



SOUTH PUGET SOUND WILDLIFE AREA 2010 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Oregon Spotted Frog

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Management Plan 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 The Koopmans Farm. 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 2009 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2010. To view the entire South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Management Plan and past updates please visit

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

Updates/Changes

During this past year numerous positions were eliminated throughout the state due to the budget shortfall. In Region 6 one of the two Wildlife Area Manager positions was eliminated. This position covered the northern and eastern portion of the region including lands scattered throughout the North Olympic, the Kitsap Peninsula and the South Puget Sound. The South Puget Sound

Inside

Land Management Summary	1
Updates/Changes	1
New Issues	4
Major Stewardship Accomplishments	5
Status Report of 2006 Performance Measures	7
New Strategies	8
2010 Performance Measures	10
Citizens Advisory Group Input	11
Appendix	18

Wildlife Area Complex is now being managed by the Olympic-Willapa Hills Wildlife Area Complex. Effectively this has doubled the size and range of coverage adding an additional 10,000 acres and 20 new units from Port Angeles to Lakewood to Chinook. The new super complex is now referred to as the Olympic-Willapa Hills-South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Complex (Appendix A – Complex Structure). This creates numerous challenges from a management standpoint; however existing staff is poised for the future and looks forward to working with numerous user groups and other government entities to ensure that management objectives are still achieved.

The habitat conservation planning (HCP) process continues to move forward for all wildlife areas in the state. During the course of the year wildlife area staff worked with the HCP inventory team to gather all relevant species and activity information for each unit in the wildlife area complex. Over the next year the HCP team will be analyzing this information and will prepare the final HCP. This process will be critical for developing sound and science based management decisions for all the lands within the WDFW lands portfolio. Further, the HCP will foster as an additional tool for accessing additional federal funding for land acquisition, restoration, and general operations and maintenance funding.

Wildlife Area HCP Goals

- Provide protection for at-risk species
- Inventory at-risk species, land management activities, and public uses on WDFW Lands
- Incorporate a landscape level approach to managing at-risk species
- Streamline permitting process



The rules and conditions for “*Temporary Use Permits*” for field trials were updated for the 2010 season of events. These rules were developed after significant internal/external review of land management policies on the Scatter Creek and Davis Creek (Koopmans) Units and have been added as a provision to the “*Temporary Use Permit*”. During this time WDFW wildlife area staff met with multiple field trial participants. Several new provisions were added to the updated rules based on these meetings. For example, the following provision was created to facilitate better access to the “puppy course” at the South Unit #1 of Scatter Creek.

“Any dog staging trips per brace utilizing vehicles must be approved by the Wildlife Area Manager or designee prior to the trial event.”

The Trumpeter Swan Society also commented on the general rules and conditions for the Davis Creek (Koopmans) Unit. The following condition was added to the temporary use permit to reflect a new wildlife area management planning strategy for protecting the health of the Lower Chehalis by eliminating the use of toxic shot at that unit.

“It will be unlawful to possess shot (either in shotshells or as loose shot for muzzleloading) other than nontoxic shot for any purpose at the Davis Creek Unit (Koopmans).”

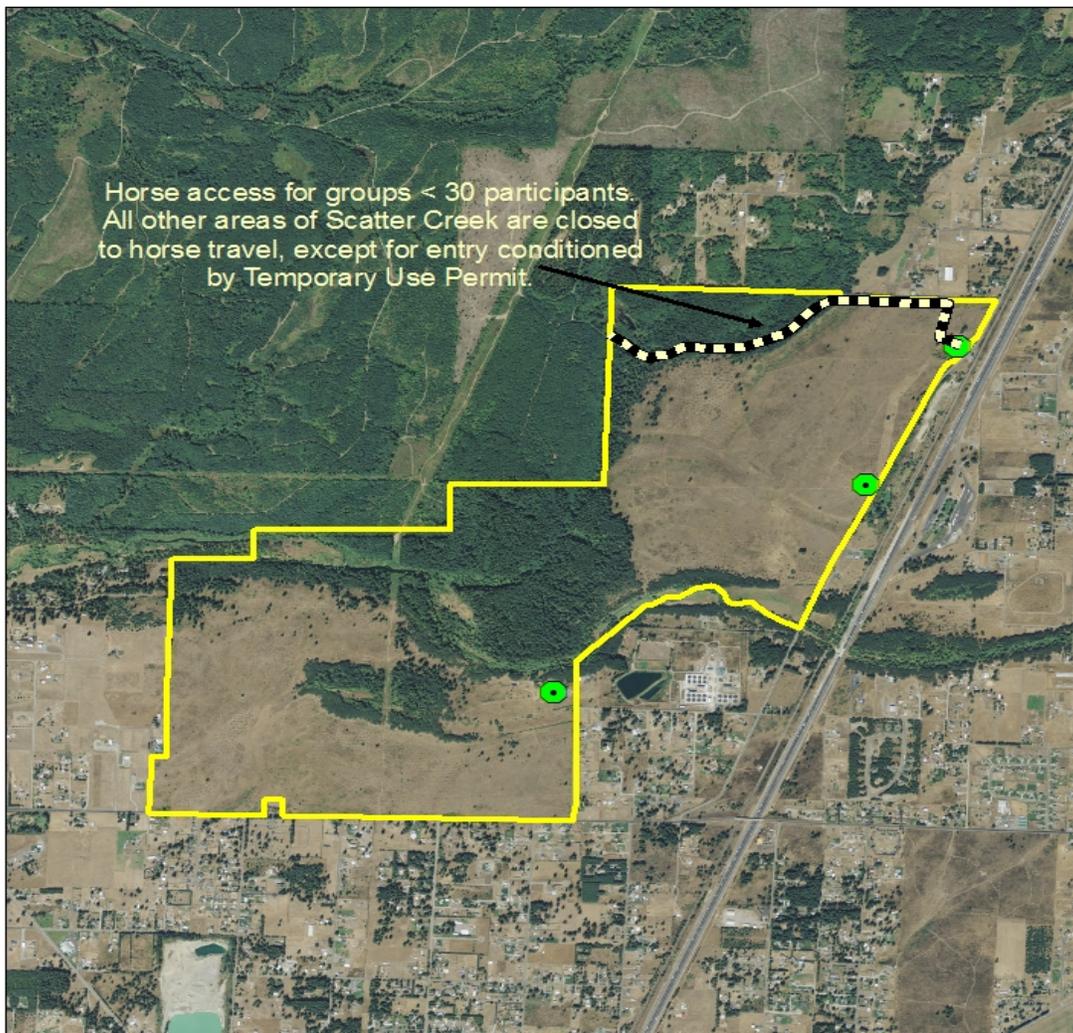
The Scatter Creek South Unit (#1) will continue to be utilized as the alternate location for winter events scheduled at the Davis Creek (Koopmans) Unit if field conditions are deemed unsuitable for this activity. However, if Scatter Creek is utilized as the alternate site, the specific rules and conditions set forth for that unit will be enforced. Some of the highlights of the updated rules and conditions include;

- Horse limits per site
- Specific rules for off trail/road riding and gallery
- Key authorization/distribution for gate entry for “*Temporary Use Permits*”

Horse access to the South Unit #1 of Scatter Creek is allowable under the guidance of a “*Temporary Use Permit*”. The map below displays the location at the Scatter Creek Unit where horse entry is permitted without a temporary special use permit. WDFW enforcement will continue to monitor and enforce the posted rules at the Scatter Creek Unit.

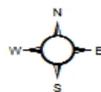


South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Scatter Creek Unit



Legend

- WDFW - Scatter Creek Unit
- Non-Permit, Horse Access
- Public Access Locations



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

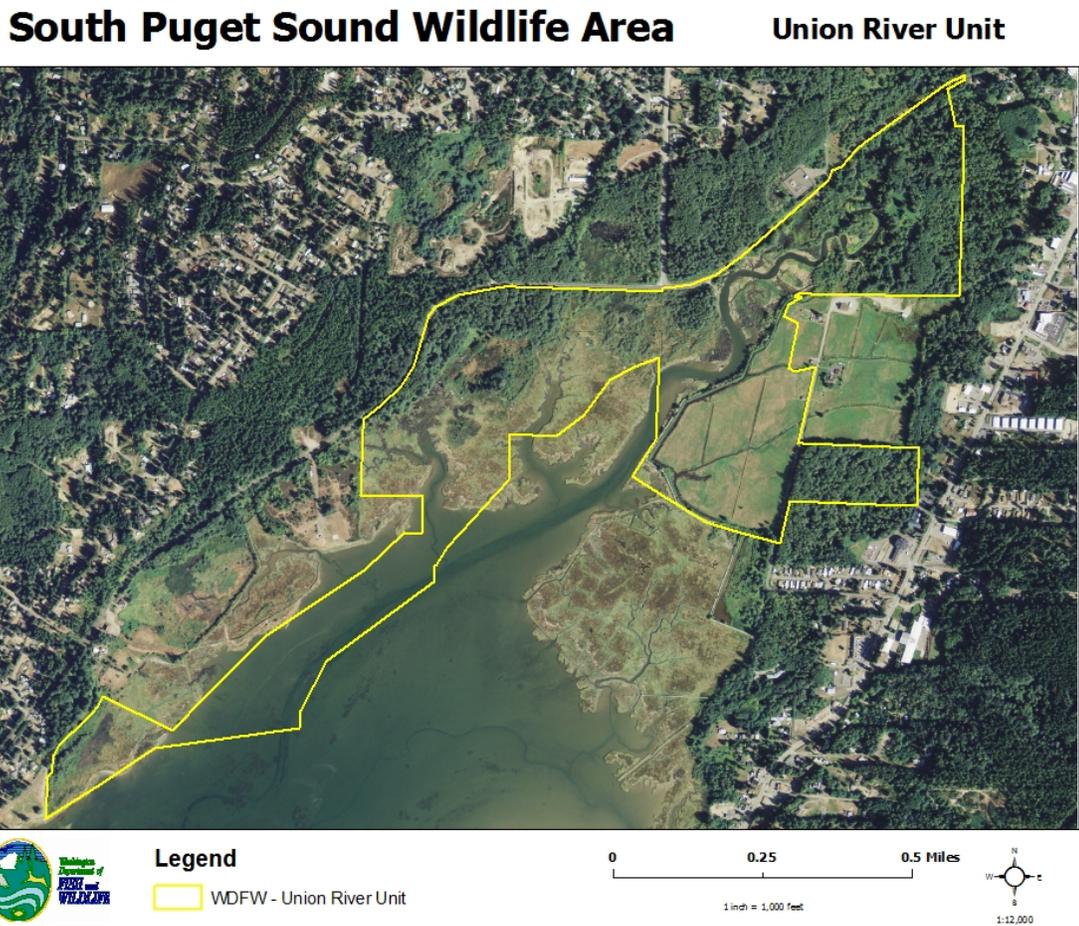
1 inch = 2,000 feet 1:24,000

For general use only - map displays approximate ownership boundaries - Respect Private Property

A new pond project has been started at the South Puget Sound Urban Area unit. WDFW is currently working with the Lakewood Fish Hatchery and Pierce County on developing a plan for construction of a new wetland pond for western pond turtles and Oregon spotted frogs. Also incorporated into the plan will be an abatement pond for the fish hatchery's solids.

New Issues

Through “coordinated resource management” (CRM) WDFW partnered with the Pacific Northwest Salmon Center (PNWSC) to develop a land-use agreement for the Union River Unit. This agreement includes the framework for the planned estuary restoration. It also covers the elements included for PNWSC to conduct trail maintenance activities on WDFW property. WDFW also completed the HB 1309 Ecosystem Standards Assessment process for PNWSC to temporarily utilize 2.5 acres of WDFW property to graze 8 alpaca. The alpaca are being utilized by PNWSC as an educational element to the developing concept of sustaining productive organic agricultural activities on a relatively small parcel of land that abuts the WDFW wildlife area unit.



Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Prairie restoration projects continued on West Rocky Prairie and Scatter Creek units using a variety of grant sources including ACUB (Army Compatible Use Buffer) funds from Fort Lewis, and WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program) funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

A project to develop habitat for Taylor's checkerspot and Mardon skipper was initiated in 2007-2008 on Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area Units. The project included both habitat management planning and implementation, with an interdisciplinary team approach in identification of areas to concentrate management activities, and determination of initial actions. Management focus areas were mapped, work plans were developed, and important resources in each area were mapped. Implementation focused on removing exotic shrubs and trees on prairie habitat and near oak trees, setting up plots, planting, and monitoring the survival of plants. In the second year (2008-2009), among the actions were planting and seeding nectar species for

Taylor's checkerspot butterfly and Mardon skipper (at West Rocky Prairie), monitoring planted plants, collecting baseline vegetation information on future enhancement areas, removal of conifers over a 10 acre area, hand removal and herbicide application to remove exotic shrubs, and nursery seedling transplanting to develop seed sources of *Collinsia parviflora*, an important foodplant for Taylor's checkerspot. Future plans are to continue implementation projects with funding from the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program, the Natural Resource



Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly

Conservation Service WHIP program, United States Fish and Wildlife Service recovery funds, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife funds.

The Mardon skipper occurs at only a few sites in South Puget Sound, including both units (north and south) of Scatter Creek Wildlife Area. The wildlife area includes approximately 600 acres of grassland. This project focuses on maintaining and improving habitat quality for Mardon skipper through control of exotic species (invasive forbs, shrubs and trees), enhancing food plants and re-vegetating by planting important plant species. In the second project year (2008 – 2009), WDFW and others pulled Scot's broom by hand over 30 acres, mowed Scot's broom over 89 acres, brushcut Scot's broom over 93 acres, and treated Scot's broom with herbicide on 7 acres. These efforts included removal of shrubs and small trees encroaching Mardon skipper habitat, and controlling bracken in 22 patches throughout the wildlife area. Efforts were continued to re-established a plant used as a nectar source by the Mardon skipper, established 40 *Viola adunca* monitoring plots, controlled several noxious weeds, discovered new locations for noxious weeds, planted approximately 2,400 forbs and grass plugs, burned a small wet prairie

patch to evaluate effects of fire, initiated a seed bed for wet prairie species, mapped key nectar species, and mapped rare plants.

Utilizing prescribed fire continues to be a critical tool in the restoration effort throughout the south sound prairies. Landscape-scale burns have started to progress rapidly over the past two years thanks to the collaborative partnership that formed over a decade ago. In 2008, approximately 317 acres were successfully burned and in 2009, 1,861 acres were burned at 40 separate locations. This included several small level burns at Scatter Creek, West Rocky Prairie, and Glacial



West Rocky Prairie – Spotted frog research plots

Heritage Units. The Nature Conservancy recently released a summary report of the 2009 fire activities. *“The South Puget Sound region of Washington was once largely dominated by a diverse mosaic of fire dependent grasslands that were interspersed with conifer and deciduous woodlands and wetlands... Lack of managed fire during the past 150 years has led to significant habitat loss and impact on native species. A robust and highly active collaborative program has evolved over the past 15 years to protect and restore the remaining prairie/oak mosaic habitat and its dependent species. As a result of our past efforts, we are now on the verge of being able to effectively restore habitat at the landscape-scale. There is growing agreement that large-scale prescribed ecological fire is a critical conservation tool in these systems (South Puget Sound Ecological Fire Program 2009 Report, TNC 2009).* In 2010, WDFW is planning to increase their burn program on the Scatter Creek Unit with the identification of burning a total of 25 additional acres in a variety of critical locations.

A project funded by WHIP was completed at the South Puget Sound Urban Wildlife Area, which



controlled Himalayan blackberries and brought in 1,000 cubic yards of topsoil. This enhancement project will produce a more suitable nest hill for the productive western pond turtle recovery site. The picture to the left shows the site just after the soil amendments were tilled into the hillside. This “nest hill” is now covered by a mix of fescue and ryegrass. Western pond turtle trapping and monitoring occurred throughout 2009.

Soil amendments, pre-seeding at western pond turtle recovery site (SPSWA)

Status Report of 2009 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 2010.

2009 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2010 Related Activity/ Comments
Release 1,500 pheasants at Scatter Creek and Skookumchuck units.	At least 1,500 pheasants were released on the areas in 2009.	Similar numbers of pheasants will be released in 2010.
Maintain 300 Oregon white oak trees on SPS Urban Wildlife unit.	300 Oregon white oaks were maintained in 2008.	Dead trees were replaced, areas around trees were mowed, enclosures repaired.
Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.	Native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds were collected for propagation in 2009.	Seed collections will continue in 2010.
Create 30 nesting cavities on Scatter Creek.	Nesting cavities were not completed in 2009.	This activity has been rescheduled for 2010 (need to utilize volunteers for this effort).
Control weeds on 1,000+ acres on all sites	Weeds were controlled on more than 1,000 acres in 2009.	Scot's broom and tall oat grass control will continue as needed on the wildlife area in 2010.
Enhance western pond turtle nest sites with 300 cubic yards of topsoil	The nesting hill was enhanced with 300 additional cubic yards of topsoil and amendments.	The "nest hill" will be monitored during the nesting season to ensure that site conditions are more suitable for nesting during 2010.
Develop new wetland pond for western pond turtles.	Agreements have been signed between WDFW and Pierce County for a joint pond project.	New pond project will continue with design and water level monitoring in 2010.
Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.	Butterflies surveys and monitoring was completed in 2009.	Butterfly management including identification, surveys and monitoring will continue in 2010.
Monitor Dog use on SPS Urban Wildlife unit site.	Dog use on the area was monitored in early 2009, however with the loss of the on-site manager this has declined. Fences continue to be breached on the site for additional access points for dog walkers.	"On Leash Dog Use" will continue to be monitored for compliance in 2010.

Complete boundary fence on West Rocky Prairie site.	Boundary fence was kept on hold until further attempts are made for future acquisitions	We will continue to pursue adjusting the property boundary/ acquisitions in 2010.
Build reader boards at the West Rocky Prairie Unit.	Interpretive kiosk and parking lot expansion was completed in 2009.	Additional educational resources/prairie information will be added to the kiosk over the course of 2010.
Perform deer counts of black-tail deer population on McNeil Island.	Minimal black-tail deer counts were completed in 2009.	Funding for this activity no longer exists
Continue releasing endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies on Scatter Creek Unit.	Endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies were released on Scatter Creek in 2009.	Taylor's checkerspot butterflies will continue to be released on Scatter Creek in 2010.
Release endangered Mazama pocket gophers on West Rocky Prairie.	Releases of Mazama pocket gophers were not completed in 2009.	Releases of Mazama pocket gophers on West Rocky Prairie will continue in 2010.
Work with field trialers and farmer on coordinating activities on The Koopmans Farm property.	Met with trialers before each event to coordinate activities. Held meetings to discuss Scatter Creek and Koopmans Farm field trialing.	Will continue to meet with field trialers and farmer before events to coordinate activities in 2010.
Fix the main parking area at The Koopmans Farm property.	Parking area was maintained, but not fixed due to coordination problems and weather conditions.	Parking area will be improved in 2010.
Plant 1,000 Oregon white oaks on the Koopman Farm property	Local acorns were collected and sent to the Plant Material Center in Bow. Plants will be nursery grown for 2 years and will be installed in 2011. The WHIP contract has been modified to reflect this change of scope.	Oaks will be planted in 2011, and fencing will occur in 2010.

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. Protect and restore estuary habitat

Estuaries are important for many species and are a priority for migratory shorebirds along the Pacific flyway and provide forage and resting areas for waterfowl. Estuaries are productive environments and provide salmon with transitional habitat and forage opportunities.

- A. Strategy: Work with partnership, including Hood Canal Fisheries Enhancement Group and the Pacific Northwest Salmon Center to conduct estuary restoration activities on the WDFW Union Creek Unit.
- B. Strategy: Develop land use agreement with the Pacific Northwest Salmon Center

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.



Streaked Horned Lark

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 Rose checkermallow (*Sidalcea malviflora var virgata*), 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



Mazama Pocket Gopher

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: Monitor and enforce the updated *Field Trial Rules for Scatter Creek and Davis Creek (Koopmans) Units*.
- B. Strategy: Limit prairie impacts of un-regulated/permitted horse recreation at the Scatter Creek Unit. Create and maintain maps that direct general horse travel to the established riding area at the north end of the Scatter Creek Unit.
- C. Strategy: Enforce the closure of the south unit of Scatter Creek to horse travel except for temporary use permits that are compatible with maintaining the ecological integrity of the prairie habitat.
- D. Strategy: Post and monitor seasonal closure restrictions of the *Outer* and *Inner* Loop trails at the Scatter Creek Unit. *Outer* Loop trail is closed from April 1 – July 31. The *Inner* Loop trail is open during this seasonal closure.
- E. Identify and burn approximately 25 acres that are identified for this enhancement activity at the Scatter Creek Unit.
- F. Develop a land use agreement with The Nature Conservancy for management activities at the Glacial Heritage Unit.
- G. Create a use agreement with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to limit prairie impacts in the “right-of-way” of the power line corridor at the Scatter Creek Unit.

4. Protect and restore riparian/wetland habitat

- A. Strategy: Continue coordination and planning with the Lakewood Fish Hatchery and Pierce County on new pond development on the SPS Urban Wildlife Area property for endangered western pond turtles.
- B. Strategy: Work with Fish and Wildlife Commission to designate the Davis Creek (Koopmans) Unit as a non-toxic shot location in the Chehalis floodplain.

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: Manage Scatter Creek, West Rocky, and Glacial Heritage prairie units in a manner that protects and restores the ecological integrity of each unit.

2010 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 Urban Wildlife Area unit.
- 3) Collect native prairie plant, grass and forb seeds for propagation.
- 4) Control weeds on 1,000+ acres on all sites.
- 5) Continue with development of new wetland pond for western pond turtles at the South Puget Sound Unit in Lakewood.
- 6) Identify, survey and monitor endangered/threatened/sensitive species of butterflies.
- 7) Monitor “Dog On Leash Only” use on SPS Urban Wildlife Area unit site.

- 8) Work with regional staff on potential acquisitions adjacent to the West Rocky Prairie Unit.
- 9) Monitor compliance of field trial temporary use permits
- 10) Work with field trial groups and Koopman lessee to provide a quality location for this recreational activity.
- 11) Submit funding proposals for grading and re-surfacing the parking area at the Davis Creek (Koopmans) Unit.
- 12) Continue release of Taylor's checkerspot butterfly at the Scatter Creek Unit.
- 13) Continue release of Mazama pocket gopher at the West Rocky Prairie Unit.
- 14) Continue habitat restoration research for the Oregon spotted frog at the West Rocky Prairie Unit.
- 15) Continue habitat restoration efforts as defined by ACUB and WHIP contracts at Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie Units. (Oregon white oak release, Scot's broom control, exotic grass and shrub control, seeding of native grasses and forbs, etc.)
- 16) Spray approximately 50-75 acres of landscape dominated by tall oat grass at the Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie Units.
- 17) Create a user friendly map product that can be utilized for distribution with temporary use permits that clearly marks sensitive areas located throughout Scatter Creek
- 18) Post signs at sensitive areas at the Scatter Creek Unit, closing these areas to recreational impact.
- 19) Evaluate habitat suitability for western gray squirrels at the West Rocky Prairie Unit.
- 20) Identify approximately 25 acres at the Scatter Creek Unit for introducing prescribed fire techniques. Burn at least half of this area in 2010, weather/wind permitting. Seed all burned areas with a suite of native prairie grasses, native winter annuals and native forb species.
- 21) Attend/host annual meetings and planning sessions with internal/external partnerships on prairie research and restoration efforts.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

A Citizens Advisory Group meeting was held on March 9, 2010 to review management progress and address any new issues or input on existing issues. Those in attendance included representatives from Northwest Field Trial Council, Department of Natural Resources Natural Area Preserves Program, field trial participants, and the Backcountry Horseman. Additional comments were received by Doug Stein (Pheasant Release Program), Friends of Rocky Prairie, The Nature Conservancy, and Connie Bailey.

The following new input/issues were addressed at the meeting, or in written comments submitted after the meeting.

Northwest Field Trial Council (NWFTC) – Representative Irene Palmer

Comment – The Department is spending a lot of money and time invested solely on species such as butterflies, gophers, etc. and are not focusing on other items such as quail, pheasants, and deer projects at the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Unit. Further, recreational users who contribute greatly to the economy through taxes and other mechanisms feel as if they are systematically being shut out of the prairies with their particular activities. “Recreational users are not being included in management decisions that are made on the Scatter Creek Unit”.

Response – *Currently there are several projects underway on WDFW prairie units that involve some of the state endangered/threatened and federal candidate species that are mentioned. These include the Mazama pocket gopher, Western gray squirrel, Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly, Mardon Skipper, Puget Blue, and the Streaked horned lark.*

Furthermore, there are numerous rare and “listed” plant species that also occur on this site. These species and habitat projects are funded through a variety of sources that incorporate “listed” species. WDFW continues to manage and raise pheasants that are annually released at the Scatter Creek Unit. WDFW has a long history of working with recreational groups who utilize the Scatter Creek Unit. Recently, wildlife area staff met on several occasions with NWFTC representatives to discuss the updated rules and conditions. Input from these meetings derived by these representatives was included in the final rules and conditions for the 2010 Field Trial Season. WDFW will continue to work with all applicable recreational groups that utilize Scatter Creek to ensure that the balance of habitat and species management and recreational use is achieved.

Comments – The NWFTC member groups feel as if they have been “strung along” in the process of updating the field trial rules. Further restrictions have been imposed on training activities and the North Unit of Scatter Creek has now been closed to hunt test events. In particular, they feel as if they have been lied to about what types of activities can occur on the Davis Creek Unit (Koopmans).

Response – *WDFW wildlife area staff met with NWFTC representatives on January 28th and February 9th to discuss the updated draft rules. These meetings were followed by numerous extensive email chains from both parties. The updated rules and conditions should not have been a surprise based upon these “contacts” and from past CAG and field trial meetings.*

The Scatter Creek Unit currently is the only location in Region 6 that offers year-round dog training (1 of only 8 locations in Washington State). Dog training may occur at the North Unit of Scatter Creek year round. Dog training can occur at the South Unit from August 1 – March 31.

Several “Hunt Tests” are currently permitted and scheduled for the North Unit. One “Hunt Test” event has already occurred in 2010 season. There are two “Hunt Test” events scheduled for April at the Scatter Creek North Unit.

The Davis Creek Unit has been described by some field trial participants as offering a quality trial location and others describe it as unsuitable. At the CAG meeting this same disagreement between user groups (field trials) was noted in regards to the outer loop trail at the South Unit of Scatter Creek. One group felt that the trail was too short and the other felt that the trail was ideally designed. WDFW will continue to make improvements on the Davis Creek Unit that will make it a quality location for all field trials. Parking lot improvements are planned for the next year and future habitat and objective placements have been discussed with the user groups.

Field Trial Participant – Richard Matzke

(Richard has participated in several CAG meetings in the past as the lead representative of the Northwest Field Trial Council. He has participated in field trial events for numerous years and was fundamental in the creation of the outer loop trail at Scatter Creek.)

Comment -- How can the agency close the south unit of Scatter Creek to horses for general public use overnight? Why wasn't there better communication? Scatter Creek is a designated dog training facility as written by the hunting pamphlet rules.

Response – *Reducing and regulating horse impacts on the sensitive prairie habitats has been discussed at CAG and field trial meetings since before the management plan for South Puget Sound was developed (this dates back to at least 15 years of discussion). The updated rules and conditions for field trials and general unit rules for Scatter Creek, which includes non-permitted horse recreation, are all in line with the*

management process for this unit. The Davis Creek (Koopmans) Unit was purchased as a mitigation piece to relocate some of the recreational impacts on the Scatter Creek Unit.

For numerous years there has been a finger pointing match between the Field Trial and day horse user groups at the Scatter Creek Unit. When damage occurred or rules were not followed, each group consistently pointed the finger at the other. Horse use that is conditioned through a temporary use permit can be regulated and enforced to ensure compliance. This is not possible with opening the area to horse recreation. Communication will be improved in the future through an email update service to interested parties of the wildlife area.

The Scatter Creek Unit currently is the only location in Region 6 that offers year-round dog training (1 of only 8 locations in Washington State). Dog training may occur at the North Unit of Scatter Creek year round. Dog training can occur at the South Unit from August 1 – March 31. “Bird Dog Training,” as described by the hunting pamphlet does not innately mean that horses can be utilized for this activity. During the last dog training weekend in March before the seasonal closure, there was bird dog training taking place at the South Unit of Scatter Creek. This opportunity still exists at this unit.

Comment – Why is the department requiring that weed free hay be mandatory at the Davis Creek Unit (Koopmans).

Response – *The rule included in the Temporary Use Permit is – “Hay must be certified weed-seed free or staged on tarps to prevent spread of noxious weeds.” This rule was enacted because of the past and recent import of diffuse knapweed to the site. WDFW is required by law to control and eradicate listed noxious weed species. It is critical that as weed management budgets are reduced, that future weed control issues are not created. This is a preventative measure that will protect the habitats and save the department money in the future. It should also be noted that the Backcountry Horseman are very supportive of this condition.*

Comment – If the department can choose to close the south unit to non-permitted horse use, why can't they also require the public and WDFW employees to wear hunter orange on the site for safety reasons?

Response – *The following is the requirement for wearing hunter orange as described by the 2009-10 Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons – “Anyone hunting upland birds (pheasants, quail, and partridge), rabbits, or hares with a modern firearm during any upland game bird season is required to wear hunter orange clothing. Those hunting forest grouse, rabbits, or hares during modern firearm deer or elk hunting seasons must also wear hunter orange clothing. A minimum of 400 square inches of fluorescent hunter orange exterior clothing, worn above the waist and visible from all sides, is required to comply with this regulation.”*

WDFW Question – What do you want in the Scatter Creek Management that you are not getting?

Response – “Being able to run/train my dogs on the outer loop trail on Tuesdays and Thursdays.”

WDFW Response – *Dog training may occur on the outer loop trail from August 1 through March 31. Dog training can occur year round at the north unit. Dog training involving horses may occur year round on the designated and posted trail for horses at the North Unit.*

Backcountry Horsemen – Darrell Wallace

Comment – The Backcountry Horsemen have been a partner with WDFW for numerous years and has helped with projects when requested. Currently, they feel as if there has been a serious lack of communication on recent activities. Most importantly, the Backcountry Horsemen are concerned with the process that was utilized for the closure of the south unit of Scatter Creek to non-permitted horse recreation. They would like to see some type of improved communication for updating user groups of changes of this nature. This could include additional meetings, CAG email updates/listserve, or website postings on the lands division page.

Response – *WDFW is currently compiling an email list that will receive updates on management actions throughout the wildlife area. All CAG members will automatically be incorporated onto this list (and can be removed if desired). Web-site postings may occur in the future, however at this time this is not a budgeted option.*

Comment -- The Backcountry Horsemen support the “weed-seed-free” hay regulations that are utilized in the updated field trial rules.

Comment – There still is a serious need for additional gravel to be brought to the north unit staging area that is primarily used by the horse community.

Response – *WDFW plans to conduct parking lot improvements at the north unit this spring/summer. The Backcountry Horseman have expressed an interest in helping by creating a work party for this activity.*

The Washington Department of Natural Resources – Roberta Davenport

Comment – agrees that email can be utilized as an efficient tool for updating user groups on proposed changes to wildlife area rules or regulations.

Comment – Strongly recommends that WDFW lands management staff seriously evaluate and control two specific noxious weeds that are present on the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Unit. Weeds of Concern – **Diffuse Knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*) and Mouse-Ear Hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*).**

Response – *WDFW will conduct weed control throughout the wildlife area and will pay careful attention to the small population of Mouse-ear hawkweed at the North Unit of Scatter Creek.*

The following comments were received by participating CAG members who were unable to attend the meeting, but had comments on particular issues.

Pheasant Release Program Volunteer – Doug Stein

Comment – Would like to see the Department develop an informational pamphlet with maps that describe the importance of the habitats that are present at Scatter Creek that can be used as an educational tool for the Pheasant hunting population that utilizes the site. It is his hope that this will raise awareness and help reduce potential negative impacts that the hunting community has on the prairie habitats.

Response – *Additional maps and other informational items have and will continue to be posted at the Scatter Creek Unit.*

Comment – The timing of cutting Scot’s broom at the Scatter Creek Unit has been a complaint of some of the hunting community. The freshly cut stalks have been reported as cutting some of the hunting dogs paws.

Response – *Scot’s broom is usually cut in August/September in the targeted control areas. This is when the plant is at its weakest growing stage and offers the opportunity to receive an increased amount of control.*

Comment – In the future it may be appropriate for the Department to close pheasant hunting at Scatter Creek except for Master Hunter special draw permits. This would convert the hunting experience at Scatter Creek to a privilege for experienced hunters who contribute to the habitat/species.

Response – *Scatter Creek will remain a pheasant release site open to licensed hunters throughout the 2010 pheasant season.*

Friends of Rocky Prairie – Sharron Coontz

Comments -- We're very concerned about the protection of West Rocky Prairie and the sensitive ecosystems found there. It is our hope that WDFW will continue to protect this area from anything and anyone that could harm all the sensitive plants found there, and/or disturb the rare butterflies, such as the Puget Blue and others seen in the area recently. Therefore, we ask that you continue to disallow horseback riding in the preserve, and that you consider keeping hunters out, since they too could trample sensitive and rare plants. We fervently hope that WDFW will continue to pursue funding for purchasing more of this area, recognizing that if the WDFW parcel could encompass the 745 acres currently owned by Port of Tacoma, there would be an **uninterrupted wildlife corridor of over 3,000 acres**, stretching up through Millersylvania State Park and down through the current preserve. An amazing and wonderful opportunity exists to save that for the creatures and people of future generations. Thousands of Thurston County residents have petitioned in support of protecting the rural character of this area, and we are grateful for the efforts of WDFW to protect and expand the protected parcel. We hope that those efforts continue!

Response – *Currently there is a small hunting population that utilizes the site for deer, quail, waterfowl, and coyote hunting opportunities. This recreational activity poses a minimal impact to the site and will be monitored to ensure that future impacts do not occur.*

Member of Capital Riders Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen (not a representative voice or elected position for the Backcountry Horsemen -- Connie Bailey

...As I and many other have expressed our concerns over the closure of Scatter Creek South for Horse Back riders...

Our issues are with:

Comment -- the 'Permanent Closure' and/or the requirement of applying for a usage permit.

Response -- *Reducing and regulating horse impacts on the sensitive prairie habitats has been discussed at CAG and field trial meetings since before the management plan for South Puget Sound was developed (this dates back to at least 15 years of discussion). The updated rules and conditions for field trials and general unit rules for Scatter Creek, which includes non-permitted horse recreation, are all in line with the management process for this unit. The Davis Creek (Koopmans) Unit was purchased*

as a mitigation piece to relocate some of the recreational impacts on the Scatter Creek Unit.

For numerous years there has been a finger pointing match between the Field Trial and day horse user groups at the Scatter Creek Unit. When damage occurred or rules were not followed, each group consistently pointed the finger at the other. Horse use that is conditioned through a temporary use permit can be regulated and enforced to ensure compliance. This is not possible with opening the area to unregulated horse recreation.

Comment -- if this is such a sensitive area, and butterfly larva was planted, then why are you allowing permit access for, dogs, people and horses?

Response – *WDFW is committed to providing recreational opportunities that protect and conserve sensitive habitats. The Scatter Creek Unit is open year round to a variety of recreational opportunities. These include horseback riding, dog training, bird watching, picnicking, environmental education, fishing, and waterfowl and pheasant hunting. The Scatter Creek Unit is also one of the most ecologically rich and diverse prairie habitats that remain in the South Sound. Managing for the balance between habitat and recreation is a challenge; accordingly updating unit rules and conditions is a necessary progression for land management. Allowing permitted horse driven activities give WDFW a reasonable amount of control over potential impacts to the site. This can also be closely monitored and enforced for compliance.*

Comment -- *If over 20 years horse impacts have been identified as a negative impact, why are you closing this area to horses?*

Response – *WDFW is currently in the process of finalizing a Habitat Conservation Plan with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. For more information about HCP's please visit <http://www.fws.gov/Endangered/hcp/>. There are a number of threatened/endangered state listed and federal candidate species on the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Unit. This habitat planning process may/will affect some of the recreational activities at the Scatter Creek Unit. The current rules and conditions for the Scatter Creek Unit will be applied to the HCP. As mentioned, WDFW is committed to providing recreational opportunities where applicable, however in the event that a listed species is impacted or a "take" occurs WDFW will be in violation of the Endangered Species Act. Obviously, from a management standpoint WDFW can not allow for this to occur.*

Comment -- *If over 20 years horse impacts have been identified as a negative impact, then who, how, what, where and why did **they** determine that 'limited horse use' would NOW be a violation of the endangered species act?*

Response – *Please see response above*

Comment -- Will this area be reopened for horseback riding, as it has been used in the past?

Response – *The South Unit of Scatter Creek will remain closed to horse entry except for permitted activities. Permitted activities can occur between August 1 and the opening of the pheasant hunting season at the end of September. Currently the south unit at Scatter Creek is the alternate/back-up site in the case that the Davis Creek (Koopmans) Unit is flooded during February and March.*

The Nature Conservancy – Patrick Dunn

Comments -- Scatter Creek Wildlife Area supports populations of several significant wildlife species, including rare butterflies and plants. These species are some of the rarest species in the state, occurring in only a few locations throughout the state. In addition, if these species are allowed to decline further, they will likely result in listing as federal endangered species, with subsequent impacts to Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, and more importantly, Joint Base McChord/Lewis with negative effects on military training and the economy of South Sound. Adequate protection and management for these species is needed at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area to help spread the responsibility of rare species management and recovery. The recent acquisition of Koopman Farms allowed the Department to reduce dog and horse usage on Scatter Creek. The Department needs to support this action and manage the Wildlife Area adequately to ensure impacts to rare species from recreational use are eliminated.

Please take additional steps to support the rare species and native prairie conservation occurring at Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie and minimize detrimental recreational use at Scatter Creek, especially in the South Unit.

Response – *WDFW will manage the Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie Units in a manner that allows for public recreation/enjoyment that does not threaten the unique and rare habitats that are found on these sites. Updating the Field Trial Rules and Conditions, and designating select areas for certain recreational activities at the Scatter Creek Unit are examples of positive stewardship of the sensitive habitats that are present at the Scatter Creek Unit.*



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Want to see the full plan?

Go to -
http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm

APPENDIX A

Olympic-Willapa Hills-South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Complex

