



**BLUE MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE AREA COMPLEX
2012 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE**
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

**LAND MANAGEMENT
SUMMARY**

This is an update to the 2006 Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex including the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area, Asotin Creek Wildlife Area, Grouse Flats Wildlife Area and WT Wooten Wildlife Area. Total size of the complex as of this writing is 65,785 acres located in Asotin, Garfield, and Columbia Counties



(web link: http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/)

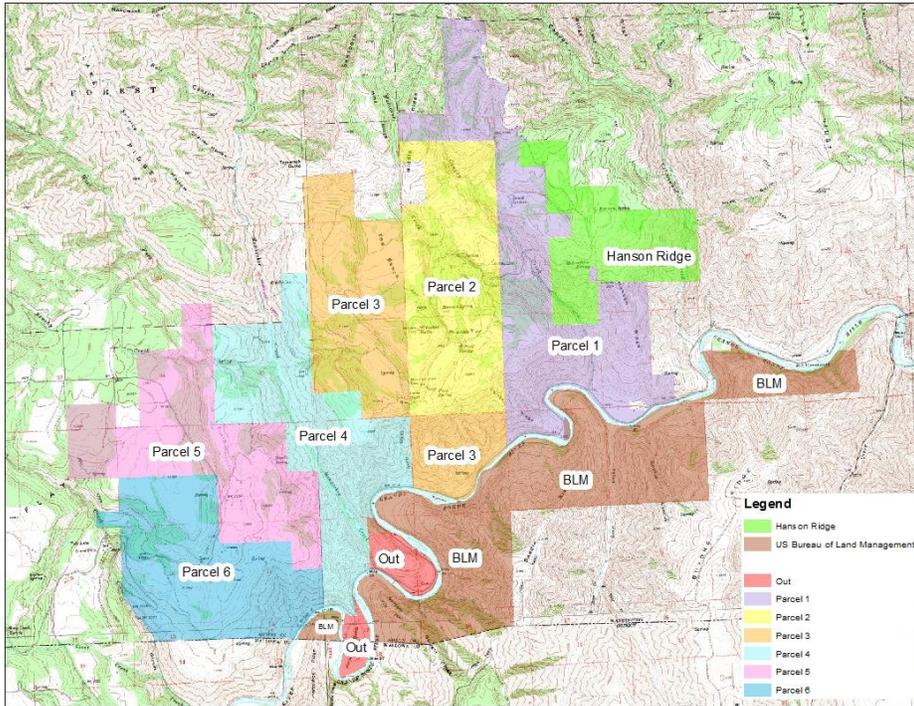
This plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Mission of “Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions.

Plans are updated every two years 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 includes 2011/2012 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2012-13.

Updates/Changes

The 4-O Ranch phase 1 acquisition closed on January 5th, 2012. Phase 1 is approximately 2,200 acres in size and is located mostly along Cougar Creek County Road. There are six phases involved in the 4-O acquisition that total approximately 12,000 acres. It is expected it will take 10 years to complete the five remaining acquisitions.

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4-O Ranch Acquisition

WT Wooten Wildlife Area

Campgrounds: WDFW renamed the campgrounds back to numbers instead of names. This was done at the request of WDFW enforcement to allow less confusion when reporting to incidents and also to differentiate between WDFW campgrounds and USFS campgrounds. WDFW and USFS have different campfire restrictions in the summer and the public was very confused as to who owned what campground. Hopefully these changes will reduce confusion of the public, while allowing enforcement to have faster response times in case of an emergency.



Access Area Manager Terry Folkins is now supervised by Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice. Previously, Terry reported to Brian Trickel out of the Spokane Regional office. The majority of work Terry performs is located on camp sites and access areas on the wildlife area complex. Having Terry report to the wildlife area instead of the Spokane office is a better fit.

WDFW lands and access sites throughout the Blue Mountains area were posted with Discover Pass signs in July 2011 as required by the legislature. Perhaps the most



controversial posting has been the Heller Bar Boat Ramp which has never had such restrictions in past years. Heller Bar is owned by WDFW and has been co-managed by WDFW and the BLM. WDFW intends to cancel the current MOU with BLM effective January 1, 2013. WDFW will assume management responsibilities of the site. A new MOU allowing BLM to also participate in management of the bar is being considered for negotiation.

New Issues

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreages: Two CRP contracts expired and were re-enrolled into CRP on Schlee acquisition lands. The first contract is 430 acres in size and is located on Smoothing Iron Ridge. The second contract is located near George Creek and is on Boozier Ridge. It is 343 acres in size. Dean Reeves is the operator for both contracts and is working with WDFW to make necessary re-seedings and conversions on contract acres to retain eligibility for the life of the 10-year contracts. In spring 2011, WDFW began spraying glyphosate herbicide on the Smoothing Iron contract to eradicate smooth brome in preparation for a seeding to a blend of native grass the following year. The majority of the contract was sprayed, mowed, heavy harrowed, and sprayed again in 2011. In 2012, the fields will be sprayed a third time then seeded using minimum till seeding equipment. At Boozier Ridge, CRP contract requirements call for conversion of 171 acres from existing cover to a blend of native grass. Wildlife Area staff mowed off 171 acres in August 2011 to clear tall vegetation out of the way for herbicide application in early 2012. The wildlife area and the operator will be following the same strategy used at Smoothing Iron at Boozier Ridge. Heavy applications of glyphosate herbicide followed by mowing and use of a heavy harrow are preferred over conventional farming methods of plowing, disking, cultivation, and packing. Asotin County Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff assisted WDFW and the operator with seedbed preparation recommendations. Those same recommendations are being followed by other landowners in Asotin County who are required to re-seed CRP acreages. Another field which is expiring from CRP in September 2012, is the 1,000 acre Halsey CRP field located near Pintler Creek. WDFW will be working with the operator to re-enroll the field back into CRP and come up plans for making any required seeding conversions.

Sensitive Period Closures: Due to winter weather conditions stressing wildlife, sensitive period closures have been made permanent from year to year. One location that benefits from a winter area closure is Cummings Creek. Closing the area to all human access, with the exception of administrative activities, decreases the extra stress put on the wildlife during that critical time period. Permanent signs were posted in January closing the Cummings Creek area to all human access from January 1 to April 1 of every

year. However, WDFW will still enter the closure as needed for administrative activities such as checking the elk fence.

The 2,200 acre 4-O ranch acquisition came with a weed problem in the form of a severe medusa head infestation on lands near the Grande Ronde River. Medusa head is an annual which forms a thick mat of material that chokes out desirable plants such as native bunchgrass. Control is difficult and must be followed up for several years. There is money available for a one-time application of herbicide on the infested hillside in 2012. Wildlife Area staff are consulting with other weed control experts to come up with a plan that will give us the most bang for our buck. Approximately 300 acres will need treatment.

Tucannon River Large Woody Debris (LWD) Project: The Habitat Program has received funding to put 200 full-size trees with root balls into a stretch of the Tucannon River around the mouth of Waterman Canyon to improve fish habitat and reconnect the floodplain. Part of the project will also involve punching a hole in an old dike along the river north of Campground 5 to free the river and allow it to move. A large helicopter will lift the trees from the Clearwater/Willow Springs area and set them in the river. The project is scheduled to take place summer 2012.

George Creek Stream Restoration Project: Funded by the State Salmon Recovery Funding Board and originally sponsored by the Asotin County Conservation District, this project initially looked at ways to stabilize and improve the George Creek stream channel on WDFW property west of George Creek County Road. The Conservation District dropped sponsorship of the project about a year ago and currently the project is sponsored by the Tri-State Steelheaders and is a design only project. Grant money is being used to design placement of LWD, engineered log jams, and tree and shrub plantings to enhance the stream channel for salmonids. Once design work is complete, further requests for construction grants will follow.

Tucannon Lakes: The eight lakes on the WT Wooten WLA are in need of serious repair. The dams have needed repair for a number of years, but no funding has been provided to complete the work. A subcommittee of the District Team has been put together to begin addressing the lakes issues. The committee has come up with conceptual designs for enhancing and improving Rainbow Lake, Deer Lake, Watson and Beaver Lakes. With the enhancement of Deer Lake, Big 4 Lake will eventually be decommissioned and returned to the floodplain.



Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) Grant Requests: There is one proposed project on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area and two on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area which are moving forward in RCO's grant application process. The Asotin Creek project is a request for \$100,000 to construct two parking areas on the main part of the wildlife area. The first parking area is proposed on the Schlee Acquisition on Back Road where WDFW land connects with the County Road. The other proposed parking area is at the end of Harlow Ridge Road at the Candi Acquisition. Both parking areas would provide access to the South Fork of Asotin Creek.

Another project moving forward calls for construction of a camping area along Rogersburg road which will provide an alternative to primitive existing camping sites in the riparian area of the Grande Ronde River. The funding request for the alternative camping area is \$150,000. The final project is the Heller Bar Boat ramp. The proposed project calls for installation of a new ramp designated for rafts and other non-motorized boats. With a separate ramp designated for rafts and floaters only, the existing ramp will be improved and designated for powerboats only. New directional signs and addition of a new gravel surface to parking areas would accompany boat ramp improvements. The funding request for this project is \$400,000.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Elk Fence: Elk fence replacement on the Wooten Wildlife area was completed in 2009. That same year, an extension project added 1 mile of fence on Tam Tam ridge on the east end. The elk fence is 23.5 miles long and includes a section between Iron Springs Road and Mountain Road where Forest Service property is on one side of the fence and private property in on the other. Blue Mountains Wildlife staff is responsible for maintenance of the entire fence. Windstorms, snow and heavy precipitation events have taken a toll on the fence, especially in burned areas. Given that, wildlife area staff has managed to keep the fence intact and functional. Though some holes are found, and some are reported to us, wildlife staff members have responded quickly to ensure repairs are made to keep the elk fence functional. In 2010, wildlife area staff installed two cattle guards in the fence at the request of neighboring landowner John Brooks in the Fitzgerald road area. Mr. Brooks paid for approximately half of installation costs. The cattle guards eliminate two gates in the fence and make access to Mr. Brook's property easier for him and his family.

Food Plots: A new food plot was created on the Hartsock Unit of the WT Wooten WLA. Approximately 2 acres was disked up and planted into a mix donated by the Walla Walla Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Several white-tailed deer were seen using the food plot during the fall deer counts.

Native Grass Restoration:

Native grass was seeded on 250 acres in the Campbell field above lick creek, and on 475 acres at Smoothing Iron Ridge in 2008. The grass is now well established and consistent mowing each summer for weed control has paid off with healthy grass for the most part. The year 2011 was probably the last time we will mow the fields on Smoothing Iron. We did not conduct any mowing activities on the Campbell field in 2011.



Our last time up there was 2010. A blend of native forbs that was over-seeded on the fields in 2009 has not shown much activity in the way of germination. In retrospect, if we had to do it all over again, the forbs should have been seeded the same time as the grass. That way, grass seed and forb seed would have had an equal opportunity to germinate and grow instead of trying to get forbs to germinate in a one year old stand of grass.

Weed Control: Previous year's efforts to control noxious weeds on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area and Chief Joseph Wildlife Area were finally starting to payoff for WDFW. For the first time in a long time, Scotch thistle in Lick Creek, Warner Gulch, South Fork, Joseph Creek, and other areas was actually looking pretty clean of weeds. U.S. Forest Service staff performed a tremendous amount of weed control in Lick Creek doing an exceptional job at getting a handle on Scotch thistle. Cooperative projects with the Asotin County Noxious Weed Control Board (Weed Board) are also producing noticeable results. Weed Board work controlling Mediterranean sage in Pintler Creek and Meyer's Ridge has been excellent. Cooperative projects with the Weed Board utilizing a contractor applying herbicide by horseback have been effective at controlling Mediterranean sage and rush skeleton weed. Wildlife Area staff working on other areas such as Warner Gulch and Joseph Creek also were able to finally get an upper hand on traditionally huge patches of thistles. Not to say that we don't have problem areas still, but conditions sure looked much better in 2011. We did make a switch in 2010 from using mostly 2-4-D herbicide to Milestone. Milestone or aminopyralid has been effective and its residual properties have made a difference in weed control efforts on the Wildlife Area Complex. WDFW also stepped up aerial spraying of weeds in 2010 and 2011. In the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011; 2,200 acres of yellow starthistle, mustards, Scotch thistle, and other noxious weeds were sprayed with a mixture of Tordon and Escort herbicide in the George Creek Unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. In summer 2011 and fall 2011, approximately 2,000 acres of noxious weeds consisting mostly of yellow starthistle was sprayed by helicopter on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area. Target

areas sprayed include Meyer's Creek at Shumaker, Shovel Creek, Birch Creek, Green Gulch and the Lime Point vicinity.

2011 Weed Control Summary (Includes CRP field spraying)

Wildlife Area	Ground Application Acres	Aerial Application Acres
Asotin Creek	1,100	700
Chief Joseph	64	2,000
WT Wooten	282	160
Total	1,446	2,860
Combined Total for the Wildlife Area complex	4,306 Acres	

STATUS REPORT OF 2010/2011 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2010/11 Performance Measures	Status of Performance Measures	Progress/2012-13 Related Activities/Comments
Assess and maintain 150 miles of boundary stock fence on the Wildlife Area Complex.	Completed for 2011	Ongoing
Irrigate foodplots and shrubs at Chief Joseph and Wooten Wildlife Areas at least twice annually.	Completed for 2011	Ongoing
Assess and maintain 23.5 miles of elk fence on and off the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex twice annually or as conditions require.	Completed for 2011	Ongoing and we will monitor this fence more intensively to prevent elk escapement to private land.
Look into methods of controlling vegetation against newly constructed elk fence on the Wooten Wildlife Area.	Some discussions but no decisions made	Continue
Maintain and monitor seven agricultural leases on Asotin creek Wildlife Area annually.	Completed with some being re-written	Ongoing
Initiate at least one habitat enhancement project annually with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Weed control project completed in 2011	Pursue additional funding for 2012

(RMEF), Blue Mountains Elk Initiative, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), etc		
Control noxious weeds along Tucannon River and in 10 campgrounds using RMEF funds.	Completed	Ongoing
Plant and maintain at least two annual foodplots on Chief Joseph Wildlife Area annually.	Completed	Ongoing
Establish and maintain four big-game foodplots on Asotin Creek and Wooten Wildlife Areas (15 acres minimum each). Plant/replant/maintain one out of four of the foodplots annually.	None replanted in 2011	Evaluate sites in 2012
Plant/maintain 125 acres of annual foodplots on Smoothing Iron Ridge.	Completed	Ongoing
Treat weed outbreaks on a minimum of 500 acres annually on the four wildlife areas.	Completed	Ongoing
Participate in at least two cooperative weed control projects with local weed boards, Wallowa resources, TNC, etc.	Completed	Ongoing
Continue to support and assist with mountain quail reintroduction project on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.	Completed. Staff report sightings to District Wildlife Biologist	Continue
Maintain and install bluebird nest boxes.	Completed	Continue
Complete endangered plant surveys on Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) funded portions on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Survey other non-BPA funded lands as funding opportunities allow.	The only work completed here was for Silene on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. WSU was contracted to provide this service.	WSU will continue in 2012

Maintain eight “plant and take” lakes stocked with rainbow trout, steelhead, and Chinook salmon on the Wooten Wildlife Area.	Completed	Continue
Evaluate existing guzzlers and either repair or discard as necessary. Five evaluations annually.	Completed	Continue
Evaluate old agricultural fields for restoration into native grass habitat. Evaluate two fields per year on the Blue Mountain Wildlife Area Complex.	Completed	Continue
Continue to limit trail access to non-motorized vehicles only on the four wildlife areas except for Green Gulch on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area which is open Oct. 1 – Nov 30.	Completed	Continue
Continue to implement and monitor big-game winter range closure gates on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.	Completed	Continue
Maintain mineral enhancement sites for big game on the four wildlife areas; Asotin Creek – 9, Wooten – 4, Chief Joseph – 4, Grouse Flats – 1	Completed	Continue
Evaluate wildlife area campgrounds and consider establishment of designated campsites with fire rings as funding allows.	We started this in 2011 on the Wooten Wildlife Area. Next step is to identify individual campsites with carsonite sign posts	Continue
Monitor and utilize where possible, water rights on the four wildlife areas. Install flow meters on irrigation pumps to accurately monitor water usage. Document usage.	Not completed. No funding for flow meters.	Seek funding in 2012 for flow meters.
Install one informational	Completed	Continue

kiosk displaying wildlife area maps, noxious weed information and plant and animal species of concern on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area. Maintain kiosks installed on the Wooten and Asotin Creek Wildlife Areas.		
Seek funding for maintenance of Tucannon Dams and Lakes.	We are working towards this goal with the Tucannon Floodplain Management Plan	Continue
Maintain native grass/forb planting on Campbell Field and Smoothing Iron Ridge.	Completed	Continue
Seek funding and support to bury Columbia REA power line between Tucannon Hatchery and Camp Wooten State Park.	An RCO grant request was submitted for this project	Continue
Revisit 33 post-fire monitoring photopoints in May.	Not completed in 2011, we are going to visit sites every other year beginning in 2012.	Visit sites in 2012
Identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area complex. Address at least one barrier annually.	We are currently looking at a barrier issue in Lick Creek on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Road Maintenance Abandonment Plan (RMAP) funding may be available to fix the problem.	Continue
Continue inventory and monitoring of Spaulding's catchfly on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.	Completed	Ongoing by WSU in 2012
Seek funding for riparian area enhancement projects.	Some discussions held in 2011	Continue

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

Issues identified in italics were provided by the Citizen's Advisory Group. These public comments are captured at the end of the document. Although underlined strategies have no current funding source, identifying these needs is the first step in securing additional funds.

Agency Objective: Protect, Restore and Enhance Fish and Wildlife Populations and their Habitats.

Objective: Improve or Maintain Big Game Populations by Managing Rangelands.

1. Explore possibility of grazing on Chief Joseph Wildlife Area by dividing a large area into three pastures and grazing once every 3rd year. Use income generated from lease to pay for noxious weed control.
2. Explore the possibility of grazing on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area with the goal of re-invigorating native stands of grass and income generated from leases to pay for noxious weed control.

Objective: Protect, Enhance and Restore Function and Structure of Native Habitats

1. Seek funding for projects designed to enhance riparian areas for fish and wildlife species.
2. Seek funding to bury the overhead powerline from Tucannon Hatchery to Camp Wooten.

Objective: Improve and Maintain Fish Populations

1. Look for options to add large woody debris to streams, and do so as time and funds allow.
2. Identify ways to decrease or minimize soil erosion and/or soil delivery to streams. Close roads, reseed roads or rock roads as necessary to achieve goal.
3. Continue work with the Tucannon Lakes Subcommittee to draft a Lakes Management Plan.
4. Work with Fish Program and Habitat Program to complete and begin implementation of a Tucannon River Floodplain Management Plan for the WT Wooten Wildlife Area. The plan encompasses all management activities within the floodplain area including in-stream habitat improvements, lake improvements and modifications to recreational sites for the benefit of the public and fish and wildlife habitat.

Agency Objective: Minimize adverse interactions between humans and wildlife

Objective: Provide Refuge Areas for Wildlife and Reduce Winter Disturbance

1. Make Cummings Drainage winter range closure a permanent occurrence for each winter. Follow agency policy recommendations to

make the closure authentic.

Objective: Implement Strategies to Reduce Elk Damage on Private Lands

1. Determine a low cost method for reducing accumulated vegetation and debris from building up against the new elk fence on the Wooten WLA to reduce the risk of damage from range fires, without adversely affecting big game winter range on a large scale (Goat Mtn, Tualum, Able's Ridge and Tam Tam Ridge).

Agency Objective: Provide sound operational management of WDFW lands, facilities, and access sites.

1. Acquisition of phase 1 of the 4-O Ranch occurred on January 5th, 2012. The first phase was approximately 2,200 acres. Wildlife Area staff will work with the landowner to develop an MOU for operation of the ranch which includes grazing, agricultural activities, timber harvest, big-game hunting tag quotas and recreation. The MOU will guide land management and recreation activities while WDFW acquires the remaining five phases over a 10 year period.

2012-13 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Assess and maintain 150 miles of boundary stock fence on the Wildlife Area Complex.
- Irrigate foodplots and shrubs at Chief Joseph and Wooten Wildlife Areas at least twice annually.
- Assess and maintain 24 miles of elk fence on and off the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex twice annually or as conditions require.
- Look into methods of controlling vegetation against newly constructed elk fence on the Wooten Wildlife Area.
- Maintain and monitor seven agricultural leases on Asotin creek Wildlife Area annually.
- Initiate at least one habitat enhancement project annually with RMEF, Blue Mountains Elk Initiative, TNC, etc
- Control noxious weeds along Tucannon River and in 10 campgrounds using RMEF funds.
- Plant and maintain at least two annual foodplots on Chief Joseph Wildlife Area annually.
- Establish and maintain four big-game foodplots on Asotin Creek and Wooten Wildlife Areas (15 acres minimum each). Plant/replant/maintain one out of four of the foodplots annually.
- Plant/maintain 125 acres of annual foodplots on Smoothing Iron Ridge.
- Treat weed outbreaks on a minimum of 500 acres annually on the four wildlife areas.
- Participate in at least two cooperative weed control project with local weed boards, Wallowa resources, TNC, etc.

- Continue to support and assist with Mountain Quail reintroduction project on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Maintain and install bluebird nest boxes.
- Complete endangered plant surveys on BPA funded portions on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Survey other non-BPA funded lands as funding opportunities allow.
- Maintain 6 “plant and take” lakes stocked with rainbow trout, steelhead, and Chinook salmon on the Wooten Wildlife Area.
- Evaluate existing guzzlers and either repair or discard as necessary. Five evaluations annually.
- Evaluate old agricultural fields for restoration into native grass habitat. Evaluate two fields per year on the Blue Mountain Wildlife Area Complex.
- Continue to limit trail access to non-motorized vehicles only on the four wildlife areas except for Green Gulch on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area which is open Oct. 1 – Nov. 30.
- Continue to implement and monitor big-game winter range closure gates on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Maintain mineral enhancement sites for big game on the four wildlife areas; Asotin Creek – 9, Wooten – 4, Chief Joseph – 4, Grouse Flats – 1
- Evaluate wildlife area campgrounds and consider establishment of designated campsites with fire rings as funding allows.
- Continue to monitor and maintain established campgrounds on the four wildlife areas.
- Monitor and utilize where possible, water rights on the four wildlife areas. Install flow meters on irrigation pumps to accurately monitor water usage. Document usage.
- Install one informational kiosks displaying wildlife area maps, noxious weed information and plant and animal species of concern on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area. Maintain kiosks installed on the Wooten and Asotin Creek Wildlife Areas.
- Seek funding for maintenance of Tucannon Dams and Lakes
- Maintain native grass/forb planting on Campbell Field and Smoothing Iron Ridge.
- Seek funding and support to bury Columbia REA power line between Tucannon Hatchery and Camp Wooten State Park.
- Revisit 33 post-fire monitoring photopoints in May.
- Identify and prioritize fish passage barriers on the wildlife area complex; address at least one barrier annually.
- Continue inventory and monitoring of Spaulding’s catchfly on Asotin Creek Wildlife Area.
- Seek funding for riparian area enhancement projects

CITIZENS ADVISORY GROUP INPUT

Wooten CAG

The Wooten CAG meeting was held on March 15, 2012. Member in attendance included:

Terry Bruegman	Columbia County Conservation District
Tim Fuller	Park Ranger, Camp Wooten State Park
Larry Scoggin	Wenaha Game Assoc; Trappers Assoc Reg Rep
Wilbur Eaton	Farmer, Rancher
Doug Maxey	Adjacent Landowner/Tucannon Hatchery
Jim & Joanne Kirkpatrick	Adjacent Landowner
Jim MacArthur	Last Resort KOA and Lyons Ferry Marina
Dr. John Corey	Adjacent Landowner
Dr. Chuck Reeves	Dayton Vet/County Commissioner
Del Groat	USFS
Chris Herres	Adjacent Landowner
Marty Hall	Local Landowner
Don Howard	Local Landowner
Eric Hoverson	Umatilla Tribe
Chris Fulton	Umatilla Tribe
Steve Martin	Salmon Recovery Board
Tom Schoenfelder	DNR

Issue: Several CAG members have frustration with WDFW finding funding to purchase new lands but not being able to provide funding for maintenance of lands WDFW already owns.

Response: Funding to purchase lands comes out of a different pot of money than operating funding. Money to purchase lands is earmarked by the legislators, and it would take legislation to change that and direct the money towards operating and maintenance.

Issue: With the purchase of the 4-O Ranch, will WDFW be leasing the grazing rights? Will WDFW continue the current farming practices?

Response: The previous landowner of the 4-O Ranch will retain all grazing rights and management practices of the land until all 10 phases have gone through and all of the land has been purchased. The 4-O Ranch will be a permit-only big game hunting area until all of the land is purchased. No decisions have been made on what the management practices will be after all of the land has been purchased.

Issue: CAG members support the Cummings Creek closure for wintering wildlife, but want to know why WDFW then flies elk counts in March when the elk are dropping their antlers.

Response: WDFW conducts March elk counts because that is the way they have been doing it for the past 20 years, and they are trying to utilize the spring green up to congregate the elk into herds that are easier to locate and count. Every region and state conducts wildlife counts differently depending on terrain, weather and habitat types.

Issue: CAG members expressed concern over the amount of money that is being spent to put large woody debris into the river. They feel the money would be better spent on repairing the lakes. Millions of dollars have been spent on river enhancements in the past and no results have been seen as of yet.

Response: The money being used to put LWD in the river is grant funds that are dedicated to enhancing the floodplain and increasing habitat for Spring Chinook and steelhead. Those funds cannot be used for lake repair or enhancement at this time. The science is currently evolving on how to increase salmonid habitat and improve the function of rivers based on past projects and what has or has not worked. River enhancement is a continually changing field.

Chief Joseph CAG

The Chief Joseph CAG meeting was held on April 12, 2012. Member in attendance included:

Nelle Murray	Asotin County Weed Board
Jerry Hendrickson	Landowner
Angela Sondanaa	Nez Perce Tribe Wildlife Program
Sam Ledgerwood	Rancher
William Brigham	Sportsman
Ron Landrus	Sportsman
Stan Wilson	Asotin County Sportsmans Assoc.
Ron Scheibe	Neighboring Landowner
Dan Luther	Citizen
Mark and Pat Bogar	Backcountry Horsemen
Monte Fujishin	USFS
Courtney Smith	NRCS
Dan Schlee	Neighboring Landowner
Casey Hagenah	Neighboring Landowner
Keith Carlson	Canyon Birders

Issue: Concerns over possible closure of Cougar Creek County road with new acquisition of 4-O Ranch and access for the public up Charley Creek Road with Koch acquisition.

Response: There are no current plans to seek closure of Cougar Creek County road. The public will be allowed access up Charley Creek across private ground through an easement for non-motorized use.

Issue: Why is grazing still a viable option for management of WDFW lands?

Response: Grazing is used as a management practice on many wildlife areas across the state. In the Blue Mountains, it is still an option and will be looked at more closely once WDFW has final results from WSU's analysis of the Pilot Grazing Program.

Issue: WDFW could do a better job installing horse friendly gates in boundary fences which would allow access by horseback riders.

Response: The wildlife area has been working with volunteer groups such as Back Country Horsemen to install horse gates at access points. We usually install one or two special gates per year and will continue to do so as time and funding allow.

BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) funds a portion of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. BPA funded areas are the Schlee acquisitions on Smoothing Iron Ridge and George Creek. The Bickford acquisition in George Creek is also funded by BPA. All together, approximately 10,000 acres out of 33,000 acre Asotin Creek Wildlife Area is BPA funded. Funding the wildlife area mitigates habitat losses through construction of hydroelectric dams on the Columbia River. By funding habitat enhancement and maintenance activities, BPA receives credit towards its mitigation obligation.

Progress towards this obligation is assessed through the use of periodic surveys based on standardized Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP). Habitat Evaluation Procedures were developed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to quantify the quality and abundance of available habitat for selected wildlife species. HEP is based on ecological principles and the assumption that habitat for selected wildlife species can be described as a numerical value based on a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). This value is derived from an evaluation of the ability of key habitat components to supply the resource needs of focal species of fish and wildlife. The HSI values (ranging from 0.0 for no value to a maximum of 1.0) are multiplied by the area of available habitat to obtain Habitat Units (HUs), which are for mitigation purposes, the 'currency' used to measure/compare habitat losses and gains (Schroeder et al. 2008). Completion of baseline and periodic (preferably at 5-year intervals) HEP is a fundamental requirement for management of mitigation areas.

Several wildlife species on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area have been identified as the focus for management planning through the HEP process, because their needs define healthy habitat for many species in the riparian wetlands habitat, beaver, great blue heron and yellow warbler have been selected. In Ponderosa pine habitat; elk, flammulated owl, and white-headed woodpecker have been selected. In the grasslands; bighorn sheep, sharp-tailed grouse, mule deer and grasshopper sparrow have been selected. Additional wildlife species are also targeted to evaluate habitat acquired with BPA mitigation funding. This HEP is applied to the Smoothing Iron and George Creek units and includes

western meadowlark, black-capped chickadee, downy woodpecker and Lewis woodpecker.

Reports/Proposals/Plans

BPA provided has been providing funding for the Schlee and Bickford acquisitions since 2003. Since that time, numerous reports, funding proposals and work plans have been produced. By following the below links, additional information on these activities can be found.

General information on the Mitigation Project

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009.

<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/narratives/1012.doc> Contains detailed descriptions of the area's history, land purchases and rationale for mitigation and focal species.

Additional information describing BPA's role in mitigation and crediting can be found on the BPA web site: <http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/Wildlife.aspx>
<http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/wildlifecredit.aspx>

Proposed Management Activities

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009

[http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012 - 10](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012-10)

2010-2012 Funding Proposal. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009

[http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012 - 10](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012-10)

Monitoring and Evaluation

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009

[http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012 - 10](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=1012-10)

Acquisition Strategy

Lands identified for acquisition must pass the internal Lands Division's 20/20 review process. WDFW has an active lands acquisition process utilizing funding from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. Currently there are no lands targeted for acquisition using BPA funding on the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex.

Funding Strategy

2010-2012 Funding Proposal. Submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009

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Contains detailed descriptions of proposed management activities for the 2010-2012 time period including proposed budgets plus projected needs through 2018. Also contains

detailed descriptions of work elements, capitol projects and cost-share opportunities and all projected budgets.

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Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

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