



COLOCKUM WILDLIFE AREA 2008 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Colockum Wildlife Area Management Plan (http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/) that provides management direction for the 91,603 acre Wildlife Area located in Chelan and Kittitas County, Washington. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Mission of “*Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife*” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions.

Plans are updated annually as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update also includes 2007 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2008.

Updates/Changes

Several significant events have occurred on the Wildlife Area since the last update. A human-caused wildfire on May 11, 2008 in the N. Fork Tarpiscan drainage burned approximately 580 acres of riparian and shrub-steppe habitat. Habitat restoration, including the reseedling of native grasses will be required in the fall of 2008. The year 2008 started out a busy year for forest road management on the Wildlife Area, with WDFW planning to complete many of the road maintenance issues required by WDFW’s Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) for the Colockum. The main focus of this work is to improve water quality and fish habitat by reducing delivery of sediments from forest roads into streams. Roadwork scheduled to be done includes installing water bars, improving drainage, replacing undersized culverts, and blocking and abandoning non-maintained roads. Major

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changes in the land ownership pattern of the Wildlife Area are still underway, with the large land exchange between WDFW and WA Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) still moving forward. A checkerboard ownership pattern on the Colockum is expected to be eliminated by exchanging and consolidating ownerships between WDFW and WDNR.

New Issues

WDFW is concerned about the level of human disturbance to big game (primarily elk) during the stressful winter months. In some areas elk appear to be leaving the Wildlife Area to seek refuge on adjacent private lands. After a series of public meetings with stakeholders including local sportsman's clubs and the local Big Game Management Roundtable (BGMR), WDFW implemented a winter motorized vehicle closure on portions of the Colockum elk herd's winter range. WDFW is also initiating a new elk study to in part determine if the winter range closure is effective in reducing the movement of elk to private lands during the winter and early spring months.

WDFW is also in the process of evaluating the entire road system on the Wildlife Area to identify problem areas. These include areas where road densities are high leading to animal harassment and low spike bull elk escapement during fall hunting seasons. Other issues include stream adjacent roads in shrub-steppe habitat areas that are not addressed by the forest road RMAP plan.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments



In the fall of 2007 the Wildlife Area Manager wrote a successful grant application to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for the planting of bitterbrush and other important big game winter range forage plants on the West Bar area of the Colockum. This seeding will take place in the fall of 2008. An earlier RMEF-funded project was completed in the spring of 2008, with the fertilization of 700 acres of heavily used winter range, improving the nutrient content of preferred elk forage plants. Two other grant proposals were submitted in the spring 2008, and scored

well enough to indicate they should be funded. These include funds to improve the primitive boat launch just north of the Wildlife Area headquarters, and another grant to assist in abandoning two stream-adjacent roads to improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. In addition to these successful grants other more basic stewardship activities were continued. This includes the continued monitoring of public use through digital car counters that are installed at major entrances to the Wildlife Area. Weed control, boundary fence repair and maintenance of the green dot road system also continued to be a large part of the stewardship activities on the Colockum in 2007 and 2008.

Status Report of 2007 Performance Measures

Key performance measures are identified each year to monitor progress and identify any issues that might interfere with planned priority activities. This information will be used to delete, add or alter priority strategies for 2008.

2007 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2008 Related Activity/ Comments
Complete CAG selection for Colockum W.A.	In progress.	CAG meeting planned for fall 2008.
Evaluate the effectiveness of winter range closures.	8 car counters monitored, 3 enforcement flights conducted.	Continue monitoring public use; assist with implementation of new Colockum elk study.
Remove artificial ponds and diversions in Brushy and Tekison Creeks.	Pond dike breached in Brushy Creek, eliminating fish entrapment problem.	Tekison Creek dam to be breached in 2009.
Implement permanent road closures in Tekison and Stray Gulch. Create new camping areas.	Evaluating WDFW process to close roads, pursue funding sources.	Applying for grant funds for abandonment work.
Maintain 180 acres agricultural fields in annual grains or forage grasses.	Weed control, cultivation completed. No crops planted in 2007.	140 acres to be kept fallow in 2008 to clean up weeds. 120 acres scheduled to be planted with native forage grasses in fall 2008.
Maintain 35 miles of boundary fencing to exclude trespass livestock.	Completed.	Continue maintenance in 2008.
Fertilize 1000 acres big game winter range.	700 acres fertilized.	High fertilizer costs reduced project size.
Coordinate road management with DNR.	On-going. New standards for green dot road management developed.	Coordination will continue, in anticipation of WDFW/WDNR land exchange.
Inspect and maintain spring developments.	4 springs maintained.	Local sportsman's groups preparing for more work on springs, water sources.
Perform mandatory weed control.	Coordinated with Kittitas Co. Weed Board on yellow starthistle control. Staff controlled knapweeds, whitetop, and goatgrass.	Jointed goatgrass control looking very promising. Diffuse and Russian knapweeds need renewed control efforts.
Begin RMAP work on forest roads.	Inspected worksites, acquired permits and flagged sites.	Completion of RMAP work expected by fall 2008 in the Grouse Springs, Swift Creek, Ingersoll and Tarpiscan areas.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agencies strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species present and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed or new issues or changes on the wildlife area. New strategies may also be in response to adaptive management as staff evaluate the impacts of past management activities.

If the Citizens Advisory Group provided public comments on new issues, they will be identified (*in italics*) at the end of this document. Although underlined strategies have no current funding source, identifying these needs is the first step to securing additional funds.

Agency Objective: Protect, restore and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

1. Protect priority habitats and state listed species.

WDFW began development of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for wildlife areas in 2006 that will inventory listed species and map their habitats, including species no longer present but with suitable habitat to support them still remaining on the wildlife area. As part of this effort, current management activities that occur on a wildlife area will also be inventoried, to determine if such activities are beneficial or detrimental to at-risk wildlife species. Depending on the outcome of the HCP, strategies will then be developed to address identified issues or concerns. Initial HCP development for the Colockum W.A. began in 2008.

Agency Objective: Ensure WDFW activities, programs, facilities and lands are consistent with local, state and federal regulations that protect and recover fish, wildlife and their habitats.

1. Protect federally listed species.

Establish an HCP that inventories existing activities for the wildlife area (see Objective 2, #1 under New Strategies above).

2008 Performance Measures

Performance measures for the Colockum Wildlife Area are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

- 1) Complete CAG selection to reform a group specific to the Colockum W.A.
- 2) Evaluate the success of winter closures on big game winter range to reduce disturbance.
Determine success through continued use of car counters, aerial enforcement flights and the new Colockum Elk Study.
- 3) Continue effort to remove diversion pond in Tekison Creek.
- 4) Continue process to abandon Stream adjacent roads in Stray Gulch and Tekison Creek.
- 5) Seed 120 acres of old agricultural fields in the N. Fork Tarpiscan to native forage grasses.
- 6) Maintain 35 miles of wildlife area boundary fence to exclude trespass livestock.
- 7) Complete RMEF fertilization project on big game winter range.

- 8) Coordinate cooperative road management system with DNR to prepare for post-land exchange road management.
- 9) Inspect and maintain spring developments. Maintain springs with help from volunteer organizations.
- 10) Perform mandatory weed control. Control weeds along roads, campsites, boat launch, parking areas.
- 11) Complete RMAP work in the Grouse Springs, Swift Creek, Ingersoll and N. Fork Tarpiscan areas.
- 12) Seed 40 acres of bitterbrush and other native plants on West Bar through RMEF grant.
- 13) Seed 40 acres burned in the May 2008 Tarpiscan fire (fall 2008). Seed fire lines, cat trails, and severely burned areas.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

The last meeting of the combined Citizens Advisory Group for the LT Murray/Wenas, Colockum, and Oak Creek Wildlife Areas was held on November 21, 2006. The decision to restructure individual CAG's for each wildlife area was made in early 2007. No CAG meeting was held during 2008. A new CAG for the Colockum WA is currently being formed.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/

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