

District 10

Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties

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District 10 is located in southwestern Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. GMUs in this district include 501 (Lincoln), 503 (Randle), 504 (Stella), 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 Toutle). This wide area includes maritime rolling hills in Wahkiakum County to Cascade peaks in Lewis County.

A high percentage of this district is in private ownership, which presents a variety of access options and challenges. The recent trend is for private forest land to become more limited to public access and in some cases not open at all or leased for hunting seasons to a limited number of participants. Contacting the landowner is the first step in understanding their programs and how it might impact your hunting. It is always a good idea to obtain a map from the landowner where you wish to hunt if one is available.

Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10 and typically allows motorized access to this area during the general hunting season. Information about recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land can be found [here](#) or by calling 1-866-636-6531. Guidelines for the St. Helens Tree Farm and locations where their maps are sold can be found [here](#).

Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but generally not open to private motorized vehicles. Other major industrial forest landowners include Hancock, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond, and West Fork. Access to these lands may be impacted during the months of August, September, and in some cases October due to high fire danger. More information about hunting opportunities on private land can be found on [WDFW's Private Lands webpage](#), on page 96 of the pamphlet, or at our [Go Hunt mapping](#) site.

Public land in the district includes WDFW's [Cowlitz](#) and [Mt St Helens](#) wildlife areas, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources scattered throughout all three counties. These are public lands open to public access. Contact the USFS Cowlitz Valley Ranger District at 360-497-1100 and the Castle Rock DNR office at 360-577-2025.

St. Helens Land Access Program: The St. Helens Land Access Program is a cooperative effort between many volunteer organizations, Weyerhaeuser, and WDFW to provide additional weekday motorized access to the majority of the Weyerhaeuser St. Helens Tree Farm during special elk permit seasons. Thanks to the hard work of participants, this program has been very successful in providing access to approximately 80% of the St. Helens Tree Farm for the past 6 years.

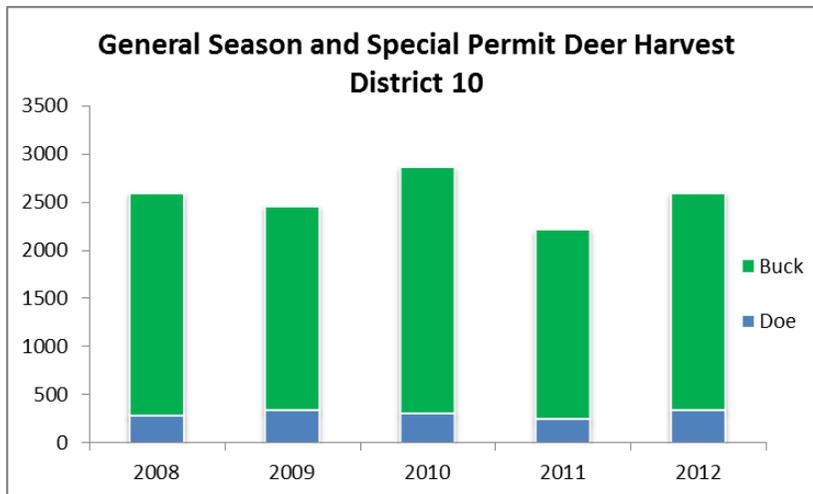
Volunteers are paired up and assigned to road junctions to direct hunters to open areas on the tree farm. The number of volunteers that sign up is directly related to the amount of land that can potentially be opened up. Because of the volunteer presence, Weyerhaeuser chooses to open much of their land to motorized access knowing there is a reduced risk of dangerous encounters with hunting traffic near active logging operations. You can help to provide access by signing up as a volunteer [here](#).



St. Helens Land Access Program Volunteers

Deer: Several GMUs in this district are tops in the state for black-tail deer harvest. The highest general season harvest in 2012 occurred in 501 (Lincoln), 520 (Winston), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). The majority of the antlerless harvest occurs during the general archery and muzzleloader seasons since there are very few antlerless special permits.

Deer hunting is often best at the end of the general season as conditions in the heavily vegetated west-side improve for stalking and moving through the woods quietly. The best conditions often are at play during the late buck hunt--consult the pamphlet for unit listings and dates. Deer are "edge" animals and finding places with good forage and hiding cover nearby is a great starting point. Hunting just before or after a heavy storm can be a good strategy, as animals will reduce feeding during storms. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer.



Elk: This district is always either number one or two in statewide harvest for elk. The highest general season harvest in 2012 occurred in 506 (Willapa Hills), 520 (Winston), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). Additionally, there are many permit hunts in District 10; the majority of which are antlerless permits to support the goal of reducing the Mt. St. Helens herd. Three GMUs-522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), and 556 (Toutle)-are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In this district in 2012, 1,458 elk were harvested by permit and 1,728 during the general season. Generally, a 5-point elk would be a nice trophy in this district as 6-point bulls are few and far between.

Big game populations in Cowlitz and Lewis counties were influenced by late spring storms in 2013. The survey index that was conducted for winter elk mortality showed high loss in 2012/2013, indicating a reduction in yearling animals and some loss of older animals as a result of the winter conditions. The influence of these winter losses may impact elk numbers for a few years as the reduced recruitment impacts the population over time. The lowland areas of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties probably did not see such losses and those might be good areas to focus on during the 2013 season. Those units include 530 (Ryderwood) and 506 (Willapa Hills).

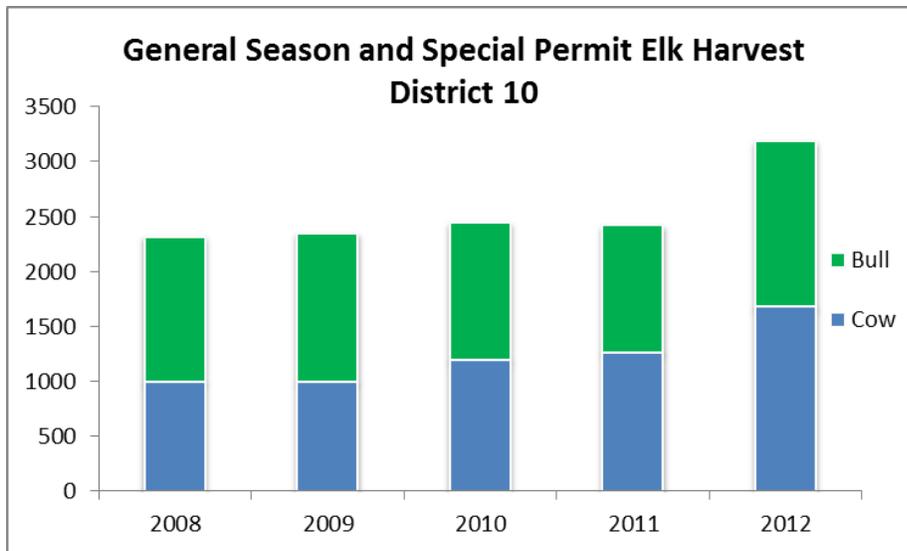


Bull group in the St. Helens herd

Early hunting season access for archery hunters is often complicated by hot weather and fire access closures. If that occurs, hunters should consider going west to the Willapa 506 GMU or to any of the GMUs with state or national forest lands. These areas often stay open during times of high fire danger on the west slope of the Cascades.

Using the [Go Hunt mapping](#) online tool to look at aerial photos to identify recent clearcuts and drainages is a good start for identifying areas to hunt. Pre-season scouting on the commercial tree farms is usually done by bike or on foot as most areas will not be open to motorized access at that time. Motorized access and camping is available on state DNR lands unless there is high fire danger.

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



Elk Hoof Disease: Reports of lameness and deformed hooves in elk have been observed in southwest Washington since the mid 1990's. This problem seems concentrated in the lowlands in the lower Cowlitz River Valley, but reports have been increasing in number and geographic scope, and hunters are regularly seeing and sometimes harvesting an elk with this condition. It has been noted in both males and females; old as well as very young animals, and in any hoof.

The type observed in southwest Washington elk does not appear to match with any known hoof diseases in domestic or wild animals. The most recent results from testing of affected elk are not currently complete, but as of summer 2013 the findings so far indicate: no significant viruses isolated, no evidence of significant inflammation or infection above hooves, other tissues (including meat) are not affected, no abnormal parasite loads, and low selenium and copper levels (not unusual for elk herds, but could indicate possible impacts on general health and immunity).

Current diagnostic efforts are focused on specialized bacteriology testing to rule out infectious organisms including the bacteria *Dichelobacter nodosus* and the bacteria in the genus *Treponema*, which are the most common causes of infectious hoof disease in sheep and cattle, respectively.

Elk hunters in this district are encouraged to use extreme caution when deciding whether or not to harvest an elk that looks sick or is travelling in a herd with affected animals. More information can be found on page 95 in the pamphlet and on the department's [webpage](#). Hunters are encouraged to use the [online reporting tool](#) on that webpage if they observe or harvest elk that are suspected of having this hoof disease.

Black Bear: District 10 makes up part of both the South Cascades (GMUs 503, 505, 510, 513, 516, 520, 522, 550, and 556) and Coastal (GMUs 501, 504, 506, and 530) black bear hunt zones

for the fall bear hunting season, which runs from August 15-November 15. Many of the commercial timber companies experience tree damage from bears and encourage bear hunting on their land. Harvest numbers and hunter success for 2012 in the South Cascades and Coastal zone were 141 (3.7% success) and 229 (6.5% success), respectively. In 2011, harvest and hunter success in the South Cascades and Coastal zone were 182 (4.4% success) and 277 (7.5% success), respectively.

A spring bear damage special permit hunt also occurs in portions of the 501 Lincoln GMU where Weyerhaeuser and other commercial timber companies designate the hunt area. Hunters interested in this hunt should contact the [Weyerhaeuser Pe Ell tree farm](#) before submitting a special permit application to find out details on access.

All successful bear hunters must submit the premolar tooth in a tooth envelope—see page 63 of the pamphlet for more details.

Cougar: In 2012 one cougar was harvested in each of the following GMUs: 530 (Ryderwood), 516 (Packwood), and 556 (Toutle). Beginning in the 2012/2013 season a harvest guideline system was initiated, which closes hunt areas after January 1st if the harvest guidelines have been met or exceeded. For more information on these new guidelines and to check if the area you are interested in hunting is closed or not please see the [cougar webpage](#).

Mountain Goat: The Goat Rocks/Tieton River goat hunt area has 3 special permits and is one of the premier spots in the State for mountain goat hunting. Hunter success in this unit is usually 100%. A voluntary program begins in 2013 where successful mountain goat hunters are encouraged to bring the head and horns of their animal to the closest WDFW regional or district office for biological sampling as soon as feasible after their hunt. Successful draw applicants will receive a letter with additional details.

Upland Birds: Upland birds are impacted by spring conditions during the hatch, which directly affect chick survival. We had a relatively dry spring, which should improve chick survival and boost numbers of young available to hunters this fall. Pheasants will be released at locations throughout the district—please consult [our webpage](#) for details.

Forest Grouse: This district supports significant forest grouse populations and is one of the top producers for western Washington. Our spring conditions were favorable this year for good chick survival and insect production, which should translate into better grouse populations this fall. Hunting riparian areas with mixed forest species might be a good bet to scare up a grouse or two.

Waterfowl: Duck and goose hunting will be good this fall after the rains in November and December encourage birds to come south to our area. Hunters are reminded to consult the regulations pamphlet for details on the goose seasons and any changes in duck bag limits. For example, the daily bag limit for scaup is reduced to 3 this year as a result of poor production in

the breeding grounds. Early hunting also might require hunters to examine the birds more carefully; often ducks are not in full plumage and confusion on species ID can be challenging, *especially for pintails as they have a restricted bag limit.*



Duck hunting on the Columbia River

Hunting early season is often best along the Columbia River and other large, permanent bodies of water. Remember that the Columbia River is tidal in flow and watch for outgoing tide conditions to avoid having your boat get stuck. Remember to be careful on the water and always have your PFD on! Later in the season when high water might disperse birds, having access to farmlands is a great way to adapt to changing behavior patterns of birds. More information can be found on the Department's [waterfowl webpage](#).

Duck harvest in 2012 was 6,661 in Cowlitz county (up from 2011), 12,740 in Lewis county (up from 2011), and 3,327 in Wahkiakum county (down from 2011).



Goose hunting in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties is subject to the additional restrictions of Goose Management Area 2A, which are in place to protect the dusky subspecies. In order to goose hunt in this area hunters will need to pass a goose identification test. Identification guides and test information can be found [here](#). More details on season dates and bag limits can be found in the waterfowl pamphlet.

There is also a special late goose season in this area that is open to Master Hunters and youth hunters accompanied by a Master Hunter. Master Hunters will be mailed an application for this hunt in January and qualified applicants will be placed on a list to participate in this hunt, which occurs on goose damage areas in February.

Goose harvest in 2012 was 787 in Cowlitz county (down from 2011), 2,016 in Lewis county (up from 2011), and 113 in Wahkiakum county (down from 2011). Harvest during the 6-day long September season in 2012 was 190 in Cowlitz county (down from 2011), 448 in Lewis county (up from 2011), and 56 in Wahkiakum county (down from 2011).



Zone 2A goose check station