

Chelan Wildlife Area

2019-20 Management Plan Update



This document is intended to highlight accomplishments as they relate to goals and objectives identified within the Chelan Wildlife Area Management Plan. The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities at the Chelan Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, WDFW develops a process for revising the management plans for each wildlife area to identify new management priorities and actions. In between plan revisions, the update focuses on recent accomplishments over the last two years.

Management Highlights

Swakane Unit - Storage/Shop Building (*Goal/Objective 3.B*)

For the first time, a new building was constructed on the Chelan Wildlife Area. When the Swakane Unit was acquired in 1967, it came with a two-story shop and storage building that should have been condemned years ago. Thankfully, it was demolished in 2019 and the new building was completed in the fall of 2020. This building provides secure storage for equipment

and supplies, and it has enough room for a small shop. This infrastructure will help extend the life of equipment and supplies and allow repair and maintenance of equipment to occur on the wildlife area. Repairs and maintenance previously occurred on the Wells Wildlife Area. Funding was provided through the State Capital Budget through the Capital and Asset Management Program. The building was constructed by Glacier Industries.



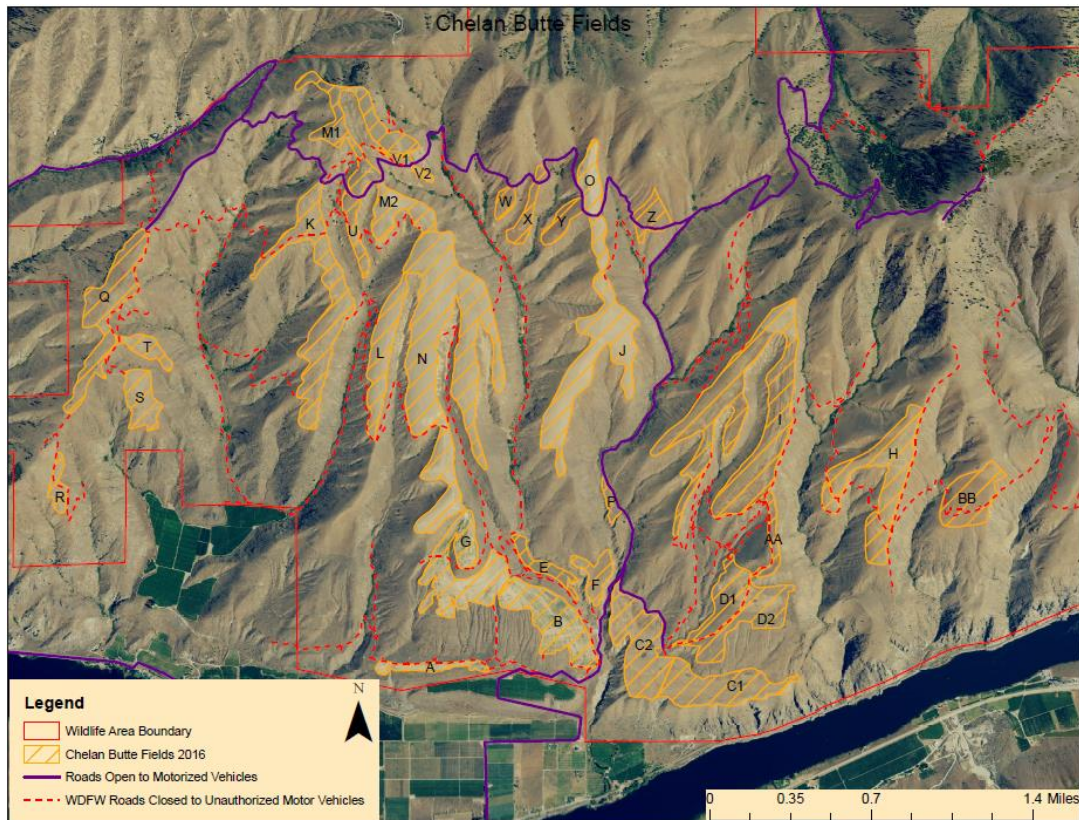
Swakane storage / shop building – Photo by Daniel Hammerstrom, Glacier Industries

Chelan Butte Unit – Shrubsteppe Agricultural Fields Restoration (Goal/Objective 1.C)

Starting in the late 1800s, the ridges of Chelan Butte were farmed for dryland wheat production. Thirty fields totaling just over 1,000 acres were farmed at one time or another for over 100 years. After WDFW acquired Chelan Butte in 1970, the best fields were maintained in wheat production under share crop agreements. In 2010, with funding from the Chelan Public Utility District (Rocky Reach Dam Settlement Agreement), work began on restoring the fields to native grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Fields were fallowed for one to three years and then seeded with native grasses in fall. The year after seeding the grasses, a second seeding operation with native forb and shrub seed was conducted on a portion of each field. After 10 years, the project is nearly complete; a few patches of perennial weeds and cereal rye will need attention in the next couple of years. The restored fields represent 10 percent of the acreage of the unit and have dramatically changed Chelan Butte to benefit grassland and shrubsteppe-dependent wildlife. Their completion also was the ruination of the excellent mourning dove hunting associated with wheat production on the Butte.



Field K (Woody Woodpecker) 2019



Swakane and Chelan Butte Units – Riparian Restoration (*Goal/Objective 4.C, D; 5.B*)

Over the past eight years, 14 riparian plantings totaling 11 acres have been completed on the Chelan Butte and Swakane units with funding from the Chelan Public Utility District (Rocky Reach Dam Settlement Agreement). In 2019, a one-acre planting was completed on Chelan Butte and two acres were completed in Swakane Canyon in 2020. It is commonly known that riparian areas provide habitat for a plethora of native mammals and birds, as well as introduced game birds. This habitat type is also important to beneficial insects and pollinators. Shrubs that flower at different times during the growing season provide a more continuous source of needed pollen and nectar. Flowering shrubs that were planted include smooth sumac, serviceberry, chokecherry, woods rose, hawthorn, Oregon grape, golden current, wax currant, blue elderberry, ocean spray, mock orange, and snowberry. Starting in 2018, all plots have included plantings of narrow-leaf milkweed and showy milkweed. The first blooming milkweed from these plantings was observed in 2020, providing a bright spot in an otherwise dismal year.



Swakane Canyon planting in 2014



Swakane Canyon planting in 2020

All Units – Improved Signage (Goal/Objective 9.M)

The original units of Chelan Wildlife Area (Swakane, Entiat, and Chelan Butte) still had 50+ year old signs at many of the main entry points. The durability of these signs is a testament to former manager Ken Kilgore's fabrication skills and use of 3/8-inch steel plates mounted on railroad iron. All the signs referred to the units as Department of Game Wildlife Recreation Areas. Needless to say, these signs were a bit out of date. Pittman-Robertson and Discover Pass funding was used to update the entry signs and complete much needed maintenance and upgrades to existing kiosks on the Swakane and Chelan Butte units.



Refurbished kiosk on the Swakane Unit



Updated entry signs on the Chelan Butte Unit

New Issues

Swakane Rifle and Pistol Range

By mid-summer of 2021, Phase One of the developed shooting range in Swakane Canyon should be completed. Funding for Phase One is from a Firearm and Archery Range Recreation (FARR) grant, state funds, and a donation by the Wenatchee Sportsman's Association. The new range will be constructed on the site of a user-created range, and it will have 100 and 200-yard rifle ranges. Funding for Phase Two will combine a second FARR grant and state funding to construct a 25-yard pistol range, firing lines, and shooting benches.



Construction starts on the Swakane Rifle and Pistol Range