combined two days of work totaling over 200 volunteer hours. Last year alone, nearly 30 volunteers participated in this event on a beautiful Saturday afternoon in June. Following the volunteer workday, most volunteers met in Winthrop for pizza followed by a group campout along the Chewuch River at the Lower Bobcat campground. BHA coordinators stated this event is quickly becoming one of BHA's biggest events in Washington. This fence removal project is beneficial to a wide array of wildlife that inhabit or cross through the Golden Doe Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area. This project is

particularly beneficial to our migratory Mule deer herds seeing as the Golden Doe Unit provides prime winter and spring mule deer habitat. Stay tuned for specific dates, times, and plans.



Nineteen of the 31 volunteers who helped improve migratory wildlife corridors by removing dilapidated woven wire fencing on the Methow Wildlife Area on June 1, 2019. This event was organized by the Washington Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers in collaboration with WDFW and was well attended by WDFW master hunters as well – Photo by Troyer

Winchester Phase II: Specialist McPherson made a site visit to the new wetland excavation project along the east side of the Winchester Wasteway. The contractor Halme currently is having equipment issues with their Caterpillar D8 but was able to get excavator on site for Russian olive removal around wetland basins.



Wetland before Russian olive removal - Photo by C. McPherson



After Russian olive removal - Photo by C. McPherson

Habitat Restoration Project Planning: Biologist Hughes continues to work with a landowner on two habitat plots. Hughes reviewed the project proposal (installation of approximately 700 shrubs). Hughes also explained the Hunter Access Program to the landowner. The landowner is eager to enroll approximately 2000 acres into Hunt by Written Permission and continue efforts enhancing habitat for upland birds and mule deer on that property. Hughes developed a Hunter Access Program contract and habitat contract with the landowner and submitted new habitat forms to the Private Lands Access Program Manager Strickland for cultural resource compliance.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Wolf 101 Presentation in Wenatchee: Specialist Bridges attended the wolf presentation at Pybus Market in Wenatchee. Great conversations took place after the presentation and local department staff members exchanged email and phone numbers in order to continue the conversation about wolves into the future. A big thank you to Ben Maletzke for putting on the presentation, and for Stacey Lehman for coordinating the venue!

Seed Biomass and Remote Camera Trap Waterfowl Surveys: Specialist McPherson finalized protocols, sample designs, methods, and study designs for both seed biomass and remote camera surveys and submitted them for review. Monitoring Resources is a program that is sponsored by Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership and peers from U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) review studies. After peer review of the seed biomass and remote cameras surveys both are now published and made public on Monitoring Resources program. Now other natural resource agencies can access our protocol, designs, and methods to help in coordination of monitoring efforts and planning.

Sinlahekin Winter Wildlife: The swans have come back to the Sinlahekin for their annual winter visit, they can be found on the open water of the lakes within the valley. Staff members have counted on the upper end 40 swans and on the lower end 15. We hope the lakes do not freeze completely over so we get some staying through the winter.

With winter finally showing up in the valley we are getting some snow and accumulation along with cooler temperatures. Staff members have noticed more deer in the valley with the new snow and they have observed a variety of animal tracks that are much easier to see in the new snow.



Swans at Blue Lake – Photo by Wehmeyer



Adult and juvenile swans on Forde Lake – Photo by Haug



Juvenile northern goshawk north of Sinlahekin Wildlife Area headquarters – Photo by Haug



Ice on Blue Lake – Photo by Wehmeyer



Sinlahekin snow at headquarters Thursday morning – Photo by Wehmeyer



Moon above Douglas Mountain from Sinlahekin Road – Photo by Haug



Winter scenes from the Chiliwist Unit - Photos by Haug

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

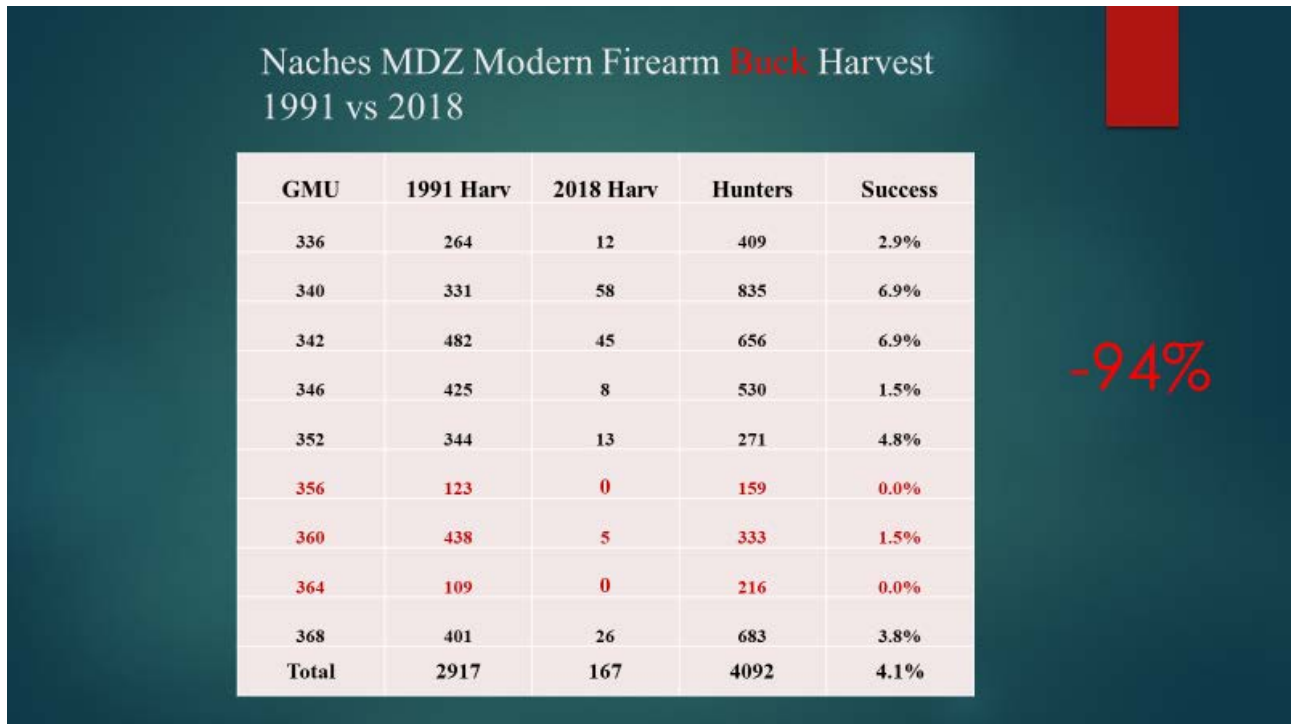
1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Population Survey Completed: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra coordinated and conducted the winter survey of the Rattlesnake Hills elk sub-herd with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partners. During winter months the elk congregate in the low elevation areas of the Hanford Reach National Monument and the Hanford site providing an opportunity for a count to be conducted. This herd is over the management objective and continues to grow. WDFW has long been working with private landowners to reduce crop damage by elk through non-lethal deterrents and controlled public hunting. Recently increased safety concerns regarding potential vehicle collisions with elk have been raised. Obtaining accurate numbers of elk, and locations of where elk occur, is important for management of elk and for human safety.



Two bulls encountered during the Rattlesnake Hills survey

Managing Wildlife Populations: District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz gave a presentation to the Oak Creek Wildlife Area volunteers on the Naches mule deer population. It is obvious to even the casual observer that the deer population is lower than historic norms. Over the past few decades, buck harvest has declined over 90 percent and the area now has the lowest hunter success rate in the state (slide below). There is no one factor that caused the decline, but after five years of following radio-collared deer, cougar predation is the number one cause of adult female mortality.



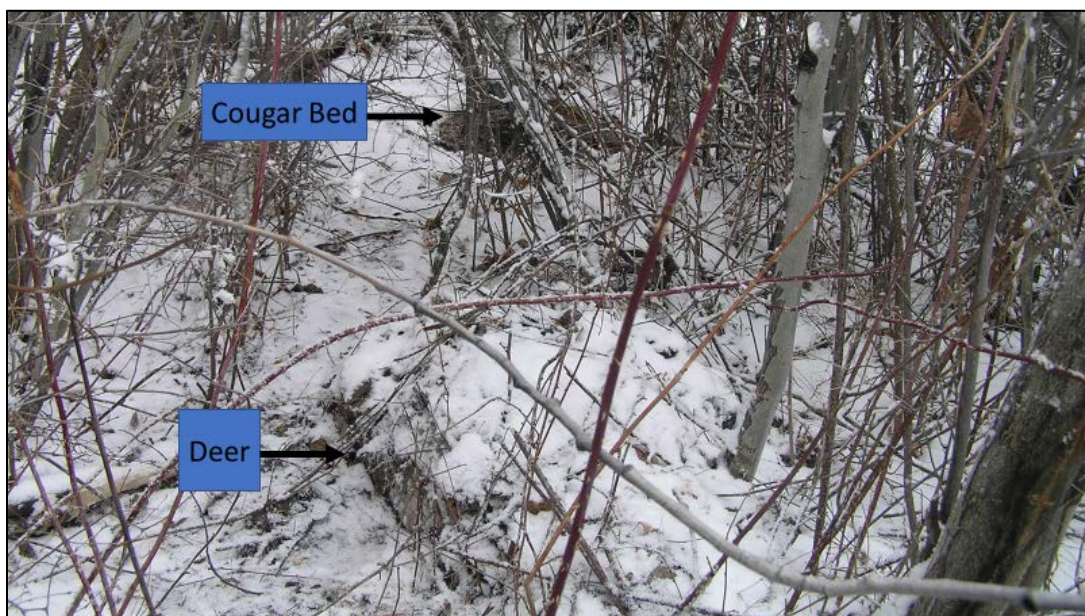
Slide comparing decline in Naches mule deer buck harvest

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz also tracked two collared deer mortalities. The first deer collar stopped reporting via the GPS system at the end of the year. The collar was heard on mortality mode and tracked to the Naches River. The collar was located in a deep, fast moving section of the river and could not be retrieved. There was no indication of foul play. The most likely ended up in the river (possible roadkill), floated down the river slowly and eventually sank.



Location of radio collar

The second deer reported a mortality and was found to have been killed by a cougar. The body fat on the dead deer appeared to be very high, which was not surprising given the warm early winter, lack of snow, local habitat and low deer density.

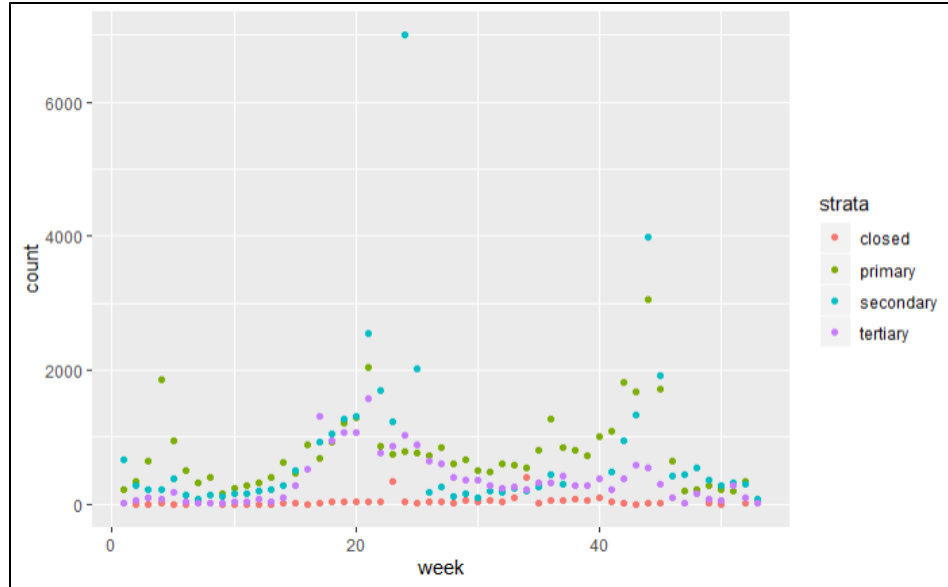


Radio-collared deer buried by a cougar



Available browse near the dead radio-collared deer

Colockum Elk Studies: District 8 Wildlife Biologist Moore has been developing and attempting to validate a road classification system across the Colockum winter range. Car counter data generated during the study is being used to determine if each road class (strata) is justified. A few counters have illustrated extreme counts and time has been spent looking for pattern to allow these data to be systematically cleaned. Overall, cleaning has been difficult, but a final classification system should be done soon.



An annual view of Colockum's winter range car counters colored by road class. Note the few extreme values.

East Slope Cascades Mule Deer Study: District 8 Wildlife Program staff members prepared for a deer capture that is planned for the week of Jan. 21. Most all of the preparation work is complete and special thanks to Biologists Jen Nelson, Steve Wetzel and Mark Teske for securing access to capture on numerous private properties within the study area. Conflict Specialist Wetzel called 13 landowners to request capture access and only one landowner declined.

Elk are coming into salt blocks at the Mellotte feed site on the Wenas Wildlife Area, but mild weather conditions have not yet required feeding to start at the site. Colder temperatures and predicted snow may quickly change that in the upcoming week.



Elk beginning to gather at Mellotte feed site

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Blackrock LHP Changes: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with the hunt coordinator at Blackrock Ranches to discuss updating their current Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) contract to include additional property the owner purchased. Additionally, Blackrock Ranches has requested a modification in hunting permit levels when their contract is renewed.

Silver Dollar LHP: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with one of the Silver Dollar hunt managers to discuss the possibility of additional landowners in the Corral Canyon area being eligible to participate in the Landowner Hunting Permit program. Apparently, at least one landowner has shown interest in the program.

District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra recently sealed a huge male cougar harvested by a hunter.

Colockum Wildlife Area staff members spent time this period assessing access and habitat damage issues at Lily Lake in the Stemilt Basin. WDFW acquired this property in 2018 from the Washington Department of Natural Resources. It is a highly used area by the public, given its popularity for spring trout fishing. The site is close to Wenatchee and easily accessed by the paved Stemilt Loop Road. Unfortunately, it is also a problem area for 4x4 off-road travel, spring “mudding,” and garbage dumping. Colockum personnel are considering options to manage these issues, including the possibility of applying for grants to create parking areas and limit vehicle travel with vehicle barriers in problem areas.



Overturned “mudder” near Lily Lake in spring 2017 being investigated by WDFW Enforcement. Sites like this could be converted to parking areas and improved with gravel, perimeter barriers and signage.



Vehicle mudding damage along the road to Lily Lake. Staff members are considering ways to fund management of this site, including restoring vehicle damage and confining vehicles to authorized areas.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resources Technician Wascisin conducted daily checks on the Rice Paddies pump system, clearing the pump intake and outlet valves of debris and making adjustments to maintain water levels.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Rodgers conducted daily checks on water control structures on the Windmill Ranch and Mesa Lake Units in order to clear debris and maintain water levels.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Rodgers has been maintaining all hunter registration sites for the eastside of the wildlife area, as well as organizing and entering harvest data. Hunters continue to report successful waterfowl hunting at the Windmill Ranch and Bailie Ranch units.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Monitoring Elk Damage near Rattlesnake Mountain: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to monitor a trail camera set up on a historically heavily used game trail leaving the Hanford Monument for newly seeded winter wheat fields on the south face of Rattlesnake Mountain. Over 200 digital images of elk were captured, all during the late evening or early morning hours as animals depart the fields prior to legal shooting hours.



Bachelor group of bull elk just leaving the wheat fields

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand prepared and delivered additional damage permits to a Kahlotus area landowners dealing with deer damage concerns. A list of master hunters who have special permits for the area was provided to the landowners to increase hunting pressure in the crop damage areas.

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued hazing and monitoring of deer in winter wheat fields in the Kahlotus area. Reports from area landowners and hunters utilizing damage permits are stating increasing numbers of deer as winter weather finally arrives with colder temperatures and snow.

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand conducted one hazing/monitoring patrol in southern Benton County in tree fruit and wine grape operations who have reported deer damage issues. Very little deer activity or damage was observed at this time.

District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Technician Leuck patrolled all major conflict areas for elk activity. Most areas have a few elk or deer in the usual places, but numbers are significantly down. Large numbers of elk have been observed on the winter range areas, which is ideal for this time of the year.

A landowner near Cle Elum ridge reported elk in his new seeding and District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel checked the area and found scattered groups of bulls, which is typical for this time of the year. The recent weather appears to have moved the cow group east.



Cow group moving east

An orchardist near Tampico reported an elk in his orchard that would not leave. Technician Leuck and Conflict Specialist Wetzel moved the elk for several hours in the large orchard, but the elk would circle around and hide in the orchard rows. The elk finally left and headed south and has not been seen in over a week.



Large orchard that serves as hiding cover for an elk that did not want to leave

While herding elk out of a large orchard at the end of Tieton Drive, an elk return gate was found wired shut and inoperable again. This same gate was wired, and chain locked shut a month ago. The gate was freed and is now operating.



Return gate rendered inoperable....again

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Colockum Wildlife Area staff members spent time this period repairing the Truax brand native seed drill that is being used to restore the historic agricultural fields in the north fork of Tarpiscan Creek. The Truax seed drill is a specialized piece of equipment able to plant native grass seeds at the correct rate and depth for optimum germination and success. The Colockum drill was in need of maintenance since some of the bearings on the planter discs had not been replaced since it was new in 2004. Once the bearings seize up the planting discs stop turning and seed is not placed correctly. Staff members removed and replaced all 36 disc blades and bearings, ensuring the drill is ready to go next year without any problems.



Colockum Wildlife Area's Truax native seed drill in action, fall 2019



New bearings and disc blades installed on seed drill, January 2020

Blackrock Pilot Project Heading into the Final Stage: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett continued working on the Blackrock Pilot Project in Benton and Yakima counties. Hulett helped one landowner calibrate and prepare their equipment for seeding. The landowner was able

to finish a few days later and seeded a total of 25 acres of green strips along Highway 241. Hulett worked with a second landowner and a chemical applicator to prepare a site for planting by controlling annual grasses and other actively growing plants with an herbicide application. Hulett worked with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) to create the required job sheets which allows the seeding to take place on this Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ground. NRCS has returned the approved job sheet and it is now up to the Benton FSA County Committee to approve this practice. Hulett hopes to have these thirty acres planted by the end of January.



Tractor and Brillion seeder preparing for seeding

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Forester Hartmann flagged thinning unit boundaries on the Windy Point restoration area. Prescriptions are under development to restore forest structure within the historic range of variability, while protecting or enhancing habitat for a variety of wildlife species.



Large old ponderosa pines on perimeter of proposed thinning unit. Historic fire suppression has allowed formerly open stands to fill in with more fire and drought intolerant species like grand fir. Prescriptions are being developed to promote forest health and create a mosaic of stand conditions that provide habitat for many species.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson has been working on removing an older culvert and beaver deceiver connecting Morgan Lake and the Johnson Wetland. The culvert and old beaver deceiver structure are almost completely removed, clearing the way for water to flow downstream into the Johnson Wetland unimpeded.



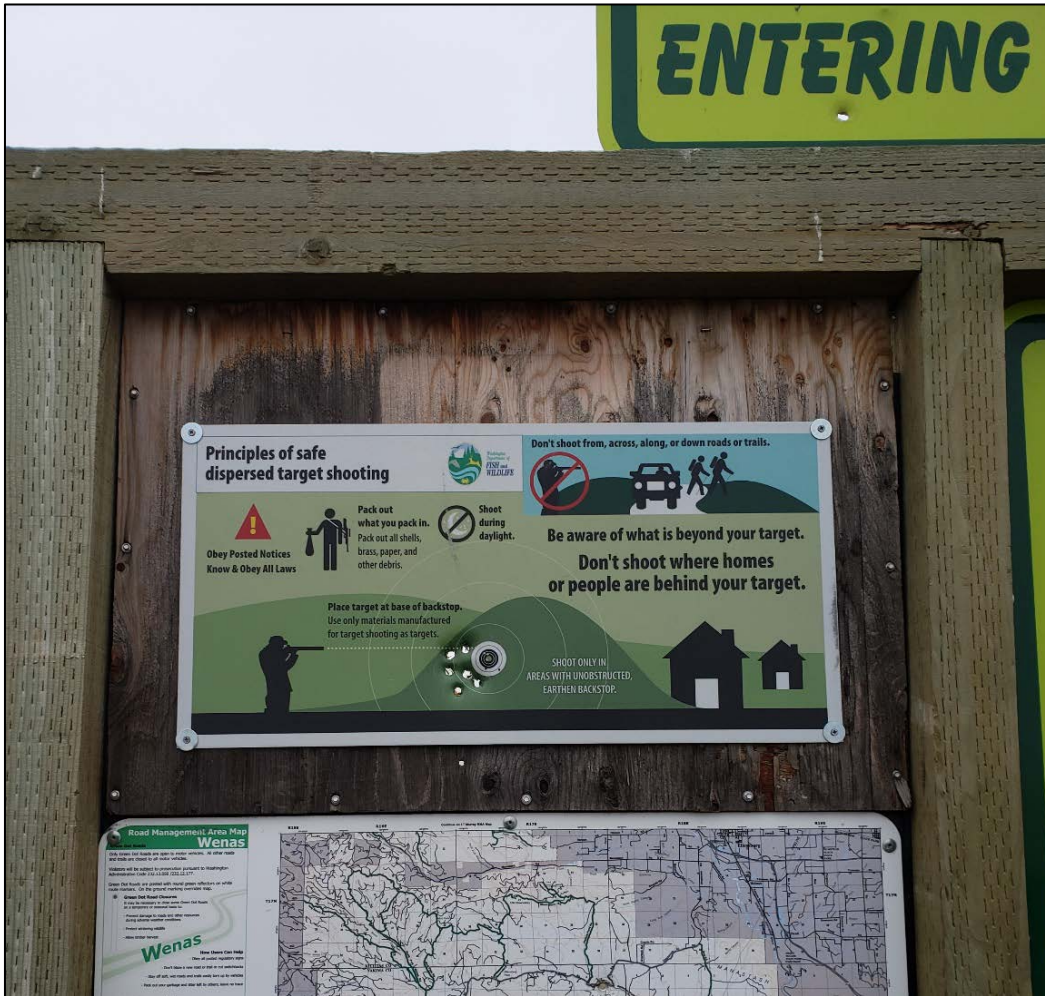
Old culvert about halfway removed



Cattails cleared out of path of water flow, downstream of old culvert structure

5) Providing Education and Outreach

The target shooting education sign posted on the Durr Road reader board in mid-November has been used as a target. Ironically, the bullet holes are through the portion of the sign saying to ‘Shoot only in areas with unobstructed, earthen backstop’, but not only did these shooters not have a backstop, they were shooting into a parking lot.



Target shooting education sign with bullet holes

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Mackey attended the monthly meeting of the Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) volunteers who staff the Visitor’s Center and provide elk viewing tours during winter feeding operations. District 8 Biologist Bernatowicz presented on local mule deer populations to the group. After staffing the Visitor’s Center seven days per week during the holidays, volunteers are back to only staffing weekends until feeding commences, which may be very soon.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff members restored an old porta potty dumped on the wildlife area and now have proper “facilities” at the Watt Barn. This will save wildlife area funds used to rent a toilet for winter feeding.



Toilet before the makeover



Proud owners of an L.T. Murray toilet!

7) Other

Assistant Manager Berry, Natural Resource Technician Kass and Natural Resources Worker Blore raked and burned tumble weeds at sheep feed site parking/viewing area



Tumbleweed clean-up at the sheep feed site on Old Naches Highway

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Forester Hartmann locked the Cleman Ridge gate at the end of December to enact the Sanford Pasture seasonal vehicle closure. However, it was determined that the gate would need modifications due to a presumed settling issue. As a result, Assistant Manager Berry and Natural Resource Technician Kass made repairs with power tools and the portable welder. The locking bar had to be elongated a couple of inches to prevent the gate from being opened with locks in place.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Berry, while checking elk fence along Highway 12, came upon a homeless campsite with a pick-up canopy being used as a shelter and an assortment of belongings in and around the shelter. Trees and brush were removed in the vicinity for access and apparently to conceal shelter and contents. Enforcement was made aware of site and is monitoring for use.



Encampment along Highway 12

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Island Marble Butterfly: Interest in enrolling in the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) to help recover the butterfly continues on Lopez and San Juan islands. To date, 14 landowners have submitted applications to be included in the program. The island marble butterfly is found only on San Juan and Lopez islands and is expected to be listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act at any time. Landowners can enroll in the CCAA during the period when listing is proposed. Under the CCAA, landowners agree to plant and maintain butterfly habitat in exchange for relief from take if they accidentally harm a butterfly on their property. District 13 staff members answered questions and send application materials to several landowners who have received postcards telling them about the opportunity to enroll.



Photo courtesy of USFWS

Salish Sea Waterfowl, Sea Bird, and Marine Mammal Aerial Surveys: Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Biologists Moore and Hamer began conducting winter aerial surveys of waterfowl, sea bird, and marine mammal populations in Washington's Salish Sea waters. The annual survey provides critical information for the management of Washington's sea duck populations and helps to monitor wintering sea bird and marine mammal populations. The aerial surveys are flown in a de Havilland Beaver at an altitude of 200 feet along all Salish Sea coastlines and extensively throughout nearshore and offshore areas. The biologist observers record all avian and marine mammal observations that fall within an 80-meter wide transect strip on each side of the aircraft. Thus far, surveys have been conducted throughout southern and central Puget Sound, Admiralty Inlet, Saratoga Passage, northern Hood Canal, and the eastern portions of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.



Biologist Moore and Hamer conducting aerial survey

Deer Shot with an Arrow: Natural Resource Technician Cogdal and Conflict Specialist Witman responded to the City of Bellingham after receiving reports of a deer walking around with an arrow in its neck. A landowner in the area was able to contain the deer in her fenced back yard.

The deer was immobilized, and the arrow was removed from the deer's neck. The landowner reported the deer appeared well several days after the arrow was removed.



Black-tailed deer with arrow removed from the neck

Helping a Mother of Two: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Seitz and Biologist Smith successfully removed a piece of wire fence that was wrapped around the chest of a deer in King County.



Deer in King County with wire wrapped around her chest

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 4 Private Lands Access Program Waterfowl Hunting Sites: Site are open and being used by the public for waterfowl hunting. The stormy weather over the last several weeks has greatly improved water conditions at hunting sites and increased hunter success. Several sites have been closed due to flooding but as the water recedes the good conditions in the fields should persist through the end of the season. Private Lands Access Program staff members have improved parking conditions at several sites that are particularly muddy.



Flooding of low-lying roads impacted access and parking at several waterfowl hunting sites in Region 4



Recent rain has improved water conditions at waterfowl hunting sites in Region 4



Parking area improvements at waterfowl hunting sites in Region 4 with partner landowner equipment for the heavy work

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

San Juan Islands National Monument Plan: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently issued the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding the proposed management plan for the National Monument. The plan emphasizes recreational activities within the monument over other resource and esthetic values. Specifically, the plan calls for dispersed camping on much of the monument and recreational access to many of the small rocks and islands within the monument's ownership in the San Juan Archipelago. This is somewhat contrary to the ideals under which the monument was established. The BLM allows a 30-day window for Governor Inslee to review and comment on the final plan. This assures that the plan is allied with the rules of state and local jurisdictions. District 13 personnel, together with staff members from State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Ecology, and the Recreation and Conservation Office and county agencies reviewed the plan. District 13 provided comments to the governor's office that detailed several areas of concern for wildlife and their habitats if the current plan is adopted.

North Leque Island Project: WDFW is advancing a project on the northern portion of the Leque Island Unit, which is the opposite side of Highway 532 as the large restoration project completed over the summer. This portion of the property has been intertidal for 15 years after a dike failed, though water and fish only have access to the site through a single large opening.

The project involves removing the remainder of the dike and connecting channels to Skagit Bay and has two goals: Improving fish and ecosystem process access onto the site and reducing erosion on a neighboring dike.



A WDFW construction crew completed the first phase of construction, which involved repairing a wood wall that protects against erosion on a neighboring property



The next phase of the project is in the permit process and is planned for construction this summer. This concept plan shows dike removal along the red line and excavation to connect to existing tidal channel along the blue lines.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Columbian White-tailed Deer Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Holman concluded surveys for Columbian white-tailed deer on Puget Island. Five repetitions of the two driving survey routes that cover most of the island were completed during November and December. A high count of 173 deer were observed on the Dec. 16 survey. This compares to 212 individual deer observed on a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) aerial survey using Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) that was conducted in March. Thanks to Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey along with Habitat Biologist Fornes and Customer Service Specialists Smith and Koppi who participated in the surveys as well.

A pooled total of 686 deer were observed on the five surveys including 334 does, 216 fawns, 130 bucks, and six unclassified animals. This results in ratios of 39 bucks and 65 fawns per 100 does respectively. The goal of the survey is to evaluate annual productivity among the Columbian whitetails in different locations as well as provide a comparison to the total deer numbers generated from the FLIR survey. The strong fawn to doe ratio on Puget Island indicates very good productivity during 2019. These surveys are done in collaboration with USFWS who maintain the data and coordinate surveys within the range of the deer in the Columbia River population. Columbian white-tailed deer are listed as federally threatened and state endangered. For more information about Columbian white-tailed deer see the WDFW website at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/odocoileus-virginianus-leucurus> or the USFWS website at: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/julia_butler_hansen/wildlife_and_habitat/mammals/columbian_whitetailed_deer.html.



Columbian white-tailed deer

Goose Season Patrol: Biologist Bergh joined officers Moats and VanVladriken for a waterfowl patrol on the last weekend of the regular goose season in Goose Management Area 2-Inland. The Enforcement Program jet boat was used to access the Lake River and Vancouver Lake areas to contact waterfowl hunters. A total of six groups with 13 hunters were contacted and all but one group had harvested at least one duck. None of the groups had harvested any geese, but most were surprised to be contacted and a handful of citations and verbal warnings were issued. The late goose season in Goose Management Area 2-Inland, which is NOT open on national wildlife refuges and WDFW wildlife areas, runs from Feb. 8 through March 7. The season for dusky Canada geese is closed in Management Area 2 during October through March.

Waterfowl Hunter Checks with Enforcement: Biologist Holman joined Officer Budai to perform waterfowl hunter checks in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The team focused on areas within Canada Goose Management Area 2-Inland. The primary purpose of the checks is to assure hunter compliance with regulations designed to protect populations of wintering dusky Canada geese. Together the team encountered and checked two goose hunting parties totaling three hunters with a total of one Taverner’s and six cackling Canada geese. Additionally, four duck hunting parties totaling 13 hunters were checked with 12 widgeon, four mallards, three scaup, two ring-necked, one green-winged teal, one pintail and one canvasback. Thanks to Officer Budai for teaming up with Wildlife Program and helping to implement the complex waterfowl regulations in southwest Washington.

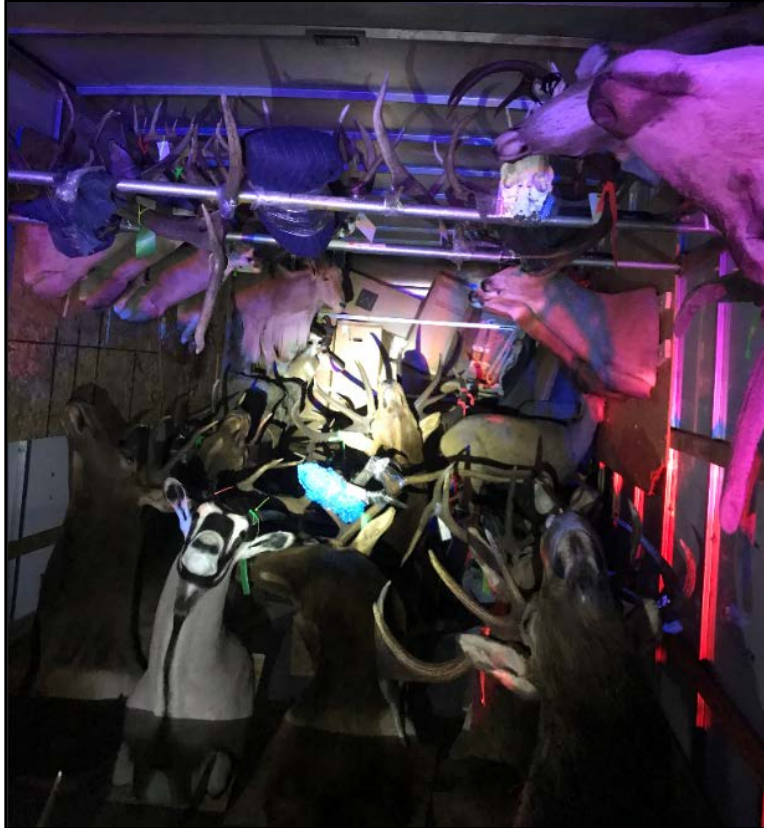


Family duck hunting party



Solo duck hunter

Additionally, Officer Budai and Biologist Holman stopped a large truck traveling southbound on Interstate 5 due to concerns related to irregular driving. Upon investigation the two individuals in the truck were in compliance with driving regulations. Interestingly, as the conversation proceeded, the individuals indicated that they were hauling “a whole bunch of animals” in the truck. Officer Budai then asked if they would mind if we took a look. Within the truck Budai and Holman found approximately 30 taxidermy mounts of hunter harvested animals including elk, mule deer, audad, oryx (gemsbock), and fallow deer. The individuals were transporting the completed mounts from taxidermists in the Puget Sound area to customers primarily in California. Whether x-ray vision allowed him to see through the walls of the enclosed truck or a superhuman olfactory system allowed him to smell the taxidermy chemicals while driving 70 MPH in the rain, Officer Budai’s sixth-sense ability to detect a possible wildlife crime is remarkable.



Completed taxidermy mounts of various animals inside truck traveling on Interstate 5

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Holman along with Customer Service Specialist Rainwaters conducted dusky Canada goose surveys in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The purpose of the surveys is to count dusky geese observed and read alphanumeric codes on any red collared duskies. Wildlife managers survey the geese multiple times across their primary wintering grounds and use the data to generate survival estimates. The dusky geese are collared on their breeding grounds in Alaska every other year. During the survey, dusky, cackling, Taverner's, white-fronted and western Canada geese were located and recorded.



Mixed flock of Taverner's and cackling Canada geese in Wahkiakum County

Goose Survey: Biologist Bergh conducted a goose survey specifically looking for dusky Canada geese in the Shillapoo/Vancouver Lowlands area. Strangely there were no geese flying and only four small groups of cackling Canada geese were observed despite covering lots of ground. The wintering sandhill cranes were the most active and abundant that day and a crane with leg bands was seen at Frenchman's Bar Park. According to the banding report from www.reportband.gov, the crane hatched in 2008 and was banded that fall near Delta, British Columbia, Canada.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Silver Lake: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay we were able to remove the last of the hazard cottonwood trees at the Silver Lake access site. All branches and debris will be hauled away by Clark County Public Works.





Silver Lake

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Sheep Depredation Investigation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of a cougar sighting at a residence, where the landowner was also missing one of the six sheep he was fostering. The sheep went missing sometime in the middle of the night, as the sheep were free-ranging over the heavily wooded, 20-acre property at all hours. Jacobsen located a blood trail and followed the path to where the sheep had been dragged under a fence onto the adjoining property. A subsequent depredation investigation confirmed that the sheep was killed by a cougar. Advice on livestock husbandry and living in cougar country were provided to the landowner. The landowner is planning to lock up his remaining sheep in the barn at night from now on.



Sheep killed by a cougar

Duck Depredation Investigation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a residence where a domestic duck was reported to have been killed. The duck was previously injured with a broken leg from an unknown cause and had been left outside to wander the property at night. The duck carcass was found in a heavily wooded section of the landowner's property, completely cached (likely by either a bobcat or cougar). Jacobsen installed a trail camera over the site to see if any wild animals returned to the area. Advice was given on livestock husbandry and locking the fowl up at night. Jacobsen also inspected the landowner's chicken and duck pen, pointing out areas where a bobcat could easily slip through to access the fowl inside.



Cached duck carcass

Deer Stuck in Fencing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Myers responded to a report of a deer that was entangled in electric fencing in Skamania County. Sometime during the night, the mature buck had approached a four-foot-tall electric fence surrounding a vegetable

garden and managed to get his antlers stuck in the fence. The buck proceeded to flee across a field and into the woods, dragging a 200-foot section of fencing over 200 yards before the fence became severely tangled in the underbrush and around multiple trees. Jacobsen sedated the deer with a tranquilizer gun and the fencing was successfully removed from the deer's antlers (with some difficulty). The deer was then ear-tagged with a small, yellow tag. A chemical drug reversal was administered to counteract the effects of the sedative and the deer quickly recovered and left the scene, exhausted from the night of fighting with the fencing but unharmed. Thank you to the landowner for reporting the deer!



A trail of electric fence wire leading into the woods – Photo by WDFW



Electric fence wire leading into the woods and wrapped around multiple trees. All the underbrush in the area was severely trampled and broken during the deer's fight with the fence – Photo by WDFW



Deer entangled at the end of a long section of electric fence wire - Photo courtesy of the landowner



Tranquilized deer at the end of the tangle of electric fencing wire. The tranquilizer dart is visible in the deer's right hindquarter – Photo by WDFW



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen after removing the remaining electric fence from the deer's antlers – Photo by WDFW

Injured Hawk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey received a report of a potentially injured hawk in a park in Clark County. Aubrey responded to the area and searched for the bird, but was unable to locate it.

Elk Fence Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner in Wahkiakum County who recently purchased a new parcel of land. The landowner eventually wants to run cattle on the property but is concerned with the number of elk that frequently knock the fences down. Aubrey provided the landowner with materials that talk about wildlife friendly fence designs and provided advice on what he perceived as the best option for that piece of land.

Damage Permit: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey issued a damage permit to a landowner experiencing issues with elk.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area Slash Pile Burning: The last two piles of slash left from a forest health thinning project in 2018 were burned this week. The piles were at the Klickitat Wildlife Area Headquarters, at the edge of Unit 1. A propane burner was used to ignite the piles and proved to be a good alternative to a drip torch. The piles were large and took some time to light. Once they were ablaze, they burned hot enough to consume most of the slash. Unburned wood around the perimeter of the piles was placed in hot spots on the second day to burn it up.



Klickitat Wildlife Area slash pile alight.....



.....and next day

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Living with Large Carnivores Presentation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen gave a presentation on “Living with Large Carnivores” to the general public at the Goldendale Community Library as part of the library’s Simcoe Mountains Speaker Series. The presentation was well-attended, with many engaged and curious members of the public. Thank you to Erin Krake and the Goldendale Community Library for inviting WDFW and for hosting the series! Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Sue Van Leuven will also be presenting a talk on a recent WDFW land acquisition in Klickitat County as part of the series on March 4, 2020.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen presenting at the Goldendale Library - Photo courtesy of Sue Van Leuven

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Firearm Training and Qualification: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey and Assistant District Biologist Stephens attended and qualified during the two days of department required firearm trainings and qualifications.

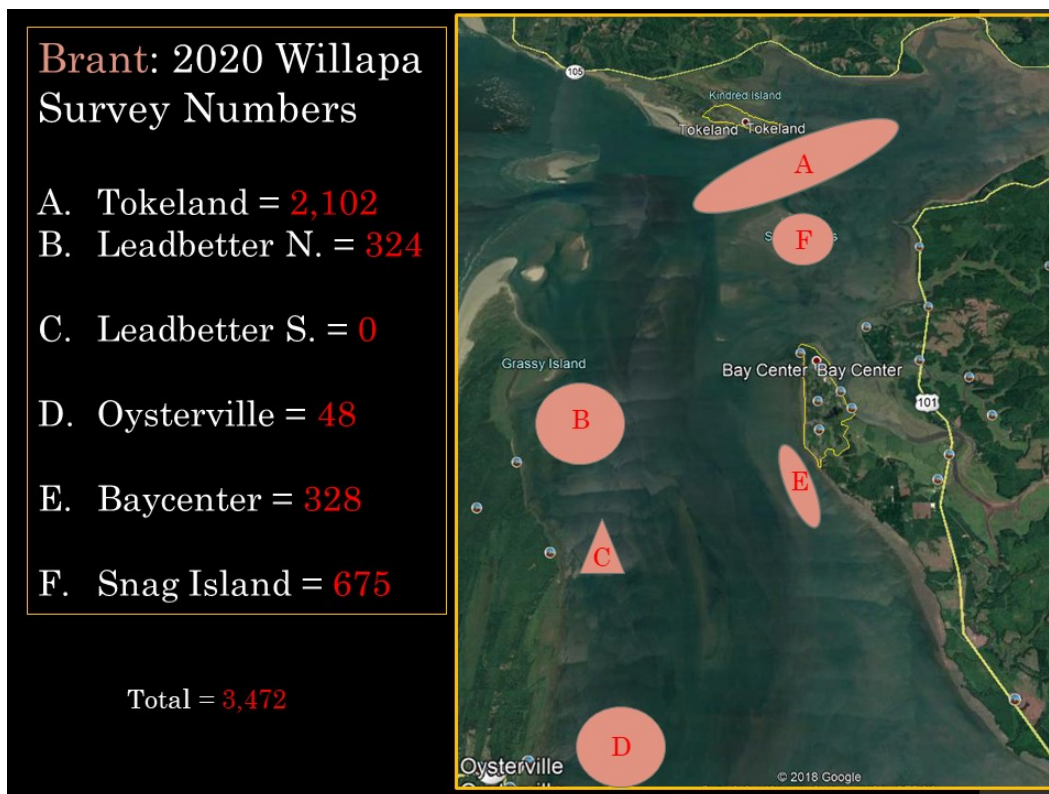
REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Taylor's Checkerspot Reintroduction Plan: Biologist Linders is incorporating feedback from agency staff members on key components of the Taylor's Checkerspot Reintroduction Plan. The plan will guide the next 20 years of project implementation. It moves the project from a short-term, site-based approach to one that incorporates the long-term and landscape scale views of population size and structure needed for recovery. The plan will be ready for review by a broader group of stakeholders in the coming weeks.

Willapa Brant Survey: Biologists Michaelis, Sundstrom, and Novack surveyed brant numbers in Willapa Bay. A total of 3,472 brant were seen which, is a 12-year high.



Map of brant locations and numbers seen in Willapa Bay, January 2020

Goose Hunter Checks: Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom continued field checking and collecting goose hunter information and making contacts in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties during January. Some hunters commented on how spooky the geese were acting during this period.

Date	Location /County	# of Hunters	✓ or phoned in	January 4- January 12, 2020, Goose Hunter Checks Goose Species Reported or Recorded									
				Cackler	Aleutian	Taverner	Lesser	Dusky	Western	GWF	Snow	UK/Other	
1-4	SWPA	2	✓	8									
1-4	NPA	1	PI	1									
1-4	SWPA	1	PI	1			2						
1-4	NPA	2	PI	5									
1-4	GHC	1	PI										1
1-5	SWPA	1	PI										2*
1-8	SWPA	1		3			1						
1-11	SWPA	1	PI				1						
1-11	SWPA	2	PI			3	1						
1-12	SWPA	2	PI	1									7
Total		13		19		3	5						10

SWPA = Riekkola Willapa NWR, Sandridge Rd., and near the town of Chinook. CPA = Areas south of South Bend to HWY 4. NPA = north Pacific County, GHC = Grays harbor county, ✓ = field checked, PI = Birds phoned in and classed as to what the hunter(s) believed them to be.

*Two collared resident dark geese, (wuskys) harvested.

Goose Survey 4: Biologist Michaelis and Sundstrom conducted the first goose survey for 2020 in Pacific and Grays Harbor counties. Good numbers of cackling and dusky Canada geese were observed.

JANUARY

1/8/20	Cackler	# Banded	Aleutian	# Banded	Tav/ Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unknown/ Other	Totals
Location																
Grays Harbor Co	595		0		846		295	3	242		0		7	6	0	1,991
North Pacific Co	220		0		200		1,605	9	0		0		0	0	0	2,025
South Pacific Co	3,090	0	1	0	468	0	828	12	92	0	0	0	3	6	35	4,523
Totals:	3,905	0	1	0	1,512	0	2,728	24	334	0	0	0	10	6	35	8,539

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Grouse Wing Barrels: Biologist Butler took down all three grouse wing collection barrels within District 11 at the start of the new year. The goal of this collection effort is to build

Wing Bags Collected in D11	
Barrel Name	Total #
North Vail	65
Skookumchuck	1
West Vail	35
Total	101

estimated population trend datasets for each species to evaluate harvest changes. The barrels were placed prior to the start of the 2019 grouse season and remained up until the end of the season. With the help of two volunteers, the barrels were checked about twice a month and 101 wings were collected. Almost all wings were collected before December. More information about this effort can be found

here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/grouse-wing-tail-collection>.

Hunter Access: Biologist Michaelis spent another day near Forks, field checking accessibility into Department of Natural Resource (DNR) lands in Game Management Unit (GMU) 602 (Dickey). Inclement weather with high rainfall and the instability of slopes prevented Michaelis from going too far into these remote areas. Areas on the northwest periphery of the Dickey GMU were investigated.

Luhrs Landing, Thurston County: After severe rains, extreme erosion damage to the hillside and parking area occurred. The water access team scraped and blew the access road. Using a tractor, concrete blocks were pulled back away from the new landslide.





Bogachiel River Wilson Bridge: A Capital Project that will replace two 50-year-old restrooms has started. The new restroom will be A.D.A. compliant, including asphalt parking. The access team salvaged the existing fence fabric, posts, and hardware that surrounded the old restrooms. Repurposing will happen later when needed. Knowing the equipment C.A.M.P. (Lacey Construction Shop) would have on site, a new sign standard was brought in for install. Working with C.A.M.P. this project was almost effortless. (Thank You C.A.M.P.!!)



Snow Creek, Clallam County: The water access team replaced cables and locks that were cut for illegal entry into the upper parking lot. Large rocks and a new cable were also installed, blocking the latest unauthorized entry point. (the lower parking area remains open for walk in use only)



Sol Duc River: The newly re-developed hatchery site now has a restroom, and extended asphalt parking. This improved site is more user friendly, but also increases the maintenance time for the site. Team members Mitchell and Reeves spent two hours blowing off the asphalt.



Trash Removal: The access team, working with the Enforcement Program, removed an abandoned 20 foot boat at Mission Lake in Kitsap County, and 28 tires dumped illegally at the Duckabush River site were removed and recycled.



3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Injured Bald Eagle: Biologist Butler responded to two different injured bald eagle reports. The first report came from Miles Resources staff members who witnessed two bald eagles fighting with one of them landing in their parking lot injured. After observing that it could not fly, WDFW was contacted for assistance. Despite its limited mobility, the eagle was still able to walk to the tree line where it took shelter in some brush. As the sun was setting, Butler along with the help of Miles Resources staff members were able to safely capture the eagle and it was transported to the Twin Harbors Wildlife Center.



Injured bald eagle

Biologist Butler, along with the Port of Tacoma biologist, responded to an injured bald eagle report on Jan. 10, aka: Save the Eagles Day. This eagle was first reported to WDFW by a member of the public visiting the Gog-le-hi-te wetlands in Tacoma and later by Port of Tacoma security personnel. The adult eagle was successfully captured and was transferred the West Sound Wildlife Shelter. Due to the severity of the injury, the eagle needed to be euthanized. During its exam, buckshot was found in the right wing. Bald eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and law enforcement is now investigating this case. WDFW encourages any citizen who witnesses a fish and wildlife offense to report it and more information about reporting can be found here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/enforcement/report>.



Biologist Butler and the Port of Tacoma biologist capturing an injured bald eagle

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Golden Paintbrush Policy Document Review: The USFWS requested comments on a draft policy document guiding planting locations of golden paintbrush (federally threatened) and harsh paintbrush. While both species are native to the area, they can also hybridize. This management challenge is exacerbated by the fact that harsh paintbrush is also a primary oviposition host for Taylor's checkerspot. This has led to the loss of pure localized strains of harsh paintbrush, a moratorium on planting either species at several sites, and eradication of hybrids on some sites in an effort to maintain the purity of golden paintbrush.

SWOT Analysis on Prairie Conservation: Follow up comments were requested regarding a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis covering a broad range of issues related to prairie conservation (e.g., acquisition, restoration, species status, research, reintroduction, monitoring, etc.). The project was commissioned by the South Sound Military and Communities Partnership (SSCMP) with the purpose of identifying needs and potential improvements to conservation work off Joint Base Lewis-McChord in an effort to more quickly effect conservation.