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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



Elk on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area, submitted by Nicholle Stephens (WDFW)

District 10 Hunting Prospects

Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties

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DISTRICT 10 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 10 is in southwest Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. Game management units (GMUs) in this district include 501 (Lincoln), 503 (Randle), 504 (Stella), 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 530 (Ryderwood), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). The landscape of this wide area ranges from tidally influenced Columbia River shorelines to Cascade peaks. In the section of this document called “Individual Game Management Unit (gmu) Specifics” you will find details for each GMU including size, the approximate percentage of public land, primary landowners, and access roads.

A high percentage of this district is privately-owned. Private timber companies often limit public access to their lands or sell hunting access permits to a limited number of participants. When planning your hunt, it’s important to understand the recreational access policies of individual timber companies. You can typically find recreational access information on websites or by calling access hotlines. A list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by private industrial timber companies is included at the end of this document.

Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10. Major changes to hunting access in 2015 included a requirement that hunters buy an access permit to hunt on most of Weyerhaeuser land, including the St. Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). Motorized access permits are being sold for between \$250 and \$400, while non-motorized access permits are between \$75 and \$125. Visit their [website](#) for details. Weyerhaeuser does allow free public access on their lands enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program. To locate those lands, visit [Private Lands Hunting Access | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

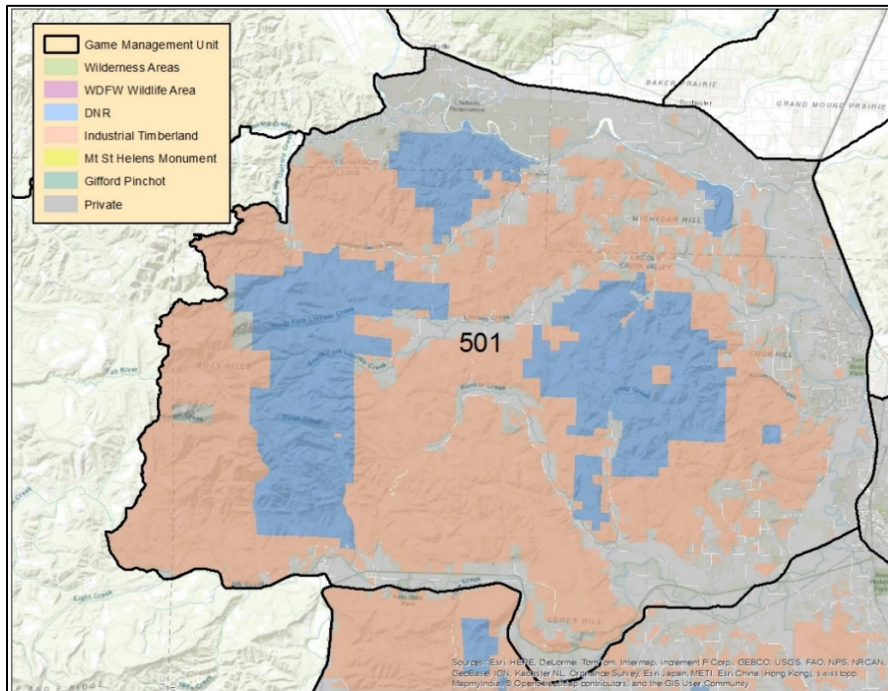
Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting without an access fee, but vehicle access may be limited. Major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Hancock Forest Management, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond (permit fee access), Rayonier (very limited access), and Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management. Access to these lands may be restricted in August, September, and sometimes October due to fire danger. You can find more information about hunting opportunities on private land on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/private-lands>, on page 96 of the [Big Game pamphlet](#), or by using the Mapping Tool at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>

Public land in the district includes WDFW’s Cowlitz and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Areas. You can find details about the Wildlife Areas on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas>. Additionally, there is the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot/> as well as state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) scattered throughout all three counties. Contact this email for more information: pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov These state and federal lands are open for public access.

INDIVIDUAL GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT SPECIFICS

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 501 -LINCOLN

GMU 501 is located in the northwestern corner of WDFW Region 5, west of Interstate 5 (I-5), near Chehalis and Centralia, and lies predominantly in Lewis County. The GMU is a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes in the lower elevations and closer to Interstate 5 but transitions quickly into forestlands as elevations increase. The predominant geographic features of GMU 501 are the Chehalis River, Interstate 5, and the Doty Hills. The unit is generally very good for black-tails and poor for elk.

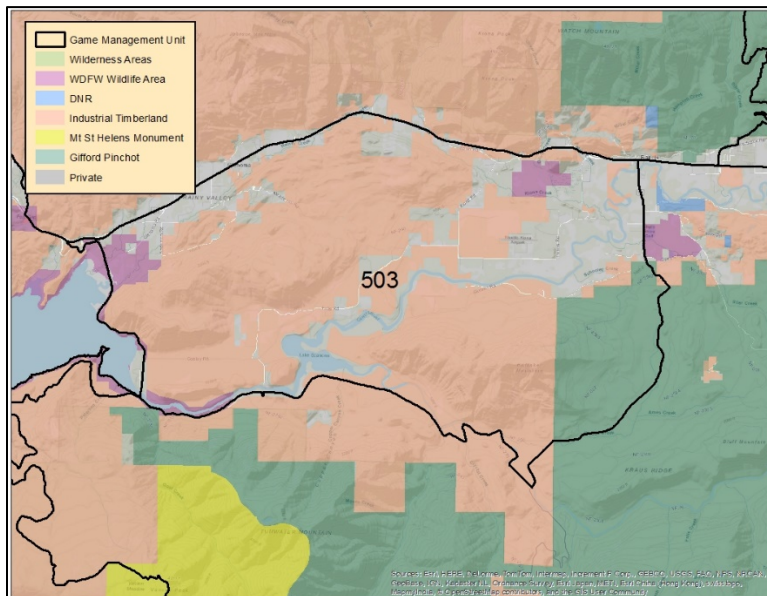


Square Miles	232
Percent Public Land	~35%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~45%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~10%

Primary Landowners	Weyerhaeuser
	DNR
Habitat / Terrain	Small Agricultural Owners
	State and Industrial Forestlands
	Floodplain / Private Agricultural and Residential
	Mix of Flatter Agricultural Areas and Steeper Hills
Primary Access Points	State Route 6
	Lincoln Creek Road
Small Game / Waterfowl	Average for ruffed grouse, very good for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 503 -RANDLE

GMU 503 is located east of I-5, near Randle, east of Riffe Lake, South of State Route 12 and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes in the lower elevations, private industrial forestlands, and U.S. Forest Service lands. The Kiona Creek and Kosmos Units of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area also lie within this GMU. The predominant geographic features of GMU 503 are the Cowlitz River, Cispus River, USFS Road 25, and State Route 12. The unit is generally moderately productive for black-tails and elk though its small size and significant amount of private property make access challenging.

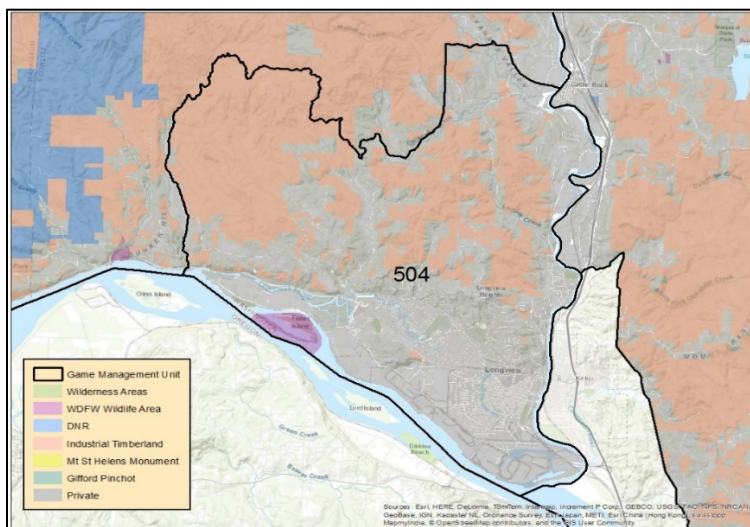


Square Miles	56
Percent Public Land	~20%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~50%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~0%

Primary Landowners	Small Agricultural Owners
	U.S. Forest Service
	Private Industrial Forestlands
Habitat / Terrain	Floodplain / Private Agricultural and Residential
	U.S. Forest Service Lands
	Forested Hills and Flatter Agricultural Areas
Primary Access Points	State Route 12
	U.S. Forest Service 25 Road
Small Game / Waterfowl	Average for ruffed grouse / Low for Waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 504 -STELLA

GMU 504 is located west of I-5, lies entirely in Cowlitz County, and includes the city of Longview. The GMU is a mix of urbanized areas, industrialized areas, private agricultural lands, and rural homes in the lower elevations, as well as private industrial forestlands. The Fisher Island Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area also lies within this GMU. The predominant geographic features of GMU 504 are the Columbia River, the City of Longview, and Coal Creek. The unit generally has low productivity for black-tails and elk. Access to the GMU is challenging due to its small size, the predominance of private lands, and urbanized areas. Additionally, the GMU is “Firearm Restricted”, meaning the use of modern firearms for hunting is not allowed. See the annual Big Game Regulations for specific details. Finally, the GMU has a small population of Columbian white-tailed deer in low-elevation areas near the Columbia River. Hunters are reminded that there is no open season for these deer and should check the Big Game Pamphlet for specifics.

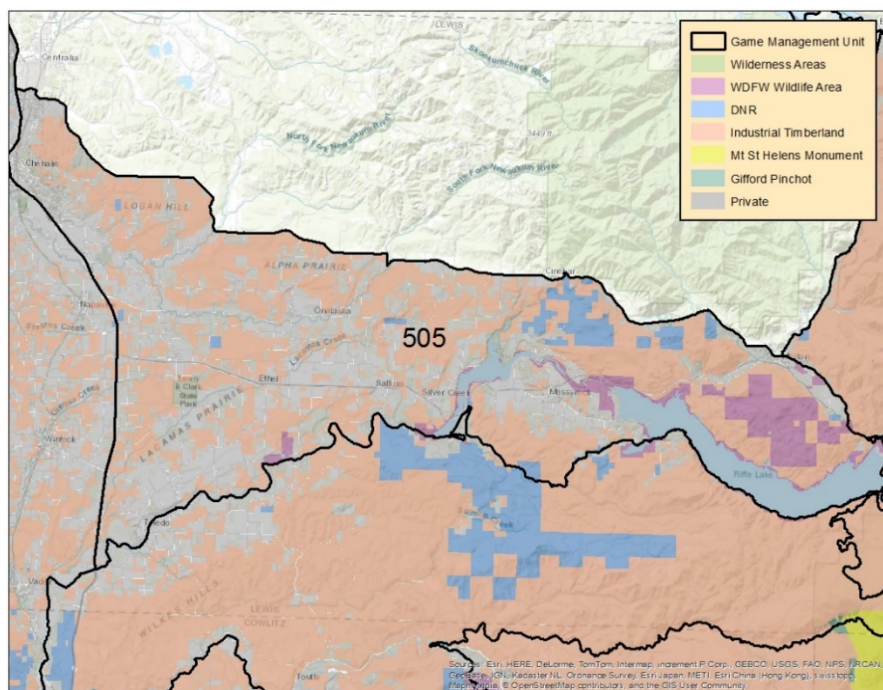


Square Miles	96
Percent Public Land	~5%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~40%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~35%

Primary Landowners	Small Agricultural landowners
	Weyerhaeuser
	Urban/Suburban
Habitat / Terrain	Industrial Forestlands
	Floodplain / Private Agricultural and Urban
	Mix of Forested Hills and Flatter Developed Areas
Primary Access Points	State Route 4
	Coal Creek Road
Small Game / Waterfowl	Average for ruffed grouse
	Good for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 505 -Mossyrock

GMU 505 is located east of I-5, north of the Cowlitz River, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is primarily a mix of private agricultural lands and rural homes. The Peterman Hill and Swofford Pond units of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area are also within this GMU. The predominant geographic features of GMU 505 are the Cowlitz River, I-5 and State Route 12, as well as Riffe and Mayfield Lakes. The unit generally has good productivity for black-tailed deer, but only a small elk population. Access to the GMU is challenging due to the predominance of small private landholdings. However, the Peterman Hill Unit of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area does provide access to solid deer hunting opportunities.

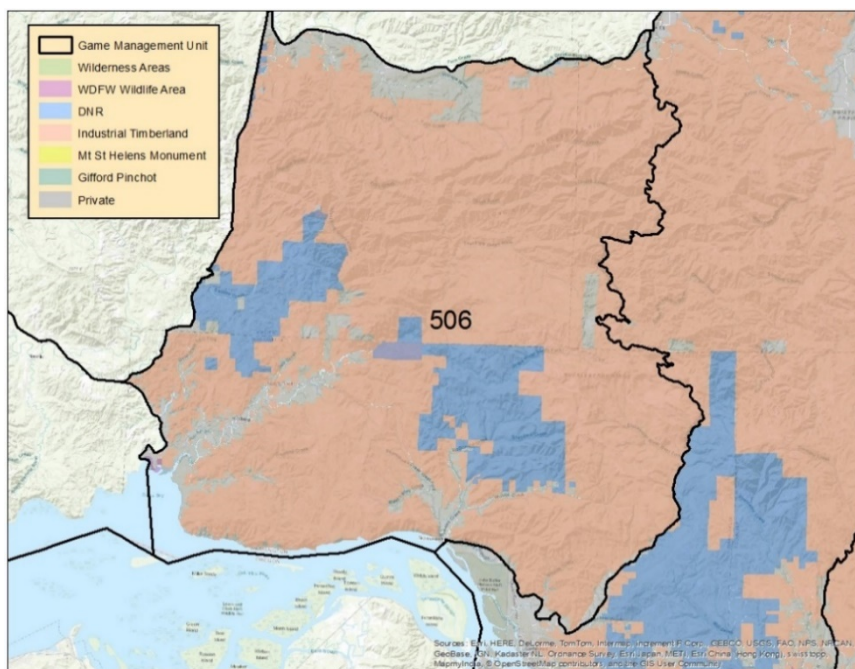


Square Miles	295
Percent Public Land	~20%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~45%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~5%

Primary Landowners	Small Agricultural Owners
Habitat / Terrain	Private Agricultural
	Private Industrial and State Forestlands
	Mostly Flatter or Rolling Topography
Primary Access Points	Some Steeper, Rugged Terrain
	State Route 12
Small Game / Waterfowl	Peterman Hill Road
	Good for ruffed grouse
	Modest for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 506 -Willapa Hills

GMU 506 is located west of I-5 at the western margin of WDFW Region 5 and lies in a combination of Wahkiakum, Pacific, and Lewis counties. The GMU is primarily private industrial and DNR forestlands with a small amount of private agricultural lands and rural homes on the valley floors. The predominant geographic features of GMU 506 are the Willapa Hills themselves, the Gray's River / Gray's Bay, the Willapa River, as well as State Routes 4 and 6. The unit has good productivity for blacktailed deer and a strong elk population. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.

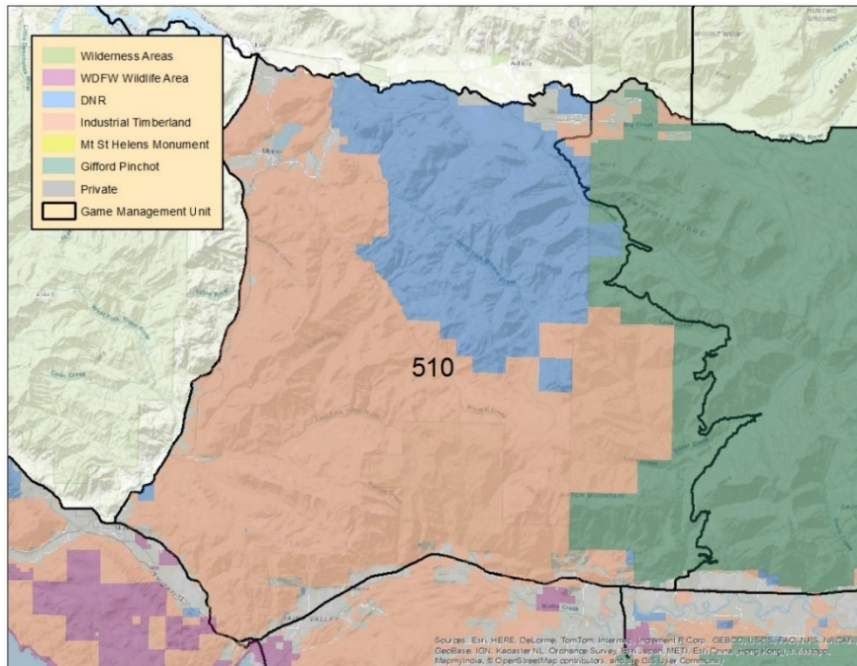


Square Miles	371
Percent Public Land	~30%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~60%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~0%

Primary Landowners	Hancock
	Rayonier
	DNR
Habitat / Terrain	Private Industrial and State Forestlands
	Mostly Rugged Mountainous Terrain
	Limited Flatter, Valley Floor Topography
Primary Access Points	State Routes 4 and 6
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed grouse
	Good for Waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 510 -Stormking

GMU 510 is located in northern WDFW Region 5, north of State Route 12, east of State Route 7, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is primarily a mix of private industrial forestlands, DNR forestlands, and USFS-managed lands. The predominant geographic features of GMU 510 are the Tilton River, Stormking Mountain, and Kiona Peak. The unit is generally low in productivity for blacktailed deer and elk.

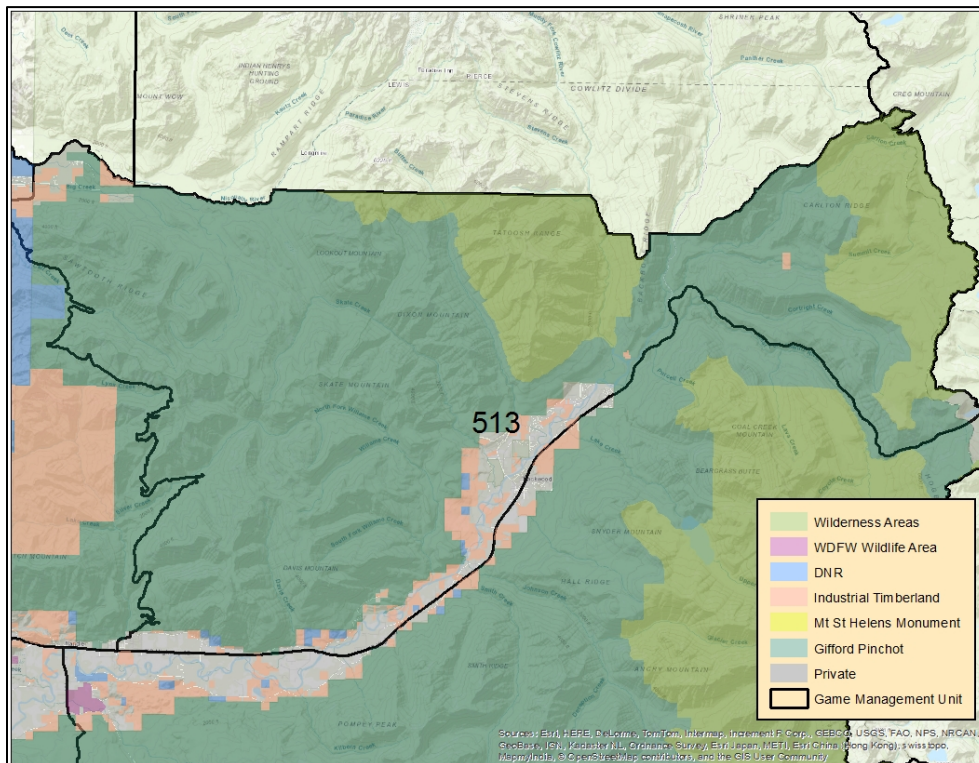


Square Miles	208
Percent Public Land	~50%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~45%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~0%

Primary Landowners	Hancock
	Sierra Pacific
	DNR
Habitat / Terrain	Private Industrial, State, and US Forest Service Forestlands
	Rugged mountainous terrain
Primary Access Points	State Routes 7 and 12
	USFS Road 47
	DNR Road 1
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed and Sooty Grouse
	Poor for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 513 -South Rainier

GMU 513 is in the northeastern corner of WDFW Region 5, north of State Route 12, south of Mt. Rainier National Park, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is nearly entirely managed by the USFS except for a narrow band of private lands along State Route 12 and the Cowlitz River. The predominant geographic features of GMU 513 are the Cowlitz River, Sawtooth Ridge, Skate Mountain, and Carlton Ridge. Two USFS wilderness areas are found within GMU 513; Tatoosh and William O. Douglas. The unit is generally low in productivity for blacktailed deer and elk.

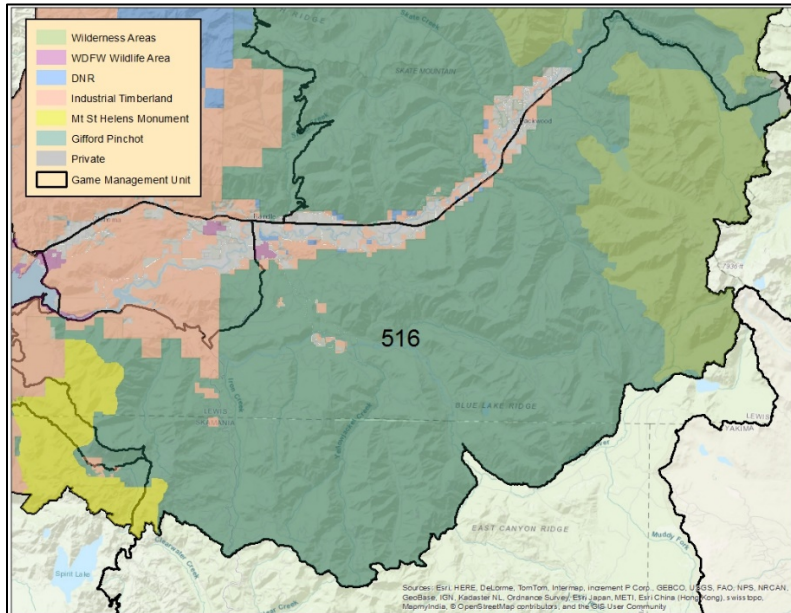


Square Miles	240
Percent Public Land	~95%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~0%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~0%
Percent Wilderness	~20%

Primary Landowners	U.S. Forest Service
Habitat / Terrain	US Forest Service Forestlands
	Rugged mountainous terrain including wilderness
Primary Access Points	State Route 12
	USFS Road 47
	Pacific Crest Trail
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed and sooty grouse
	Poor for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 516 -Packwood

GMU 516 is a very large unit located in the northeastern portion of WDFW Region 5, south of State Route 12, and lies entirely in Lewis County. The GMU is nearly entirely managed by the USFS except for a narrow band of private lands along State Route 12. The predominant geographic features of GMU 516 are the Cowlitz River, Cispus River, and Goat Rocks Wilderness. The unit is generally low in productivity for blacktailed deer and elk.

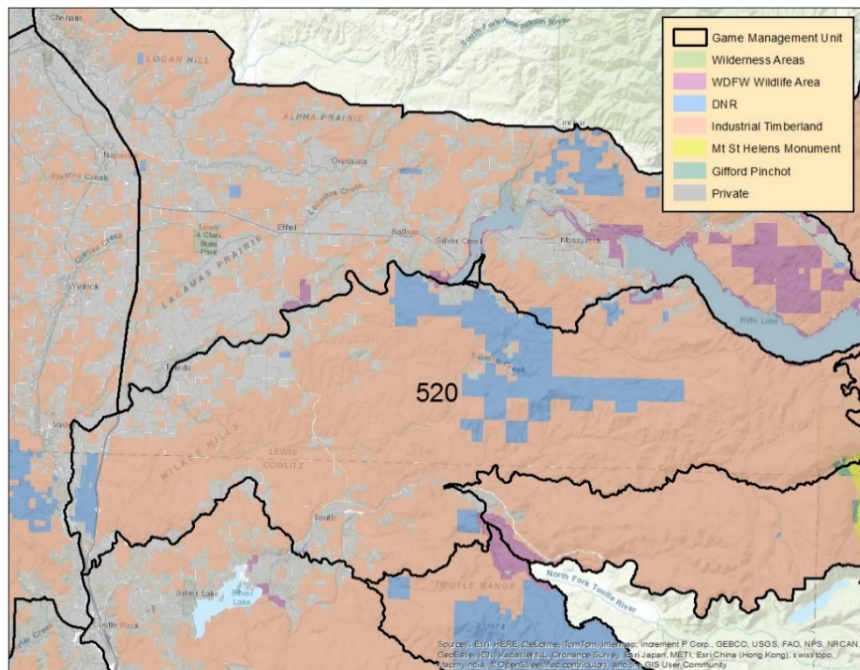


Square Miles	538
Percent Public Land	~95%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~2%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~0%
Percent Wilderness	~20%

Primary Landowners	U.S. Forest Service
Habitat / Terrain	US Forest Service Forestlands
	Rugged mountainous terrain including wilderness
Primary Access Points	State Route 12
	USFS Roads 20 and 23
	Pacific Crest Trail
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed and sooty grouse
	Poor for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 520 -Winston

GMU 520 is located east of I-5, lying primarily between the Cowlitz and Toutle/Green Rivers. The unit sits primarily in Lewis County but is partially within both Cowlitz and Skamania counties as well. The GMU is primarily private industrial forestlands with a modest amount of DNR lands, a small area of USFS at its extreme eastern margin, and rural homes and agricultural areas in the northwestern part of the Unit. The predominant geographic features of GMU 520 are the Toutle River, Green River, Cowlitz River/Riffe Lake, as well as Salmon Creek. The unit has good productivity for both blacktailed deer and elk. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.

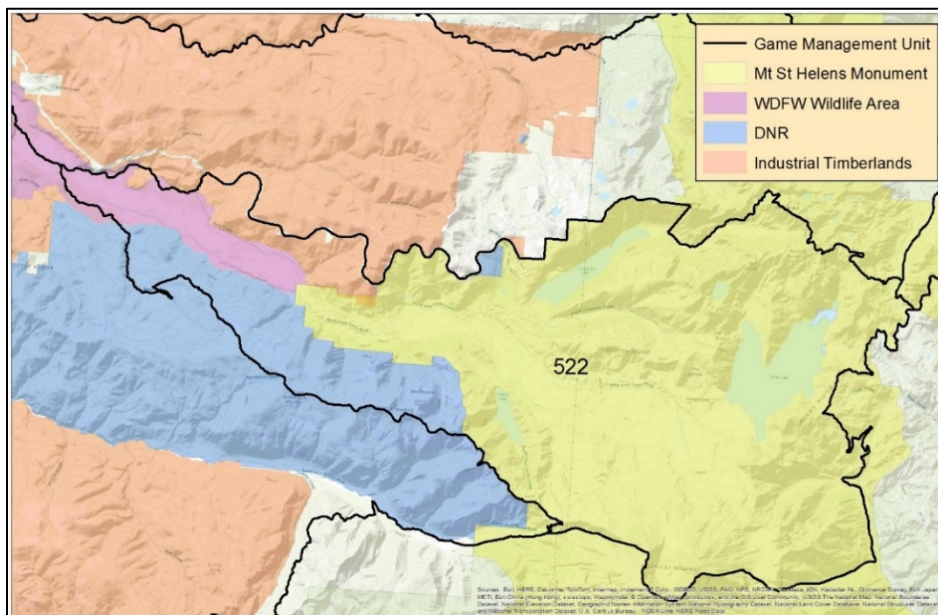


Square Miles	299
Percent Public Land	~20%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~75%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~2%

Primary Landowners	Weyerhaeuser
	Olympic Resource Management
	DNR
Habitat / Terrain	Private Industrial Forestlands
	mountainous terrain
	Flatter in the western portion of GMU
Primary Access Points	State Routes 505 and 12
	Winston Creek Road
	Weyerhaeuser 1900
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed grouse
	Poor for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 522 -Loo-Wit

GMU 522 is a small unit located in the central portion of WDFW Region 5, south of State Route 12, and lies within Skamania and Cowlitz counties. The GMU is dominated by the USFS Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, with much smaller portions owned/managed by DNR, Weyerhaeuser, and WDFW. The Mudflow and Hoffstadt Units of WDFW’s St. Helens Wildlife Area lie partially within GMU 522. The predominant geographic features of GMU 522 are Mt. St. Helens and the North Fork Toutle River. Recreational access to the unit is severely limited by the policies of the Monument, which are in place to protect the valuable ecological features of the recovering Mt. St. Helens landscape. **The unit is closed to hunting with the exceptions of elk and mountain goat hunting on a permit-only basis.**

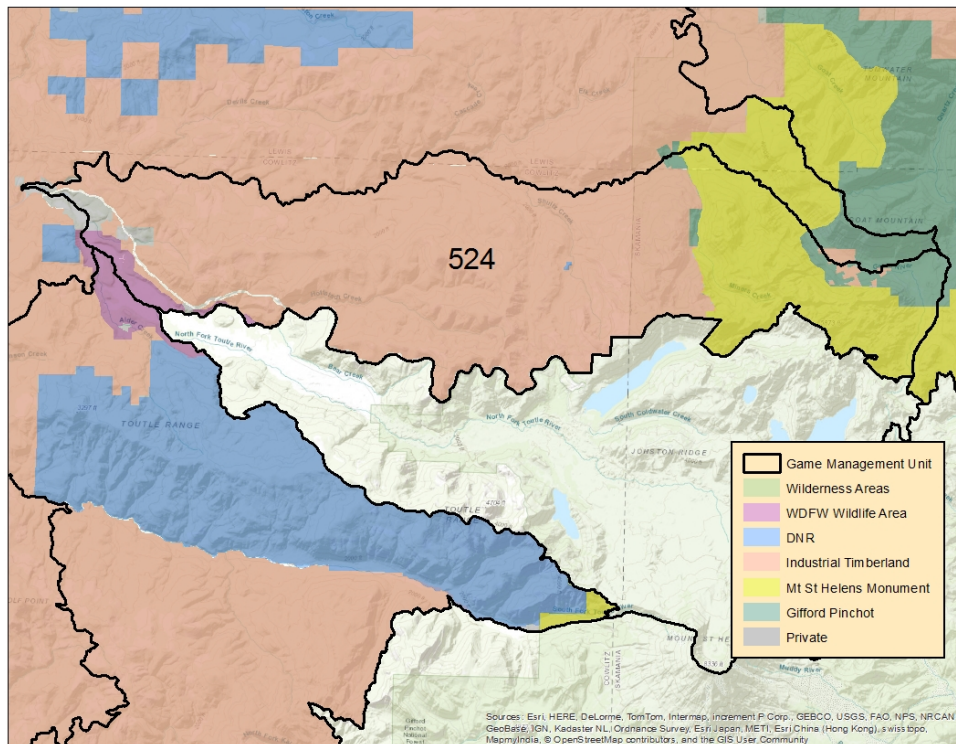


Square Miles	93
Percent Public Land	~95%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~5%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	0%

Primary Landowners	U.S. Forest Service St. Helens Monument
	DNR
	WDFW
	Weyerhaeuser
Habitat / Terrain	Mt. St. Helens Blast Zone and Mudflow
	DNR / Private Industrial Forestlands
	Remote Mountainous Terrain
Primary Access Points	State Route 504
	U.S. Forest Service Road 26/99
	DNR 3000 Road
Small Game / Waterfowl	Closed Season for these Species

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 524 -Margaret

GMU 524 is a small Unit located in the central portion of WDFW Region 5, south of the Green River, and lies primarily within Cowlitz and Skamania counties. GMU ownership is dominated by Weyerhaeuser, the USFS Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, a small area of private industrial forestland, and a small portion of WDFW's St. Helens Wildlife Area. The predominant geographic features of GMU 524 are the Green River and the Mt. Margaret Backcountry. The easternmost portion of the unit (as defined by Elk Area 5066) is closed to general-season elk hunting. Hunting in this portion of the GMU is instead offered on a permit-only basis.

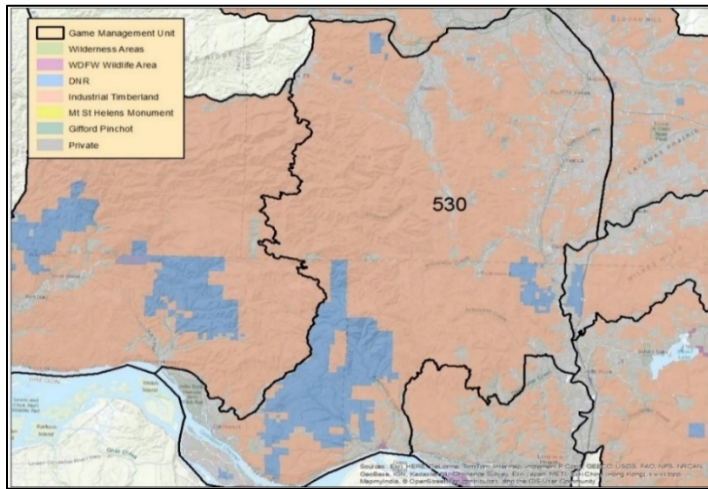


Square Miles	96
Percent Public Land	~20%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~75%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	Zero

Primary Landowners	Weyerhaeuser
	U.S. Forest Service St. Helens Monument
Habitat / Terrain	Private Industrial Forestlands
	Mt. Margaret Backcountry
	Remote Mountainous Terrain
Primary Access Points	State Route 504
	Weyerhaeuser 1100
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed grouse
	Poor for Waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 530 Ryderwood

GMU 530 is located along the western side of I-5 from roughly Castle Rock to Chehalis and lies in a combination of Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. The GMU is primarily private industrial and DNR forestlands but contains private agricultural lands and rural homes on the valley floors and Puget Island. The predominant geographic features of GMU 530 are the Willapa Hills, the Columbia and Chehalis rivers, as well as State Routes 4 and 6. The unit has very good productivity for blacktailed deer and a good elk population. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands. The GMU has a population of Columbian white-tailed deer in low elevation areas near the Columbia River, especially in the vicinity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the deer and on Puget Island. Hunters are reminded that there is no open season for these deer and should check the Big Game Pamphlet for specifics.

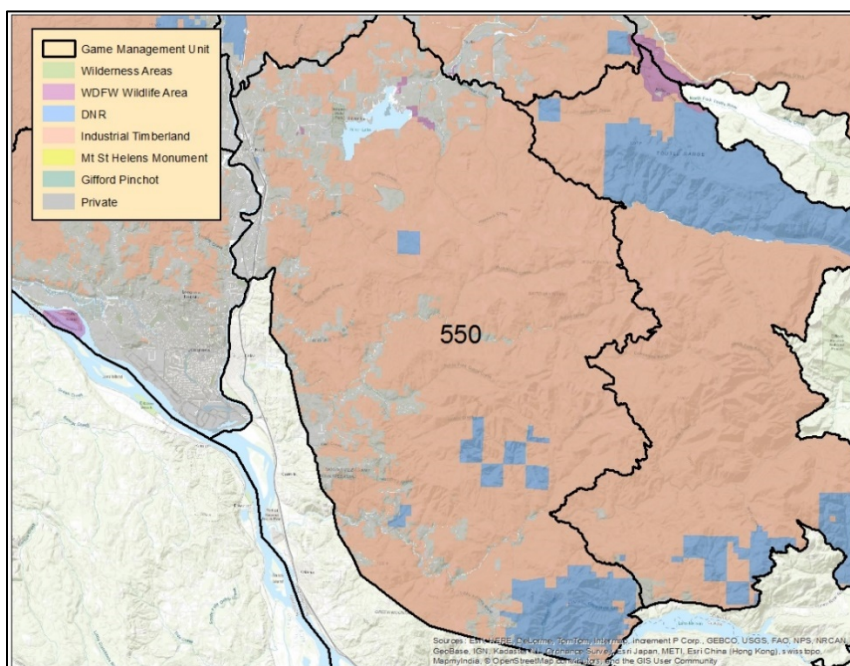


Square Miles	541
Percent Public Land	~20%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~70%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~5%

Primary Landowners	Sierra Pacific
	Weyerhaeuser
	DNR
	Small Private / Agricultural
Habitat / Terrain	Private Industrial and DNR Forestlands
	Floodplain / Private / Agricultural
	Mountainous Terrain
Primary Access Points	State Routes 4 and 6 and 506
	Boistfort Road
	Germany Creek Road
	Abernathy Creek Road
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed grouse
	Good for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 550 Coweeman

GMU 550 is located east of I-5, south of State Route 504 in the Cascade Mountain foothills. The unit sits entirely within Cowlitz County. The GMU is primarily private industrial forestlands with a modest amount of DNR lands as well as rural homes and agricultural areas mostly in the northwestern part of the unit. The predominant geographic features of GMU 550 are Silver Lake, the Coweeman and Kalama Rivers, Cowlitz River, as well as Baird Mountain and Georges Peak. The unit has very good productivity for blacktailed deer and good productivity for elk. Access to the GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.

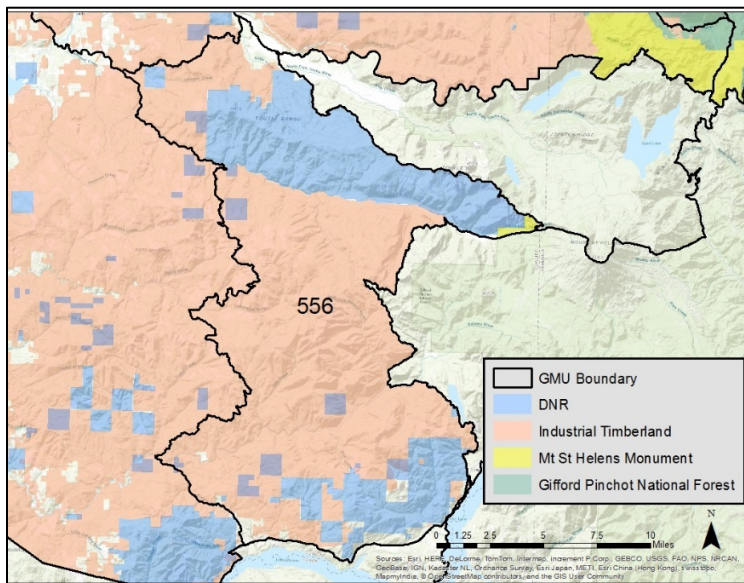


Square Miles	347
Percent Public Land	~15%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~80%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	~5%

Primary Landowners	Weyerhaeuser
	DNR
	Small Private / Agricultural
Habitat / Terrain	Private Industrial and DNR Forestlands
	Floodplain / Private / Agricultural
	Mountainous Terrain
Primary Access Points	State Routes 504
	Weyerhaeuser 4700, 6100, 6300
	Kalama River Road
	Rose Valley Road
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed grouse
	Modest for waterfowl

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 556 Toutle

GMU 556 is located east of I-5, in the upper watersheds of the Kalama, Coweeman, and South Fork Toutle rivers. The unit sits entirely within Cowlitz County. The GMU is largely private industrial forestlands but does have a meaningful amount of DNR lands in the northern and southern portions of the unit. The predominant geographic features of GMU 556 are The South Fork Toutle, Coweeman, and Kalama Rivers; as well as Lakeview Peak and Elk, Big Bull, and Little Cow Mountains. The unit has modest productivity for black-tails and good productivity for elk. **Hunters should note that all elk hunting in GMU 556 Toutle is by Special Permit Only -- there are no General Seasons for elk.** In 2021, the boundary between the Toutle and Yale GMUS was adjusted to simplify hunting regulations. The new boundary on the southern end of the Toutle GMU now follows Lewis River Road. Access to the Toutle GMU involves navigating the property boundaries and access policies of private industrial forestland owners as well as locating public lands.

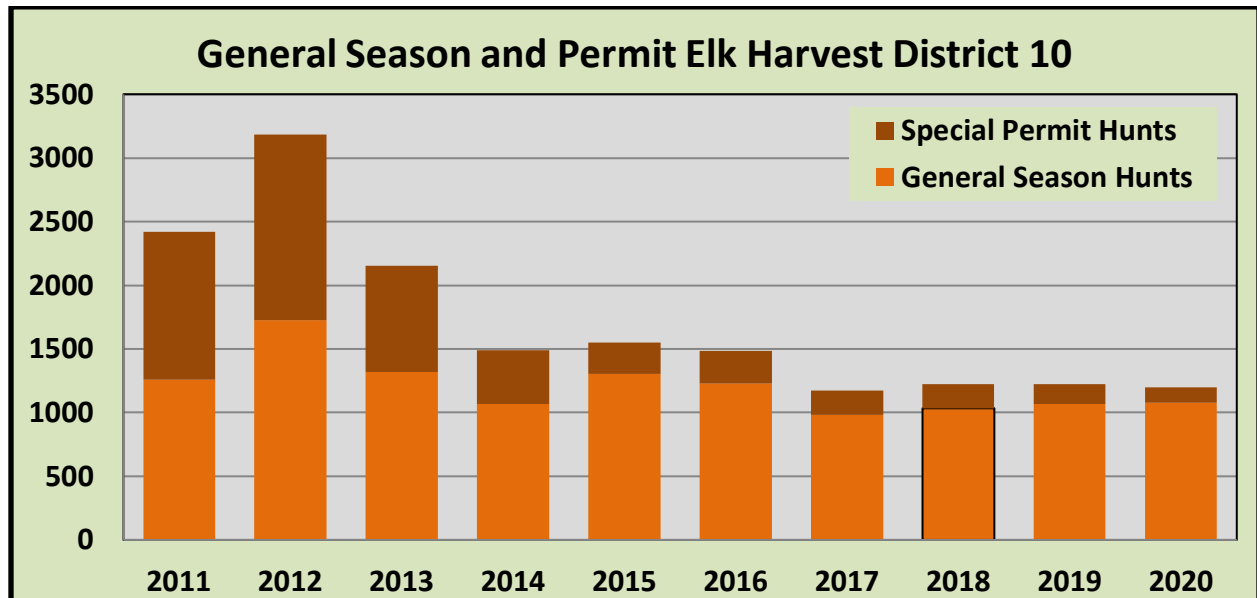


Square Miles	230
Percent Public Land	~35%
Percent Industrial Forestland	~65%
Percent Urban/Sub-Urban	Zero

Primary Landowners	Weyerhaeuser
	DNR
Habitat / Terrain	Private Industrial and DNR Forestlands
	Mountainous Terrain
Primary Access Points	State Routes 503 and 504
	DNR 4200 and 4250 Roads
	Weyerhaeuser 4950, 5500, 7200, 1400 and 6600
	Rock Creek Road
Small Game / Waterfowl	Good for ruffed and sooty grouse
	Poor for waterfowl

ELK

Historically, District 10 has been among the leaders in statewide elk harvest. The highest general season harvests in 2020 occurred in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills), 530 (Ryderwood), 520 (Winston), and 550 (Coweeman). There are also many permit hunts in District 10, which are offered to manage the elk population, address agricultural damage caused by elk, and provide recreational opportunity. Additionally, two GMUs – 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle) – are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In 2020, 1,079 elk were harvested during the general season in addition to 121 elk harvested by permit in District 10. Elk found west of I- 5 are considered to be of the Roosevelt sub-species, while those in the Cascade Mountain Range are of mixed origin. Specifically, Cascade elk are a genetic combination of native Roosevelt elk and introduced Rocky Mountain elk. The Figure below shows the trend in District 10 elk harvest over the past ten years and how this harvest is divided among general and permit seasons.



Additional metrics help decide where to begin scouting for an elk hunting location. The below table includes elk harvest, percentage success, number of hunters, number of hunters per square mile, elk harvest per square mile, and the percentage of harvest comprised of five-point or larger bulls. The data are listed by GMU and presented for the four-year averages of the 2017-20 hunting seasons. Data represent modern firearm general seasons only.

Elk Hunting Statistics; WDFW District 10						
Modern Firearm General Seasons 2017-20 4-Year Averages						
GMU	Elk Harvest	Percent Success Hunters	Hunters / SQ Mile	Elk Harvest / SQ Mile	Percent of Bulls 5-PT.	
501 (Lincoln) *	19	8.5	212	0.9	0.08	0.67
503 (Randle)	9	4.7	156	2.8	0.16	0.53
504 (Stella) *	7	11.1	77	0.8	0.08	0.25
505 (Mossyrock)	14	6.2	223	0.8	0.05	0.88
506 (Willapa Hills)	121	14.8	819	2.2	0.33	0.41
510 (Stormking)	13	7.6	167	0.8	0.06	0.76
513 (South Rainier)	14	6.9	213	0.9	0.06	0.80
516 (Packwood)	28	4.0	712	1.3	0.05	0.48
520 (Winston)	76	8.8	882	3.0	0.25	0.60
524 (Margaret)	26	8.7	297	3.1	0.27	0.64
530 (Ryderwood)	89	11.4	796	1.5	0.16	0.53
550 (Coweeman)	57	7.0	809	2.3	0.16	0.53
WDFW District 10 **	478	8.7	5263	1.6	0.14	0.52
* = Antlerless Elk Included in Harvest in GMUs 501 and 504, All Others Are Bulls Only						
** GMUs 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle) Not Included; All Elk Hunting in These GMUS is by Special Permit Only						

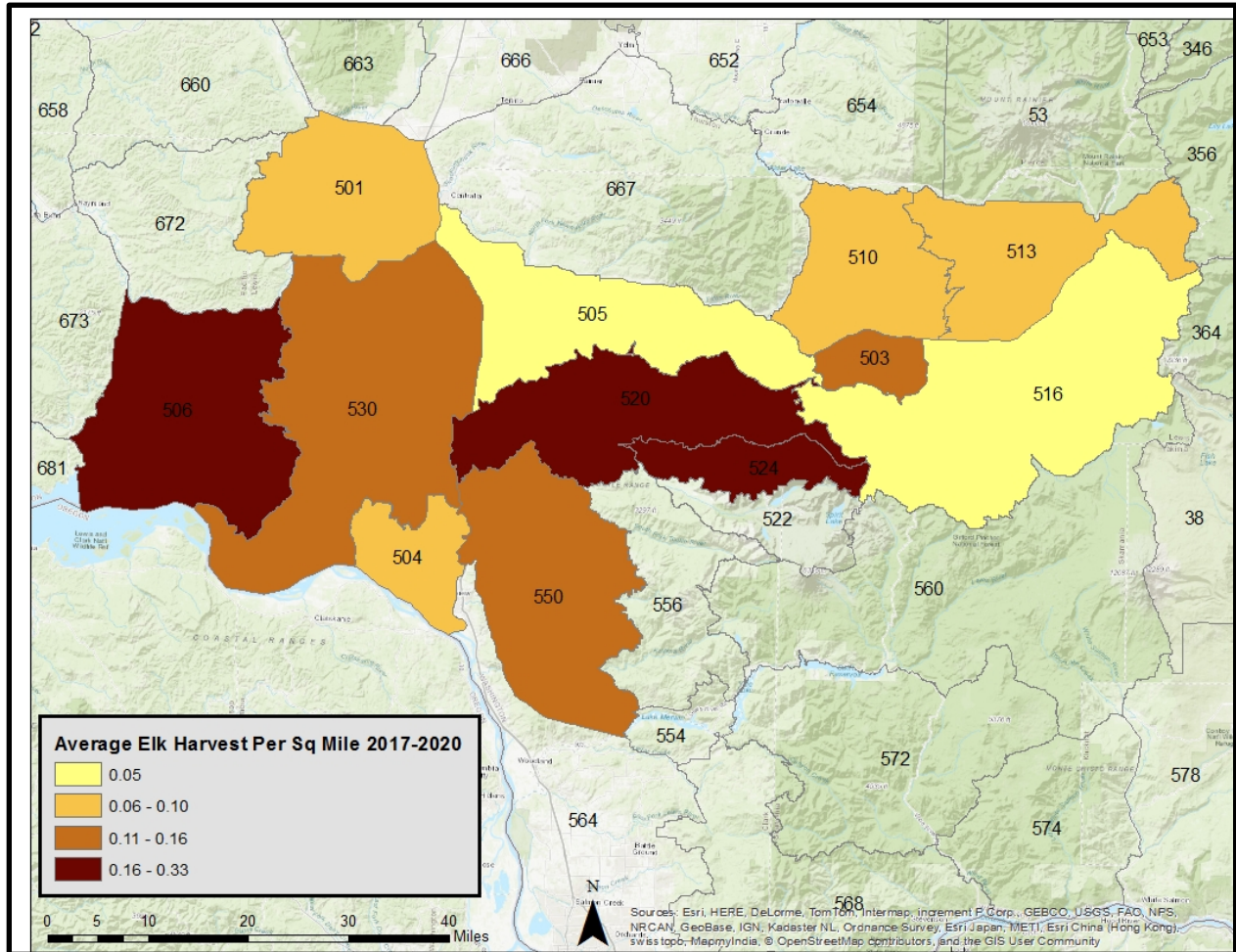
ELK POPULATION INFORMATION

Elk populations in the game management units including the Mount St. Helens elk herd area are down from historic highs during the mid-2000s. This population reduction was implemented per the objectives of the [St. Helens Elk Herd Plan](#). Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity, combined with several years of late-winter and spring storms, reduced the elk population in these GMUs. Elk within the St. Helens herd typically lack large fat reserves to help with long, hard winters. Additionally, TAHD is common in District 10 elk. Female elk suffering from this debilitating condition have been documented to have lower pregnancy rates, poorer body condition, and lower survival rates than healthy elk in the same landscape (WDFW-Unpublished Data).

Survey efforts conducted during the spring of 2018 and 2019, indicate that the Mount St. Helens elk herd has stabilized at a population level of about 1,000 adult elk in the area used to index the population. Unfortunately, the 2020 and 2021 surveys were canceled due to safety-related work restrictions in association with the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the lack of up-to-date survey information, the most recent data available points toward an elk population that is below objectives and well below historic highs. Therefore, hunters should expect a generally less productive elk hunting season during the 2021 hunt. WDFW has reduced antlerless hunting opportunities accordingly.

Elk population surveys in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills) and 530 (Ryderwood) are conducted on an every-other-year basis and were most recently completed in spring 2020. Surveys conducted in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 indicate stable elk populations in GMUs 506 and 530. Severe winter conditions rarely cause population-level impacts on Willapa elk populations. Hunting opportunities and success rates should be similar to recent years.

The general bull elk season is always challenging, but the District 10 elk population produces a harvest of nearly 1,000 bull elk annually, and those hunters who put in the effort and remain focused may be rewarded with success. See below for an illustration of the average elk harvest per square mile during 2017-20 seasons, by GMU in WDFW District 10 during the modern firearm general season. Note that GMUs 522 and 556 are excluded because all elk hunting in these two units is by special permit only.



Additional resources for those interested in District 10 elk

You can find annual Harvest Reports for deer and elk based on hunter reporting on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest>. For more information regarding elk management in the Mount St. Helens, Willapa Hills, and South Rainier elk herd areas, review the Elk Status and Trend Reports on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans>.



Photo by Sam Kolb (WDFW)



Photo submitted by Frank Gordon

Elk scouting strategies

Use the Hunting Regulations Mapping Tool at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/> to look at aerial photos to identify recent clear-cuts and drainages. You can do some preseason scouting on the commercial tree farms by bike or on foot, as most areas will not be open to motorized access yet. Motorized access and camping are available on DNR lands unless there is a high fire danger. Prospective elk hunters should keep in mind that the animals often prefer cooler, wetter areas during times of warmer weather, and are more often active during dawn and dusk.



Bull elk in GMU 556 photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)



Elk taken in GMU 520 photo by Lisa Hallock (WDFW)

TREPONEME-ASSOCIATED HOOF DISEASE OF ELK

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range. While elk are susceptible to many conditions which result in limping or hoof deformities, the prevalence and severity of this new affliction suggested something altogether different. WDFW diagnostic research (2009 – 2014), in conjunction with a panel of scientific advisors, found that these hoof abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause a hoof disease of cattle, sheep, and goats called digital dermatitis. Although digital dermatitis has affected the livestock industry for decades, Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) is the first known instance of digital dermatitis in a wild ungulate. The disease is currently concentrated in southwestern Washington where prevalence is highest in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and western Lewis County. The disease is also present at lower prevalence in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area.

While many questions remain about the disease, several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals' hooves and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** There is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

How hunters can help:

In 2021, WDFW is implementing an incentive-based pilot program to encourage west-side (400, 500, 600 series GMUs) hunters to harvest limping elk, potentially reducing prevalence of the disease over time. The objective of this program is to increase the proportion of limping elk in the total harvest, rather than increase elk harvest overall. General season or permit hunters can choose to participate in the program by submitting elk hooves at one of the many collection sites in western Washington. See the WDFW website for the locations of collection sites. Hunters that submit hooves with signs of TAHD (for example, abnormal hooves) will be automatically entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit for the following license year. Multiple bull permits in western Washington with season dates of Sep. 1 – Dec 31 will be awarded. Additionally, all participants will receive a custom, waterproof license holder.

So, what can hunters do to help?

- **Harvest a limping elk from any 400, 500, 600 series GMUs**
- **Turn in your elk hooves along with complete registration forms at one of several collection sites in western Washington**
- **Report elk:** Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's online reporting form.
- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

WDFW is working with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations, tribal governments and others to better understand and manage TAHD. For more information about TAHD, see WDFW's website at [https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/and Washington State University's website](https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/and_Washington_State_University's_website). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Pamphlet.



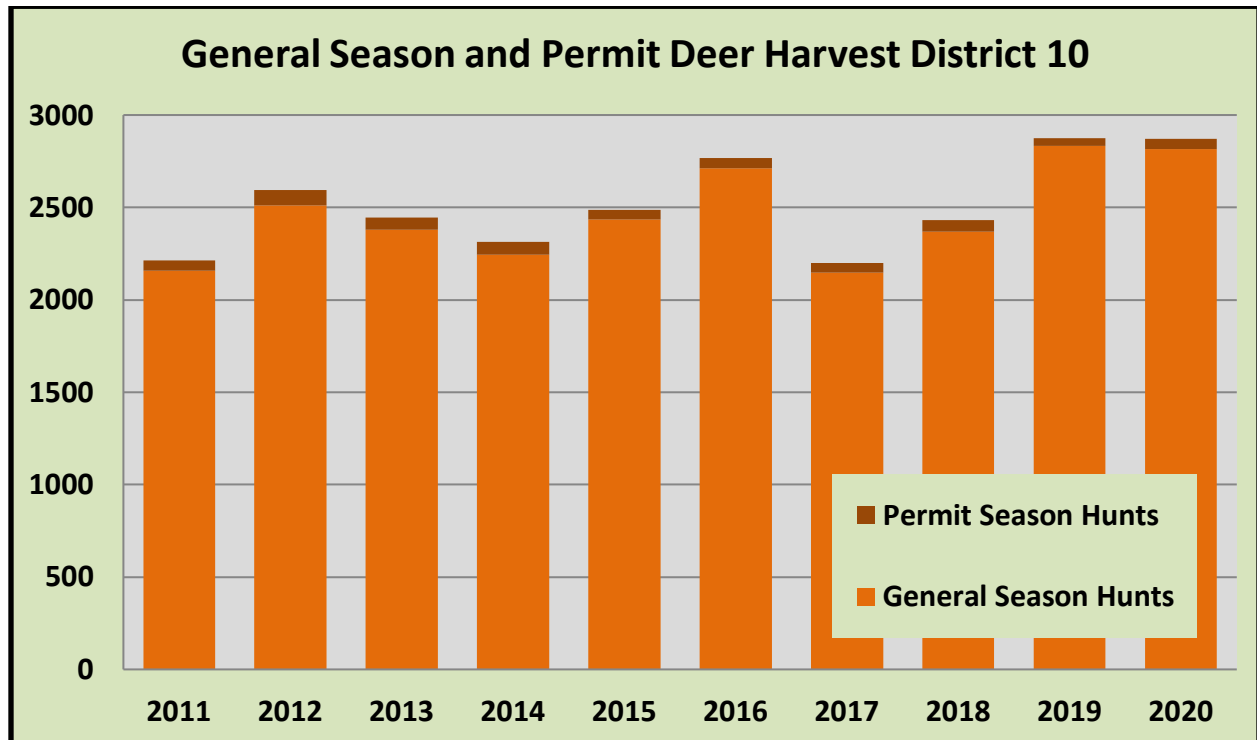
WDFW Research on Hoof Disease photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)



Study elk captured in GMU 550 photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)

DEER

Several GMUs in District 10 are among the best in the state for black-tailed deer harvest. The highest 2020 general-season buck harvests within District 10 occurred in GMUs 550 (Coweeman), 520 (Winston), 530 (Ryderwood), 501 (Lincoln), 505 (Mossyrock) and 506 (Willapa Hills). The majority of the harvest occurs during general seasons, with a small portion of the harvest occurring during special permit seasons (see figure below). For more information on deer in District 10, see the annual [Game Status and Trend Report](#) on the WDFW website.



Additional metrics help decide where to begin scouting for a deer hunting location. The below table includes buck harvest, percentage success, number of hunters, number of hunters per square mile, buck harvest per square mile, and the percentage of harvest comprised of 3-point or larger bucks. The data are listed by GMU and presented for the four-year averages of the 2017-20 hunting seasons. Data represent modern firearm general seasons only.

Blacktail Buck Hunting Statistics; WDFW District 10						
Modern Firearm General Seasons 2017-20 4-Year Averages						
GMU	Buck Harvest	Percent Success	Hunters	Hunters / SQ MI	Buck Harvest / SQ Mile	Percent Bucks 3 PT. +
501 (Lincoln)	218	24.8	881	3.8	0.94	33%
503 (Randle)	42	15.2	268	4.8	0.75	40%
504 (Stella)	44	29.3	148	1.5	0.46	41%
505 (Mossyrock)	192	25.1	777	2.6	0.65	36%
506 (Willapa Hills)	203	23.8	841	2.3	0.55	28%
510 (Stormking)	44	13.9	314	1.5	0.21	51%
513 (South Rainier)	21	10.6	202	0.8	0.09	45%
516 (Packwood)	57	9.5	596	1.1	0.11	36%
520 (Winston)	295	25.2	1170	3.9	0.99	30%
524 (Margaret)	24	17.1	135	1.4	0.25	42%
530 (Ryderwood)	336	25.1	1331	2.5	0.62	32%
550 (Coweeman)	384	27.4	1436	4.1	1.11	30%
556 (Toutle)	142	20.2	689	3.1	0.63	26%
WDFW District 10	2001	20.5	8788	2.5	0.56	32%

Black-tailed deer populations are stable to increasing in District 10. The annual harvest of more than 2,000 bucks for all user groups combined has been typical for many years. The severe winter of 2016-17 caused some deer mortality and led to a decline in harvest in the 2017 season. The recent winters have been mild, and deer hunting opportunity should again be good in 2021.

Hunting for black-tailed deer is often best near the end of the general season when conditions improve for stalking and moving through the woods in heavily vegetated western Washington. The best opportunity often occurs during the late buck hunt, when favorable stalking and weather conditions combine with the breeding season or rut. The 2021 late buck season runs Nov. 18-21. Black-tailed deer generally favor dense vegetation and have small home ranges. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer.

See below for an illustration of the average buck harvest per square mile during the seasons of 2017-20, by GMU in WDFW District 10 during the modern firearm general season. Note that GMU 522 (Loo-Wit) is not included as this unit closed to deer hunting.

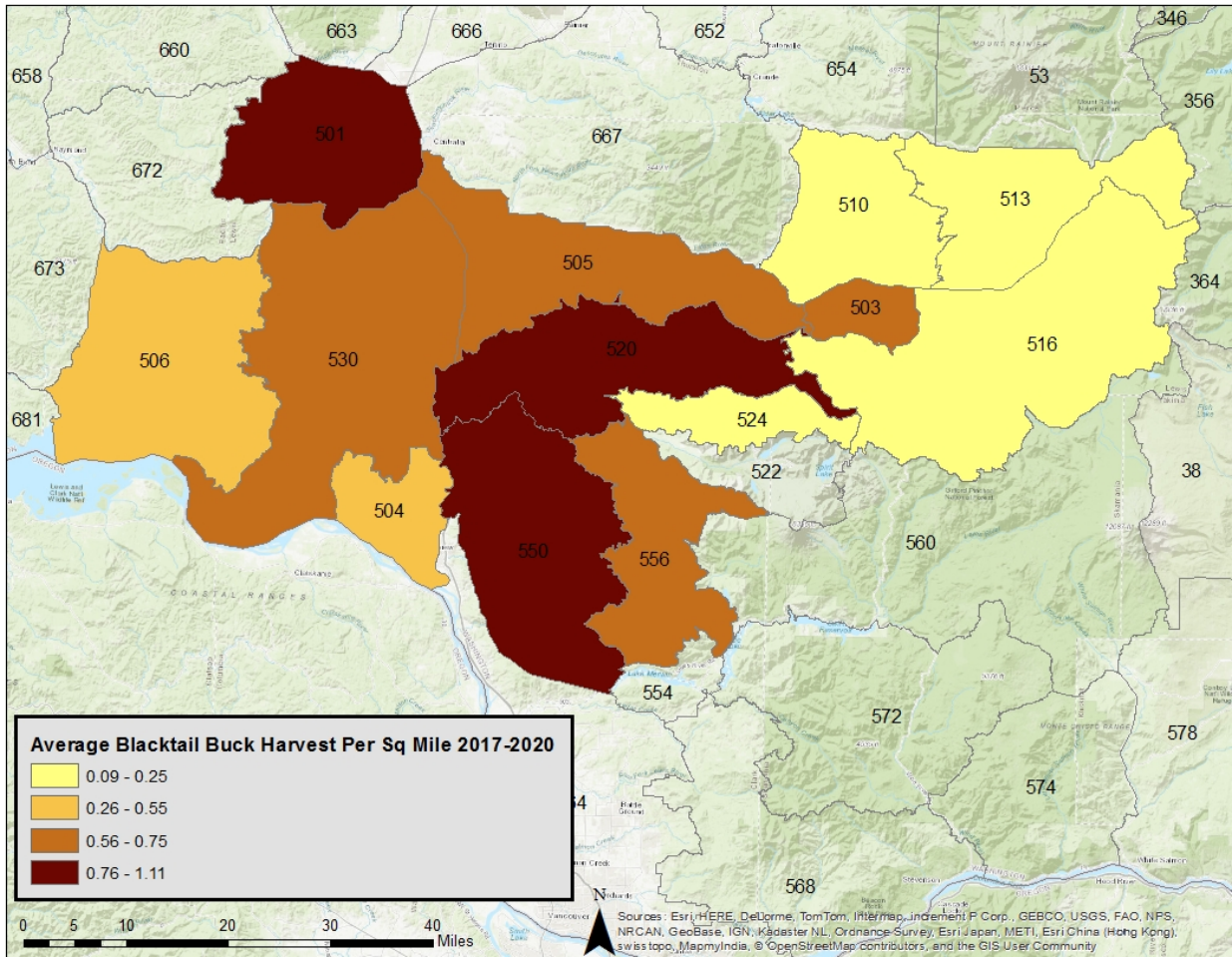


Photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)



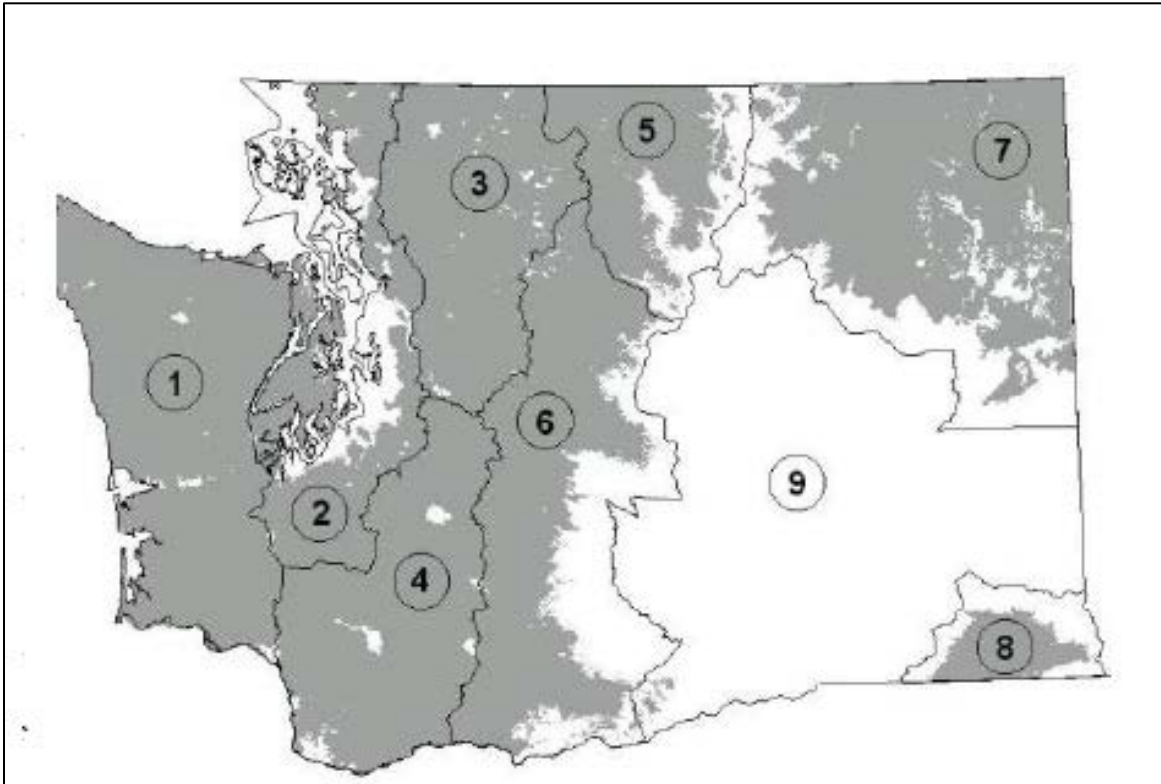
District 10 black-tailed buck submitted by Dan Howell



District 10 black-tailed buck submitted by Tom Rhodes (WDFW)

BEAR

District 10 makes up part of both the South Cascades and Coastal Bear Management Units (BMU) for the fall bear hunting season which is open from Aug. 1-Nov. 15. There currently are no spring bear hunting opportunities in District 10.



Black bear distribution in gray and 9 Black Bear Management Units in Washington

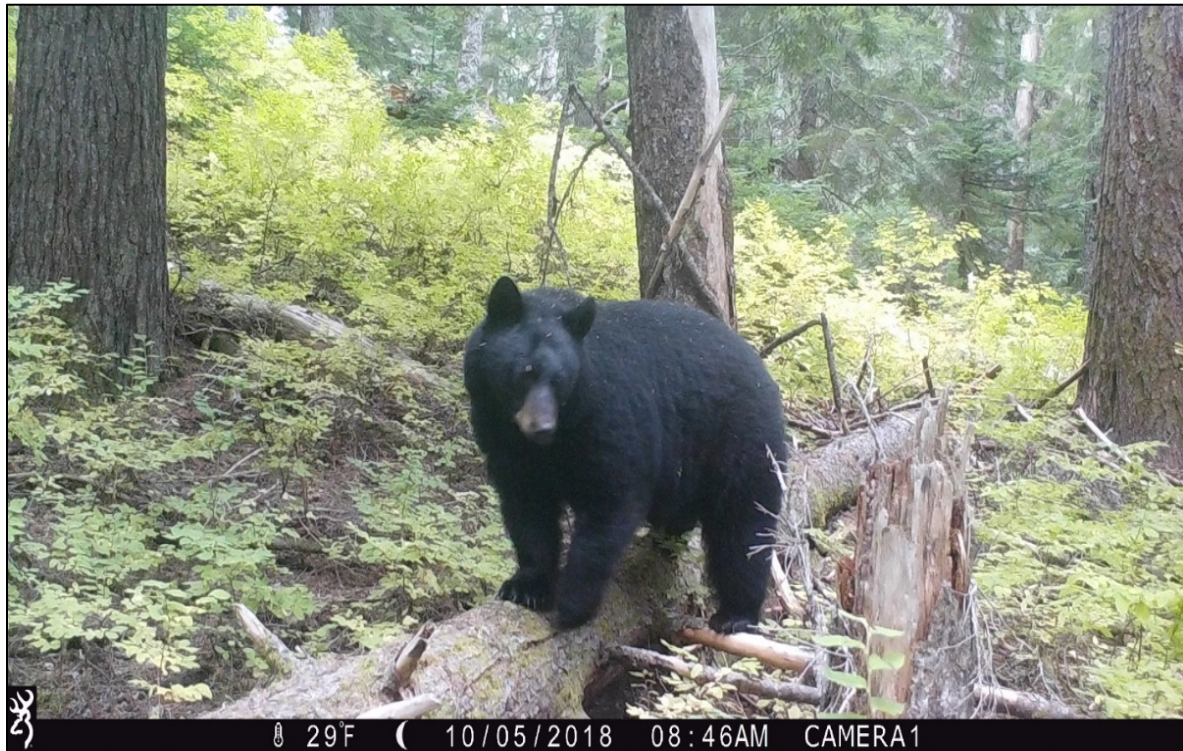
Harvest numbers and hunter success in 2020 were down from 2019 but were similar to 2018. See table below for harvest numbers and hunter success by GMU. For more information on the management of black bears in Washington, including the Coastal and South Cascades management zones, see the Status and Trend Report on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans>.

Successful bear hunters must submit a premolar tooth to WDFW. See page 68 of the [Big Game pamphlet](#) for details.

Hunting for black bears is challenging, but also can be rewarding. Hunters should try a variety of methods, including targeting areas of favored foods like huckleberries, blackberries, cascara trees, etc. Other methods include glassing clear cuts or alpine areas at dawn and dusk, as well as predator calling.

Black Bear Harvest in District 10 2018-2020

GMU	2020		2019		2018	
	Total Harvest	Hunter Success	Total Harvest	Hunter Success	Total Harvest	Hunter Success
501 - Lincoln	12	5%	27	15%	16	10%
504 - Stella	7	19%	7	20%	5	19%
506 - Willapa Hills	23	8%	25	8%	19	7%
530 - Ryderwood	26	7%	25	7%	20	6%
503 - Randle	2	2%	6	8%	0	0%
505 - Mossyrock	12	11%	9	8%	11	7%
510 - Stormking	5	6%	6	9%	4	4%
513 - South Rainier	12	8%	22	16%	6	4%
516 - Packwood	9	3%	19	7%	16	5%
520 - Winston	3	1%	32	10%	8	3%
524 - Margaret	7	9%	0	0%	2	3%
550 - Coweeman	12	4%	16	5%	6	3%
556 - Toutle	4	4%	3	2%	0	0%



Black bear in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest near Mt St Helens. Photo by Nicholle Stephens (WDFW)

COUGAR

In 2020-21, hunters harvested 13 cougars in the GMUs that make up District 10. Cougar hunting in this region is managed under a harvest guideline designed not exceed harvest of 12-16% of the adult population annually. The season consists of an early (Sept. 1-Dec. 31) and late (Jan. 1-April 30) hunt period. The harvest guideline may be achieved during the early hunt period, and prospective hunters should visit the cougar hunting page of the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/big-game/cougar> to assure that the season in their prospective area remains open.

Most cougar hunting in western Washington occurs as an additional opportunity concurrent with deer and elk hunting. Hunters who want to harvest cougars should focus on areas with concentrations of deer and elk. Fresh snow facilitates tracking, and hunters may want to try predator calling.



Photo from Nicholle Stephens, Brooke George, and Eric Holman (WDFW)

MOUNTAIN GOAT

The southern Washington Cascade Mountains support a robust population of mountain goats. Areas with goat populations span the boundaries of WDFW districts. Specifically, the Goat Rocks population lies in both Districts 8 and 10, while the Mount St. Helens population lies in Districts 9 and 10.

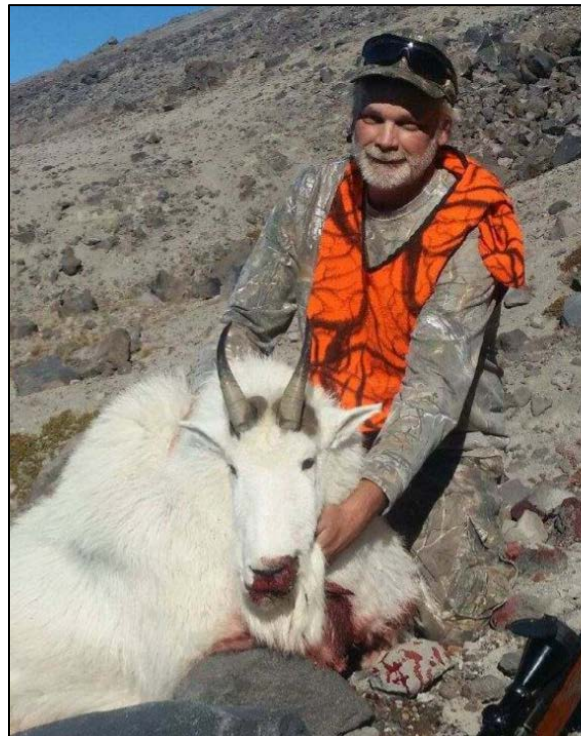
Goat populations in the Goat Rocks area have dipped in recent years and currently stand at roughly 200. Tag numbers have been adjusted downward and hunters fortunate enough to draw these permits should still enjoy a successful hunt. The Goat Rocks area has been divided into two hunt areas. Selected hunters need to review the boundaries of the hunt areas before going afield.

For the first time in many decades, mountain goat permits are available for the Mount St. Helens population. Goats have re-colonized the area following the 1980 eruption and the population is now approximately 250 goats. For hunting management, two hunt areas have been delineated and one tag has been awarded in each area, each year, since 2018.

Successful draw applicants for all hunt areas will receive a letter with additional details regarding hunt areas, mandatory checking requirements, mandatory goat identification training, biological sample collection, and more.



Goat Rocks Mountain Goat photo provided by Kristina Luttrell



Mount St. Helens Mountain Goat photo provided by Jim Rich



Mt. Margaret Backcountry goat provided by Nate Corley



Mt. St. Helens goat provided by Brad Crocco

PHEASANT



WDFW releases pheasants multiple times throughout the pheasant hunting season at three locations in District 10: In Lewis County at the Kosmos Unit of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area, on DNR property on Lincoln Creek, and in Cowlitz County at Woodland Bottoms on lands enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. For more information about the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, visit the [WDFW website](#) and the property location guide with accompanying maps at [2020 Western Washington Pheasant Release Program](#).



Youth hunters and those over 65 years of age should check the regulations for opportunities to hunt earlier in the season.

Hunting hours are from 8 a.m.- 4 p.m.

Woodland Bottoms Pheasant Release Site 2020, photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW)



Releasing pheasants, photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW).

FOREST GROUSE

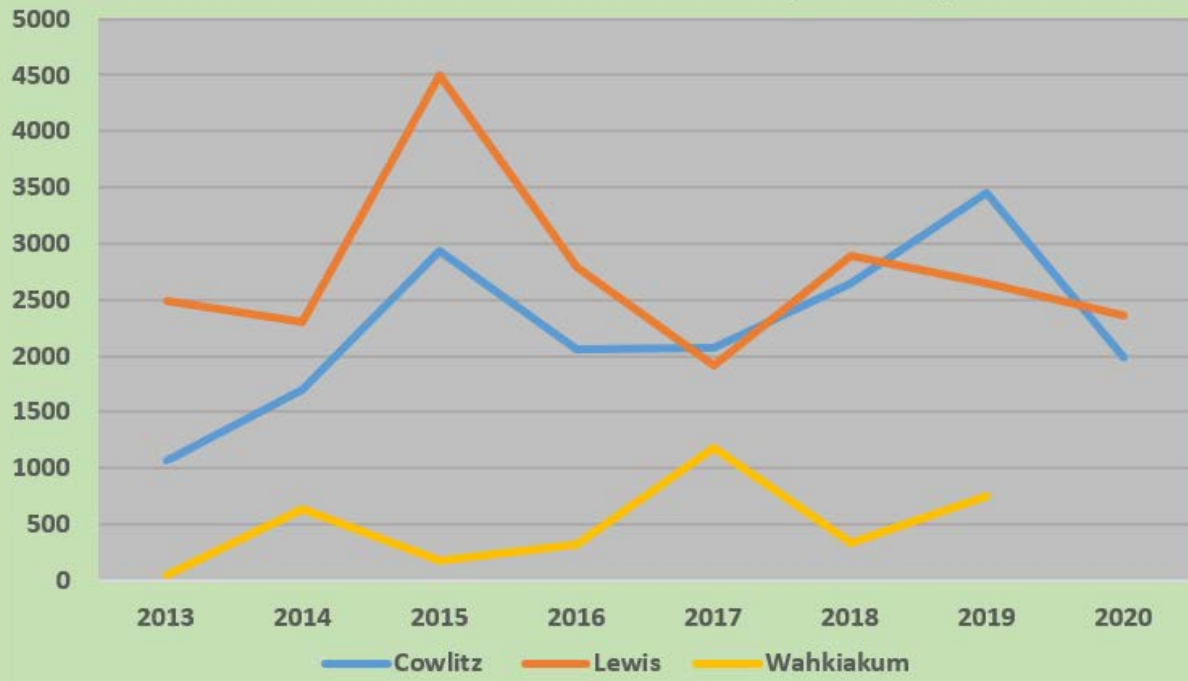
District 10 supports substantial forest grouse populations and is one of the top-producing areas for hunters in western Washington for ruffed grouse and sooty grouse. Spruce grouse are also present in the higher elevations of District 10. Grouse hunters will want to take note that the statewide grouse season for forest grouse in 2021 will be Sept. 15-Jan. 15 (the season previously ran from Sept. 1-Dec. 31). This change was implemented after several rounds of public input and was put forward due to the increased vulnerability of breeding females to harvest during the first half of September. After brood break-up in mid-September, females are much less vulnerable to harvest. Since females drive population growth or decline, delaying the season start is a strategy to increase the grouse population. Some good strategies for hunting grouse include hunting riparian areas with mixed forest vegetation and walking closed or abandoned roads.

WDFW is collecting wings and tails from hunter-harvested grouse at barrel locations around the state. The submission of wings and tails is voluntary and helps wildlife managers determine the species, age, and sex composition of the grouse harvest locally. Locations where grouse barrels will be placed for the 2021 season can be found here: [Forest grouse wing and tail collection | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)



Grouse Wing and Tail Collection Barrels

District 10 Grouse Harvest by County



WATERFOWL

DUCK HUNTING

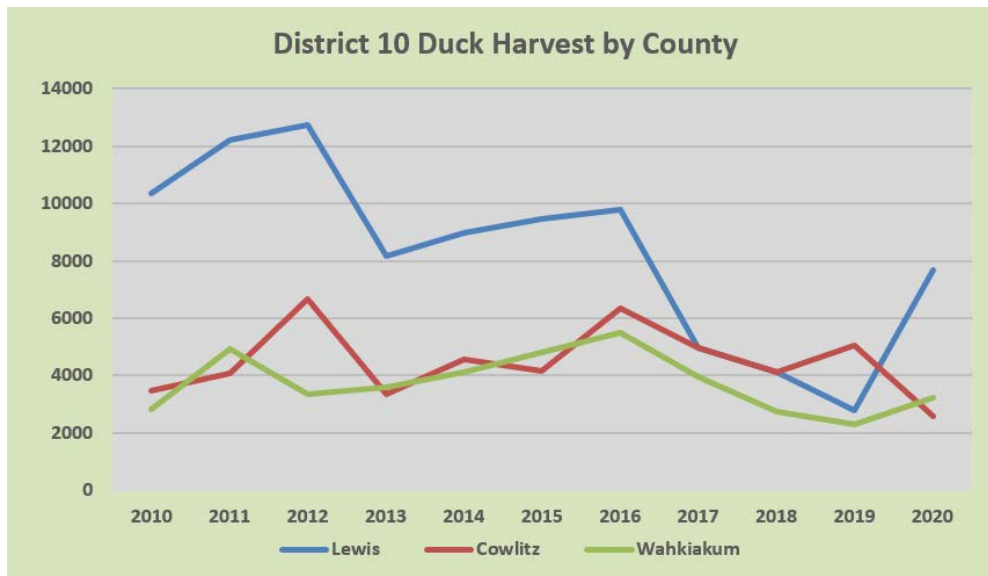
For the first time in its 65-year history, the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat survey was canceled in 2020 and again in 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Therefore, we don't have the data that is normally helpful to predict how many waterfowl will be coming south this fall. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has published the results of its 2019 breeding waterfowl surveys at the link below:

<http://flyways.us/>

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php>

Hunters are reminded to consult the [Migratory Waterfowl Rules](#) pamphlet for details on hunting regulations. Prospective hunters should take special note of the late September season open only to youth hunters. Check the regulations closely for the details on this mentored hunting opportunity for early-season ducks.

Hunting early in the season is often best along the Columbia River and other large, permanent bodies of water. The Columbia River up to the Bonneville Dam is tidally influenced, so it is a good idea to be aware of outgoing tide conditions to avoid getting your boat stuck. Later in the season, high water might disperse birds, and hunters may have more success by targeting flooded farmlands. Prospective hunters should be aware that success often depends on the severity of fall/winter weather, with wet, blustery conditions generally producing better duck hunting in southwest Washington.





Duck Hunting Success in the Lower Columbia River photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)

GOOSE HUNTING

Hunters are reminded of the complex goose hunting regulations in Goose Management Area 2, designed to protect wintering populations of the dusky Canada goose. New hunters and those whose hunting authorization for Goose Management Area 2 was invalidated the previous year need to pass a goose identification exam with a minimum of 80% to receive their current-year hunting authorization. Goose hunters are encouraged to review the different subspecies of Canada geese in southwest Washington, where the ability to identify those birds is critical for a productive and enjoyable season.

Please review the information regarding goose identification found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/goose-identification-testing> before hunting this season, and see the [WDFW Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet](#) for more information.

While dusky Canada geese remain of concern, several other subspecies are abundant and support large annual harvests.

Goose hunters are also encouraged to take advantage of the early goose season in September. See the waterfowl hunting pamphlet for details on this enjoyable goose hunt for western Canada geese.



Canada geese during a banding effort in southwest Washington – Photo by Brian Davern

PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)

601 Bond Road

PO Box 280

Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

[WA - DNR](#)

pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov

Link to purchase DNR quadrangle maps:

<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/buy-maps-aerial-photos-or-survey-data>

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Headquarters

10600 N.E. 51st Circle

Vancouver, WA 98682

(360) 891-5000

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot/>

Cowlitz Valley Ranger District

10024 US Hwy 12

PO Box 670

Randle, WA 98377

(360) 497-1100

Mt. Adams Ranger District

2455 Hwy 141

Trout Lake, WA 98650

(509) 395-3402

Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument

42218 N.E. Yale Bridge Road

Amboy, WA 98601

(360) 449-7800

PRIVATE LAND RESOURCES

WDFW PRIVATE LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM

Public hunting opportunities are available through the Private Lands Access Program free of charge. The website will list the properties available by county, GMU or type of access allowed such as Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt or Hunt by Reservation. Not all properties allow the same hunting options, landowners can select hunting all legal species or choose to be more restrictive such as deer and elk only, waterfowl only, etc.

Read each property description carefully for property rules, and maps of property locations at:

https://privatelands.wdfw.wa.gov/private_land/

**** Every year new properties are added or may be removed, please frequently check the website for property updates. ****

District 10 – Access Program acres as of 7/23/21	13,482 acres
Weyerhaeuser (multiple parcels) - All species allowed, Feel Free to Hunt	6,297 acres
Columbia Land Trust (2 properties) - Waterfowl Only, Register to Hunt	259 acres
Woodland Bottoms (2 properties) - Pheasant Only, Feel Free to Hunt	369 acres

NEW PROPERTIES TO BE ADDED SEPTEMBER 2021!

For Private Lands Access program information within Region 5 contact:

Monique Ferris
(360) 696-6211 ext. 6721
Monique.ferris@dfw.wa.gov

Please be respectful, hunting on private land is a privilege.



Photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW).



Private Lands Access Program, Register to Hunt property in Wahkiakum County, photo by Monique Ferris (WDFW).

PRIVATE FORESTLANDS

Green Diamond

- Recreation permits must be purchased for motorized and non-motorized access.
<https://greendiamond.com/recreation/rec-program/>

Hancock Forest Management (HFM)

HFM Cathlamet Tree Farm

- Open for non-motorized recreational access

Pacificorps

Generally open for non-motorized recreational access _NO CAMPING
[Lewis River Hunting Access \(pacificorp.com\)](#)

Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management

- Was recently acquired by Rayonier

Rayonier

- Hunting access by lease or permit depending on location
- [Rayonier Hunting | Recreation Licenses | Hunting & Recreation Licenses](#)
- 855-729-4868

Port Blakely

- Generally open to public access
- Check website for information on roads that are open to walk-in or motorized access
- <https://www.portblakely.com/pb-tree-farms/public-access-policy/policy>

Sierra Pacific

- Generally open to walk-in, day-use access
- Access hotline 360-623-1299

Weyerhaeuser

- Includes St. Helens Tree Farm, Yacolt (Columbia River East), Vail, Pe Ell, Columbia Timberlands
 - Access is by permit only except on lands enrolled in the WDFW Private Lands Access Program (Feel Free to Hunt).
 - Motored and non-motorized permits available
- Recreational access webpage: <https://wyrecreationnw.com/permits>
 - Access hotline-866-636-6531