



# SOUTH PUGET SOUND WILDLIFE AREA 2008 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



## **Land Management Summary**

This is an update to the 2006 South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Management Plan ([http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/)) that provides management direction for the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Complex including Union River, South Puget Sound Urban Wildlife Interpretive Center, McNeil Island (Gertrude Is. and Pitt Is.), Nisqually, Scatter Creek, West Rocky Prairie, Black River, Skokomish Delta, Skookumchuck, Duckabush, Big Beef Creek, Morgan Marsh and Koopmans Farm located in Grays Harbor,

Jefferson, Kitsap, E. Mason, Pierce and Thurston Counties. 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**

In 2007 several changes occurred on the wildlife area. One new property was acquired, The Koopmans Farm near Oakville in Grays Harbor county. This property is a 550-acre former dairy farm, which was purchased using funds from a wetland conservation grant. The farm will be managed as a working farm, while also a wildlife recreation area. Hunting dog field trials will be allowed, along with waterfowl hunting, and fishing. The ownership of Ohop Farm property in Pierce County was transferred to the Nisqually Land Trust. They are performing salmon habitat enhancement in the Ohop valley, and will be able to do an enhancement project on this property also. New grant funds were acquired for use on Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie for native prairie restoration. These include funds from

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the Fort Lewis ACUB program, the Army Compatible Use Buffer project. This program helps preserve native prairie by teaming with other government agencies managing lands adjacent to Fort Lewis. The funding for the Wildlife Area Managers position has changed. The salary for the manager was cut 50%, in order to make up deficit, 25% will come from grant funds for various prairie restoration projects on West Rocky Prairie and Scatter Creek, and 25% will come from other grant monies and the Agricultural Lease on The Koopmans Farm.

### New Issues

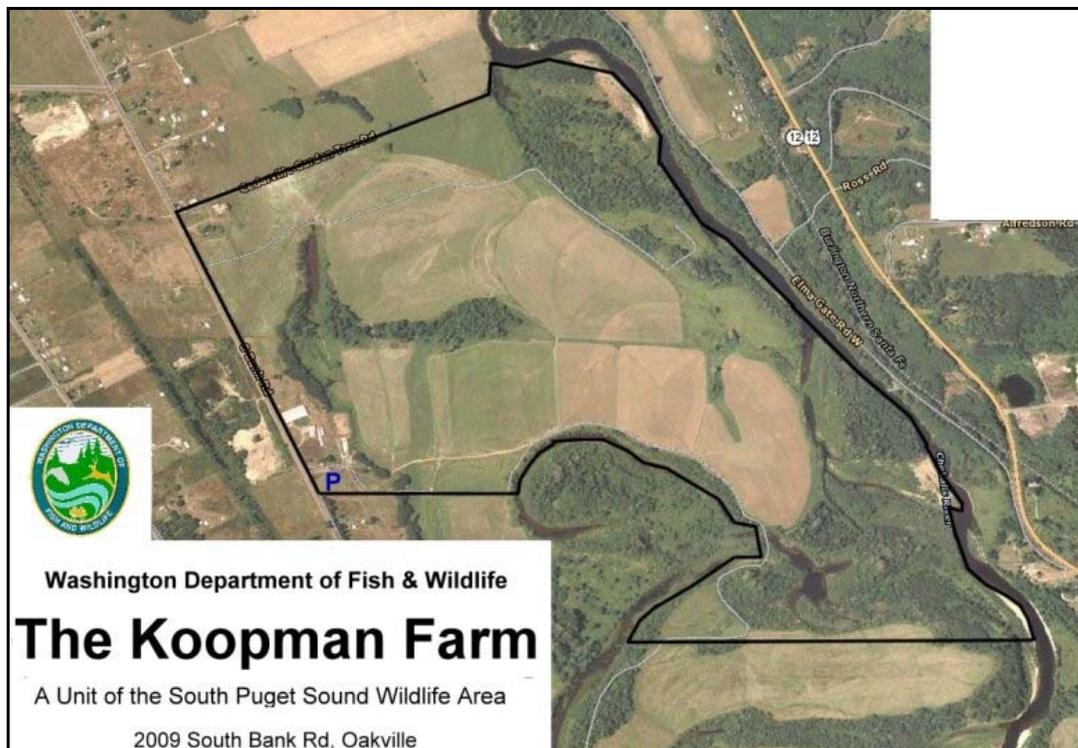
Garbage dumping on the Union River access has been increasing this year. Large amounts of construction debris and household garbage have been repeatedly cleaned up. The gate to the access has been left unlocked and open. We will coordinate better with the Enforcement Division to increase the patrols at the Union River access.

This year, we will begin using West Rocky Prairie as a release and recovery site for endangered Mazama Pocket Gophers. As soon as funding for the project is secured, we will begin releasing gophers onto the site.

With the recent purchase of the Koopmans Farm property, we will be transferring all field trials and dog training using horses from Scatter Creek to the new property.

### Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Purchased 550-acre Koopmans Farm property near Oakville for wetland conservation and wildlife recreation.



To enhance and restore prairie habitat, 400-acres of Scot's Broom was treated on the Scatter Creek. New herbicides were tested using an herbicide wiping implement and sprayers.

Tall oat grass was controlled on 75 acres of native prairie using aerial and ground herbicide applications and mowing on Scatter Creek to enhance and restore prairie habitat.

Controlled Tansy ragwort on Scatter Creek, West Rocky Prairie and the South Puget Sound sites.

Released endangered Taylor's Checkerspot butterflies on Scatter Creek Unit with good results.

Planted endangered Indian Paintbrush, *Castilleja levisecta* at Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie Units.

Planted Idaho fescue at Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie Units.

Completed a Historical Architectural Report on the Miller-Brewer House at Scatter Creek Unit.

Administrative Access to the West Rocky Prairie property was completed.



A parking lot and river access trail was completed at the Black River Unit.



The wetland ponds at S. Puget Sound UWIC area are managed for endangered western pond turtles. Controlling Himalayan blackberries enhanced endangered western pond turtle nesting site areas. Endangered western pond turtle trapping, monitoring and nest protection continued in 2007. For unknown reasons, no turtles hatched out in the nests. Eggs taken to the Woodland Park Zoo to incubate had 6 eggs hatch.

Ownership of the Ohop Farm property was transferred to the Nisqually Land Trust.

Purchased 120-acre parcel adjacent to Union River Unit.

Rebuilt the duck hunting blinds and repeatedly cleaned up garbage at the Union River Unit.

**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.

<b>2007 Performance Measure</b>	<b>Status of Performance Measure</b>	<b>Explanation of Progress/ 2007 Related Activity/ Comments</b>
Find suitable recreational replacement area for Scatter Creek unit.	The Koopmans Farm property was purchased, and has been added into the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Complex.	This project was completed.
Release 1,500 pheasants at Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck units.	At least 1,500 pheasants were released on the areas in 2007.	A like number of pheasants will be released in 2008.
Plant 150 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.	Due to a change in plans, this project was cancelled.	Project has been cancelled.
Maintain 300 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.	300 Oregon white oaks were maintained in 2007.	Dead trees were replaced, areas around trees were mowed, enclosures repaired.
Plant one test plot of Roemer's (Idaho) fescue on SPS UWIC unit.	Due to lack of fescue seed, this project was cancelled.	Project has been cancelled.
Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.	Native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds were collected for propagation in 2007.	Seed collections will continue in 2008.
Create 30 nesting cavities on Scatter Creek.	Nesting cavities were not completed in 2007.	This activity has been rescheduled for 2008.
Develop educational materials and host 2 educational events.	Educational materials were completed for the Scatter Creek site. 2 Educational events were completed at the SPS UWIC site.	Educational events will continue on the SPS UWIC site in 2007. Further educational materials will be made in 2007.
Control weeds on 720+ acres	Weeds were controlled on more than 1,000 acres in 2007.	Scot's Broom and Tall Oat Grass control will continue as needed on the wildlife area in 2008.
Install two gates on wildlife area properties.	One access point and gate for the West Rocky Property was completed in 2007. One	This project was completed in 2007.

	access point and gate for the Black River Property was completed in 2007.	
Enhance western pond turtle nest sites with 100 yards of topsoil.	This project was not completed in 2007.	This project has been rescheduled for 2008.
Develop new wetland pond for western pond turtles.	Initial inquiries were made into a new pond project with Pierce County.	New pond project will continue to be pursued in 2008.
Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.	Butterflies surveys and monitoring was completed in 2007.	Butterfly management including identification, surveys and monitoring will continue in 2008.
Set up canoe access area for Morgan Marsh Unit.	Canoe access area was not completed in 2007.	Due to continuing problems with access issues on the Morgan Marsh site, this project has been rescheduled for 2008.
Transfer ownership and management of Big Beef Creek properties to Kitsap County.	Transfer of ownership of the Big Beef properties has been put on hold for the present time due to ownership issues.	The issue of property ownership with the Big Beef Creek properties will be evaluated in 2008.
Monitor dog use on SPS UWIC site.	Dog use was monitored and evaluated, and a new "Leash Only" requirement was enacted.	"Leash Only" dog use will be monitored for compliance in 2008.
Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.	Boundary fence for West Rocky Prairie site has been put on hold due to a potential land exchange.	Meetings to discuss the potential land exchange will continue in 2008.
Post boundary and rules signs at West Rocky Prairie site.	Boundary and Rules signs have been posted at the new access point, and on other strategic locations to help enforce land use rules.	Will continue working with Enforcement division. Status of signs and compliance with posted rules will be monitored in 2008.
Set up and perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island.	Minimal black-tail deer counts were completed in 2008.	Deer counts will be continued on a time available schedule in 2008.

### **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 Citizens Advisory Group. These public comments are captured 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. Maintain big game populations**

The Management activities that occur on McNeil, Gertrude and Pitt Islands are based on the Transfer Deed management requirements for the following strategy.

- A. Strategy: Perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island.

**2. Protect and restore prairie habitat**

Oregon white oak, associated with prairie habitat is uncommon and at the extent of its range on the west side of the Cascade Mountains and north of the Columbia River and has been subject to loss from land development and invasion by Douglas fir. Approximately 10 % of the original short grass prairies are left in the Puget Sound area. 90% of that is located on Fort Lewis. The remainder is located in several parcels owned by Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Thurston County, and The Nature Conservancy. All of these agencies are working to protect, restore and enhance the prairie habitats. Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie are two of the largest parcels, and have some of the highest quality native prairie habitat. Several species of butterflies, mammals and birds depend on this prairie habitat. The Mardon skipper butterfly is a state endangered species in Washington and is found on Scatter Creek. The Mazama pocket gopher, Valley silverspot, and Puget blue are state candidate species that are in very low numbers in Washington State, and depend on the native prairies and associated Oregon white oak woodlands at Scatter Creek. The state endangered plant *Sidalcea malviflora var virgata*'s only location in Washington State is at the Scatter Creek Unit. Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie may also play an important role in recovering the federally endangered Golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*). For all of these species to survive on Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie, it is critical that the native prairie habitat be protected, restored and enhanced. The South Puget Sound unit is one of the last parcels of native prairie and Oregon white oak woodlands in Lakewood. Located in an urban setting, it provides a unique opportunity to educate the public in the importance of native prairie and oak woodlands habitats, and the process of restoring those habitats.

- A. Strategy: Use West Rocky Prairie as a release and recovery site for endangered Mazama Pocket Gophers. Begin releasing gophers onto the site as soon as funding for the project is secured.
- B. Strategy: Transfer all Field Trials and dog-training using horses from Scatter Creek to the new Koopmans Farm property.
- C. Strategy: Continue planting native Roemer's (Idaho) fescue on degraded prairie area on the West Rocky Prairie site. Use WHIP grant funds to accomplish work done in 2008.
- D. Control weeds that may come up in areas where Scot's broom has been removed. Use WHIP grant funds to accomplish work done in 2008.
- E. Strategy: Work with other conservation organizations to setup test plots for rehabilitating degraded native prairie at the West Rocky Prairie site.
- F. Strategy: Improve nesting habitat for Western Pond Turtles on SPS UWIC site by controlling blackberries and importing topsoil to hillside.

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

1. Maintain facilities to achieve safe, efficient and effective management of the wildlife area.
  - A. Strategy: Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.
  - B. Strategy: Post ownership, rules, and regulations signs on the Koopmans Farm site.
  - C. Strategy: Grade main Parking Area at The Koopmans Farm.
  - D. Strategy: Oversee barn deconstruction project at The Koopmans Farm.
  - E. Strategy: Setup new Parking Area at north end of The Koopmans Farm property.

**Agency Objective: Provide sustainable fish and wildlife-related recreational and commercial opportunities compatible with maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations and habitats. Improve the economic well being of Washington by providing diverse, high quality recreational and commercial opportunities.**

1. Provide public access compatible with fish, wildlife and habitat protection.
  - A. Strategy: Work closely with the Field Trail groups to coordinate recreational activities on The Koopmans Farm site.
  - B. Strategy: Work closely with the Agricultural Lessee on The Koopmans Farm site to coordinate farming and recreational activities.

**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. Manage species and habitats in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and Washington State fish passage, road management and forest practice rules.
  - A. Strategy: Rebuild two Harbor Seal Observation Blinds on McNeil and Gertrude Islands.

**2008 Performance Measures**

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

- 1) Release 1,500 pheasants at Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck units.
- 2) Maintain 300 Oregon white oak trees on SPS UWIC unit.
- 3) Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.
- 4) Create 30 nesting cavities on Scatter Creek.
- 5) Host 2 educational events.
- 6) Control weeds on 1,000+ acres on all sites.
- 7) Enhance western pond turtle nest sites with 100 yards of topsoil.
- 8) Develop new wetland pond for western pond turtles.
- 9) Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.
- 10) Set up canoe access area for Morgan Marsh Unit.
- 11) Monitor "Leash Only" dog use on SPS UWIC site.
- 11) Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.
- 12) Monitor and replace when necessary, boundary and rules signs at West Rocky Prairie site.

- 13) Continue to perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island when time is available.
- 15) Continue releasing endangered Taylor's Checkerspot butterflies on Scatter Creek Unit.
- 16) Release endangered Mazama pocket gophers on West Rocky Prairie.
- 17) Lock Gate and monitor garbage dumping at Union River Access site.
- 18) Work with Field Trialers and farmer on coordinating activities on The Koopmans Farm property.
- 19) Fix the main Parking Area at The Koopmans Farm property.

### **Citizens Advisory Group Input**

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on April 23, 2008 to review management progress and address any new issues or input on existing issues. Those in attendance included representatives from Northwest Field Trial Council, SPS UWIC neighbors, Pheasant Release, Friends of Puget Prairies, and Scatter Creek neighbors. Prior to the meeting, additional comments were received from representatives of the Scatter Creek Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen.

The following new input/issues were addressed at the meeting.

**Issue:** *Garbage dumping on the Union River access has been increasing this year. We propose to lock the gate.*

**Response:** It was suggested we put up cameras to photograph people dumping garbage. There are no funds available for cameras at this time. The gate will be locked until funds are available for other options.

**Issue:** *West Rocky Prairie will be used as a release and recovery site for Mazama Pocket Gophers.*

**Response:** West Rocky Prairie was purchased to preserve and protect native prairie habitat and associated species. One of those is the Mazama Pocket Gopher. We will begin releasing gophers on the site when funding is secured for it.

**Issue:** *Transfer all Field Trials and dog training with horses to the new Koopmans Farm property.*

**Response:** The field trial community wants to work with the Department on this major change to the recreation on the wildlife area. Recommendations regarding recreational improvements were received. The field trial community is still concerned about safety conditions for their dogs and trials scheduled in the early Spring, given that the Koopmans Farm property could be too wet to hold trials during that time. We are committed to working with the field trial community to make The Koopmans Farm a successful safe trialing site. We will continue to search for another site that can host early Spring trials.

**Issue:** *Vehicle Use Permits are still not being enforced enough on Scatter Creek.*

**Response:** We will coordinate better with Enforcement Division to increase the patrols at Scatter Creek to check for Vehicle Use Permits.

At the conclusion of the meeting, another CAG meeting was tentatively scheduled for early October.

**Want to see the full plan?**

Go to –

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/management\\_plans/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/)

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