

# Mt St Helens Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting

## Final Meeting Notes

October 25, 2017

WDFW Region 5 Headquarters, Ridgefield

6:00-8:00 pm

### Attendees:

WAAC Members present:

Carol Chandler, USFS  
Dan Howell, Rocky Mt Elk Foundation  
Darcy Michem, local community  
Mark Smith, neighbor

WAAC Members not present:

Jim Anderson, Backcountry Horsemen  
Roger Wallis, local community  
Russ Kastberg, Audubon  
Angelica Velazques, Cowlitz County Weed Board

WDFW Staff:

Daren Hauswald, Mt St Helens Wildlife Area Manager  
Sandra Jonker, Regional Program Manager  
Chad Wildermuth, Assistant Wildlife Area Manager  
Lauri Vigue, Project Manager  
Darric Lowrey, Scatter Creek/South Puget Sound/North Olympic Wildlife Areas Manager

### Welcome and Introductions

Sandra Jonker, Region 5 Wildlife Program Manager welcomed everyone. Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC), *formerly* Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) members and WDFW staff introduced themselves. Lauri Vigue, Planning Project Manager, explained the focus of the meeting is to provide a description of WAAC roles, expectations and responsibilities, planning team responsibilities, decision making, discussion guidelines, overview of the wildlife area planning process, and timeline. Daren will provide a draft list of wildlife area issues developed by internal scoping and an overview of the wildlife area units.

## Mt St Helens WLA Planning and Process

The primary purpose of this meeting is to introduce the wildlife area management planning process to this committee. The goal is to complete a wildlife area management plan for the Mt St Helens Wildlife Area in 2018. The agency mission and strategic plan were introduced. An overview of Mt St Helens WAAC roles and expectations, contributions and responsibilities were provided; as well as the planning team responsibilities. A summary of the purpose of the plan, Wildlife Area Management Planning Framework document and revised plan outline was provided.

The Mt St Helens WLA internal scoping meeting was held in September, the public meeting will be held on November 30th; and the first planning meeting it anticipated be held in December. WAAC members are highly encouraged to attend the public meetings.

## Planning Timeline (estimated)

Mt St Helens WAAC	October - February 2018 – April 2018 (3 meetings)
1 <sup>st</sup> Public meeting	November 30, 2017
2nd Public meeting	March – April 2018
Planning meetings	December - February (~3-4 meetings)
Final Draft Plan	Late spring 2018

## Wildlife Area Overview - Daren

Nellie Corser Unit: 59 acres; original purchase funded by Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) and donation; habitat includes: late successional forest. Key species: spotted owl, black-tailed deer, fisher, Cascade torrent salamander, western toad; suitable habitat – for northern goshawk and Larch Mountain salamander; recreation: hunting and hiking

Duck Lake: 39 acres; original purchase funded by Ducks Unlimited; habitat includes: wetlands and floodplain habitat along the E.F. Lewis River. Key species: Chinook, chum and steelhead, waterfowl, Oregon spotted frog suitable habitat; recreation – hunting

Two Forks: 49 acres; original purchase funded by RCO – Washington Wildlife Recreation Program (WWRP); habitat includes: mature riparian forest at the confluence of the N.F and E.F Lewis Rivers. Key species: Columbia white-tailed deer, wading birds, songbirds and black-tailed deer; recreation: hunting, wildlife viewing and fishing

Cedar Creek: 127 acres; original purchase funded by USFWS Pittman Robertson, Wildlife Funds, donation; habitat includes: mixed forest and open pasture. Key species: band-tailed pigeons, black-tailed deer, western toad. Salmonids (coho, Chinook and steelhead); recreation: hunting

Jenny Creek: 20 acres, original purchase funded by USFWS Pittman Robertson, Wildlife Funds, donation; habitat includes: mixed forest and open pasture. Key species: band-tailed pigeons, black-tailed deer, western toad; recreation: hunting

Eagle Island: 279 acres, original purchase funded by Recreation Conservation Office – Salmon Funding Recovery Board, Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA); habitat includes: mature riparian forest and salmonid habitat. Key species include: steelhead, chum, Chinook, waterfowl, black-tailed deer, band-tailed pigeon; recreation: hunting and fishing

Abernathy Creek: 138 acres; original purchase Cowlitz County transfer; habitat includes: riparian forest and salmonid habitat. Key species: Chinook, chum, steelhead, eagle, osprey, marbled murrelet, black-tailed deer; recreation: hunting and fishing

Nelson: 20 acres; original purchase Port of Kalama mitigation; habitat includes: wetland, floodplain habitat. Key species: waterfowl, eagle and osprey; recreation: hunting and wildlife viewing (only boat access)

Fisher Island: 257 acres; original purchase funded by Recreation Conservation Office, WWRP; habitat includes: forested floodplain. Key species: Columbia white-tailed deer, waterfowl; recreation: hunting and fishing

White Island: 130 acres; original purchase funded by Wildlife Funds; habitat includes: forested floodplain. Key species: Columbia white-tailed deer, waterfowl, songbirds; recreation: hunting and fishing

Altoona: 177 acres; original purchase funded by: USFWS – Coastal Wetland; Recreation Conservation Office – WWRP; habitat includes: mature spruce forest, floodplain habitat in Grays Bay. Key species: bald eagle, shorebirds, wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, elk, marbled murrelet; recreation: hunting, fishing, boating/boat launch and parking area

Carnine: 37 acres: original purchase donation; habitat includes: forest. Key species: black-tailed deer; recreation: none (land-locked unit surrounded by private residential)

Hall Road: 132 acres; original purchase funded by USFWS - Dingell Johnson; habitat includes: wetland, riparian and upland forest habitat located near Silver Lake. Key species include: waterfowl, black-tailed deer, bald eagle, osprey; recreation: hunting and fishing

Canal Road: 121 acres: original purchase funded by USFWS - Dingell Johnson; habitat includes: wetlands along Silver Lake; species include: waterfowl, bald eagle, osprey; recreation: hunting, fishing and boating

Gardner: 43 acres; original purchase funded by Recreation Conservation Office – Bonds; habitat includes: riparian and floodplain habitats along the N.F. Toutle River. Key species include: bald eagle, western toad; recreation: fishing, swimming and wildlife viewing

Hoffstadt: 3,816 acres; original purchase: state appropriation; habitat includes: old-growth forest, riparian habitat. Key species include: steelhead, coho, elk, black-tailed deer, bald eagle, fisher, waterfowl, ruffed and dusky grouse, spotted owl, amphibians; recreation: hunting and hiking (land-locked unit surrounded by Weyerhaeuser private forest)

Mt St Helens (Mud Flow): 2,744 acres; original purchase funded by Wildlife Funds, Recreation Conservation Office – WWRP, State appropriation; habitat includes: debris flow, salmon bearing streams, and wetlands. Key species include: large concentrations of winter elk, steelhead, coho, elk, black-tailed deer, bald eagle, fisher, red legged frog, western toad, northern spotted owl; recreation: Hunting, watchable wildlife, horseback riding

Merrill Lake: 1,452 acres, original purchased funded by Recreation Conservation Office – WWRP; habitat includes: old-growth forest, lodge pole pine, falls, shoreline and riparian, ancient lava flow. Key species include: elk, eagle, osprey, fisher, black-tailed deer, western toad, cascade torrent salamander, spotted owl, Larch Mountain and Van Dyke’s salamanders, Townsend’s big-eared bat, northern goshawk. Historic bull trout; recreation: Hunting, hiking, limited camping

#### Issues List - Daren

The internal scoping process identified the following preliminary issues that will be addressed in the new plan:

- Land locked units (Mud Flow and Carnine)
- Operations and maintenance (lack of funding)
- Road issues and access
- Hoffstadt land acquisition
- White Island Natural Area Preserve Management Plan
- Sediment Retention Structure
- Updated signage on wildlife area
- Encroachment – private lands
- Shed antler hunting impacts

#### Potential Focal Species:

Elk

Fisher and wolf expansion

Columbia White-tailed deer

Oregon spotted frog

Waterfowl

Band-tailed pigeon  
Yellow billed cuckoo  
Northern spotted owl  
Black-tailed deer  
Steelhead  
Chinook  
Coho  
Bull trout

#### Mt St Helens WLA WAAC Comments

Mark Smith: is interested in having a third WAAC meeting to discuss the public comments received and edits. Response: A third WAAC meeting will be setup after the all comments have been received and agency responses developed.

ACOE Sediment Structure – the WAAC is concerned with lack of wildlife mitigation for the original structure.

This will be a unique wildlife area plan because of the focal points of Mt St Helens and the Columbia River and the stakeholders involved (e.g. USACOE, USFS) and other interest groups; National Academy of Science research in the Monument and the challenges by the sediment retention structure.

Carol: How will the tribes be involved in this process? Response: The region will send out notice to the tribes in advance of the public meeting. It is up to the individual tribes on how they want to be involved in the process. Some will schedule meetings specifically with the region other prefer to submit comments. The draft plan will be sent to the tribes in advance of public review for their comments. Notices will be sent to the following tribes: Puyallup, Cowlitz and Yakama Nation.

Carol: Merrill Lake – USFS has been monitoring winter habitat for Townsend’s big eared bats. They are known to winter in caves and fissures.

Darcy: Asked about the Cress Lake Access site near Kalama, and Green River Fish Hatchery. The Onieda access site is managed by the access program.

Carol: when evaluating lands for surplus, we need to make sure we weigh values (e.g. priority species) consistent with the mission and the legal requirements of the original purchase. In some cases, we need to ask the question, are we giving up providing public access for residential development? There should be mitigation funding opportunities available for ongoing operations and maintenance activities.

Access is important for the Mud Flow Unit. Purple martins are located on this unit.

Carol: Fishers are now present at Trout Lake and expanding.

Wolves have been documented on White Pass – Cowlitz Ranger District

Oregon spotted frog, does critical habitat include historic ranges? Which neotropical birds should be considered as part of this plan?

Regarding land trades, the funding strings may restrict donations and land transfers.

Carnine Unit is located near Castle Rock and Toutle Lake, a landlocked parcel. County put deeds on 2 easements, if we surplus this property it would go back to the family.

Hoffstadt Unit – Access is a big concern, public has to acquire a Weyerhaeuser permit to access, no easement or right-of-way. WDFW has administration access only. ACOE Draft EIS points to a interlocal agreement, it is the responsibility of the state and diking district to provide access. On the N.F. Toutle there is approximately 1,100 acres loss of habitat each year due to the sediment structure. Wildlife habitat and recreation impacts have not been mitigated. Legislatures have been contacted regarding this disconnect.

Other WAAC comments:

Promote education and scientific research

- Pacific NW laboratory – look for opportunities and partnerships
- Benefits future generations
- Create recreational education projects

Include rare plants inventory and management

- Silver Lake has a bladderwort
- Lady slipper – Hall Road

Develop a bird watching brochure for Silver Lake

Need additional operations and maintenance funding

Cowlitz County Comprehensive plan – joint WDFW and DNR recreation access plan in the Toutle Valley is being developed

The recreation emphasis has been on fishing and hunting, limited people support traditional recreation now. Over 5 million use fish and wildlife lands we need to find more created ways for funding, e.g. GoFundMe adopt an acre, web cam sponsors.

Hoffstadt acquisition -

Silver Lake RV Park partnership? Public/private partnerships in existing habitat areas/access school districts, comprehensive plan expansion, community forest south end of lake.

Coldwater Lake Science Learning Center – has partnerships/education opportunities

Include pika on species list – have been documented near the Forest Center

Sasquatch tags – marketing approach

Lack of designated and dispersed camping on the wildlife area

Non-traditional recreation (handicapped, ATV trails, viewing sites) – need education trails, small trails and parking lots.

**Comments from Mark Smith, received in November 13, 2017 -**

After taking time to review all information regarding the Mt St Helens Area Management Plan, I am concerned that the title of this plan is deceptive.

With 33 properties, that are not all directly linked to Mt St Helens Area, the GP National Forest, or show compatibility, leads me to be concerned that we will not be able to directly relate the needs of each area effectively.

I would like to suggest that we consider looking at dividing these units up into at least two more related groups, to be able to address there specific needs better. Example; areas along SR 504 are related, and share the similar needs and concerns of larger land units and access. In addition, smaller land unites have different concerns and needs to maintain, or consideration to eliminate some from WDFW management.

I feel that in order to create an effective plan, we need to create a more accurate scoping for these units. As they are presented now we are applying a very broad brush.

I feel if we keep going to create a plan that will truly allow the development of these areas to there strongest and best use, I feel we need to create a more pointed review process.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments, I look forward working with all.

Stakeholders:

Lewis and Skamania County weed boards

Ducks Unlimited

County commissioners

Adjacent landowner/businesses

Uacolt Burn Sportsmen Club

Toutle School District

Mt St Helens Institute

University of Nottingham

## Pacific Northwest Research Station (USFS)

### Next steps:

- Public meeting November 30th – Region 5 Headquarters, Ridgefield
- Planning team develops goals & objectives, draft plan in winter 2018
- WAAC review draft plan Spring 2018
- Public review draft in Summer 2018

### Action items for the group

- Provide comments on the charter by July 14th
- Register as a volunteer