

Date and Source	Comment	<i>WDFW Response</i>
6/21/2023 Open House comment card	Brief presentation, good information stations with knowledgeable staff. My concerns are with horseback access and enforcement. Also, mountain bikes and e-bikes. I am a member of Backcountry Horsemen and Kittitas Valley trail riders.	As a follow up to the LTM plan, we will be creating a specific recreation plan that addresses all uses and management of those uses and for both summer and winter seasons on roads and trails. Addressing user conflicts and safety on a site-specific basis will be part of the recreation planning process.
6/21/23 Open House comment card	Please consider changing your mgmt. objectives for the road systems. To only say you want to inventory 20 miles or road in a ten-year period is a very low objective for a resource that impacts every aspect of the wildlife areas. Please change the objective to the entire road system for inventory. You can then describe the importance of the roads and the need to get the system into the best mgmt. condition. The use of lidar, GPS and CWU students should help you reach this goal. The road system has such a wide-ranging impact on all resources should be one of if not the highest concern to managers.	Thank you for your detailed evaluation of our performance measures. We have amended the performance measures to take out the metric of “twenty miles” and changed it to “# of miles” so we can achieve and report on a higher number of roads evaluated when capacity and funding allows. Our goal is to inventory and evaluate the entirety of the road system over the life of this plan.
6/21/23 Open House comment card	Riggs Rd. needs new green dots. They are Missing/damaged ones are all over.	We appreciate the information and will designate staff to address this issue.

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<p>7/14/23 Letter from Kittitas Audubon Society submitted to SEPA desk</p>	<p>The thirty (30) goals selected for this 10-year planning period are appropriate and important. However, because of limited funding and staff, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will find it challenging to make meaningful progress in all these areas without securing help from interested citizens and organizations. Work plans should be structured to include/create opportunities for citizens and organizations to help WDFW advance these goals. In Washington, interested citizens and organizations have demonstrated a willingness and level of ability to help with such work. (Kittitas Audubon Society has helped with surveying sagebrush bird species, and with monitoring use of snags in the managed forests in the Robinson Creek area.) Agency-public partnerships can produce broad benefits for the environment and the public at large.</p>	<p>The 30 goals stated in the plan are prioritized with the understanding that we need more funding and capacity to achieve them. The prioritization process included a ranking exercise that considered capacity as a factor. In recognition of the need to increase capacity, the goal is to increase stakeholder opportunities to assist staff in carrying out management objectives. Please take note of goal 24 on page 63, which states “Offer multiple and varied opportunities for stakeholder participation and engagement, which includes an objective (24b) to “provide opportunities annually for the public and other stakeholders to volunteer on the WLA”. In addition, WDFW recognizes the need for additional staff to assist the WLA manager in designing projects, coordinating volunteers, and providing logistical support to our partners. Please take note of goal 25 on page 63: “Hire, train, equip, and license, as necessary, WLA staff, to meet the operation and management needs of WLAs”. The two objectives under this goal address capacity needs: 25a) Increase staffing to meet workload demands, and 25b) Work with partnership and volunteer coordinators to build capacity”. We are designing workplans with the flexibility to accommodate more capacity but also must be prepared for unforeseen events. Our partnerships with conservation and recreation organizations are critical to the success of our management goals over the next ten years.</p>

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<p>7/14/23 Letter from Kittitas Audubon Society submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>Each of the 30 goals in the Management Plan has identified specific performance measures. However, these performance measures are primarily measures of “agency activity” rather than measures of “successful ecological outcomes”. The current Management Plan performance measures should be modified to include some performance measures that document the ecological outcomes of the plan’s actions. Additional outcome-based performance measures could also be incorporated during the proposed 2-year review cycle of the management plan.</p>	<p>Response: We understand the nature of your comments. We chose to focus on performance measures that are quantifiable, reportable, and will yield ecological results., which will be reported on every two years. Performance measures are referenced in employee work plans, which guide what employees do on the ground. Volunteers can help us achieve these goals. The plan does not preclude projects proposed or additional actions not outlined in the plan. We encourage volunteer involvement and project proposals. In the spirit of a partnership with Kittitas Audubon, we would like to extend an invitation for a meeting between WDFW staff and Kittitas Audubon to discuss ways that Kittitas Audubon can help WDFW achieve these habitat objectives. Please contact Shaun Morrison the Wildlife Area manager to arrange for such a coordination meeting if interested.</p>

<p>7/14/23 Letter from Kittitas Audubon Society submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>Most of the units of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area have experience stream channel incision and a general reduction in areas of moist meadows, floodplains and wetlands. Climate change is increasing this loss. The Management Plan’s performance measures focus concern on fish-bearing steam reaches and neglect the extensive network of channels and moist areas not adjacent to fish-bearing waters. Despite the lack of fish, these areas are of great importance to animals and birds. Restoration efforts to reduce channel incision and re-water riparian area would improve habitat for upland wildlife. Also, water captured and stored in these areas higher in the watershed can be expected to beneficially extend flow in fish-bearing waters downstream. To address the impacts of climate change on the Wildlife Area, additional performance measures, objectives, and tasks are needed under Goals 7 and 8 to address these upper watershed area and small watershed areas.</p>	<p>Thank you for highlighting the importance of meadows, streams, wetlands, and other moist areas for habitat, water storage, and climate resilience. Additional climate resilience-focused objectives were developed for all goals in the climate section (see Appendix H). For Goal 7: “Protect and restore riparian and aquatic habitat”, the associated climate objective is to “reconnect the floodplains in forest and shrubsteppe habitat to improve water storage” (pg. 126). Reconnecting the floodplain is an adaptation strategy that can increase natural flood storage, reduce flood risk, recharge groundwater, and restore critical salmonid habitat. For Goal 8: “Protect and restore meadow and wetland habitats”, the associated climate objective directs the agency to “restore meadows and wetlands through re-establishment of flow paths” (p.126). The protection, management, restoration and creation of wetland and meadow habitat-and associated ecosystem functions – are all essential for increasing resilience of these habitat types. Wetlands and wet meadows provide numerous ecosystem functions including habitat for species, regulating hydrologic function, soil stabilization, and act as natural fire breaks. All these functions will be increasingly important in a changing climate.</p> <p>We prioritized fish bearing streams over headwater streams as we can often get funding and capacity in fish-bearing streams more easily than in non-fish bearing systems. Our biologists and partners work on a floodplain and watershed level for multiple benefits. A guiding principle of stream restoration is to work on restoration from the bottom up to connect habitat</p>
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		<p>rather than focus on isolated streams. It is more effective to prioritize habitat in lower order systems and work toward higher order streams as funding and capacity allows. Our biologists are working on headwater streams and meadows where funding and capacity are available. If you are interested, we'd be happy to sit down with you to show some of our current plans and incorporate input from you on other potential sites.</p>

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<p>7/14/23 Letter from Kittitas Audubon Society submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>In the section on Hydrology and Watersheds (page 66) the Management Plan suggests that the watercourses in the shrubsteppe dominated watersheds are maintained by springs and seeps and have minimal variations in flow. This is not an accurate characterization. Our typical precipitation patterns yield a higher spring flow period, with surface water in these channels for long distances. Channel and watershed restoration actions have the potential to store this extra water, expand riparian areas, and extend the period of surface flow downstream. Clarification of this annual cycle and restoration opportunities should be incorporated in the final document.</p>	<p>Thank you for addressing the importance of restoration opportunities in shrubsteppe habitat. A unique focus of this wildlife area plan is on the restoration and protection of shrubsteppe habitat on the wildlife area. Please take note of Goal 8 and the associated objectives on page 56 and Goal 10 and the associated objectives on page 56-57. Notably, the agency is directed to 8c: “restore meadows and wetlands through reestablishment of hydrologic connectivity” on all units of the wildlife area, as well as 10c: “Incorporate results and recommendations from WDFW/Audubon Sagebrush songbird surveys into shrubsteppe management”, and 10f: “identify and develop a shrubsteppe restoration strategy” which will identify priority restoration opportunities together with our partners. Most streams in the Quilomene and Whiskey Dick are ephemeral. We revised the language in the Hydrology section to include the following language: “Some streams such as Parke, Quilomene, Skookumchuck and Whiskey Dick Creeks have perennial reaches.”</p>

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<p>7/14/23 Letter from Kittitas Audubon Society submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>The Management Plan (see Map 8, page 97) indicates that fish are not present in Robinson Canyon Creek with the L.T. Murray unit. This is not correct. A small, remnant population of fish are indeed still present in the creek in an area of perennial flow. The area used to include a beaver dam complex. Although the stream – adjacent road has been mostly removed, natural channel restoration has been slow. The addition of large woody material in the channel would likely be beneficial.</p>	<p>Please revisit Map 8. The map and key show that both rainbow trout and cutthroat trout are present in Robinson Creek. We are currently working to restore Robinson Creek by increasing woody material and reconnecting channels and floodplain. The WLA is looking to add woody debris to most channels on the WLA. Working with Forestry staff, we can source wood of WLA forest health projects.</p>
<p>7/14/23 Letter from Kittitas Audubon Society submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>It would be helpful to the reader of the Management Plan to have the table of goals in the plan Executive Summary (page 11) match the organization and enumeration of table of goals in the actual document (page 53, Table 9: Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures). As currently presented, the tables are ordered differently, giving the reader the impression that there are two somewhat different sets of goals, and making the document confusing to review.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Staff have revised the table of goals in the plan to match the organization of goals in Table 9 for greater clarity.</p>

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<p>7/12/23 Letter from Conservation Northwest submitted to SEPA desk</p>	<p>There are a wide variety of goals and objectives proposed in this plan that will benefit wildlife, the habitat, and the people who utilize these lands. Obtainable performance measures were presented with a heavy emphasis on restoration projects, fence removal, and recreation management.</p> <p>This WLA hosts many important watersheds that are in need of protection and repair. Conservation Northwest supports the many restoration projects and opportunities performance measures were presented with a heavy emphasis on restoration projects, fence removal, and recreation management.</p>	<p>Thank you for your support of the goals, objectives, and performance measures in the plan.</p>

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<p>7/12/23 Letter from Conservation Northwest submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>CNW strongly supports the investigation and implementation of virtual fence where possible (Goal 7). This can be an opportunity to replace derelict fences with an effective (both cost and ability) and wildlife friendly alternative to physical fences. Virtual fence will also allow the managers and the leases to work together to utilize grazing as a restoration tool without the limitations of physical fence and a new ability to spot graze invasive weeds and keep cattle away from important riparian areas. With experience in coordinating virtual fence projects throughout central Washington, our Sagelands Heritage Program staff hope to contribute information and assistance in this process. We would also recommend, if possible, some language regarding grazing deferment or relocation should a wildfire occur on the leased lands (Goal 23). This will allow the habitat to rest and recover with the help of other restoration techniques.</p>	<p>We appreciate CNW’s concerns regarding grazing deferment or relocation in the case of wildfire. We consider relocation or deferment as a mitigation strategy for our existing grazing permits. Please note in the Tasks column for Objective 23a that we will review existing permits for shrubsteppe protections, which include protections for shrubsteppe habitat post-fire. Notably, the plan prioritizes staff to develop a shrubsteppe restoration strategy and budget by 2026 (Objective 10f), which includes evaluation of post-fire impacts and development of post-fire restoration pathways for both short and long-term restoration.</p>

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<p>7/12/23 Letter from Conservation Northwest submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>Investing in ways to monitor ecological integrity and gauge social conditions are important for maintaining effective recreation management. We encourage the continued effort to monitor road and trail conditions to inform decisions to improve green dot roads or decommission roads throughout the WLA. High road density and human disturbance can lead to impacts on migration corridors and wildlife movement, so the continued effort to reduce road density while still allowing access will benefit our elf, mule deer, and many other species. With the continually increasing number of recreationists visiting the WLA, it is pertinent to develop a means of monitoring for recreation impacts on the habitat. Especially in areas like Cabin Creek that have been overwhelmed with dispersed camping sites and vehicle use around and in the creek itself.</p>	<p>To address your comments regarding the Yakima River unit and recreational impacts to the Cabin Creek area, we have added the Yakima River Unit to the Unit description column in the Goals and Objectives table for Goal 16, Objective 16b, to ensure the objective is applied to this unit.</p>

<p>7/12/23 Letter from Conservation Northwest submitted to SEPA desk (cont.)</p>	<p>CNW would like to recommend some language around handling dispersed usage in what could otherwise be productive wildlife and fish habitat and including an education and outreach objective in goal 15. The compatibility of recreation and conservation can be strengthened through education and outreach as mentioned in goals 3, 10, 17, 18, and 20. It would also be beneficial to investigate ways to include dual-language signage, kiosks, and outreach materials where possible.</p> <p>The L.T. Murray WLA has incredibly valuable and some of the last intact shrub-steppe habitat in the state which is relied on by many species. Unfortunately, it is also an area with extensive and increasing recreational demand, invasive weed species, and weather instability causing high fire danger. The habitat disturbance and degradation caused by both human and natural processes impacts the resiliency of these important ecosystems and the success and survivability of our local wildlife species. It will undoubtedly require extensive coordination and collaboration to achieve these conservations and recreation goals for this WLA, and it is admirable that WDFW has made an intentional effort in this plan to mention and plan to collaborate with a variety of agencies, NGOs, the Yakama Nation, and local community members who are ready to help maintain and improve this important area.</p> <p>We would like to thank you again for allowing this opportunity to review and comment on this draft management plan for the L.T. Murray wildlife area. We enthusiastically support WDFW’s mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and habitat and see this reflected in this management plan. CNW is looking forward to witnessing and participating in the conservation objectives set in this plan into the future.</p>	<p>WDFW would like to thank Conservation Northwest for advocating for dual-language outreach and recreation materials on the WLA. We recognize the need and have begun implementing dual-language materials and signage through our new signage standards. We plan to update recreational signage with dual-language messaging and materials on the wildlife area.</p> <p>Thank you for your support of goals and objectives aimed at shrubsteppe conservation and recovery, and climate resiliency.</p>
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<p>Email received from the Confederated Colville Tribes, on July 10, 2023, by the SEPA desk.</p>	<p>“The CCT concurs with WDFW's issuance of a DNS in relation to the LT Murray Wildlife Area Management Plan. However, I have cc'd WDFW's Cultural Resources Program Manager, Katherine Kelly, here as the SEPA Checklist solely accounts for the Yakama Nation's cultural resource interests in the project area. I want to be sure that Ms. Kelly informs WDFW staff (in this case Holly English) to be sure to include the CCT when engaging in consultation regarding proposed projects within LT Murray, and that we expect our history to be accurately represented, and our views to be appropriately considered, in all cultural resource survey reports. Thank you for consulting with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.”</p>	<p>WDFW is in ongoing conversations with the CCT. The agency is committed to consultation with the CCT and all affected tribes within the project area per WDFW Policy 5007. Policy 5007 provides guidelines and expectations for WDFW employees to consult and coordinate on a government -to-government basis with federally recognized tribal governments, when a proposed WDFW policy, agreement, or program implementation may affect tribal interests.</p>