

2022



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DISTRICT 7 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Chelan and Douglas counties

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DISTRICT 7 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Split in two by the Columbia River and comprised of Chelan and Douglas counties, the Wenatchee District is at the heart of Washington. From the crest of the Cascade Range to the shrubsteppe of the Columbia Basin, District 7 offers an incredibly diverse array of habitats and hunting opportunities. Hunters in District 7 have access to a variety of small and big game species, with hunting opportunities ranging from agricultural fields and sagebrush to alpine basins tucked away deep in the wilderness.

Douglas County, the eastern half of the district, is a plateau of shrubsteppe, farmlands, and deep basalt coulees. Ownership is mostly private, yet Douglas County offers excellent opportunities to hunt a variety of species. Hunters seeking pheasant, quail, doves, gray partridge, chukar, and mule deer will find many areas to hunt across the county. The game management units (GMUs) in Douglas County are 248 (Big Bend), 254 (Saint Andrews), 260 (Foster Creek), 262 (Withrow), 266 (Badger), and 269 (Moses Coulee).

Chelan County descends from a high point of 9,500-feet atop the Cascade crest at its western boundary down to a low elevation of 800-feet along its eastern border, the Columbia River. Extending approximately 40 miles from the Cascade crest to the Columbia River, Chelan County encompasses five mountain ranges (Sawtooth, Chelan, Entiat, Chiwaukum, and Wenatchee) providing virtually unlimited terrain.

Home to some of the best mule deer and bighorn sheep hunting in the state, Chelan County is a destination for many hunters. With its large public land base, the county offers almost unlimited opportunities to find a place of your own. Four of the state's six high deer hunt wilderness areas are in Chelan County, as well as three bighorn sheep herds and an increasing mountain goat population. GMUs in Chelan County are 243 (Manson), 244 (Clark), 245 (Chiwawa), 246 (Slide Ridge), 247 (Entiat), 249 (Alpine), 250 (Swakane), and 251 (Mission).

CURRENT SPECIES STATUS

Big game: Almost all the deer harvested in District 7 are mule deer, with very few white-tailed deer. A lesser-known fact is that black-tailed deer also occur in Chelan County along the Cascade crest, and that mule deer here share more black-tailed genes than hunters realize. Elk are present primarily along the southern edge and central portions of Chelan County. These elk represent the northern extension of the Colockum elk herd, centered to the south in Kittitas County. Black bears roam across almost all habitats in Chelan County. Their densities are higher in the wetter timbered habitats in western Chelan County and near the crest of the Cascades, and at somewhat lower densities in drier habitats farther east. Hunters harvest few black bears in Douglas County, but they do occur in small numbers in brush-filled riparian draws along the Columbia River and other drainages. Cougars occupy all habitats where deer and elk are. While most cougar harvests take place during deer and elk seasons, the cougar harvest typically does not meet the harvest guidelines. Winter conditions and fresh snow determine the ease or difficulty of a dedicated cougar hunt. There are three California bighorn sheep herds in the

district, the Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson herds. The world record California bighorn sheep came out of the Swakane herd in Chelan County in 2010, and the Chelan Butte herd has become known for producing quality California bighorn rams. Mountain goats occupy most of the high elevation habitat in Chelan County and hunting opportunities for mountain goats exists in two areas bordering Lake Chelan.

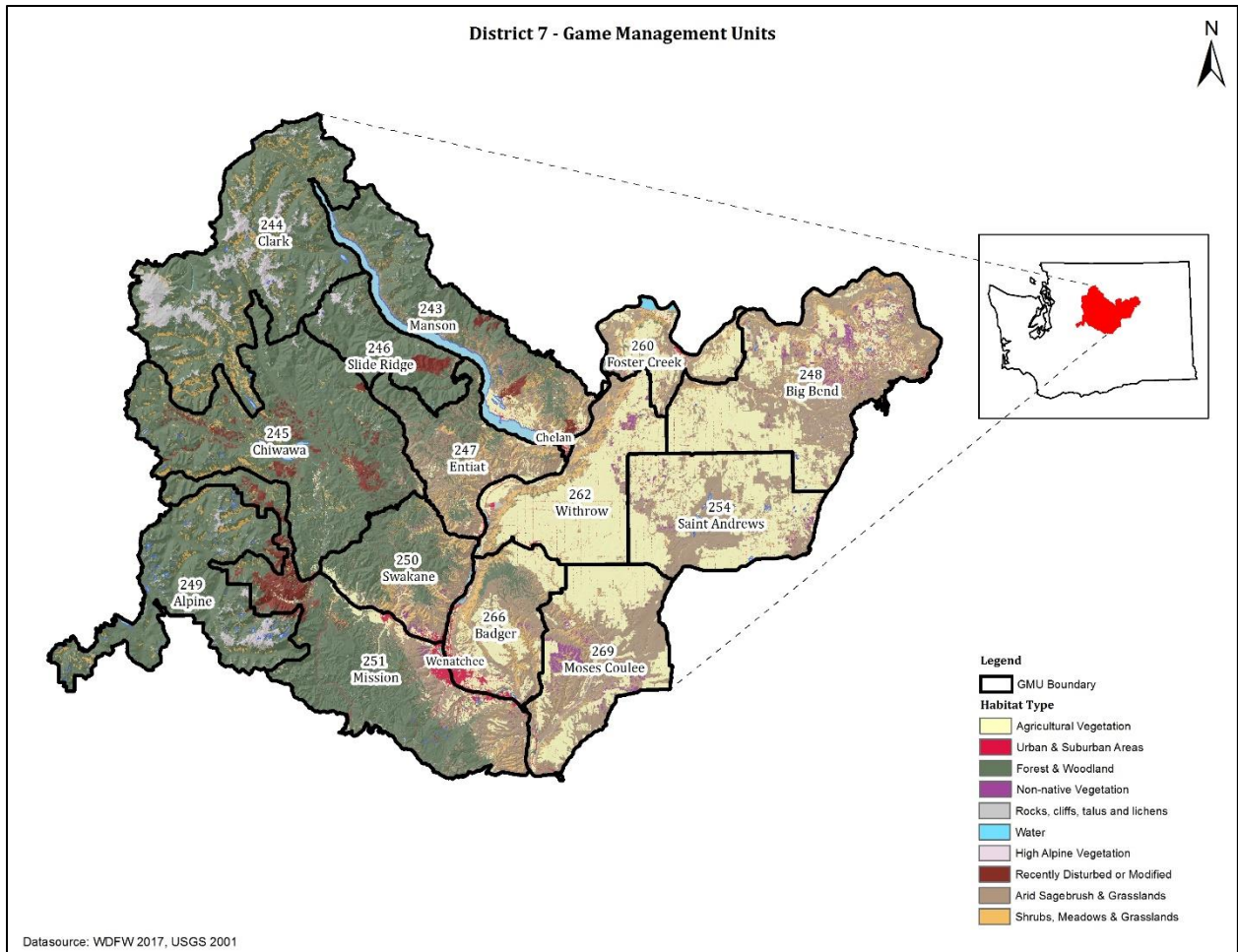
Upland birds: Upland bird hunting is available across the district. Turkey hunting occurs mainly in Chelan County, but numbers are growing in northern Douglas County, and some newly acquired wildlife areas are expanding opportunities. Hunttable grouse species are in forested environments in both counties. Hunters can pursue sooty, dusky, spruce, and ruffed grouse in different parts of the district. The three other grouse species present in the district- greater sage-grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and white-tailed ptarmigan are protected species in Washington. Chukar partridge require hunters to climb steep ridgelines and traverse rocky slopes to bag their quarry. Valley quail, as their name suggests, prefer gentler terrain, and usually stay in greater numbers near agricultural areas. Gray partridge, or Huns, are found primarily in Douglas County. Doves are hunted in both counties, but most of the success is from Douglas County. There are two ring-necked pheasant release sites in Chelan County (Swakane and Chelan Butte Wildlife Areas).

Small game: Coyotes are the most widely adaptable species in the state, and as such, occur virtually everywhere. Bobcats are another widely distributed species hunted across a wide range of habitats from high mountains to dry shrubsteppe. Raccoons are almost everywhere, except for the highest peaks and the driest desert. Crows are another small game species available, and likely little pursued. Rabbits and hares offer hunting opportunity throughout the district, with snowshoe hares at higher elevations (mainly in Chelan County) and cottontail rabbits in a variety of habitats in both Douglas and Chelan Counties.

Waterfowl: Ducks and geese offer opportunities in different portions of the district. The bulk of the waterfowl hunting is along the Columbia River, with ducks being the primary focus. Goose hunts are mainly in Douglas County, but opportunities are also available along the Columbia River.

GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS

The 14 GMUs in District 7 run from the crest of the Cascade Range to Moses Coulee and Banks Lake. Units in western and central Chelan County are high, rugged, and timbered. Eastern Chelan County units grade from mid-to-high elevation forested terrain down into low elevation dry habitat that winters its mule deer herd. The eastern half of the district lies above the Columbia River and encompasses six GMUs in Douglas County. Shrubsteppe and grasslands comprise native habitat in Douglas County and agricultural lands offer some of the best upland bird opportunities in the district.



District 7 GMUs

Each GMU is unique and offers a different experience for hunters. GMUs 244 and 249, for example, are legally designated Wilderness Areas administered by the US Forest Service (USFS). There are no roads within these Wilderness Areas and no mechanized vehicles, including bicycles, are allowed for any type of recreation. In turn, these two GMUs offer exceptional hunting experiences for those willing to go by foot or horse. By contrast, GMU 262 is the heart of Douglas County's wheat production, and while not wilderness, provides great upland bird hunting and open country mule deer hunting where access is granted. GMU 269 offers the most dramatic coulee habitat in the district with stunning landscapes and a variety of hunting opportunities. GMU 260 is in the center of the district's rangeland and features big ranches and big views.

Once you have a GMU in mind, refine your scouting efforts by using the websites below to identify specific hunt areas, WDFW Wildlife Areas, and private lands offering hunting.

- [Printable maps of each GMU](#) with its respective land ownership composition and roads
- [WDFW Wildlife Areas](#)
- The [Public Lands website](#) offers multiple ways to search for and identify public lands in Washington
- The [WDFW Hunt Planner Web Map](#) allows you to select any GMU to see what hunting opportunities are available there and when the seasons run
- The [Washington Department of Natural Resources](#) even offers LIDAR images if you need detailed topographic information

WILDFIRE

This report was written before the full extent of the 2022 wildfire season in north central and northeast Washington was known. At the time of this report, several very small (less than one-acre) brush fires have occurred in Chelan County so far, and on July 18 the Stayman Flats fire broke out above Stayman Flats Road, eventually burning 1,200 acres on the south side of Chelan Butte just west of Homestead Canyon. This area is within the range of the Chelan Butte bighorn sheep herd and provides winter range for mule deer.

Watch for fire condition updates in the monthly Weekender hunting reports, WDFW news releases, or WDFW social media posts. While the Department currently has no plans to close any hunting seasons due to wildfires, access restrictions may be in place on public and private lands in these areas. Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check fire conditions, access restrictions, and other emergency rules before you head out. Multiple websites are available to provide regional and statewide wildfire updates, including the sites listed below:

Resources Management Agency Web Sites

- [Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife](#)
- [Washington State Department of Natural Resources](#)
- [Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest](#)
- [Bureau of Land Management](#)
- [Chelan County](#)
- [Douglas County](#)

Fire Monitoring Web Sites

Visit these sites to see where wildfires are active near your favorite hunting spots.

- [Inciweb](#)
- [National Fire Map](#)
- [WA Smoke Blog](#)

Fire is a natural part of the vegetation communities in eastern Washington and a common occurrence in District 7, affecting both forested and shrubsteppe. However, fires have increased dramatically in frequency, severity, and size over the past decade. Summer and fall are our primary fire seasons and this reoccurring pattern of fire on dry landscapes has shaped the tree, shrub, and grass species that provide habitat for the game we hunt. Species can either benefit or suffer from a fire, and species can also be impacted by excluding fire from landscapes.

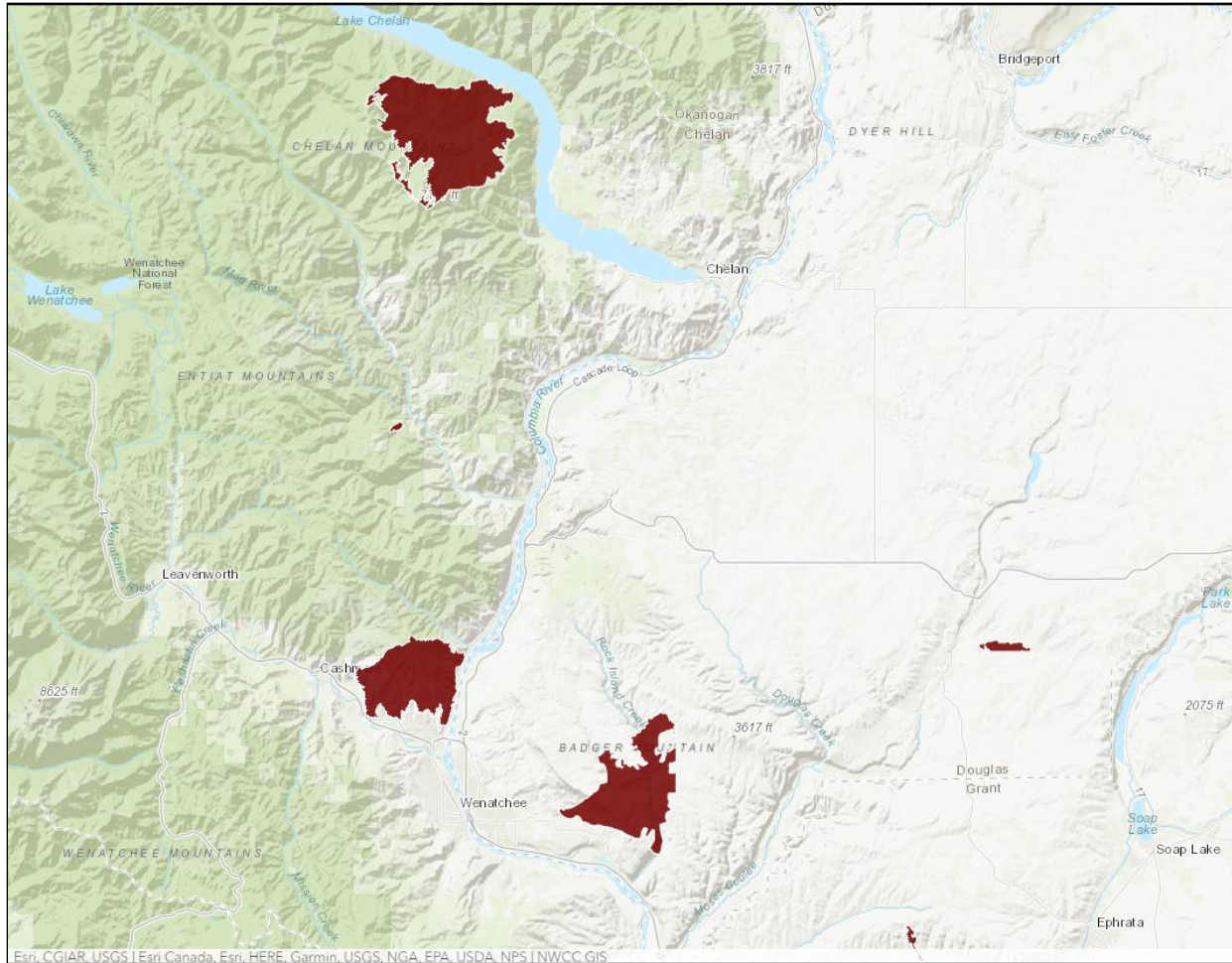
In September 2020, the Pearl Hill Fire spread across 224,000 acres of shrubsteppe habitats in northern Douglas County. This impacted both upland and riparian habitats in parts of GMUs 260, 262, 254, and 248. Post-fire recovery and restoration in the burn area has been variable

depending on burn severity, resources for active restoration, and precipitation. WDFW wildlife areas implemented habitat recovery efforts on units in GMUs 248, 254, and 260. Those efforts focused on weed suppression, seeding native grasses, rebuilding irrigation systems, installing erosion control materials, fence construction, and planting woody vegetation in creeks. Partner organizations including Foster Creek Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Chelan – Douglas Land Trust, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have conducted similar efforts on private and other public lands. These efforts will continue in the coming years to the extent that current and additional funding allows. New riparian plantings and beaver dam analogs in East Foster Creek are designed to stabilize streambanks, help with soil deposition, and provide woody browse in the future.

The South Navarre Campground and surrounding trails on the north side of Lake Chelan have been reopened, but these areas sustained significant damage in the 2017 Uno Peak fire. Hunters should note that the Safety Harbor dock and campground remain closed in 2022 due to safety hazards.

The 2021 wildfire season was once again an active one, with multiple shrubsteppe and forest fires occurring in Chelan and Douglas counties. Central and eastern Washington experienced severe drought in 2021, with precipitation up to 50% below average in places. A record-setting heatwave developed in late June and lasted a couple of weeks, and temperatures remained above average throughout July. The extreme heat and prolonged drought contributed to an early start to the wildfire season with over 25,000 acres of shrubsteppe, grassland and low elevation conifer stands in Chelan and Douglas counties burned by mid-July.

First was the Batterman Road fire in early July, which burned more than 14,000 acres of GMU 266 (Badger) in the Badger Mountain area of Douglas County. In mid-July, the Red Apple fire rapidly burned through approximately 12,000 acres of the southern portion of GMU 250 (Swakane) in the foothills north of Wenatchee, burning public and private lands, including parts of the Swakane Unit of the Chelan Wildlife Area. This area is home to the Swakane bighorn sheep herd and provides important winter range for mule deer.



2021 wildfires in District 7.

In mid-August, the Twentyfive Mile fire began burning on the south shore of Lake Chelan near Twentyfive Mile Creek State Park and quickly expanded south and west of the area. This fire continued to burn through late September and eventually burned more than 22,000 acres. The Twentyfive Mile fire primarily impacted GMU 246 (Slide Ridge) but also reached into the far northwest portion of 247 (Entiat), with closures and reduced access due to safety hazards continuing into the general season and beyond.

Table 1. Acres burned by wildfire in District 7 in 2021.

County	Fire Name	Acres
Chelan	Red Apple	12,288
Chelan	Twentyfive Mile Creek	22,117
Douglas	Whitehall	800
Douglas	Batterman	14,100

The dangers of active fires and post-fire conditions make land management and public safety a difficult issue for agencies. Following a fire, many areas have restricted access due to safety and resource concerns, and because fire season precedes and/or overlaps hunting seasons, hunters' plans may be impacted. Even when fires have been contained, or the fire is officially out, the impacts of fire and firefighting can and will restrict access in some areas. Transport of heavy equipment, gear, and firefighters during operations degrade roads despite best efforts, and in many instances, these roads are unrepaired before hunting seasons open. Hunters should expect access restrictions in areas of wildfire activity and plan accordingly.

It is always smart to start making plans early and to monitor conditions and access by contacting the agencies that manage the area in which you plan to hunt. Cities, counties, companies, and resource management agencies all can place unexpected access restrictions on roads and hunting lands. Make plans, but also have an alternate plan in your back pocket in case conditions change and your new or favorite hunting area is closed. WDFW sets hunting seasons across the entire state. However, local laws, ordinances, and policies set by landowners and jurisdictions could restrict access to public lands even though WDFW hunting seasons are open.

ELK



Photo credit: Pete Lopushinsky

GMU 251 (Mission) continues to offer the best elk hunting in the district. Most elk harvested in the Wenatchee District come from here, where the Colockum Herd reaches its northern range extension in southern Chelan County. In District 7, elk are known to use Jumpoff Ridge, Tronsen Meadows, the Camas Meadows/Peshastin area, and areas through upper Mission Creek. In 2009, WDFW implemented “true spike” restrictions for most general season harvest opportunities. Branched antler bull opportunities are primarily limited entry hunts.

A few elk harvests are scattered across Douglas County each season, but that harvest is not consistent from year to year. Liberal harvest seasons are in place in Douglas County to keep elk from establishing herds in the agriculture dominated landscape where their presence is unwelcome.

In 2021, hunts were re-established in the Peshastin Elk Area (EA 2033) with 20 cow tags in mid-December 2021 to early February 2022 and four any bull permits in early to mid-February. Prior to this, the Peshastin Elk area had not had a permit hunt since 2015. In recent years, WDFW has noted an increase in elk use in the area which has prompted some concerns from agricultural producers. Elk tend to concentrate in orchards in the winter once sufficient snow has accumulated at higher elevations driving elk to seek out lower elevation food sources. The first run of re-established Peshastin hunts proved successful, providing a quality experience for hunters as well as keeping elk moving across the landscape and decreasing time spent in any one orchard. Peshastin permits are offered at the same levels for the 2022/2023 season. Access is highly restricted to private lands, so be sure to contact landowners early if you have drawn a permit for EA 2033. Permit holders should contact the Wenatchee District Office for additional information.

Several changes to elk general seasons in District 7 resulted in increased opportunity for hunters in 2021. One notable change is that GMU 251 was opened to early and late general season archery elk hunts for spike bulls. This increase in archery opportunity was reflected in the 2021 harvest statistics, with an increase in the number of archery hunters as well as elk harvested by archers over the previous years.

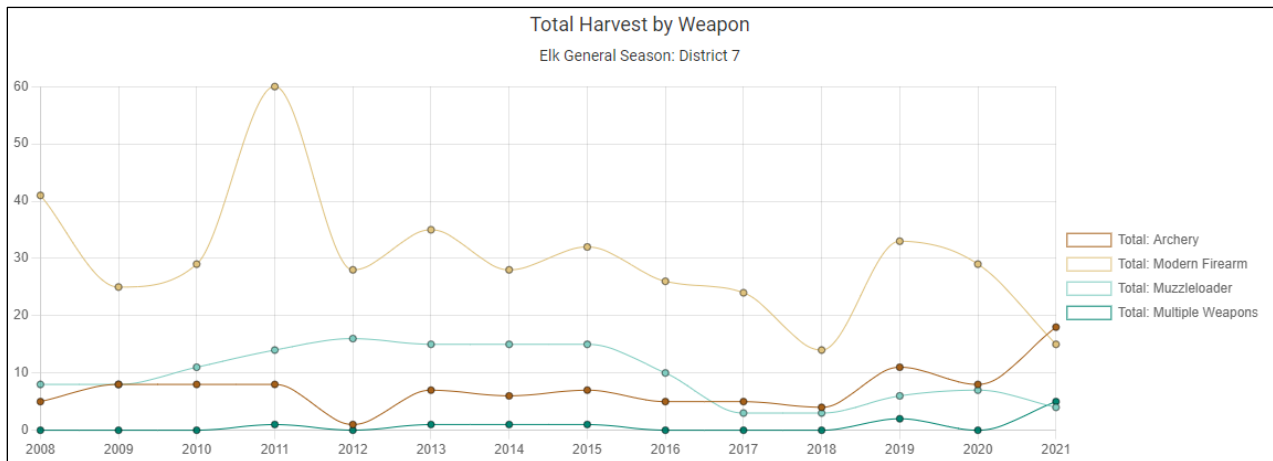


Figure 1. Total number of elk harvested in the 2021 general season in District 7 from 2008 to 2021.

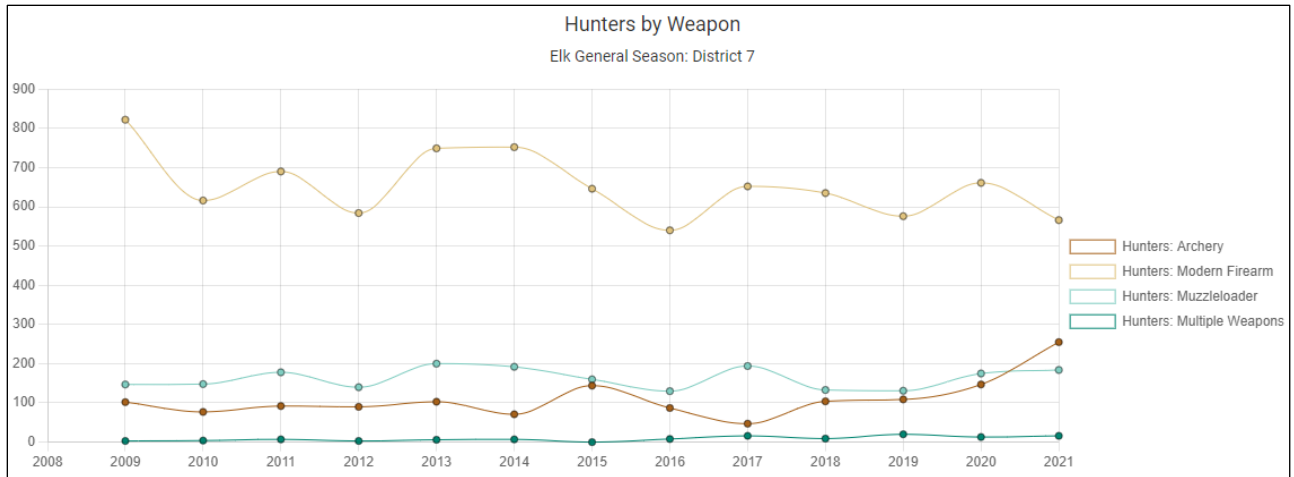


Figure 2. Number of general season elk hunters in District 7 from 2008 to 2021.

Aside from a slump in the 2017 and 2018 seasons following the harsh winter conditions of 2016/2017, hunters typically harvest 40-55 elk under general seasons in Chelan County annually, and 42 were harvested in 2021. Antlerless harvest varies year to year, with the focus placed on local elk to combat damage in the Malaga Elk Area. Most of the elk harvested come out of GMU 251, with the remaining few harvested in GMUs 244, 245, and 249, and very small numbers coming inconsistently out of other GMUs. This trend was displayed again in 2021, with few elk harvested outside of GMU 251. Although District 7 does not formally monitor the elk population, hunters and landowners alike report seeing increasing numbers of elk over the past several years, and the 2022 season should yield a harvest similar to the last few years.

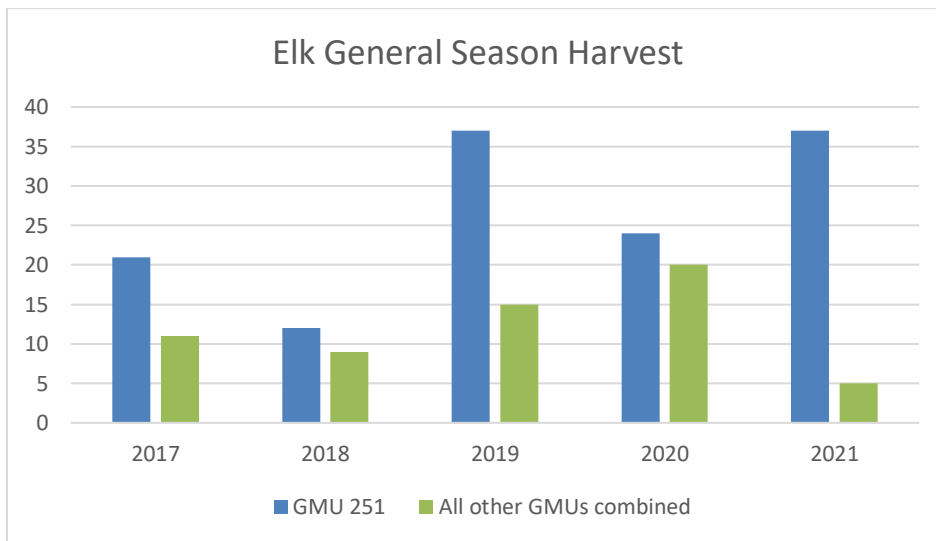


Figure 3. Snapshot of general season elk harvest illustrating the preeminence of GMU 251 for elk hunting in District 7.

Mature bulls use a portion of southern Chelan County as security and wintering habitat. Elk utilize a wide range of forage including grasses and forbs in the summer months, typically incorporating deciduous shrubby browse as these more palatable plants begin to dry out. Areas where timber harvest or wildfire has occurred, especially adjacent to creek drainages and intact timber stands, can be excellent places to look for elk, as this disturbance stimulates the growth of elk's preferred forage. Cow elk are especially dependent on finding high-quality forage in the fall to prepare their bodies for pregnancy over the winter.

Elk in GMUs 245 through 250 occur at low densities and in relatively small, dispersed bands. Local hunters who live in and work the area are often the hunters that prove to be most successful in harvesting these elk. GMU 249 comprises a large block of public land within the USFS Alpine Lakes Wilderness. While this GMU offers an opportunity for an over-the-counter archery tag for a branch-antlered bull, elk occur at very low densities here and occupy extremely rugged terrain that does not allow the use of motorized vehicles. Hunters participating in the GMU 249 archery season report surprise at the numbers of other hunters chasing elk.

GMU 251 offers elk opportunity throughout most of the unit. However, elk density is not very high and varies from place to place. Harvest occurs across the GMU, with most of the elk hunting occurring between Blewett Pass to the west, the city of Wenatchee to the east, and the mountainous and timbered habitat south of State Highway 2. The Mission Unit does have a significant number of private lands and hunters need to know property boundaries when hunting elk near private ownership.

Downloadable maps of WDFW Elk Areas in Chelan County, 2032 (Malaga), and 2033 (Peshastin) are available online at [WDFW's site](#). The Malaga elk unit offers the greatest numbers of permits for antlerless elk, intending to reduce elk numbers within and along the boundary of the Stemilt Basin agricultural area.

ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)

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. 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, but **TAHD has**

not been detected in the Colockum Herd or anywhere in District 7 at this time. However, hunters are asked to be on the lookout for any signs of this disease.

If you harvest an elk with abnormal looking hooves in eastern Washington (for example, overgrown or broken hoof claws or skin lesions), please report that harvest to your local WDFW regional office. TAHD appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. The hooves of any elk- young or old, male or female- can be affected by TAHD. Tests show TAHD 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. Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's [online reporting form](#).

Additionally, 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](#). Additional information on TAHD and this incentive program can also be found on page 65 of the Big Game Hunting Regulations Pamphlet.

DEER



Mule deer hunting is the bread and butter of the Wenatchee District. While the district does support a few white-tailed deer, mule deer far outnumber them and dominate hunters' attention. Chelan County has become a destination hunt for many mule deer enthusiasts across Washington, with late season limited entry permits being highly prized. Within District 7, hunters can pursue deer across a range of habitats, including high alpine basins along the crest of the Cascades or expanses of sagebrush in Douglas County.

The management goal of a minimum of 25 bucks per 100 does postseason in the Chelan County portion of the district has been successful in providing hunters with opportunities for quality bucks over the last 10 years. After a two-year hiatus due to persistent inclement weather and safety concerns regarding COVID-19, aerial post-hunt population surveys of the Chelan subherd resumed in December 2021 and revealed an estimated buck:doe ratio of 24:100. This is a slight increase from the estimated buck:doe ratio of 23:100 obtained from aerial surveys in 2018, which was in turn a major increase from the previously estimated buck:doe ratio of 18:100.

The 2021 post-hunt fawn:doe ratio was estimated at 76:100. These ratios add further confirmation that mule deer populations in Chelan County have been steadily rebuilding since the harsh winter of 2016/2017. With a relatively early onset of sexual maturity and high

potential for females to reproduce annually, deer populations have the characteristic of responding quickly to favorable conditions. As Chelan County has not suffered large-scale habitat alteration and the past few winters have been relatively mild, buck numbers have been able to bounce back quickly.

In Douglas County, aerial population surveys have not been performed since 2017, at which time the Douglas subherd was estimated at approximately 13,000 mule deer. Ground-based composition surveys continue to be performed annually, and District 7's portion of the Columbia Plateau mule deer herd still appears to be thriving. The 2021 post-hunt buck:doe ratio was estimated at 26:100, and while this is slightly down from the 29:100 buck:doe ratio estimated in 2020, it still far exceeds the management objective of 15:100. After steadily increasing over the past five years, perhaps sex ratios in Douglas County mule deer are beginning to stabilize.

Without the diverse cover provided by mountains and forests, buck escapement is lower in the sagebrush, therefore a smaller portion of the bucks surviving are mature. Expect to see the Douglas County herd increase in size, providing excellent hunting opportunity during general and antlerless permit seasons in these sagebrush and agricultural habitats.

An estimated 1,800 deer were harvested from Chelan and Douglas counties during the general season in 2021, an approximately 13% decrease from the previous two years' harvests. In 2020, 2,061 deer were harvested, very similar to 2019's harvest of 2,002 deer. The lower harvest in 2021 can likely be partly, but not entirely, attributed to a slight decline in archery and modern firearm hunters. However, hunter success declined slightly for most weapon types in 2021, with only archery hunters experiencing a minor increase in success (1%). Days per kill increased by two days for both modern firearm and muzzleloader hunters but remained the same for multiple weapons and actually decreased by one for archery hunters. The Entiat Unit (GMU 247) in Chelan County and the Big Bend Unit (GMU 248) in Douglas County once again produced the most harvest of the District 7 GMUs in 2021. Of these two units, the productivity of Big Bend is perhaps more notable as it routinely attracts significantly fewer hunters each year than several of the Chelan GMUs yet outpaces these in harvest.

Sex ratio of harvest in 2021 remained consistent with previous years, as 1,670 bucks were harvested in 2021 compared to 130 antlerless deer. Such consistency is expected, as permit numbers regulate the antlerless component of the deer harvest each year.

The full range of factors contributing to reduced success in 2021 as compared to 2020 is not known. Following a heavy snowfall early in the year, last winter was fairly mild, and surveyors observed large numbers of healthy-looking deer on winter range while conducting bighorn sheep surveys in Chelan County in late winter. Given the mild winter, the cold, wet spring that marked the end of drought conditions, and lack of known disease events, biologists have no reason to believe that the 2022 deer harvest will continue last year's decline.

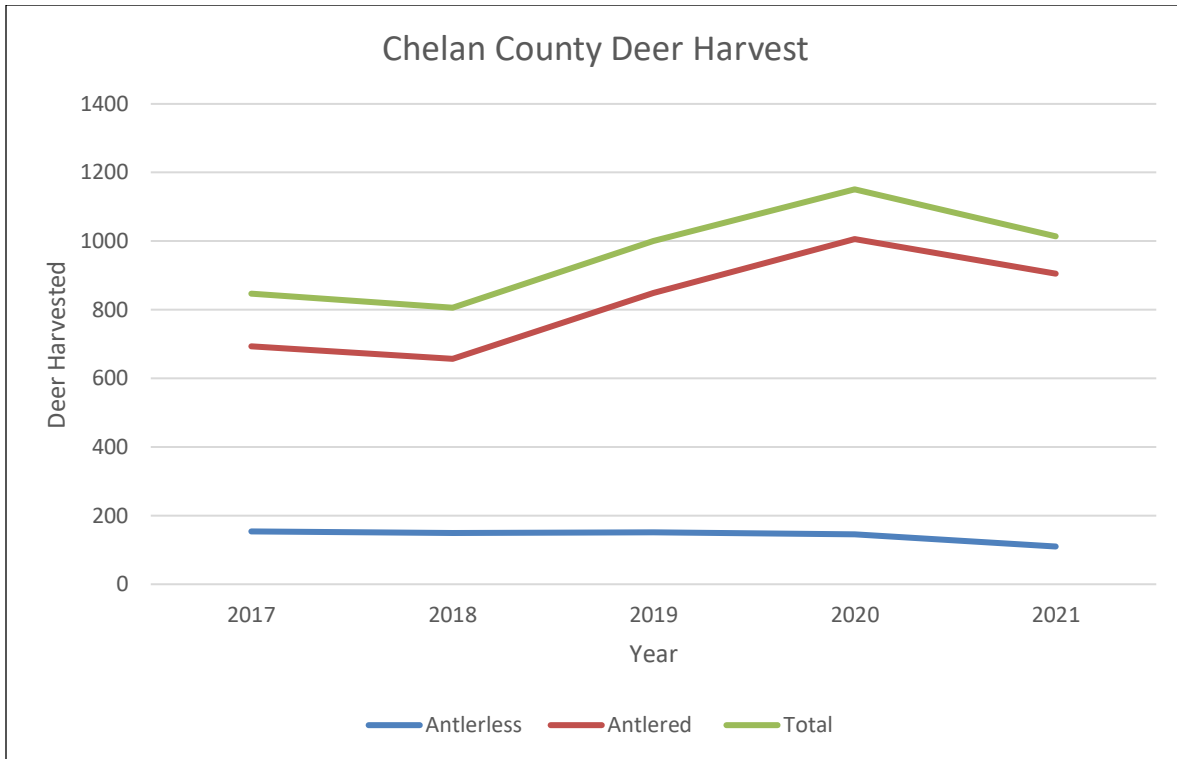


Figure 4. General season deer harvest in Chelan County from 2017 to 2021.

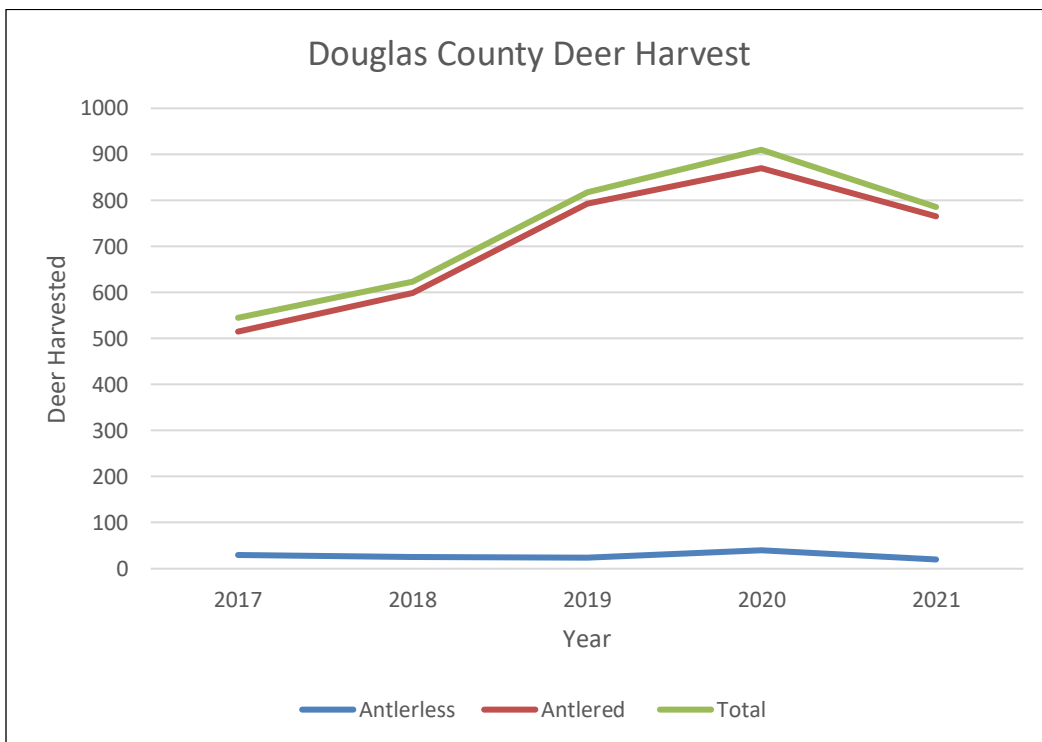


Figure 5. General season deer harvest in Douglas County from 2017 to 2021.

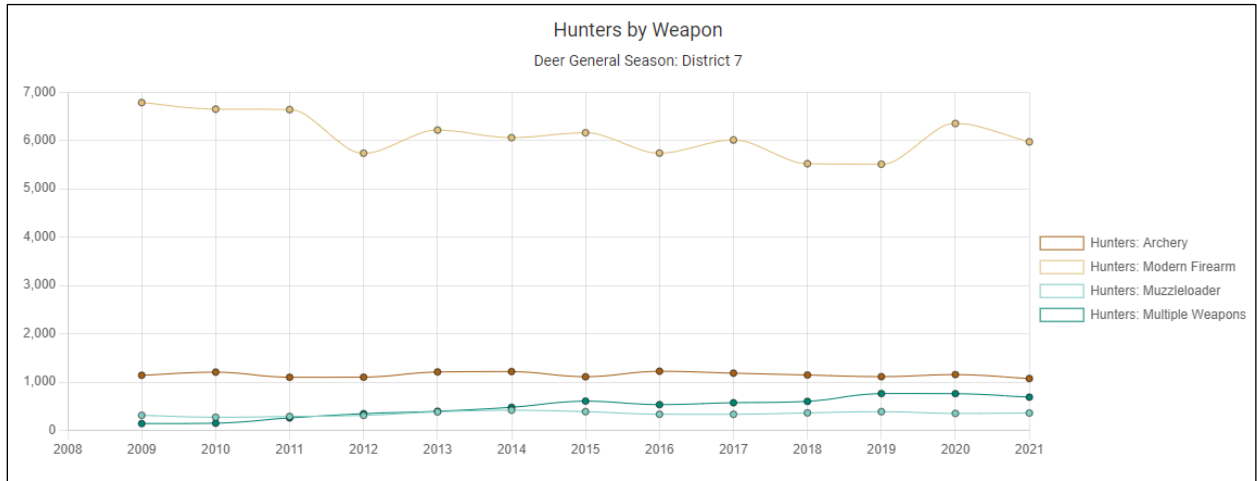


Figure 6. District 7 general season deer hunter numbers from 2009 to 2021.

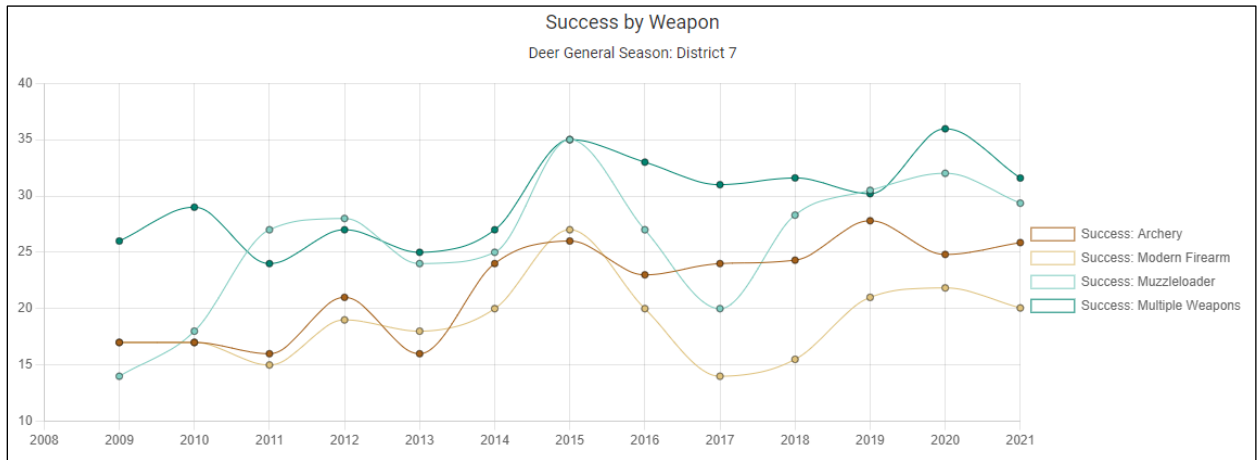


Figure 7. District 7 general season deer hunter success rates from 2009 to 2021.

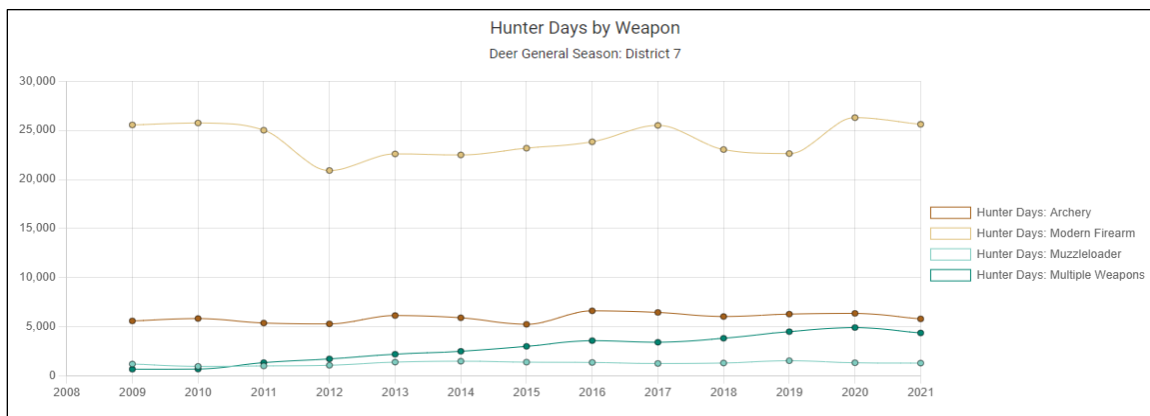


Figure 8. District 7 general season deer hunter number days from 2009 to 2021.

The 2021 fire season was not extensive enough to displace significant numbers of deer, and the nature of general season hunts in Chelan County remains unchanged. Ultimately, fall weather and deer movements determine harvest success in large part because with greater snowfall comes greater movement of mule deer off high elevation summer range and into mid-to-low elevation transitional and winter range. The Chelan County mule deer herd spends winters on the breaks along the Columbia River and surrounding foothills but disperses into the large expanse of the Cascades during summer. These movements are characteristic of a strategy used by mule deer to maximize forage quality during summer and minimize energy expenditure during winter. Some Chelan mule deer travel as far as 40 to 50 miles while transitioning between summer and winter range.

As early as mid-September, deer start responding to changes in vegetation by moving downward in elevation and occupying north-facing slopes where conditions are cooler, and wetter and forage is of better quality. From mid-September through the onset of winter, deer respond to changes in the quality of the available forage and utilize those areas that best meet their needs. By mid-November, bucks are in condition and focused on breeding. However, before that time (during our October general season), they focus on food and security, not on breeding.

A typical hillside of mule deer habitat in the Cascades will transition through the seasons from bright green in the spring and summer to light green to yellow, to orange, to red, to brown, then to bare branches. While we see changes in color, mule deer are perceiving changes in forage quality. The summer forage that supports deer and allows them to produce young and grow antlers does not retain its high quality all year, so as it changes, so do the habitats that deer occupy.

While hunting on winter ranges may sound appealing, as hunters can see long distances, most Chelan County deer will still be in areas of higher quality forage and greater security during the general seasons. Most deer will be in thicker cover where the food is higher quality, and they have protection. These are usually the brushy north-facing slopes or at elevations much higher than typical open mule deer winter range.

By contrast to Chelan County's largely migratory population, Douglas County's mule deer are residents, and the landscape here poses a different set of conditions for deer hunters. Because much of the county is comprised of private lands, hunters have less opportunity to pursue deer freely across habitats, as they must pay attention to ownership boundaries. However, as Douglas County is composed of relatively open habitat with an extensive road network, deer are more vulnerable here than in the rugged, closed canopy, mountainous terrain of the Cascades. The drier nature of shrubsteppe habitat dictates that deer use those areas where forage quality remains higher longer while balancing the need for security. Optimal hunting areas will include a mixture of sagebrush cover or steep broken rocky terrain and adjacent agricultural fields for forage (mostly winter wheat and canola fields). Large expanses of sagebrush, while not providing the best forage, can give deer the security they need as well.

In the broken Coulee County, the topography imparts security and riparian vegetation provides food resources. Deer in these areas often become experts at living in small, secure habitat pockets where they meet their needs and avoid hunters. While most of the county is private, more than 80,000 acres are enrolled in WDFW's Hunter Access Program. Start scouting now for deer herds on private lands and reach out to landowners before the rush of other hunters descend on them days before the season starts. Many farmers are partial to allowing youth hunters.

Many of the Douglas County acres affected by the 2020 fires have experienced significant regrowth of vegetation, and some of these areas in stages of early succession will likely experience enough fall green-up to provide forage for deer. These areas will increasingly attract more mule deer over the next several years as the revegetation of forbs and grasses and other nutrient-dense forage plants continues to progress.

However, the Pearl Hill Fire burned hot enough to completely denude much of the landscape of large perennials such as sagebrush, bitterbrush, and water birch plants that provide valuable cover for mule deer. As such, a good strategy for hunting mule deer in Douglas County in 2022 and in the coming years will be to scout the edges of the Pearl Hill burn area, which will provide mule deer with "edge habitat" wherein they have access to both forage and cover. Later into the season, however, expect deer to move away from the burn areas as these lands will provide no forage once fall annuals have died and winter approaches.

Winter conditions in Douglas County are more typical of the Columbia Basin than the Cascades. The core of the Douglas County population is stable, and the harvest of excess bucks does not change the direction of the population. Reductions in antlerless permits help to mitigate the effects of harsher winters, and buck permits are adjusted to maintain success rates and promote the quality aspects of late-season hunts.

District 7 also encompasses one Deer Area (2017, North Lake Chelan), a site of localized deer concentration where crop damage is a concern. WDFW provides limited, permit-only opportunities here to harvest antlerless deer to deter mule deer presence and reduce crop damage. See [Washington Hunting Seasons & Rules | eRegulations](#) for current permit opportunities and legal boundary descriptions. A map of Deer Area 2017 is available [here](#).

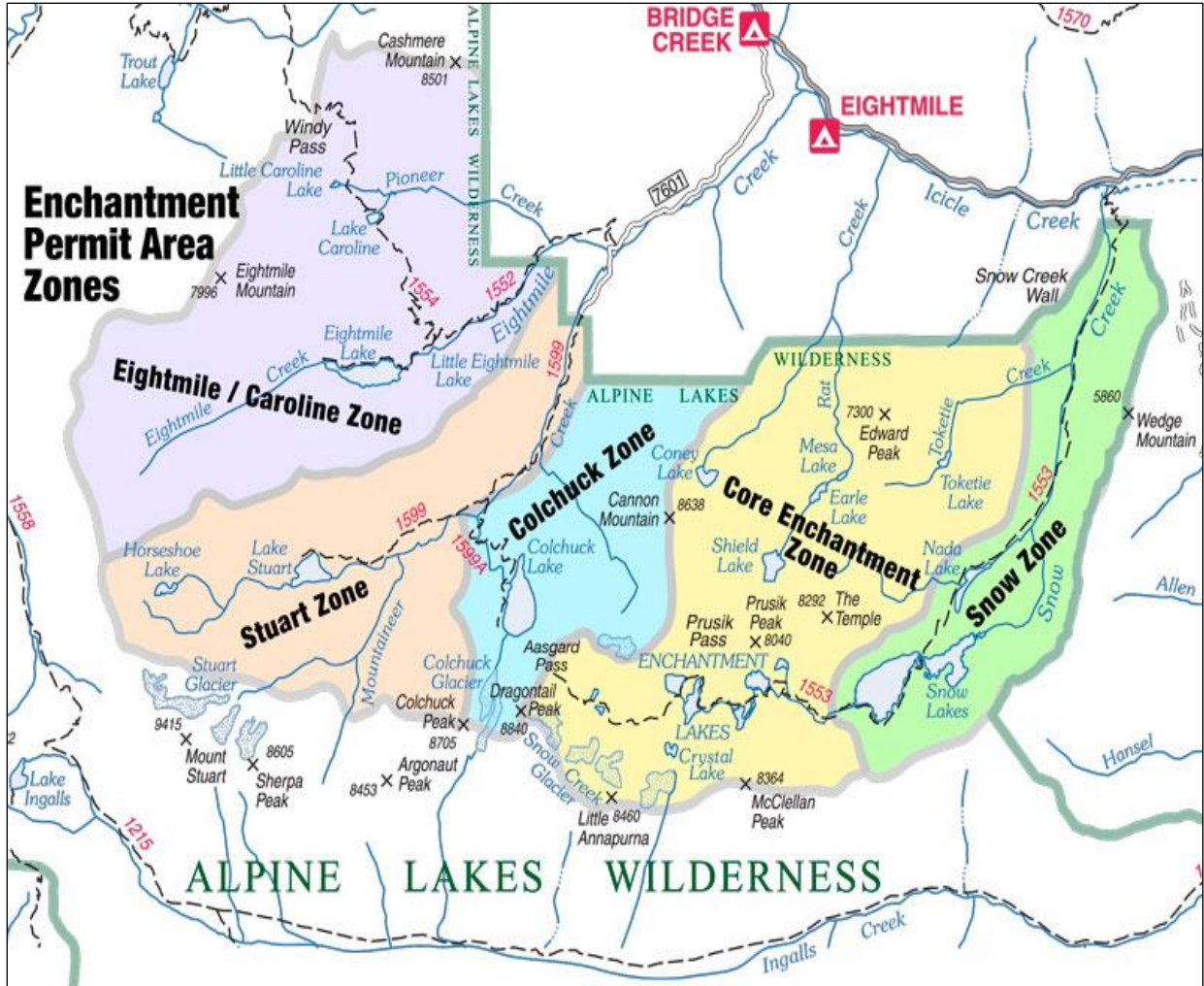
High buck hunts

High buck hunts in the Cascade Range are one of the most popular opportunities provided in the district. Each year, hunters don backpacks and ride pack strings into the heart of wilderness areas to pursue mule deer bucks and black bears. Within District 7, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, Glacier Peak Wilderness, and the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area define open high buck hunt units. The administrative boundaries of these wildernesses and the recreation area are the hunt boundaries. One misconception that continues to persist surrounds the Sawtooth Wilderness along the north shore of Lake Chelan.

The Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness is closed to high buck hunt opportunity Sept. 15-25 but opens for early archery where it overlaps GMU 243. It is common to have active fires in wilderness areas during our September hunts. We encourage hunters to keep track of fire conditions and contact local USFS offices for updates.

High-quality topographic maps and publicly available aerial imagery can help home in on spots to target for scouting. Because of the complex topography of Chelan County and the vast acreage of dissected terrain and escape cover available to deer during the high hunt, bucks can be difficult to encounter during these seasons. Hunters should scout early, when bucks are still in velvet and protecting their antlers, making them more likely to occupy less densely vegetated habitat and increasing their visibility. During the high hunt, deer are still on their abundant summer range and occur at low densities, making this hunt even more challenging. Hunters need to be aware of permit requirements in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and the Enchantment Permit Area Zones. Any overnight trips into any of the five zones within the Enchantments require a permit from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Permits are distributed through a lottery drawing system and are highly sought after. Hunters who have hunted these zones in the past need to be aware that permitting dates have changed. Without a permit, they may not have access to previously hunted areas.

For more information on regulations surrounding the use of the Enchantment Permit Area Zones, visit the [Okanogan-Wenatchee web page](#) or contact USFS directly.



Map of the Enchantment permit area zones within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

BLACK BEAR



In recent years, research conducted by WDFW staff members using hair snares for DNA capture-recapture and collaring for monitoring bear survival and productivity has contributed to our understanding of black bear population densities and sex and age structure in District 7. However, age analysis conducted using the teeth of harvested bears remains the most consistent method of monitoring black bear populations. Bear harvest in the district is managed sustainably to maintain a stable population and healthy age and sex composition, and Chelan County continues to provide consistent bear hunting opportunity. Black bears are common throughout much of Chelan County, particularly in the forested slopes of areas such as Mission Ridge, Blewett Pass, and Lake Wenatchee. Black bears also occur in significantly lesser numbers in some areas of Douglas County, with typically fewer than 10 bears harvested from the Douglas GMUs each year.

Research conducted in Chelan County indicates that fall forage availability influences reproduction and survivorship of cubs and yearlings. Black bears in Chelan County typically have a large amount of forage available to them and are most predictably found in areas suitable for berry crops, like huckleberries. This means that as the season progresses and temperatures decrease, bears tend to move up in elevation to take advantage of berries that are able to continue ripening in the later growing season of higher altitudes. By October when berries become scarce and bears enter a period of frenzied eating known as polyphagia to prepare for hibernation, bears wander a broader range of elevations and habitats in search of all possible

sources of food. Most bears harvested in the district are taken during open deer and elk seasons. Dedicated bear hunters will often hunt early in the season when bears are foraging on predictable annual berry crops and they can find them more easily. The incidental harvest that occurs during open deer and elk seasons is much more dependent on bear behavior and how widely they will have to travel for food.

In District 7, GMU 251 consistently produces the highest number of harvested bears with GMUs 245 and 250 coming in second. These units, along with all the other GMUs in Chelan County except for 243 (Manson), are part of the East Cascades Bear Management Unit (BMU 6). In total, the East Cascades BMU is comprised of 23 GMUs along the Central Cascades, and the Wenatchee District is normally responsible for a substantial amount of the unit’s harvest. In 2019 and 2020, District 7 accounted for almost 40% of black bear harvest in BMU 6, rising to comprise 45% of BMU 6 black bear harvest in 2021. Additionally, 22 black bears were harvested in GMU 243 in 2021, a similar number to those harvested there in each of the previous several years.

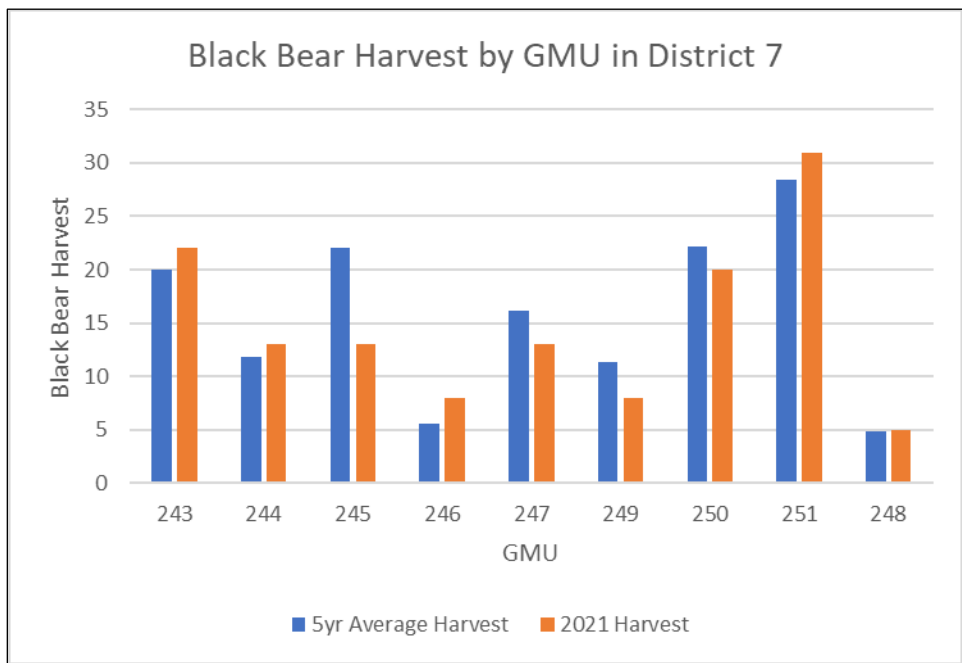


Figure 9. The number of black bears harvested during the general season in each Game Management Unit (GMU) in District 7. The total number of bears harvested in 2021 (orange) are compared to the 5-year average (blue). Other GMU’s in District 7 that are not included in this figure and had zero bears harvested in 2021 are: 254, 260, 262, 266, and 269.

While success relative to effort fluctuates from year to year, participation has been relatively stable, with approximately 4,000-4,600 hunters participating in the black bear season throughout BMU 6 each year.

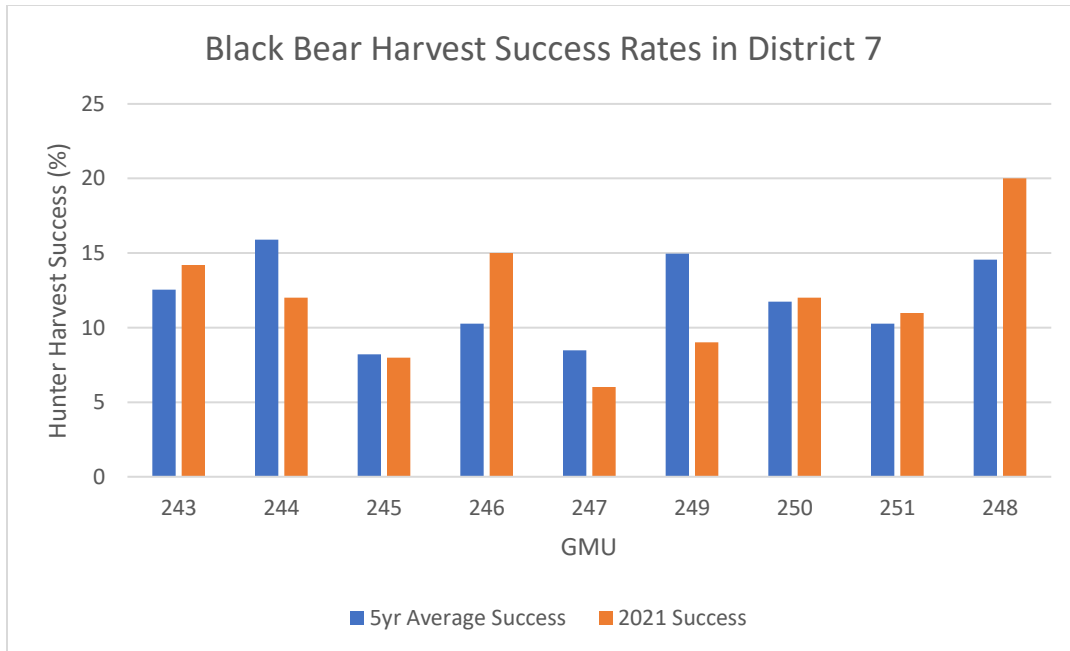


Figure 10. Black bear general season harvest success rates (%) in each GMU in District 7. The 2021 success rates (orange) are compared to the 5-year average (blue). Other GMUs in District 7 that are not included in this figure and had zero bears harvested in 2021 are: 254, 260, 262, 266, and 269.

In Douglas County, hunters can find bears sparsely distributed in small numbers particularly in brushy riparian draws along the Columbia River and other drainages. Douglas County is part of the Columbia Basin Bear Management Unit (BMU 9), and bear harvest here makes up a far smaller portion of District 7’s total. In both 2019 and 2020, seven bears were harvested from Douglas County, and five were harvested in 2021. Most bears in Douglas County are harvested in GMUs 248 and 260.

There is a statewide mandatory requirement to submit a premolar tooth from all harvested black bears by Dec. 1. Please contact the district office if you need assistance with submitting a tooth. For more information, see page 68 of the Washington Big Game Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

COUGAR

Like black bears, population monitoring for cougar management comes primarily from harvest data. In District 7, cougar hunt areas are split into four different Population Management Units (PMU) in Chelan County and a Columbia Basin PMU which includes Douglas County. Within each of these hunt areas, harvest guidelines are established based on ungulate habitat and cougar population biology. Throughout District 7, cougar populations appear stable, and cougars are dispersed widely throughout both Chelan and Douglas counties. Both counties offer good hunting opportunities, especially when enough snow falls to allow for tracking.

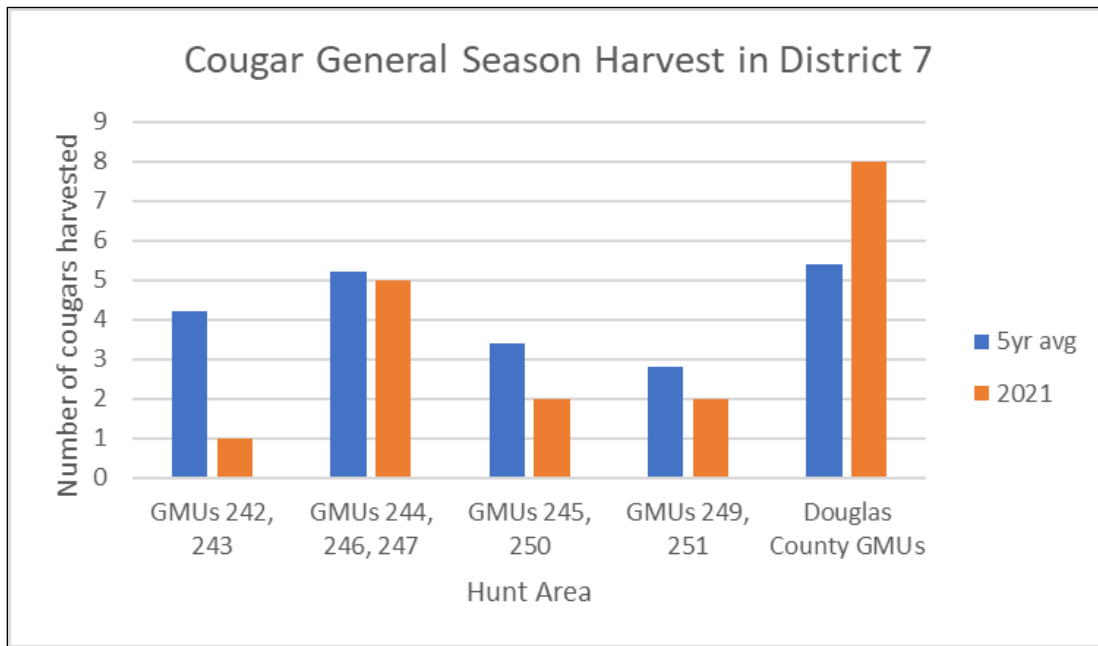


Figure 11. Comparison of 5-year average harvest (blue) and 2021 harvest (orange) for cougars in District 7.

A two-part season is in place, allowing harvest during big game seasons under an early cougar season which opens Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, and a later season, which starts Jan. 1, for a more focused pursuit of cougar when conditions make hunting easier. After Jan. 1, once the harvest guideline for a PMU is reached, a decision is made about whether to leave that hunting area open. In a typical year, one or more PMUs in Chelan County will remain open until the season closes on April 30. No PMU reached or exceeded the harvest goal in Chelan County in 2021.

While many cougars are harvested opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons in Chelan County, dedicated cougar hunters will wait until snow accumulation allows for tracking later in the winter. Cougars are primarily a predator of deer and are most active during the periods when deer are most active, which is typically dawn and dusk. Cougars follow deer herds and will typically be found at lower elevations as the early season progresses and deer move off summer range and migrate to winter range.

Douglas County also offers good cougar hunting opportunities. Most hunters will focus on the breaks of the Columbia River, Moses Coulee, and Rufus Woods Reservoir. This rough country allows cougar's access to deer herds while providing them stalking cover. Successful hunters often wait for snow and track cats on foot. Foster Creek (260), Badger (266), Moses Coulee (269), and Withrow (262) have consistent cougar harvest. There are no changes to cougar hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2022.

BIGHORN SHEEP



Photo courtesy Mark Beardemphl.

Within Chelan County, WDFW manages three bighorn sheep herds: Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson. Each of these herds is the result of multiple translocation efforts beginning in 1969, and each herd continues to thrive today and offer prized, once-in-a-lifetime sheep hunting opportunity.

Swakane:

The core range of this herd is within the Swakane Unit of the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area and the surrounding public lands adjacent to the Wildlife Area. Hunting pressure on this herd is low, with only two mature ram permits offered each year. This unit is famed for producing the world record California bighorn in 2010 as scored by Safari Club International. Over the past decade, this herd has increased from approximately 100 animals to a minimum count of 200 animals in 2019, well above the population objective for this herd. A 2021 late winter aerial survey of the Swakane herd returned a minimum count of 195 sheep with a ram:ewe ratio of 79:100 and a robust population of mature rams, so the 2022 season will no doubt provide another year of world-class sheep hunting opportunity here.

Bands of sheep are routinely found along the cliffs and steep slopes along the breaks of the Columbia River. Permit winners can take advantage of the network of USFS roads within the Swakane bighorn hunt unit to gain access to high points for glassing and scoping for groups of

rams. Other opportunities for glassing this herd can be taken from the east side of the Columbia River at pullouts on Highway 97. In recent years, the Swakane herd has expanded its range, and sheep are regularly observed as far north as the Entiat River.

Chelan Butte:

This herd is central to Chelan Butte between the Columbia River and the city of Chelan. The Chelan Butte herd provides some of the best access to all the sheep herds in Chelan County and is known to produce large rams. This fall will be no exception as the March 2021 aerial survey returned a ram:ewe ratio of 76:100 and a high proportion of mature rams. Apart from mature ram hunting opportunities, WDFW offers both ewe and juvenile ram permit hunts for the Chelan Butte herd.

A county road bisects the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area, providing access to state and federal lands open for hunting. Some of the best glassing is offered from the hang-gliding launch near the summit of Chelan Butte. For views of the cliffs along the Columbia River, try glassing by boat or from points along Highway 97, east of the Columbia River. Bighorns in this herd tend to stay on the river or east side of Chelan Butte and range north as far as Wells Dam. Hunters have also harvested rams from Deer Mountain, just north of Chelan.

The minimum population estimate for the Chelan Butte herd was 114 in the same 2021 survey, but it is possible that this drop from the 150 animals observed in 2019 is a result of surveyors simply missing one or more bands of sheep. Further surveys are planned for late summer/fall 2022 to obtain another population estimate, and this timeframe is also conducive for obtaining a lamb:ewe ratio.

Manson:

The Manson herd occupies primarily USFS land on the north shore of Lake Chelan, concentrated between Antilon Creek north to Lone Fir Creek. The Manson herd occupies some of the most rugged and inaccessible terrain of all the sheep herds in Chelan County and Washington as a whole. This herd is most readily accessible by boat on Lake Chelan. USFS maintains several public docks and campgrounds along the Lake Chelan shoreline. Be aware that a Federal Dock Permit is required to use any USFS dock between May 1 – Oct. 31. **Note: The Safety Harbor dock and campground was closed in 2017 and will not be open in 2022.**

The Manson Unit hunt season occurs much later than the season for the Swakane and Chelan Butte herds and is timed when rams should be more concentrated at lower elevations along the lake. A late winter 2021 aerial survey returned a count consistent with that of the past several years, estimating the herd at approximately 70-80 animals.

For all three of the Wenatchee District's sheep herds, overwinter survival for adult sheep remains high. Mortality of lambs for the year is characteristic of most sheep populations, where lambs suffer the highest rates of mortality during their first year of life, and the highest mortality of the year immediately after birth. With herds stable to increasing, permit numbers may increase in the future, tracking any increases in ram numbers. WDFW plans to census these herds in fall 2021.

There have been no major changes to herd health or habitat as of yet, but the deadly pathogen *M. ovi* has now infected bighorn herds to the north and south of District 7, so the public is asked to be on the lookout for signs of infection in Chelan County's bighorn sheep. *M. ovi* can cause pneumonia outbreaks in bighorn herds resulting in high sheep mortality. Symptoms of *M. ovi* in sheep include coughing, nasal discharge, persistent headshaking, lethargy, and sudden death. **Hunters are asked to report observations of any such symptoms right away to the Wenatchee District Office and provide GPS coordinates for the observed sick or dead sheep.**

Hunters selected under these drawings are encouraged to contact District 7 for additional information. All hunters harvesting a bighorn sheep ram in Washington State are required to have the horn sets measured and plugged by WDFW within 10 days. Hunters should call a WDFW Regional or District Office to schedule an appointment with a biologist.



Each harvested ram must be pinned with an aluminum pin with a unique ID number.

MOUNTAIN GOATS



While mountain goats occur in many higher elevation areas in Chelan County, they are currently only hunted along Lake Chelan in two goat hunt units: 2-1 on the north shore and 2-3 on the south shore. However, it is highly likely that permits in these units will be discontinued in the very near future due to a steep decline in mountain goat populations observed on both shores of Lake Chelan. Recent years' monitoring efforts have yielded counts far below the threshold of 100 animals necessary to allow for sustainable harvest as per WDFW's current Game Management Plan, despite extensive survey coverage.

In a preliminary response to mounting evidence that Lake Chelan mountain goat numbers were not high enough to sustain even limited harvest, WDFW removed both the north and south shore goat hunt units from the list of possible locations for the auction and raffle hunts in the 2021 season. Following an additional survey that yielded very few goat sightings, the north shore goat permit levels were dropped from two to one for the 2022 season, while the standard single permit remained in place for the south shore.

After yet another very disappointing survey in February 2022 and concern expressed by community members over the decline in goat numbers they too were observing on either shore, WDFW staff members plan to pull the remaining permits for the north and south shore herds moving forward. This makes 2022 the last year for the foreseeable future in which hunters will be able to harvest goats in District 7, until we can figure out what is contributing to the loss of Lake Chelan's mountain goats and reverse the decline such that both herds rebound to 100+ animals.

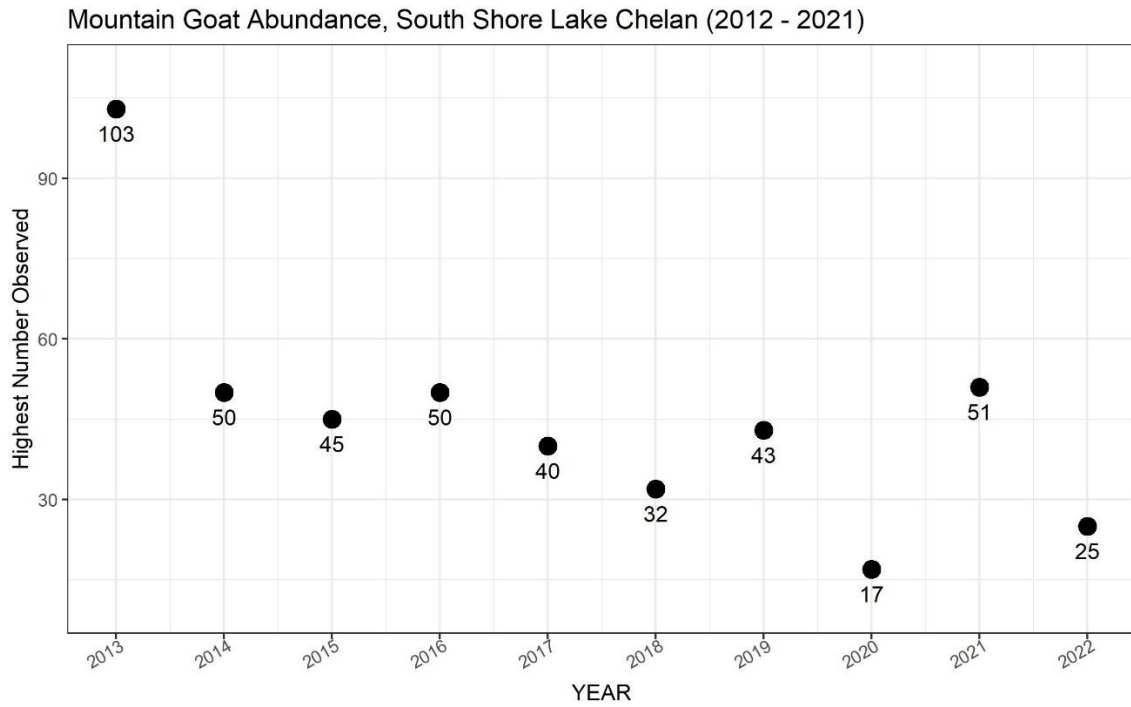


Figure 12. Number of mountain goats observed on the south shore of Lake Chelan via boat or aerial survey for each of the past 10 years.

Mountain Goat Abundance, North Shore Lake Chelan (2012 - 2021)

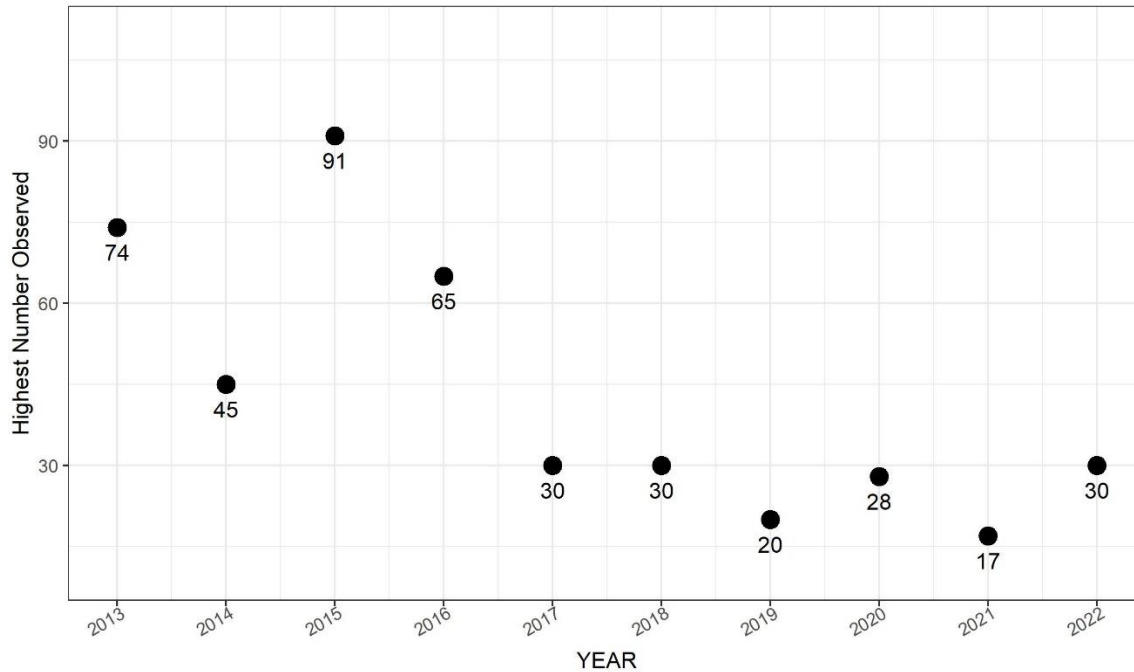


Figure 13. Number of mountain goats observed on the north shore of Lake Chelan via boat or aerial survey for each of the past 10 years.

Since 2001, 32 drawing permits have been issued for the Chelan North permit hunt, and 26 goats have been harvested, five of which were nannies. A single permit has been offered each year for the Chelan South permit hunt since 2012, with the first goat being harvested in 2013. Seven goats have been harvested from Chelan South since the establishment of the permit hunt, all of which have been billies. Every effort is made to provide hunters with information that will ensure harvest of male goats rather than female goats. A significant amount of research on mountain goats in the United States and Canada indicates that mountain goat populations are particularly vulnerable to declines caused by harvest of female goats.

Hunters selected under these drawings in 2022 are encouraged to contact District 7 for additional information. Hunters who harvest a mountain goat in Washington must present the head with horns attached to a WDFW office within 10 days of harvest. Hunters must call ahead to make an appointment with a biologist for inspection of their goat.

TURKEY



Turkey hunters saw an increase in harvest opportunities in District 7 beginning with the introduction of a fall season in 2021 for Chelan and Douglas counties that allowed for the harvest of one turkey of either sex. For the spring 2022 turkey season, the bag limit for bearded turkeys in Chelan County was raised from one to two which, as anticipated, resulted in an increase in hunter numbers and harvest levels in the North Central PMU. These bag limits remain in place for the coming fall and spring turkey seasons.

Merriam's turkeys in Chelan County are the result of the release of over 400 birds between 2000-2002. Turkeys are not native to Washington, but their popularity with hunters make them a prized game species. Turkey densities in the district are relatively concentrated, but populations appear to be increasing in the northern portions of Douglas County and parts of Chelan County. A low level of harvest occurs on public lands, with local hunters being the most successful, as densities are low, and finding seasonal habitat is important.

In Chelan County, the number of turkeys the landscape can support is determined primarily on the amount and availability of wintering habitat under typical snow depths. When winter snow depths reach 20 inches or more, wild turkeys have a difficult time making it through the winter. In areas where turkey can utilize ranches, barnyards, and farms for winter forage, they can show significant survival over winter. In Chelan County, GMUs 245, 250, and 251 produce the greatest turkey harvest.

Hunters should target more consistent turkey producing areas, such as the Colockum Wildlife Area. The Stemilt Basin outside of Wenatchee and canyons of the Wenatchee River between Cashmere and Leavenworth offer good opportunities to find turkeys. Turkeys frequently occur

in these areas near the edge of private and public lands. Some recent forest thinning projects on public lands have promise for supporting turkeys in the spring. Areas to focus for turkeys on recently logged USFS lands include Derby Canyon, Yaksum Canyon, Mission Creek, Eagle Creek, and any other canyons that lead off Chumstick Highway between Leavenworth and Plain. Hunters can also find turkeys west through Plain, but they are often on private land. In Douglas County, GMUs 266 and 248 have been producing an increasing number of turkeys. Remember to scout early and get permission to hunt private lands.

QUAIL

District 7 offers some of the best quail hunting in the state, with a five-year average (2016-2020) of approximately 9,718 quail harvested in Chelan and Douglas counties. However, harvest in 2020 was below this average at 9,000 birds taken, and District 7 quail harvest dropped again in 2021 to only 7,620 birds. This represents a 16% decrease in quail harvest since 2020, while hunter numbers actually remained stable over this time period. The continuing decline in hunter success likely reflects a decline of District 7 quail populations due to the largescale wildfires of 2021 and 2022 as well as the prolonged drought. The Pearl Hill Fire of 2020 impacted both upland and riparian habitats in parts of GMUs 248, 254, 260, and 262, while 2021's Batterman Fire and Red Apple Fire took out quail habitat in GMU 266 and 250, respectively. Meanwhile, the lack of rain in spring 2021 and accompanying extreme temperatures that summer stunted vegetation growth and depressed insect production, resulting in low chick survival.

While fire can benefit quail in the long run by setting back the successional stage of an area and stimulating forb growth and seed production, the immediate aftermath of the Pearl Hill Fire left behind vast areas of severely burned landscapes with no forage or cover available for quail or other upland game birds. Now almost two years after this fire, regrowth of vegetation has begun throughout much of the burn area, providing forage and insect prey for quail in areas that were desolate in fall 2020, although these areas still lack much of the cover required for nesting. Additionally, the cool, wet weather of spring 2022 resulted in greater vegetation growth and insect populations, and this will likely lead to a boost in chick survival this year. The 2022 quail season should see at least a modest uptick in quail harvest and hunter success, likely followed by a greater increase in the 2023 season more in line with the five-year average if weather conditions remain favorable.

Quail benefit from a variety of agricultural land uses that create the edge habitat on which quail often rely, such as where the edge of an irrigated field meets shrubsteppe. Edges of standing corn, wheat, or other grain fields, medium to heavy cover surrounding harvested fields, and other places where weed and grass seed are readily available are prime places to look for quail. Fortunately, areas such as these are plentiful in Douglas County.

Quail are also often found in thick tangles of trees and tall brush, especially near stream beds, valley bottoms with patches of Russian olive, oak or high sage, and weather-break tree lines and fence lines. In Chelan County especially, quail will tend to be found in and around orchards and other irrigated crops. Swakane Canyon also provides great quail opportunity in Chelan County. Public lands can be tough places to find larger coveys well into the season. To improve success, hunters should seek out those areas without easy access and spend some time seeking permission from private landowners. For more information, see [Quail Hunting](#).

GRAY PARTRIDGE

Gray partridges, or “huns” as they are commonly called, are more common in Douglas County than in Chelan County and are associated with grasslands or agricultural areas that are interspersed with patches of sagebrush. Brushy “hedgerows” adjacent to agricultural fields can often harbor huns in the winter. They occur at low density, with coveys dispersed across larger areas. Look to fields of grain crops enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program with lots of grass cover extending into draws, as these are often a good place to find coveys. Covering a wide range of cover types is the best way to locate coveys. While most gray partridges are taken while hunting other species, with a little focus and dedication, you can be successful hunting for huns.

At odds with other game bird species, District 7 hun harvest increased dramatically in 2021, with almost three times as many huns taken here last fall than were taken in the previous season. This increase is particularly stark when one considers that hun harvest actually experienced a precipitous decline statewide in 2021, with huns taken in District 7 making up nearly half of the statewide total harvest. The 2020 gray partridge harvest was very low at only 408 birds, but in 2021 hunters harvested a whopping 1,197 birds, far exceeding the five-year average of 687 birds. Hun populations are subject to steep yearly fluctuations, and this species’ productivity actually fares better in warm, dry springs than in cold, wet ones. For this reason, gray partridge production maybe down this year and hunters may have a harder time finding them on the landscape this coming season, with a resulting decrease in harvest.

For more information, see [Hunting Gray \(Hungarian\) Partridge](#).

CHUKAR

More chukar are harvested in District 7 than any other district in the state, with a five-year average of roughly 4,400 chukar harvested from 2016-2020, and 4,860 chukar harvested in 2020 alone. However, District 7 saw a dramatic decline in chukar harvest in 2021, with the 2,345 birds harvested last season coming to less than half the number taken in 2020. WDFW conducts no official monitoring of chukar populations, and this species is subject to major population fluctuations. The heat wave and drought conditions in summer 2021 may have significantly impacted chukar production, as chukar clutch size is often greatly reduced in drought years and some chukars do not breed at all in such difficult conditions.

Chukar harvest will likely remain lower than usual in District 7 in 2022 as the population recovers from the extremely depressed production of 2021. However, hunters should experience at least slightly higher success this year as the large amount of snowfall experienced in winter 2022 and the wet, cold, spring should boost clutch sizes and chick survival, and hatch-year birds make up the majority of hunter-harvested birds. If favorable weather conditions continue next spring, harvest levels should rebound fully by the 2023 season. In short, chukar hunters should not despair as chukar are a resilient species with high reproductive rates and the ability to take advantage of good conditions. Low populations for a season or two are invariably followed by bumper crops of birds, and District 7 will undoubtedly reobtain its status as Washington's go-to chukar hunting destination.

Opportunities for chukar hunting are numerous within the district due to a large amount of habitat that falls under public ownership. Chukar hunting falls into two distinct seasons: without snow and with snow. While trying to negotiate chukar habitat with snow and ice on the ground can be hazardous, there is no doubt that birds become concentrated following the accumulation of snow, so serious chukar hunters take advantage of this change in conditions. Throughout the season, the breaks of the Columbia River provide the majority of chukar habitat, along with areas adjacent to Banks Lake and Moses Coulee. On the Chelan County side of the Columbia River, BLM, USFS, DNR, and WDFW all control lands that provide chukar hunting opportunities, such as the Chelan Wildlife Area and Rocky Reach Wildlife Area. Chukar also occur in abundance on the north shore of Lake Chelan in the rocky exposed grassland habitats below the Grade Creek Road. Along the Douglas County breaks, almost all the appropriate chukar habitat falls under private ownership, and landowner permission is required.

For more information, see [Hunting Chukar Partridge](#).

FOREST GROUSE



Three species of forest grouse occupy the Wenatchee District: blue grouse (dusky grouse), spruce grouse, and ruffed grouse. Most grouse harvested in District 7 are taken in Chelan County in GMUs 245, 246, and 251, although 243 and 244 also offer good grouse opportunity. Fewer dispersed opportunities for ruffed grouse and dusky grouse exist in Douglas County, but coniferous and riparian forests offer the best hunting opportunities, with GMUs 248 and 266 being the most promising for grouse hunters.

Most of the harvest occurs over the opening weekend and then increases again with the general mule deer season. Hunters are asked to deposit one wing and the tail from each harvested grouse in wing barrels, which will be dispersed across Chelan County. For directions and diagrams to assist hunters in retrieving these samples, as well as a list of wing and tail collection barrel locations, see [WDFW website](#).

Hunters can find ruffed grouse in healthy riparian forests and aspen stands at the margin of timbered habitat, and dusky grouse will use timbered stringers that extend down as far as the shrubsteppe. Spruce grouse are restricted to higher elevation conifer forests, usually above the distribution of ponderosa pine.

Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by searching out areas where fewer hunters concentrate. Popular road systems can provide early season hunting. However, due to the numbers of hunters and the vulnerability of hatch-year birds, they often dry up quickly. Chelan County has a relatively limited road system within grouse habitat, and dedicated

hunters know where they are, so hunters can increase the productive length of their season by hunting areas on foot away from roads and the bulk of the other hunters.

The 2021 grouse season saw a continuation of the decline in grouse harvest and hunter numbers that has been taking place in District 7 for the past several years. Forest grouse harvest was down by 45% and hunter participation down 17% from 2020. When compared with the five-year average from 2016-2020, the drop in forest grouse harvest and hunter numbers in District 7 is even more stark, with harvest down by 55% and hunter participation down by 32% in 2021. Forest grouse harvest and grouse hunter numbers have also declined regionally and statewide over this time period, but District 7 appears to have experienced one of the more dramatic reductions in harvest.

Part of the steep decline in forest grouse harvest and hunter participation between 2020 and 2021 can likely be attributed to the shift to a later opening date. Starting in 2021, the forest grouse season was shifted back two weeks to September 15 – January 15, and previously the September 1 opening weekend had often seen the greatest number of grouse hunters on the landscape. This change in season dates was designed to reduce harvest of reproductive age females and allow for brood dispersal, which will help sustain a harvestable population over the long run. **The Sept. 15 opening date will remain in effect for the 2022 season.**

However, given that forest grouse harvest and hunter numbers have been declining in recent years prior to the establishment of the new season opener, and that the decrease in harvest has outpaced that in number of hunters, other factors are likely at play. The 2021 Twentyfive Mile fire that broke out in August and burned well into late-September destroyed a large area of productive forest grouse habitat and made an even larger area inaccessible to hunters last season. This likely discouraged more hunters from participating as well as had a significant impact on harvest. Little is known about how hunters will fare in the 2022 forest grouse season in District 7, except that it is possible the unseasonably cool, wet spring may have reduced nest success and survival of young.

For more information, see [Hunting Forest Grouse](#).

DOVE



Photo credit: Amy Pavelchek

Most mourning doves harvested in District 7 are taken in Douglas County, but opportunities for dove hunting exist in Chelan County as well in places such as Swakane Canyon. Following an unusually low number of doves harvested in 2019, dove harvest in District 7 increased in 2020 and again in 2021. In Chelan and Douglas counties, 1,310 mourning doves were harvested in 2020 as compared to 873 in 2019. 2021 saw a continuation of this increase in dove harvest with 1,519 birds taken. This level of harvest is consistent with the previous five-year average of 1,551 doves, and so far, this year conditions suggest that 2022 dove harvest will likely align fairly closely with this average again.

Hunters should secure hunting opportunities by contacting growers and getting permission. Look to areas near wetlands, brushy upland streams, agricultural fields, and orchards where birds find both roosting cover and food later in the season. The amount and distribution of CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) fields has increased in Douglas County over the past few years, with new seed mixes providing more diversity in forage within stands. Scouting for these habitats can be a productive way to find new unexploited hunting areas. It may take some extra work and require ranging a little farther from home this fall to find birds.

Hunters should be aware that Eurasian collared doves occur with mourning doves, and the Eurasian collared doves do not count towards daily bag limits. Eurasian collared doves are classified as a deleterious species in Washington and have few regulations governing harvest, so be sure to take a few when the opportunity arises. Most hunters will be familiar with the difference between these two species, but the Eurasian collared dove is a stocky bird with a distinct black collar on the dorsal side of the neck. See a photo comparison of the two species [here](#).

Table 3. Average waterfowl, upland bird, and small game harvest in District 7 (Chelan and Douglas counties) over a five-year period, 2016-2020, as compared to 2021.

Species	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	5yr Avg	2021
Quail	11,775	8,555	10,474	8,787	9000	9,718	7,620
Chukar	3,342	4,425	4,736	4,671	4860	4,407	2,345
Mourning Dove	1,926	1,134	2,548	837	1310	1,551	1519
Forest Grouse	2,900	1,840	2,899	2,266	1880	2,357	1,051
Pheasant	880	1407	477	1,034	982	956	917
Gray Partridge	608	723	692	1,004	408	687	1,197
Duck	11,565	10,624	7,838	6,448	10450	9,385	8,691
Canada Goose	2,330	1,969	1,313	1,118	1639	1,674	2,158
Sept Canada Goose	152	177	87	41	182	128	0
Cottontail Rabbit	111	38	166	74	48	87	239
Snowshoe Hare	57	0	6	57	91	42	20
Snipe	0	0	9	0	0	2	0

PHEASANT

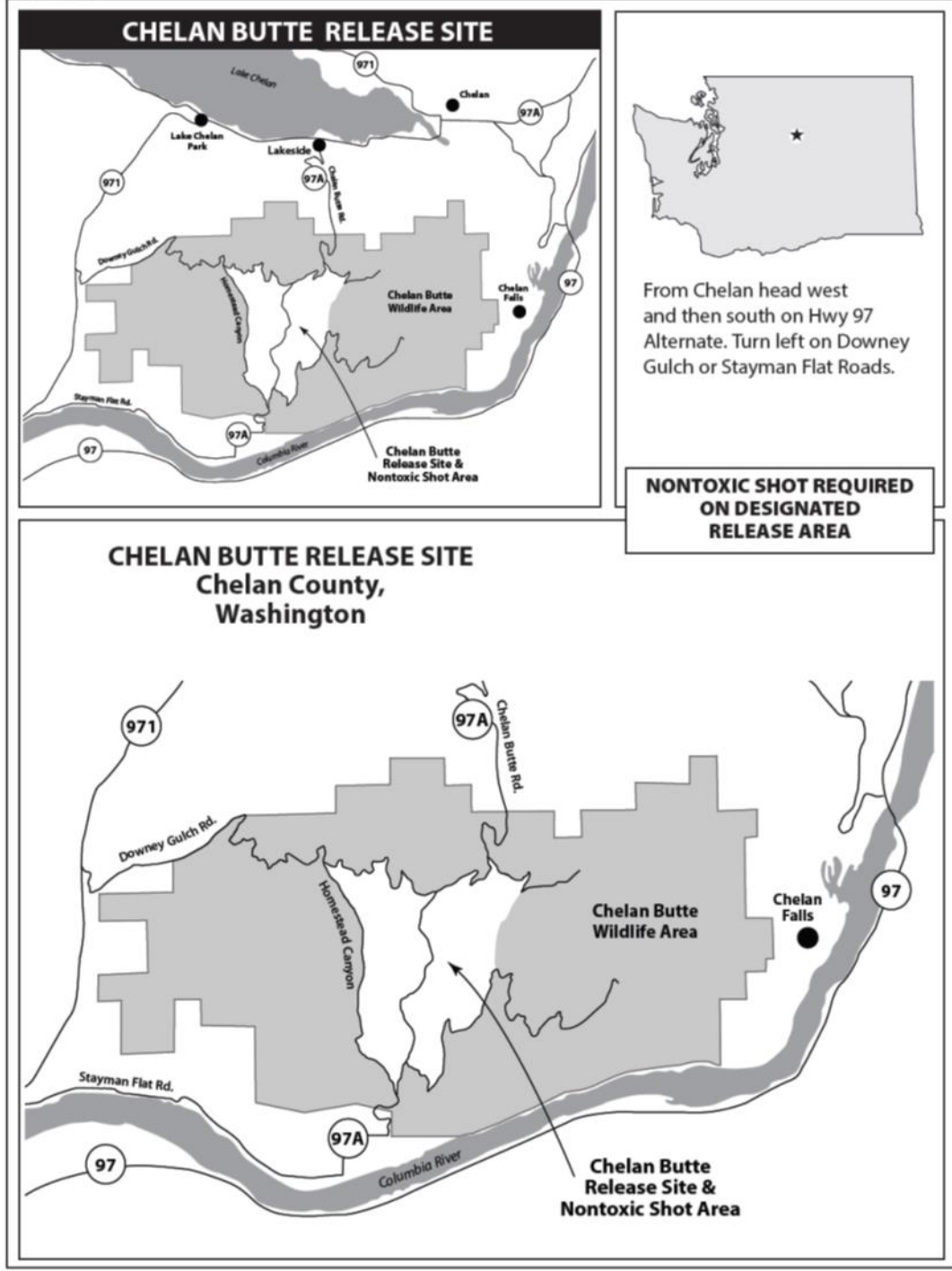
The Wenatchee District does not have the reputation as a destination pheasant hunting area in the state, but local hunters have harvested an annual average of approximately 956 pheasants over five years, from 2016 to 2020. In 2021, District 7 pheasant harvest was slightly below this average, with hunters harvesting 917 birds.

Douglas County offers a couple of locations where wild populations of pheasants sustain themselves both on public and private land. Hunters should focus on areas with a mixture of native shrubsteppe habitat, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasslands, and wet meadows/wetlands. Look for weedy and tall vegetation on the roadsides, which provides good cover. Good pheasant hunting can be found in Foster Creek (GMU 260), St. Andrews (GMU 254), and Big Bend (GMU 248).

In Chelan County, WDFW releases cock pheasants annually at both the Swakane and Chelan Butte wildlife units and will continue to do so in 2022. Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites in these units can visit the [WDFW hunting website](#) for more information.

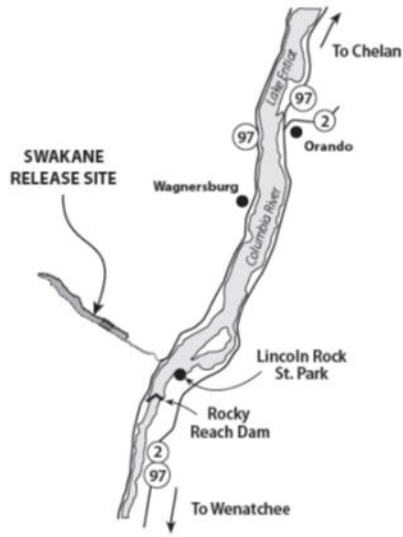
Pheasant release sites in Chelan County.

REGION 2



REGION 2

SWAKANE RELEASE SITE



To reach the **Swakane Wildlife Area** and release site, travel north from Wenatchee on Alt. Hwy 97. It follows the Columbia River on the west side toward the town of Chelan. To find the release site, head west up the Swakane Creek Road.

**NONTOXIC SHOT REQUIRED
ON DESIGNATED
RELEASE AREA**

**SWAKANE RELEASE SITE
Chelan County, Washington**



WATERFOWL



Photo credit: Adam Neff.

Data indicates that 2021 waterfowl harvest in District 7 remained close to the previous five-year average with a slight shift in species composition. The five-year period of 2016-2020 saw an average of 9,385 ducks harvested compared to 8,691 in 2021, while the 2021 Canada goose harvest rose to 2,021 birds harvested from a five-year average of 1,674 birds. The 2021 goose harvest also marked an increase from the previous year's season in which 1,639 geese were taken. However, over this same period, duck harvest fell by 17% in District 7, from 10,450 birds in 2020 to 8,691 birds in 2021.

It is likely that this drop in duck harvest reflects a genuine decline in local population levels, as the persistent drought throughout eastern Washington continued unabated in spring/summer of 2021, resulting in low water levels in smaller lakes and potholes and depressing duck production. In contrast, Canada geese are more adaptable in their choice of nesting habitat and their populations likely didn't suffer as much from the drought as large bodies of water such as rivers and reservoirs were less affected by the low precipitation and high temperatures.

It is likely that hunters will unfortunately face a more challenging duck season in District 7 again in 2022, as the cool, wet spring this year was not enough to sufficiently recharge water levels of brood ponds. The heavy snowmelt that has resulted in high water runoff in rivers throughout District 7 has likely done some damage to geese nesting along the river, but it is likely any decline in goose production this year will be minor. In any case, local waterfowl production

influences early season success but later in the season most of the birds are migrants from the north, so hunters may experience greater success in District 7 later in the fall and winter.

Most waterfowl harvest in Chelan County is focused along the Columbia River. Hunting along the Columbia River is usually consistent but dictated by local weather patterns. It is important to note that due to county ordinances and the expansion of Wenatchee City Limits, **a no-shooting zone exists from the Odabashian Bridge to the George Sellar Bridge**, which connects Wenatchee and East Wenatchee.

The Columbia River is also the primary site for waterfowl hunting in Douglas County. A popular and productive place for waterfowl hunting is the Bridgeport Bar Unit, where ducks form large rafts on the Brewster Pool. However, northern Douglas County also has a concentration of small lands and ponds that hold waterfowl. As in most years, the success of the season depends on the timing of migration through the area.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see [Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting](#).

Table 4. Average waterfowl, upland bird and small game hunter numbers in District 7 (Chelan and Douglas counties) over a five-year period, 2016-2020, as compared to 2021.

Species	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	5yr Avg	2021
Quail	1,374	1,103	1,228	1,356	1,376	1,287	1,370
Chukar	733	868	1,093	1,021	1,313	1,006	1,218
Mourning Dove	189	142	240	173	126	174	175
Forest Grouse	1,708	1,355	1,729	1,510	1,243	1,509	1,036
Pheasant	620	787	523	714	956	720	822
Gray Partridge	207	278	388	421	340	327	464
Duck	979	768	714	709	771	788	682
Canada Goose	411	373	341	308	452	377	386
Sept Canada Goose	88	74	63	50	100	75	0
Cottontail Rabbit	58	34	111	106	48	71	140
Snowshoe Hare	68	13	15	35	35	33	20
Snipe	0	0	18	0	0	4	12

PRIVATE LANDS HUNTER ACCESS

WDFW maintains hunter access agreements with hundreds of willing landowners across the state, which allows for public hunting to occur on private lands. Hunter Access Program lands in District 7 are located in Douglas County, where most rural private lands occur. WDFW Lands personnel work closely with agricultural producers to provide access for hunting. As a result, there are thousands of acres in Douglas County to hunt on throughout the season.

The Pearl Hill Fire in 2020 scorched several private land parcels where landowners had access agreements, and some of these properties may still be closed to hunters this season or offer reduced opportunities. Please respect all closures and be aware of all fire restrictions during hunting season. Access lands are marked with signs displaying contact information, and you can find all private land hunter access areas [here](#).

In Chelan County, private land hunting opportunities often occur with deer or elk concentration areas, but no formal hunting access agreements exist. As such, hunters in Chelan County must be proactive in gaining permission from landowners. Hunters wishing to apply for tags in the Lake Chelan North Deer Area, the Malaga Elk Area or the Peshastin Elk Area are encouraged to contact the Wenatchee District Office prior to applying.

Table 5. Acres of private lands enrolled in WDFW’s Hunter Access Program in Douglas Co. in 2021.

Hunting Access Type	Acres in Douglas County
Feel Free to Hunt	9,694
Hunt by Reservation	2,255
Hunt by Written Permission	70,202
Total	82,151

ADDITIONAL ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

As digital technology has rapidly advanced, today's hunters have a plethora of apps and online resources available to them to help plan their hunting trips. While these tools are excellent for focusing your efforts, navigating, and coordinating logistics, they can't replace scouting in the field. Below we present a select list of helpful sites to assist you in planning your hunting trip, which is by no means exhaustive.

- [USGS Topo maps](#): downloadable topo maps for the United States.
- [GoogleEarth](#): free application for exploring aerial and 3D imagery. Useful for importing and exporting locations
- [AgWeather Net](#): Washington State University maintains an array of weather stations from across Washington. View real-time and historic weather data. Also available as a free app.
- [Interactive Snow Depth Map](#): This map compiles NOAA snow-fall data for the US.
- [SNOTEL](#): Customizable tables looking at historic and forecast data as well as current snow conditions.
- County landownership maps: Most counties in Washington publish web maps with landowner data by parcel. These maps can be used to ensure you are hunting on public lands and are aware of where private land permissions may be needed. Here are the resources for [Chelan](#) and [Douglas](#) counties.