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EMILY JEFFREYS, District Wildlife Biologist
JOHNNA EILERS, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist



Photo by Cameron Hein

DISTRICT 7 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Chelan and Douglas counties

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DISTRICT 7 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Divided by the Columbia River and comprised of Chelan and Douglas counties, WDFW's District 7 is at the heart of Washington. From the crest of the Cascade Range to the shrubsteppe of the Columbia Basin, the Wenatchee District 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, but 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 approximately 40 miles 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. Chelan County encompasses five mountain ranges (Sawtooth, Chelan, Entiat, Chiwaukum, and Wenatchee), providing hunters with 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. 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. Black-tailed deer can also be found in Chelan County along the Cascade crest, and mule deer here share more black-tailed genes than hunters realize. Elk are present primarily along the southern edge 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 found. While most cougars are harvested during deer and elk seasons, the cougar harvest typically does not meet the harvest guidelines and are not over harvested. 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 some of the high elevation habitat in Chelan County, but there are no known herds of sufficient size to allow for hunting. As such, there are currently no mountain goat hunting opportunities in District 7.

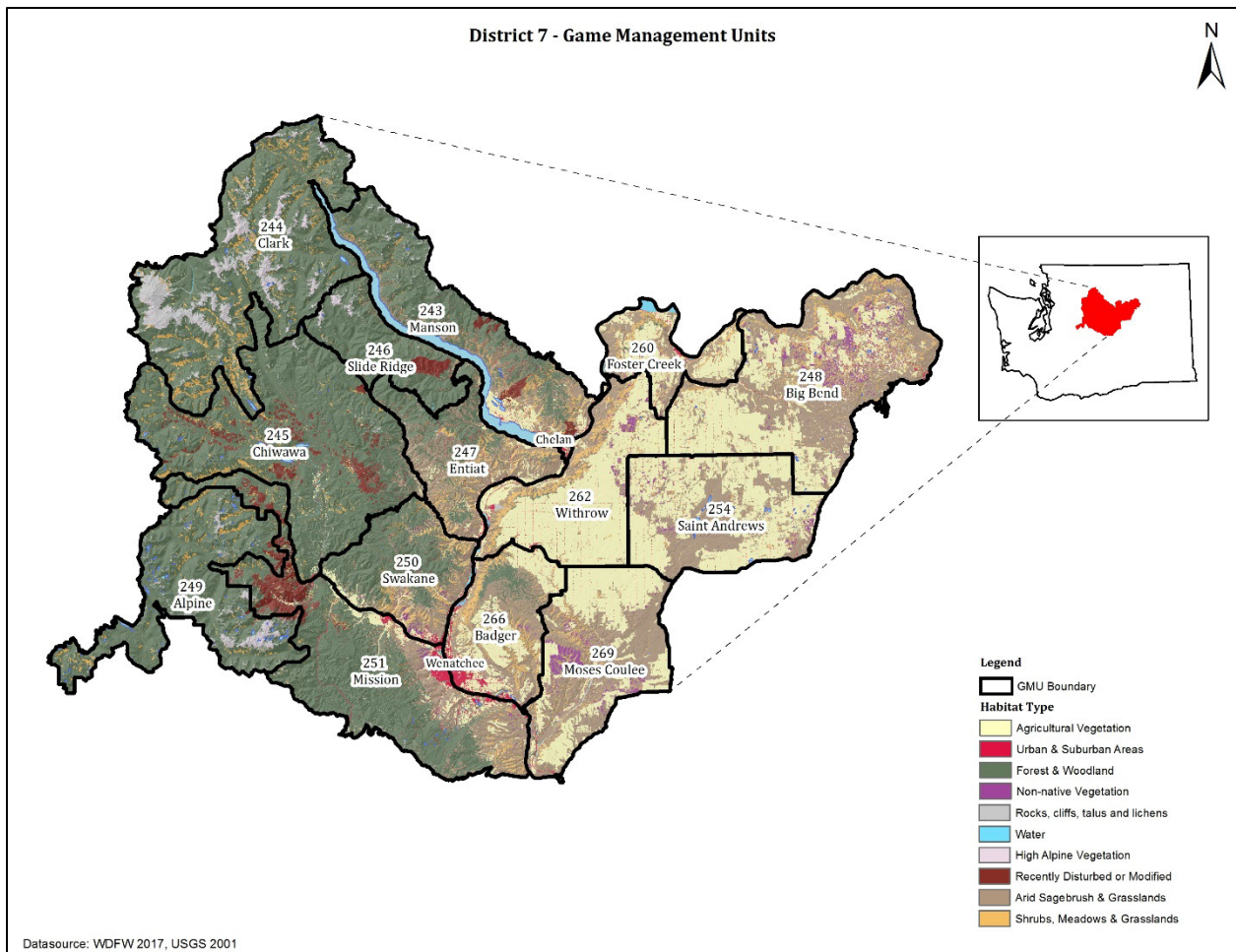
Upland birds: Upland bird hunting opportunities are available across the district. Turkey hunting occurs mainly in Chelan County, but numbers are growing in northern Douglas County, and some newly acquired wildlife areas are expanding opportunities. Hunttable grouse species are found in forested environments in both counties. Hunters can pursue sooty, dusky, spruce, and ruffed grouse in different parts of the district. The three other grouse species found on the district (greater sage-grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and white-tailed ptarmigan) are protected species in Washington and cannot be hunted. Chukar and 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 hunters find success is in Douglas County. There are two ring-necked pheasant release sites in Chelan County at the Swakane and Chelan Butte wildlife areas.

Small game: Coyotes are the most widely adaptable species in Washington, and as such, can be found across District 7 and beyond. 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 rarely 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: There are opportunities for duck and geese hunting in different portions of the district. The bulk of waterfowl hunting in District 7 takes place 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 Game Management Units (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 provides mule deer winter range. 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 Game Management Units

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 U. S. 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 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](#) offers LIDAR images if you need detailed topographic information

WILDFIRE

At the time of this report, several small brush fires have occurred in Chelan County in 2023, near the city of Wenatchee. On July 20, 2023, a wildfire near Badger mountain burned 475 acres but was quickly contained.

Watch for wildfire condition updates in the monthly Weekender hunting reports, WDFW news releases, or WDFW social media posts. Access restrictions can be put in place on short notice in the event of an emergency, so make sure to check fire conditions, access restrictions, and other emergency rules before you head out. There are multiple websites where you can check regional and statewide wildfire updates:

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AGENCY WEBSITES

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

FIRE MONITORING WEBSITES

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

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

Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem in eastern Washington and a common occurrence in District 7, affecting both forested and shrubsteppe habitats. 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.

2022 WILDFIRES

The 2022 wildfire season was once again an active one, with multiple shrubsteppe and forest fires occurring in Chelan and Douglas counties. Over 25,000 acres of habitat burned in District 7, a similar amount to what burned in 2021.

In late July 2022, the Stayman Flats fire began burning on the Chelan Butte wildlife area and burned 1,200 acres. This area is within the range of the Chelan Butte bighorn sheep herd and provides winter range for mule deer. The largest fire in District 7 in 2022 was the White

River/Irving Peak fire near Lake Wenatchee in GMU 245, which started in mid-August 2022 and continued until November 2022, burning 11,180 acres.

Table 1. Acres burned by wildfires in District 7 in year 2022.

County	2022 Fire Name	Acres Burned	GMU
Chelan	Stayman Flats	1,200	247
Chelan	White River Irving Peak	11,180	245
Chelan	Minnow Ridge	5,140	246 & 247
Douglas	Mohr	6,944	269
Douglas	Nilles	589	248

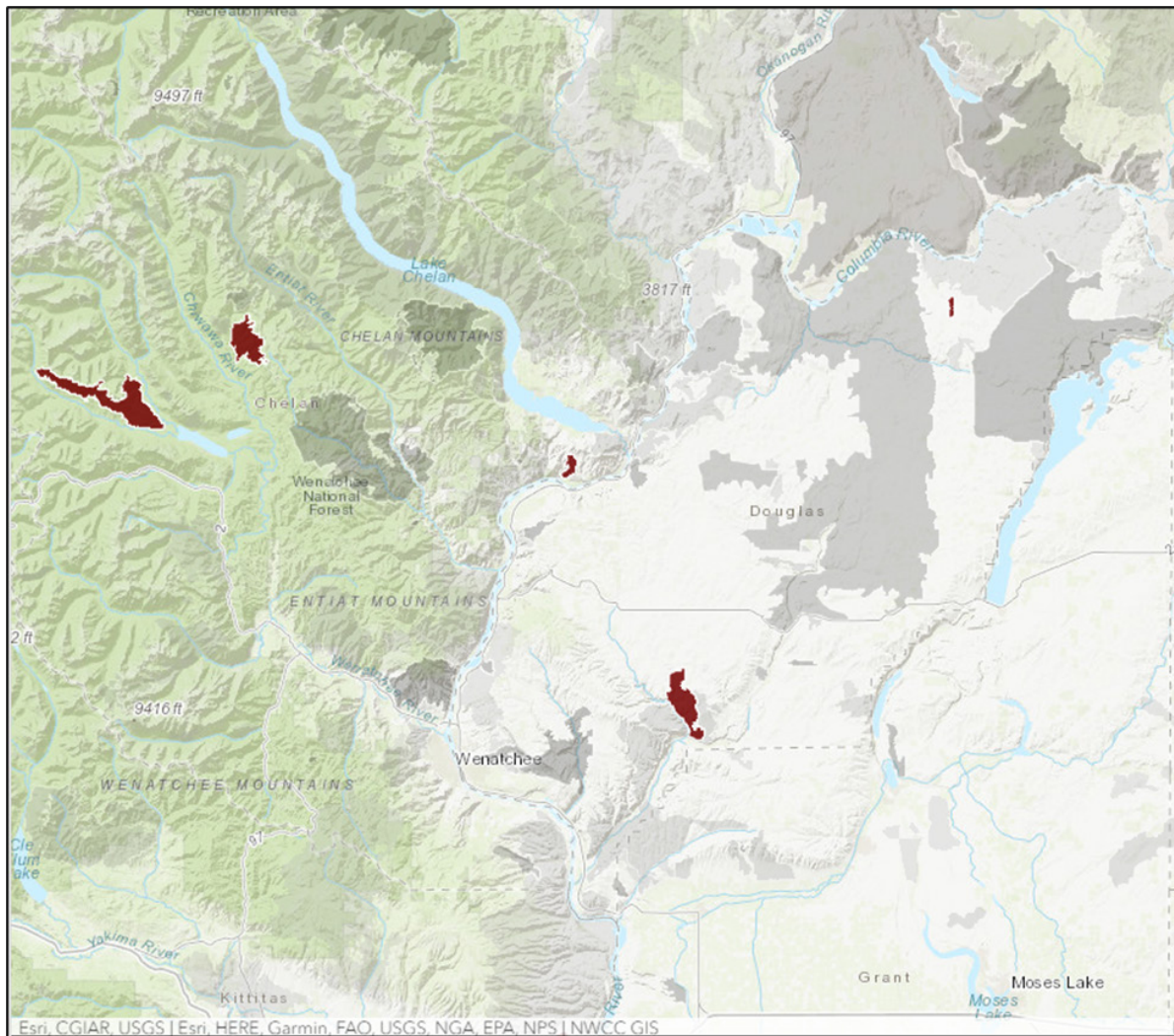


Figure A. Map of wildfire in Chelan and Douglas Counties during year 2022 (dark red). The grayscale layers are historic wildfires. Map collected from [NWCC :: Home \(nifc.gov\)](https://www.nwcc.gov/)

2021 WILDFIRES

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 2021 wildfire season started with 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. 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.

2020 WILDFIRES

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, building fences, 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.

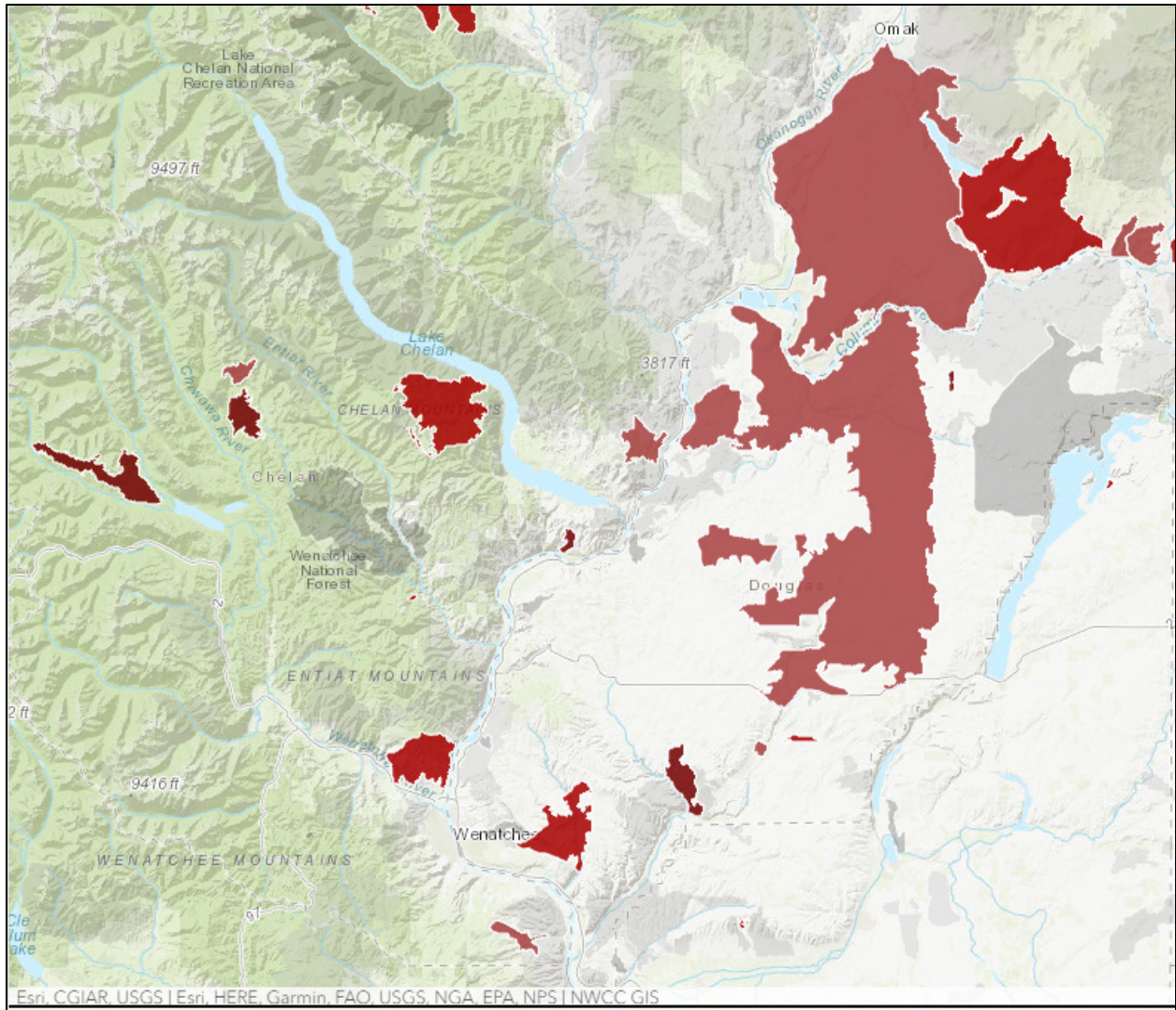


Figure B. Map of wildfires in Chelan and Douglas counties in years 2020 through 2022.

ELK



Photo by 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 reliably use Jumpoff Ridge, Tronsen Meadows, the Camas Meadows/Peshastin area, and areas throughout upper Mission Creek. Elk are also found loosely distributed through the southern half of GMU 249 (Alpine). In 2009, WDFW implemented “true spike” restrictions for most general season harvest opportunities. Opportunities to harvest a branched-antler bull are primarily through limited-entry hunts.

A few elk harvests are scattered across Douglas County each season, but that harvest is not consistent from year to year and elk are very scarce throughout the county. Liberal harvest seasons are in place in Douglas County to keep elk from establishing herds in the agriculture-dominated landscape where they can cause commercial crop damage.

Elk eat a wide range of forage including grasses and forbs in the summer months, incorporating shrubby browse as more palatable plants dry out. Areas where timber

harvest or wildfire has occurred can be excellent places to find elk, especially adjacent to creek drainages and intact timber stands. The 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 very low densities and in small, dispersed bands. Local hunters who live and work in the area are often the hunters are most successful 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 relatively low densities here and occupy rugged terrain where hunters cannot use motorized vehicles. Hunters participating in the GMU 249 archery season are often surprised at the numbers of other hunters chasing elk.

There are opportunities for elk hunting throughout most of GMU 251. However, elk density is not very high and can vary across the unit. Hunters harvest elk across the GMU, with most of the elk hunting occurring between Blewett Pass to the west, 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 land, 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 on [WDFW's website](#). 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.

In 2021, WDFW reinstated both antlered and antlerless hunts in the Peshastin Elk Area (EA 2033) as biologists and agricultural producers noted an increase in elk use in the area, prompting concerns about orchard damage. Elk tend to concentrate in orchards in the winter once sufficient snow has accumulated at higher elevations, driving elk to seek lower elevation food sources. The first two years of re-established Peshastin hunts have proven successful in providing a quality experience for hunters as well as keeping elk moving across the landscape and decreasing the time elk spent in any one orchard. In 2023/2024, 20 cow tags (mid-December through early February) and four any-bull tags (mid-February) are available for the Peshastin Elk Area. 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 recent changes to elk general seasons in District 7 have resulted in increased opportunity for hunters since 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. That same level of success was maintained in fall 2022.

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 45 were harvested in 2022 (Figures 1 and 2). 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 (Figure 6), with the remaining few harvested in GMUs 249, 245, and 244, and very small numbers coming inconsistently out of other GMUs. 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 2023 season should yield a harvest similar to the last few years.

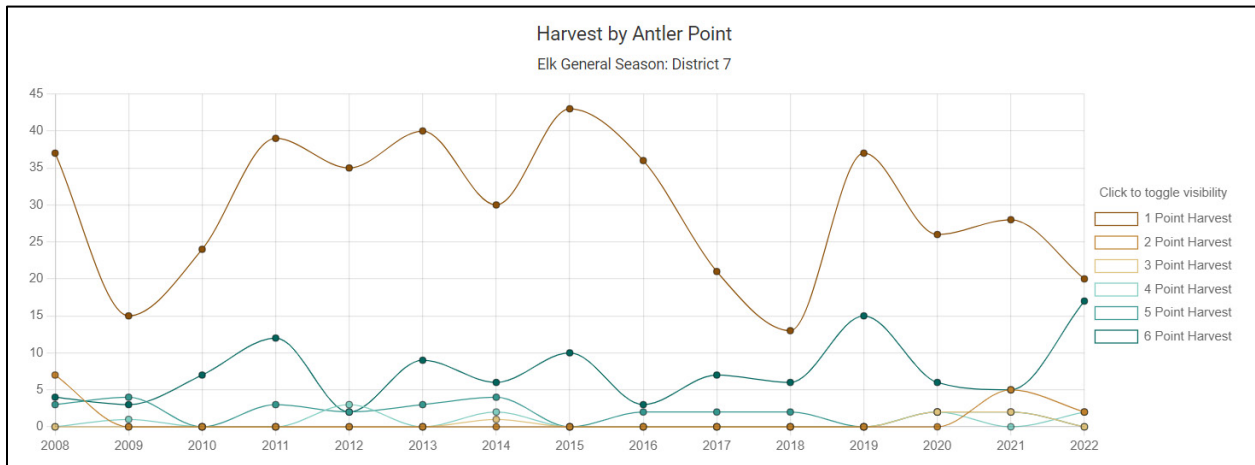


Figure 1. Total number of elk harvested by antler point during the general season in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

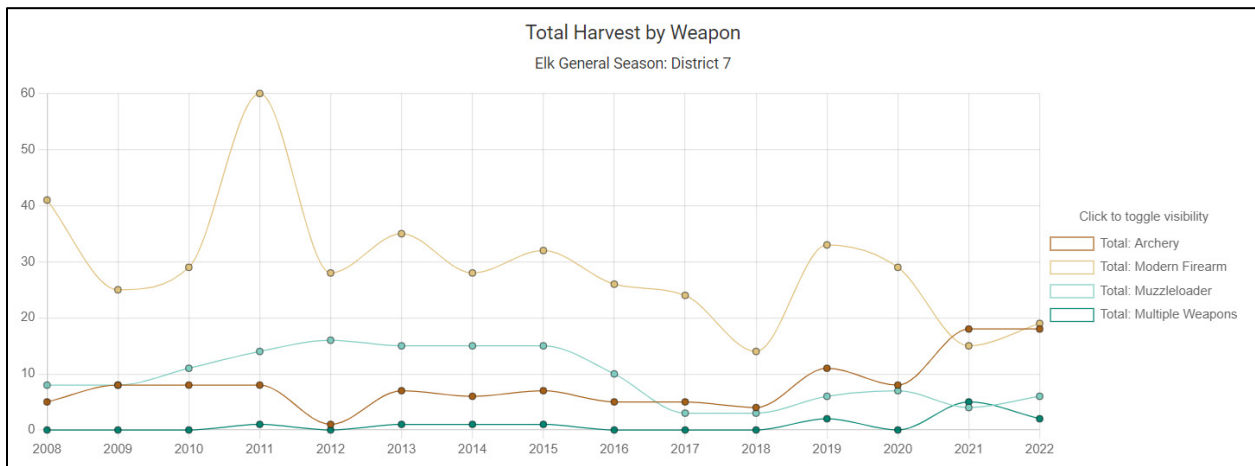


Figure 2. Total number of elk harvested by weapon type during the general season in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

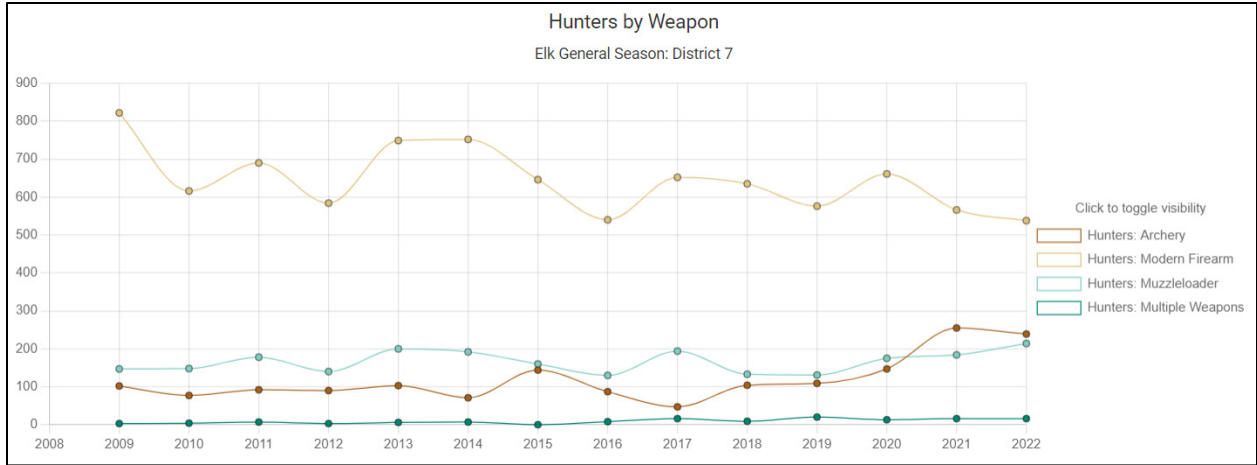


Figure 3. Number of general season elk hunters in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

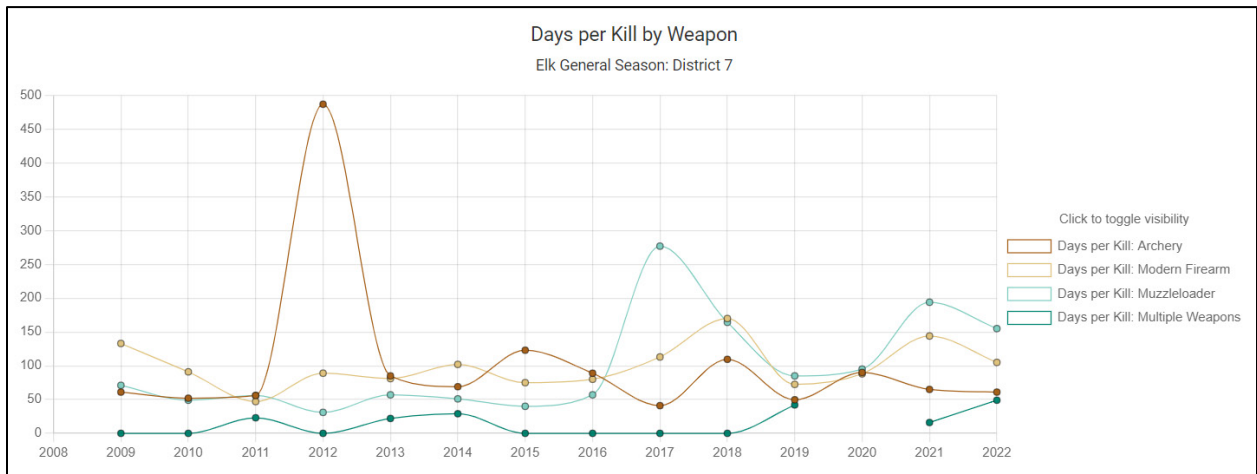


Figure 4. The number of days spent hunting per kill during elk general season in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

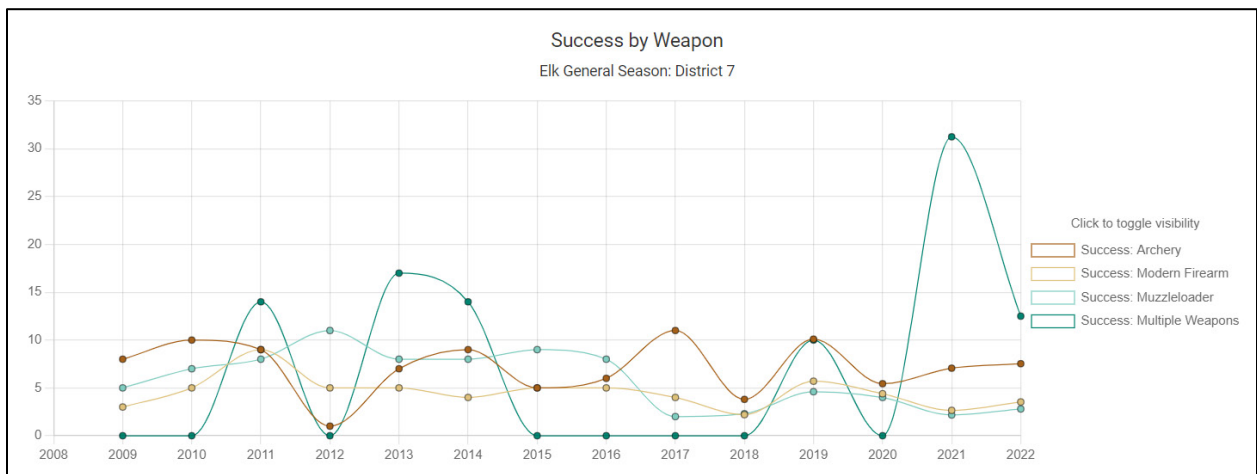


Figure 5. The percentage of successful hunters by weapon type for elk general season in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

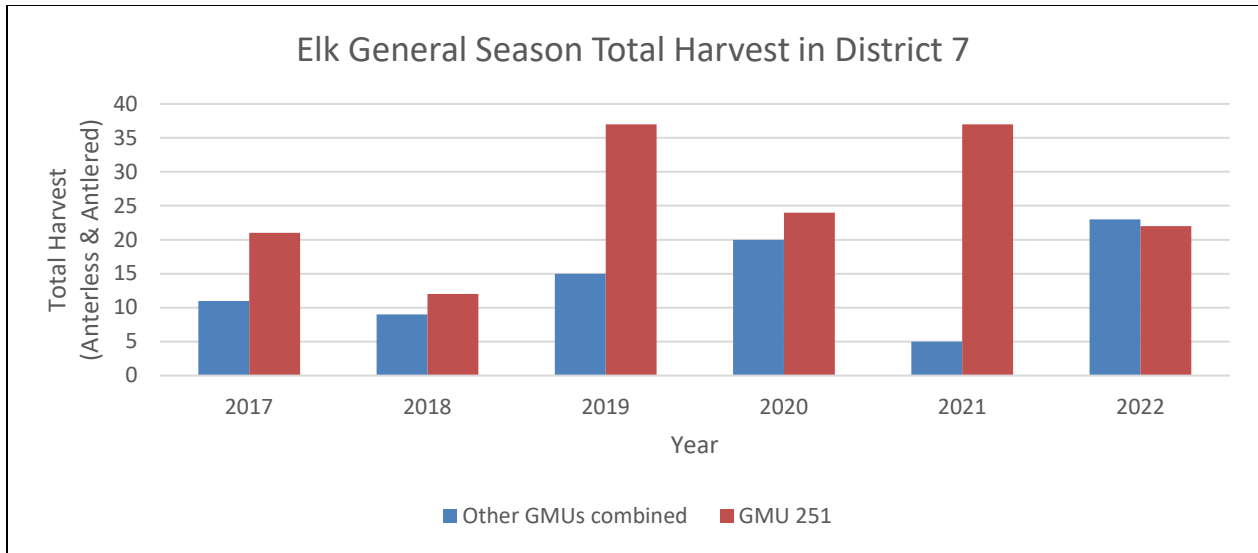


Figure 6. Snapshot of general season elk harvest illustrating the preeminence of GMU 251 for elk hunting in District 7.

EELK 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 from 2009 to 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 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 counties. The disease is found less frequently in elk herds that are distant and discrete from the core affected area. **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 (for example, overgrown or broken hoof claws or skin lesions) in eastern Washington, 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 through 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



Photo by Kim Anderson

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 in Chelan County or expanses of sagebrush in Douglas County.

1,355 deer were harvested from Chelan and Douglas counties during the general season in 2022, an approximate 24% decrease from 2021's harvest of 1,800 deer (Figures 7 & 8). This number represents roughly 2/3 of the number of mule deer harvested in years 2019 and 2020. There are likely several factors contributing to last year's low general season harvest, including the unseasonably warm temperatures before and during the modern firearm season.

Approximately 85% of mule deer found within Chelan County (comprised of the Wenatchee Mountains and Chelan subherds of the East Slope Cascades Mule Deer Management Zone) are migratory and summer at higher elevations outside of the most popular GMUs (including Entiat and Swakane). Modern firearm hunters represent the largest portion of mule deer hunters by far, and hunters struggled to find deer in low to mid-elevations throughout Chelan County in 2022, as the heat and lack of snow at high elevations meant that bucks had no reason to head

to lower ground in October. As Figure 8 below illustrates, modern firearm harvest decreased substantially in 2022, whereas archery harvest remained stable and muzzleloader harvest declined modestly. Another, albeit smaller, impact to mule deer harvest numbers in District 7 is likely due to the number of modern firearm hunters decreasing for the second year in a row.

It's unknown whether a decline in overall mule deer abundance in Chelan County is another factor that contributed to last year's low general season harvest. Biologists are working to improve monitoring methods to answer this question and respond accordingly with appropriate management actions. That being said, biologists are more confident that a decline in mule deer abundance within the Douglas subherd of the Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Management Zone can at least partially explain last year's low harvest in Douglas County.

The Entiat (GMU 247) and Swakane (GMU 250) units 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 2022 (Tables 2 & 3). Of these three units, Big Bend appears to be especially productive. This unit attracts significantly fewer hunters each year compared to other Chelan GMUs, but outpaces these in harvest numbers.

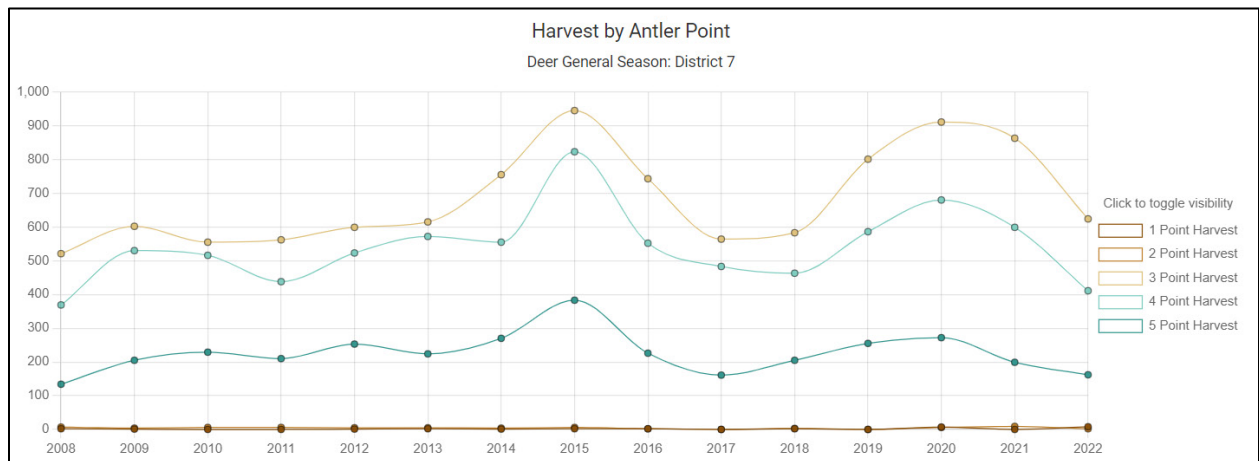


Figure 7. Total number of mule deer harvested by antler point in District 7 from 2008 to 2022.

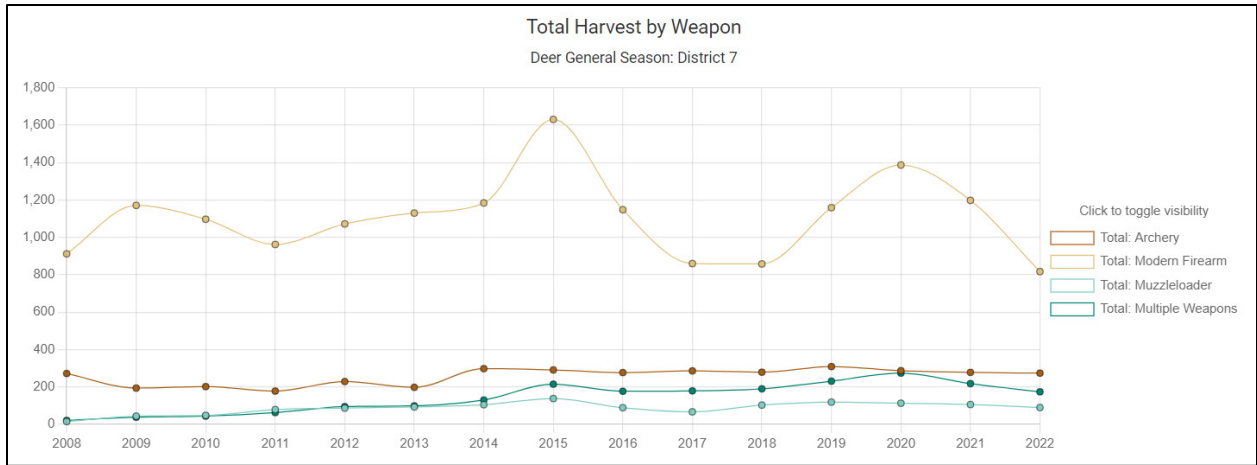


Figure 8. Total number of mule deer harvested by weapon type in District 7 from 2008 to 2022.

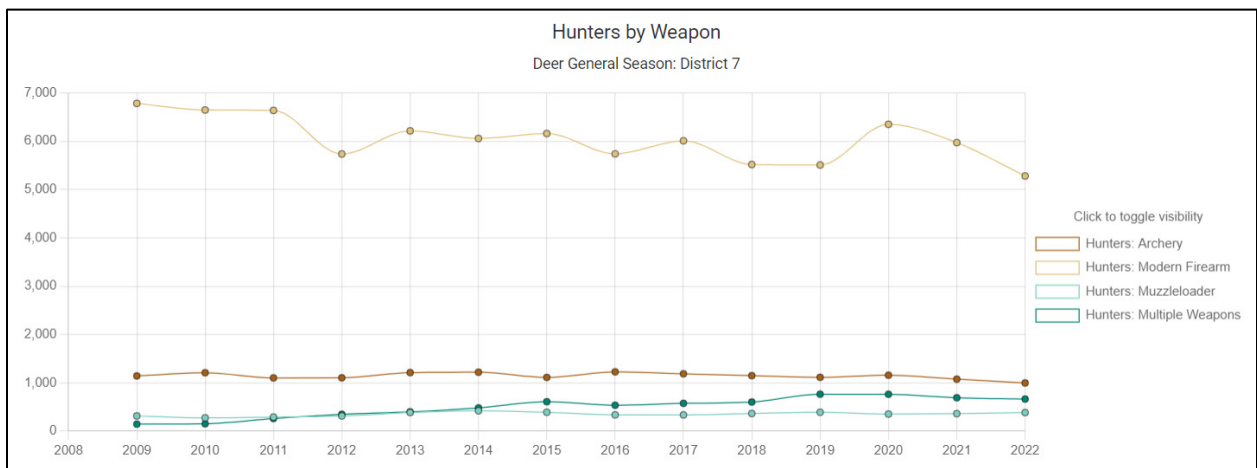


Figure 9. The number of hunters by weapon type for mule deer in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

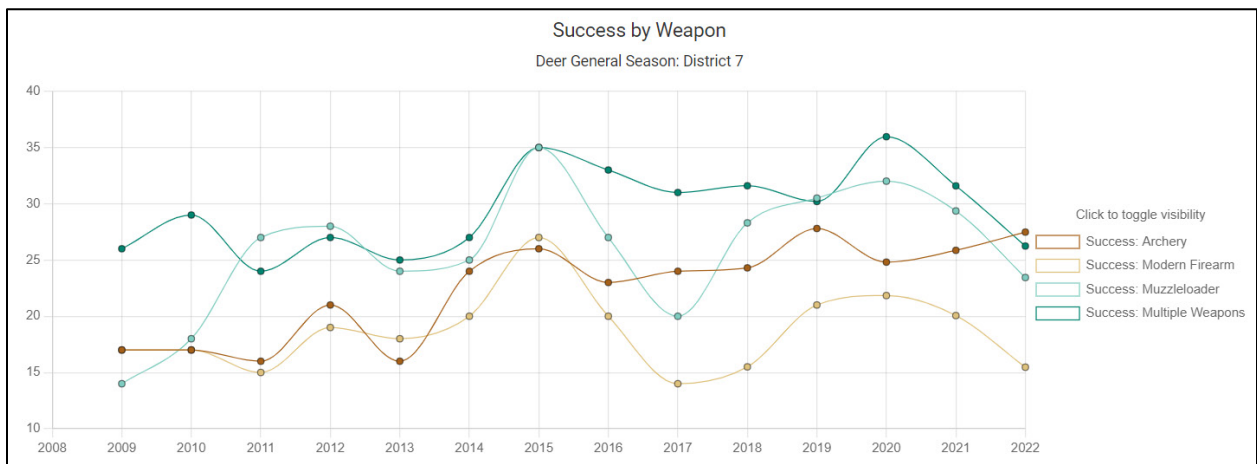


Figure 10. The percentage of harvest success by weapon type for mule deer in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

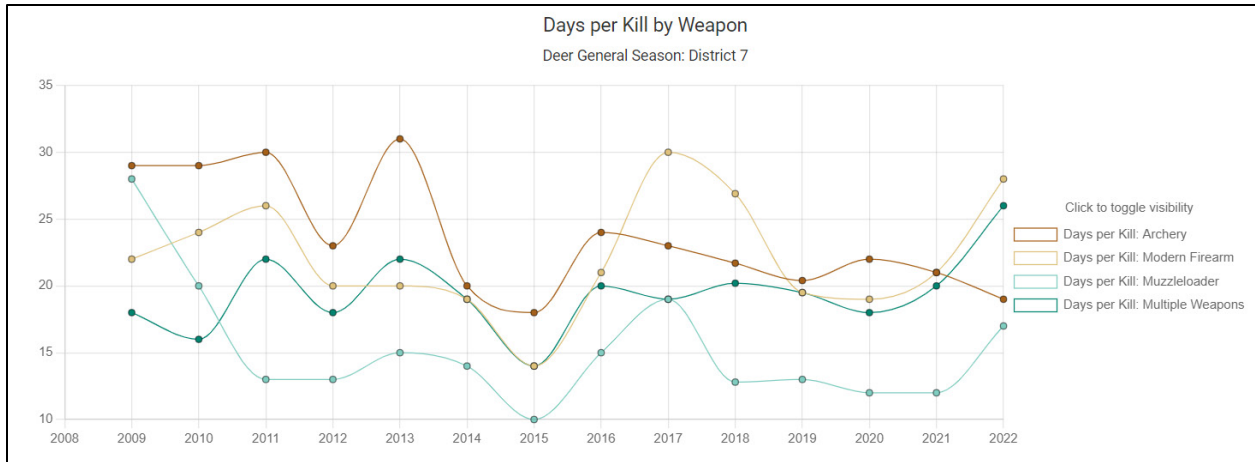


Figure 11. The number of days spent hunting per kill for mule deer in District 7 from 2009 to 2022.

CHELAN COUNTY MULE DEER

The Chelan County portion of the district’s management goal 25 bucks per 100 does (minimum) post-season 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 a robust 76:100.

No post-hunt aerial survey of the Chelan subherd was conducted in 2022 as resources were allocated towards a Douglas County subherd aerial survey. Another aerial survey of the Chelan subherd is planned for December 2023. Surveying mule deer in Chelan County is very difficult due to consistently poor winter flying weather, tree cover, and extremely limited winter road access. For this reason, biologists plan to test using remote game cameras to obtain sex and age ratios in fall 2023. During this pilot project, biologists will place 25 game cameras along known mule deer migration corridors used by the Wenatchee Mountains mule deer herd in time for 2023 fall migration. Data garnered from these cameras will be compared against ratios obtained from the December 2023 aerial survey.

The 2022 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 greater snowfall results in mule deer moving farther 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.

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.

As early as mid-September, deer start responding to changes in vegetation by moving lower 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 areas that best meet their needs. By mid-November, bucks are in condition and focused on breeding, but until then they are focused on food and security.

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.

There is one Deer Area in District 7 (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 [on WDFW's website](#).

Table 2. The number of harvested mule deer for each GMU within Chelan County in 2022.

GMU	Anterless	Antlered	Total Harvest	1 Point	2 Point	3 Point	4 Point	5+ Point
243	0	108	108	6	0	48	32	22
244	3	6	9	0	0	2	2	2
245	20	55	75	0	0	25	19	11
246	5	35	40	0	0	16	16	3
247	68	108	176	2	0	60	38	8
249	2	10	12	0	0	8	1	1
250	27	158	185	0	0	77	51	30
251	0	106	106	0	0	45	43	18
TOTALS	125	586	711	8	0	281	202	95

HIGH BUCK HUNTS

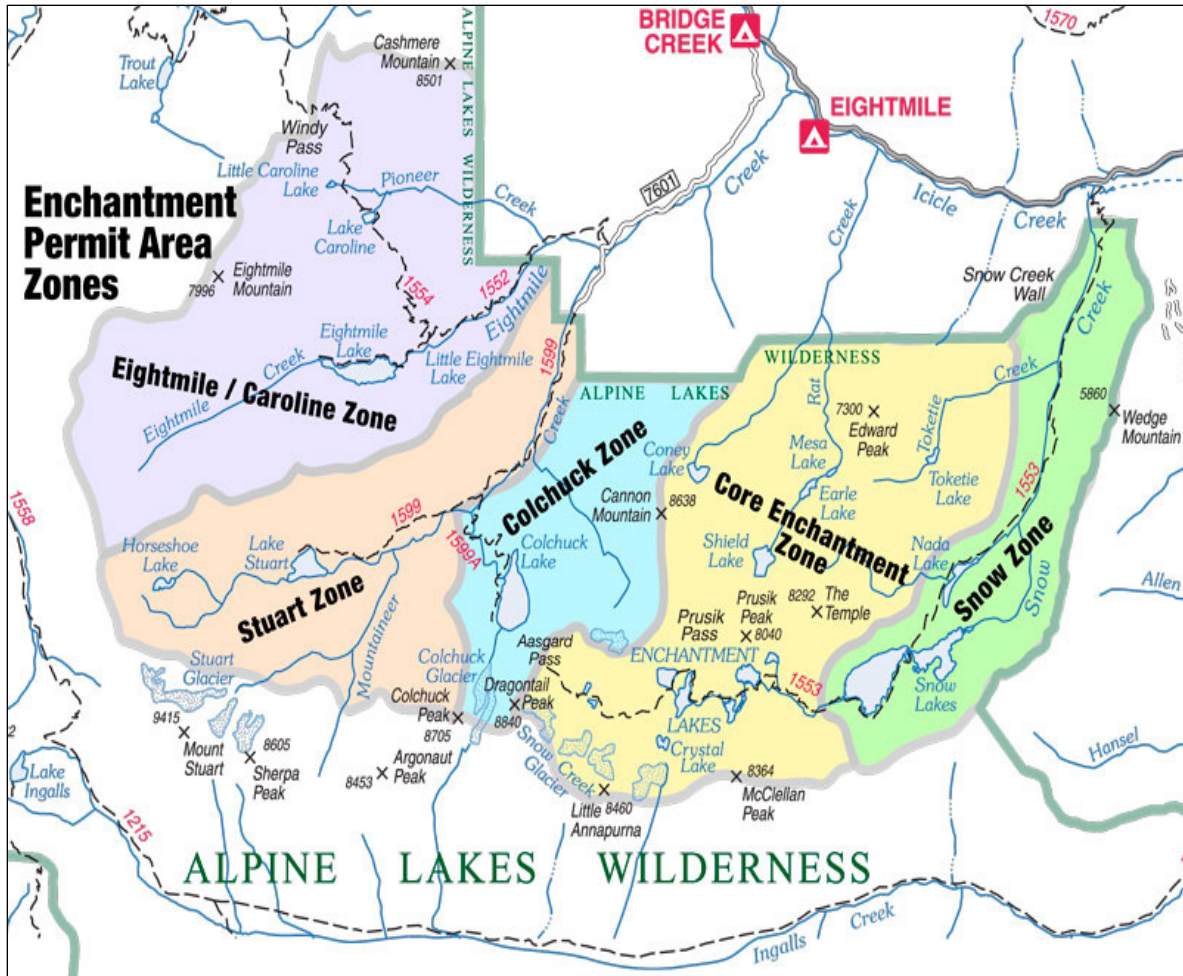
High buck hunts in the Cascade Range are one of the most popular opportunities provided in the district. Each year, hunters don backpacks and ride pack strings into the heart of wilderness areas to pursue mule deer bucks and black bears. Within District 7, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Henry M. Jackson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

Hunters should remember that **the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness is closed to high buck hunting Sept. 15-25** but opens for early archery where it overlaps GMU 243.

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 about the Enchantment Permit Area Zones, visit the [Okanogan-Wenatchee web page](#) or contact USFS directly.

It is common to have active wildfires in wilderness areas during our September hunts. We encourage hunters to keep track of fire conditions and contact local U.S. Forest Service (USFS) offices for updates.

High-quality topographic maps and aerial imagery can help hone in on spots to target for scouting. Bucks can be difficult to encounter during high hunt seasons because of the complex topography of Chelan County and the vast acreage of dissected terrain and escape cover available that time of year. Hunters should scout early, when bucks are still in velvet and protecting their antlers, making them more likely to occupy less dense habitat, 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.



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

DOUGLAS COUNTY MULE DEER

Post-hunt aerial population surveys were conducted in Douglas County in winter 2022, with an estimated population of 11,873 mule deer. This represents a 22% decline from the last aerial survey performed here in 2018, which returned a population estimate of 15,254. The buck:doe ratio was calculated at 20:100 (20 bucks per 100 does), which exceeds the management objective of 15-19 bucks per 100 does, and the fawn:doe ratio was a healthy 67:100. While the Douglas subherd's sex and age ratios look good, the significantly lower abundance estimate in 2022 over that of 2018 is cause for concern, particularly when paired with reports of hunters and landowners seeing fewer deer in some of the Douglas County GMUs in recently. Biologists do not know what is driving this apparent decline, and several factors could be at play including prolonged drought, severe wildfires, disease, and emigration to other parts of the Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Management Zone. Biologists seek to learn more in the coming years through continuing ground and aerial surveys. There are also discussions about potentially initiating a collaring project to track the movements of mule deer and investigate mortalities.

While deer numbers may be down in recent years, Douglas County still offers good mule deer hunting opportunity in a very different environment than found in Chelan County. Unlike Chelan County’s largely migratory population, Douglas County’s mule deer herd is thought to consist primarily of 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, deer are more vulnerable in Douglas County’s relatively open habitat with an extensive road network, compared to the rugged terrain of the Cascades.

Without the diverse cover provided by mountains and forests, buck escapement is lower in the sagebrush. This means a smaller portion of the bucks surviving are mature. Deer utilize the dry shrubsteppe habitat 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.

In the broken Coulee County, the topography provides security for deer 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.

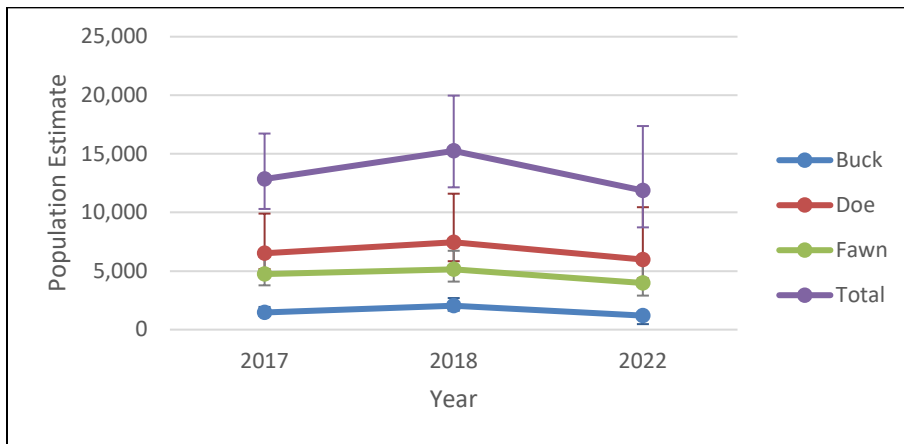


Figure 12. Aerial survey estimates of Douglas County mule deer population and structure, calculated from the modified Idaho Sightability Model, 2017-2022; 90% confidence intervals are demonstrated with brackets.

Table 3. The number of harvested mule deer for each GMU within Douglas County in 2022.

GMU	Anterless	Antlered	Total Harvest	1 Point	2 Point	3 Point	4 Point	5+ Point
248	9	164	173	0	0	98	54	12
254	5	128	133	0	0	75	31	22
260	9	97	106	0	0	49	41	7
262	0	92	92	0	0	56	27	9
266	0	68	68	0	0	26	27	15
269	0	72	72	0	2	39	29	2
TOTALS	23	621	644	0	2	343	209	67

BLACK BEAR



Bears at Mud Creek

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 good 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 usually fewer than 10 bears harvested from the Douglas GMUs each year.

Recent research by WDFW 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.

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. 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, berries become scarce and bears enter a period of frenzied eating known as polyphagia to prepare for hibernation. During this time,

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. 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 (Mission) most consistently produces the highest number of harvested bears, closely followed by GMU 245 (Chiwawa). 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). 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, and 43% in 2022. BMU 6 saw a dramatic increase in black bear harvest and hunter success in fall 2022, with 50% more bears harvested here last year than in 2021. An increased number of black bears were harvested in fall 2022 in nearly all District 7 GMUs where bears are reliably taken. Bear harvest in GMU 245 actually exceeded that of GMU 251 last year (Figure 13). This may be partly attributed to anecdotal evidence of a relatively poor berry crop east of the Cascade crest last fall, resulting in bears spending less time at high elevations throughout the hunting season and more time closer to human food sources in areas such as Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth.

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.

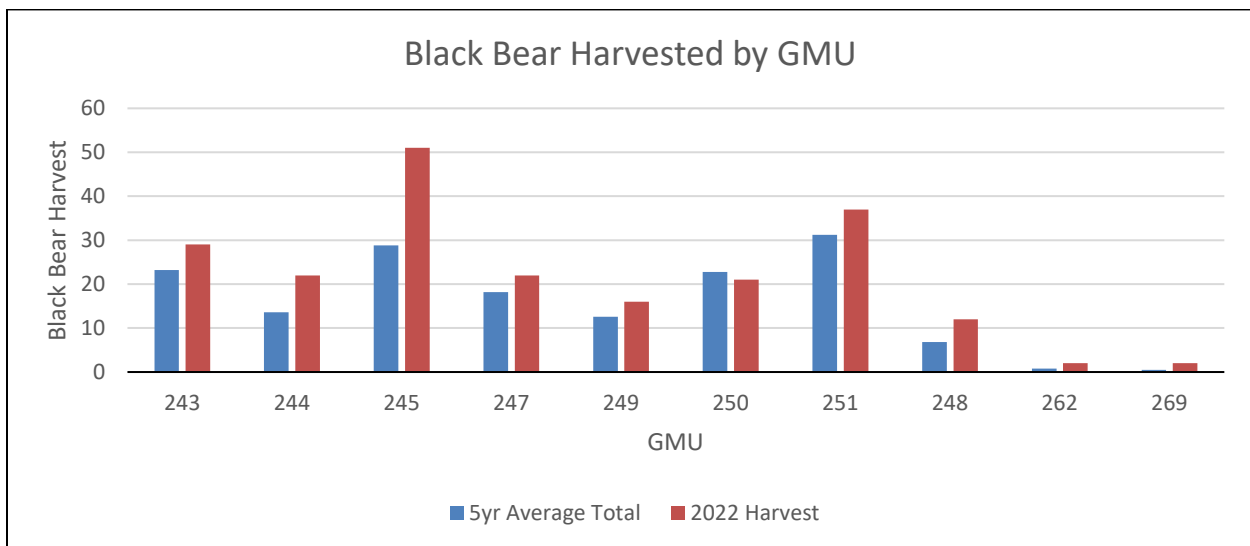


Figure 13. The number of black bears harvested during the general season in each Game Management Unit (GMU) in District 7. The total number of bears harvested in 2022 (red) are compared to the 5-year average (blue). Other GMU's in District 7 that are not included in this figure and had zero bears harvested in 2022 are: 246, 254, 260, and 266.

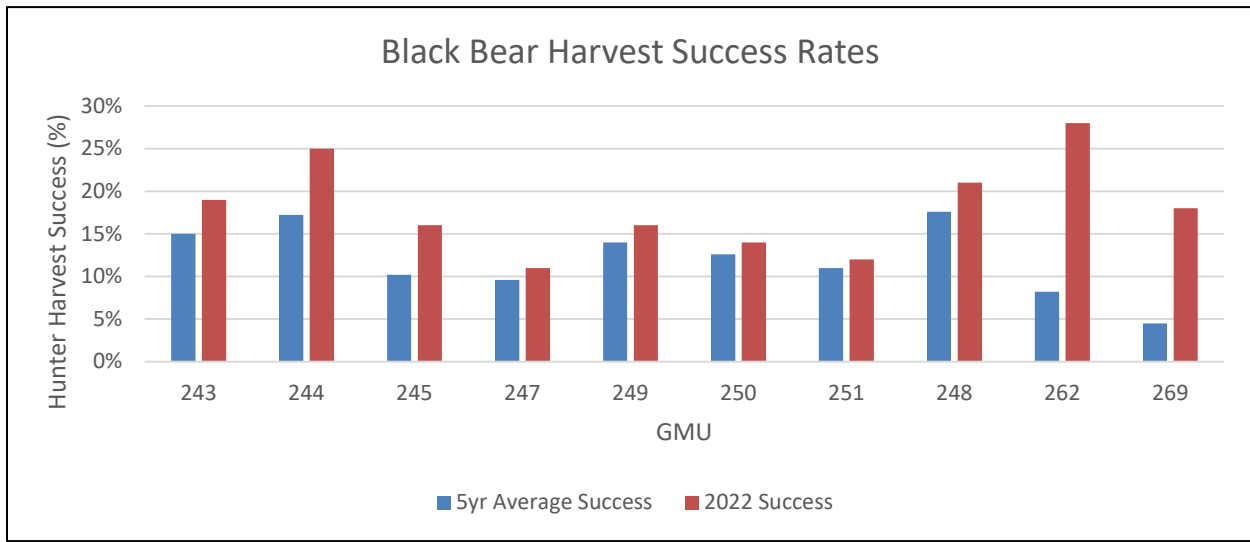


Figure 14. Black bear general season harvest success rates (%) in each GMU in District 7. The total number of bears harvested in 2022 (red) are compared to the 5-year average (blue). Other GMU’s in District 7 that are not included in this figure and had zero bears harvested in 2022 are: 246, 254, 260, and 266.

In Douglas County, hunters can find bears sparsely distributed in small numbers in brushy riparian draws along the Columbia River and other drainages. Douglas County is part of the Columbia Basin Bear Management Unit (BMU 9), which is largely comprised of the most arid lands in Washington and makes up the smallest percentage of bear harvest in the state by far. Bear harvest in Douglas County makes up a far smaller portion of District 7’s total. In both 2019 and 2020, seven bears were harvested from Douglas County, five harvested in 2021, and 16 harvested in 2022. Most bears in Douglas County are harvested in GMUs 248 and 260.

Hunters statewide are required 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.

There is a two-part cougar season in District 7, starting with an early cougar season during big game seasons (Sept. 1 – Dec. 31). Starting Jan. 1, a more focused cougar season opens when conditions make hunting easier. The Jan. 1 season closes April 30 or when harvest guidelines for the PMU are reached. In 2021, no PMU reached or exceeded the maximum harvest guideline in District 7.

2022 cougar harvest data will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

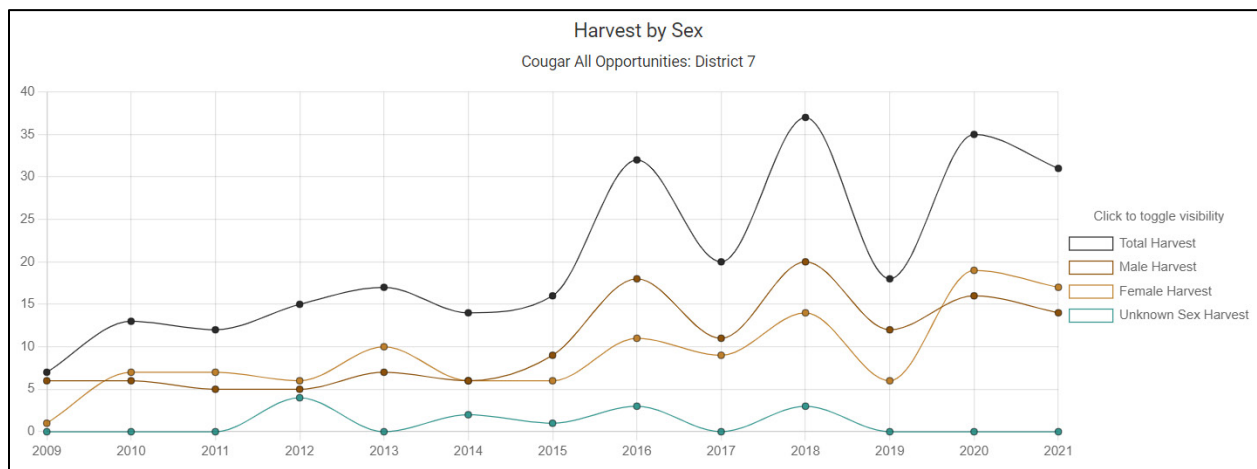


Figure 15. Number of cougars harvested by sex in District 7 from 2009 to 2021.

While many cougars are harvested in Chelan County opportunistically during general deer and elk seasons, dedicated cougar hunters will wait until snow accumulation allows for tracking later in the winter. Cougars are most active when deer are most active, typically at dawn and dusk. Cougars follow deer herds and can 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 Columbia River breaks, Moses Coulee, and Rufus Woods Reservoir. This rough country allows cougars access to deer herds while providing 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 2023.

BIGHORN SHEEP



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. Each herd continues to thrive today, offering 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 two decades, 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 2022 spring aerial survey of the Swakane herd returned a minimum count of 195 sheep with a ram:ewe ratio of 84:100 and a robust population of mature rams. The 2023 season will no doubt provide another year of world-class sheep hunting opportunity here.

Bands of sheep are routinely found on the cliffs and steep slopes along the Columbia River breaks. 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. Hunters can also glass for this herd 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 of all the sheep herds in Washington and is known to produce large rams. This fall will be no exception as the November 2022 aerial survey returned a ram:ewe ratio of 97:100 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 for hunters with disabilities.

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 available 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 84 from fall 2022 aerial surveys, which is a decline from the 114 bighorn sheep observed in spring of the same year. This in turn was a decrease from the 150 bighorn sheep observed in a 2019 aerial survey of the Chelan Butte herd. This drop in sheep numbers observed may not represent a true population decline, as aerial surveys are only conducted once per year, making it difficult to ensure you're surveyed a representative sample.. It is also possible that the Chelan Butte herd is expanding outside of its known range and traditional survey units. However, further monitoring of this herd will be necessary to determine if one or both of these factors is at play or whether a true population decline is occurring. Multiple ground surveys are planned for late summer/fall 2023 to obtain another population estimate, including a lamb:ewe ratio. The lamb:ewe ratio from 2022 fall season aerial surveys was 44 lambs per 100 ewes. In the meantime, the high proportion of 3/4 and full curl rams in this herd will still make for exceptional California bighorn sheep hunting.

MANSON

The Manson herd primarily occupies 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. A Federal Dock Permit is required to use any

USFS dock between May 1 – Oct. 31. **Note: The Safety Harbor dock and campground remains closed in 2023 due to continuing risk of flash flooding.**

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 spring 2022 aerial survey returned a count consistent with that of the past several years, estimating the herd at approximately 70-80 animals, with a ram:ewe estimate of 37 rams per 100 ewes. The comparatively remote, rugged terrain and lower number of rams in the Manson herd makes for a more challenging hunt than either the Chelan Butte or Swakane Units, with days per kill consistently averaging higher here than in the other two sheep units in Chelan County (Figure 17). While it may take hunters more time to find the ram of their choice, hunters in the Manson unit still enjoy a 100% success rate each year along with some of the best scenery in the state.

DISTRICT 7 BIGHORN SHEEP SURVIVAL AND HEALTH

Over winter survival for adult sheep remains high in all three of the Wenatchee District's sheep herds. Annual lamb mortality 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 at least two 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 2023.

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 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 featuring a unique ID number.

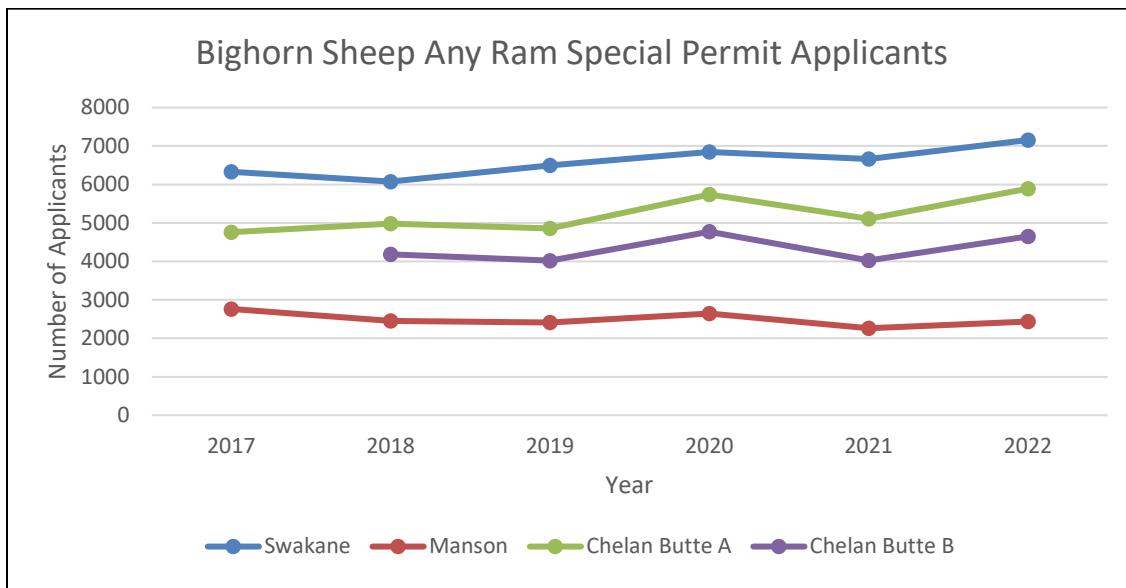


Figure 16. The number of applicants for Any Ram special hunt permits within District 7.

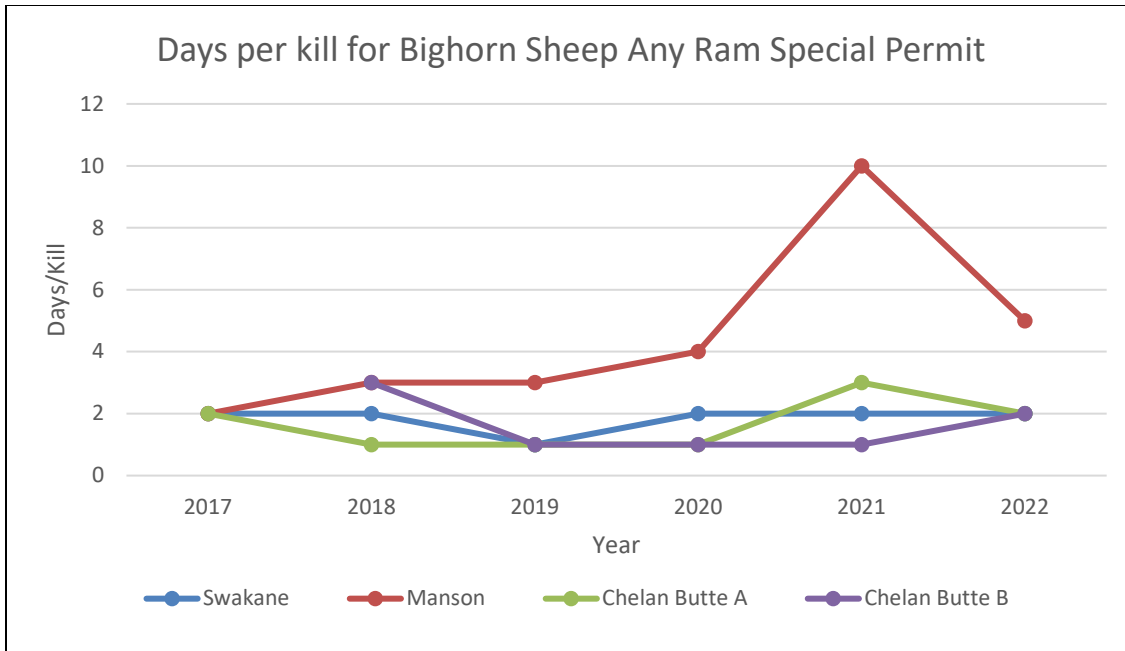


Figure 17. The number of days per harvest by each hunter for Any Ram special hunt permits within District 7.

TURKEY



Merriam's turkeys in Chelan County descend from over 400 birds released 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.

In Chelan County, the number of turkeys the landscape can support is determined primarily by 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 can often be found in these areas near the edge of private and public lands. Recent forest thinning projects and logging on public lands have created good spring turkey habitat. 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.

Turkey hunters have enjoyed greater harvest opportunities in District 7 since 2021, when a fall season for Chelan and Douglas counties was introduced that allowed for the harvest of one turkey of either sex. Both fall seasons since have yielded very similar hunter turnout, harvest levels, and hunter success, with 706 hunters in the North Central PMU harvesting 220 turkeys in the fall of 2021 and 611 hunters harvesting 218 turkeys in fall 2022. 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.

QUAIL

District 7 offers some of the best quail hunting in the state. In both Chelan and Douglas counties, quail benefit from a variety of agricultural land uses that create edge habitat, such as where the edge of an irrigated field meets shrubsteppe, that they rely on. 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 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](#).

2022 quail harvest figures will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Methods used for small game harvest analysis have been revised and this year's results will not be directly comparable to previous years.

GRAY PARTRIDGE



Photo by Neil Paprocki

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.

District 7 hun harvest increased dramatically in 2021, with almost three times as many huns taken that year than were taken in the previous season. This is especially noteworthy as hun harvest experienced a precipitous decline statewide in 2021, District 7 harvest making up nearly half of the statewide total. The 2020 gray partridge harvest in District 7 was low at only 408 birds, but in 2021 hunters harvested 1,197 birds, far exceeding the five-year average of 687. Much like chukar, hun populations are subject to steep yearly fluctuations, so the high level of harvest enjoyed in 2021 doesn’t provide any evidence as to the overall trend of local hun populations.

2022 partridge harvest figures will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Methods used for small game harvest analysis have been revised and this year’s results will not be directly comparable to previous years.

CHUKAR

Traditionally, more chukar have been harvested in District 7 than in any other district in the state, and opportunities for chukar hunting are numerous here due to a large amount of prime habitat on public lands. On the Chelan County side of the Columbia River, BLM, USFS, DNR, Chelan PUD, and WDFW all manage lands with chukar hunting opportunities, such as the Chelan Wildlife Area and Rocky Reach Wildlife Area. Chukar are also abundant on the north shore of Lake Chelan in the rocky exposed grassland habitats below Grade Creek Road. Along the Douglas County breaks, almost all chukar habitat falls under private ownership, and landowner permission is required to hunt.

Chukar hunting falls into two distinct seasons: with snow and without 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 Columbia River breaks provide the majority of chukar habitat, along with areas adjacent to Banks Lake and Moses Coulee.

The 2016-2020 hunting seasons saw an average annual harvest of 4,400 chukar from Chelan and Douglas counties. District 7 saw a dramatic decline in chukar harvest in 2021, with the 2,345 birds harvested last season coming in at less than half the number taken in 2020. While WDFW conducts no official monitoring of chukar populations, this species is subject to major population fluctuations, so one year of abnormally low harvest is not necessarily a cause for concern. 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. Some chukars do not breed at all in such difficult conditions.

2022 chukar harvest figures will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Methods used for small game harvest analysis have been revised and this year's results will not be directly comparable to previous years. For more information, see [Hunting Chukar Partridge](#).

FOREST GROUSE



Left to right: Ruffed, Dusky, and Spruce grouse. Photos by Neil Paprocki.

Three species of forest grouse can be found on 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. There are fewer dispersed opportunities for ruffed grouse and dusky grouse hunting in Douglas County, but coniferous and riparian forests offer the best hunting opportunities. GMUs 248 and 266 are the most promising for grouse hunters.

Most grouse harvest on the district occurs over 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 located across Chelan County. For directions on collecting these samples and a list of wing and tail collection barrel locations, visit the [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 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, they often “dry up” quickly due to the numbers of hunters and the vulnerability of hatch-year birds. 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.

Harvest figures for the 2022 season are still being calculated, but the 2021 grouse season saw the continued decline of grouse harvest and hunter numbers in District 7. Forest grouse harvest was down 45% and hunter participation down 17% from 2020. When compared with the five-year average from 2016-2020, forest grouse harvest in District 7 is down by 55% and hunter participation down by 32% as of 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.

In 2021, WDFW changed the forest grouse season to September 15 – January 15 to reduce harvest of reproductive age females and allow for brood dispersal, which will help sustain a harvestable population over the long run. Previously, the September 1 opening weekend had often seen the greatest number of grouse hunters on the landscape. This change in season dates may be contributing to the decline in forest grouse harvest and hunter participation, but other factors are likely at play. These factors could include prolonged drought in the region, increasing wildfire, and the influence of climate change on early spring temperatures and precipitation, which would impact brood success.

The Sept. 15 grouse season opening date will remain in effect for the 2023 season.

2022 grouse harvest figures will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Methods used for small game harvest analysis have been revised and this year’s results will not be directly comparable to previous years. For more information, see [Hunting Forest Grouse](#).

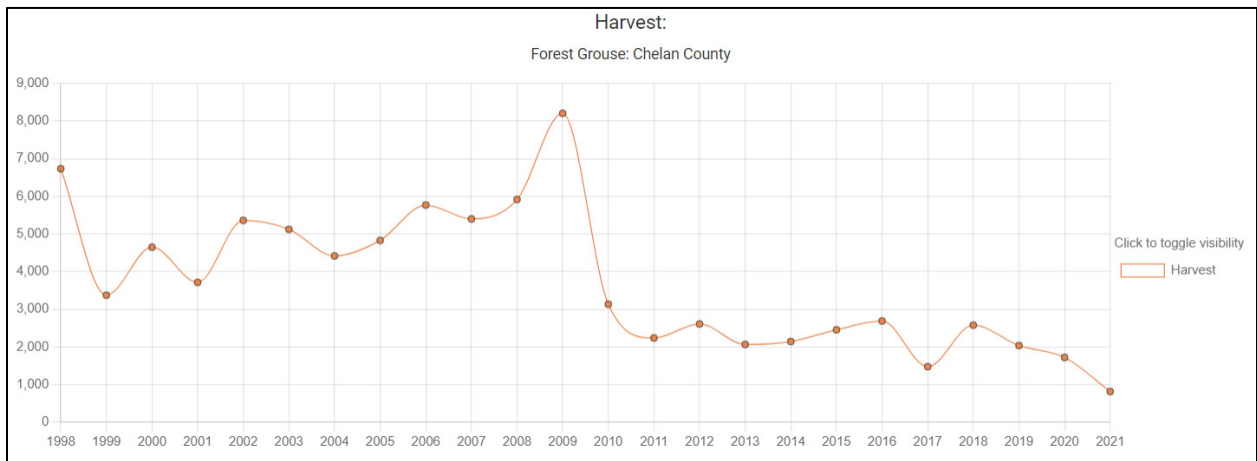


Figure 20. The total harvest of forest grouse in Chelan County from 1998 to 2021.

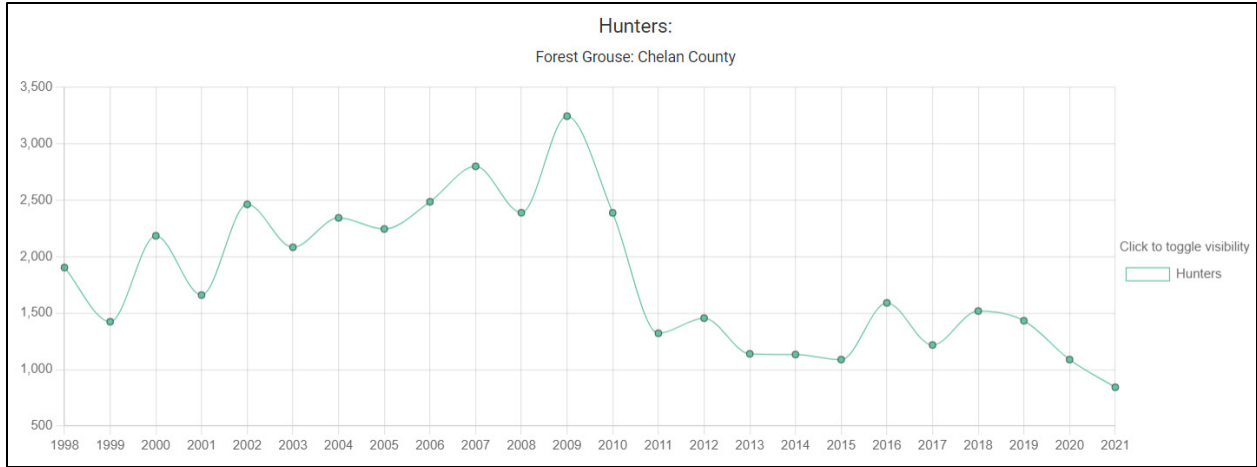


Figure 21. The total number of forest grouse hunters in Chelan County from 1998 to 2021.

DOVE



Photo by Neil Paprocki

District 7 offers good dove hunting opportunity, and harvest levels have been increasing here over the past couple of years. Most mourning doves harvested in District 7 are taken in Douglas County, but viable options for dove hunting exist in Chelan County and in places like Swakane Canyon. Hunters should contact private landowners to secure hunting opportunities and gaining access permission to private lands. 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.

Hunters should remember that Eurasian collared doves can be found in the same areas as mourning doves.. Eurasian collared doves are classified as a deleterious species in Washington and do not count toward daily dove bag limits, so be sure to take a few when the opportunity arises. 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 in the [Small Game Hunting Regulations pamphlets](#).

2022 dove harvest figures will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Methods used for small game harvest analysis have been revised and this year's results will not be directly comparable to previous years.

PHEASANT

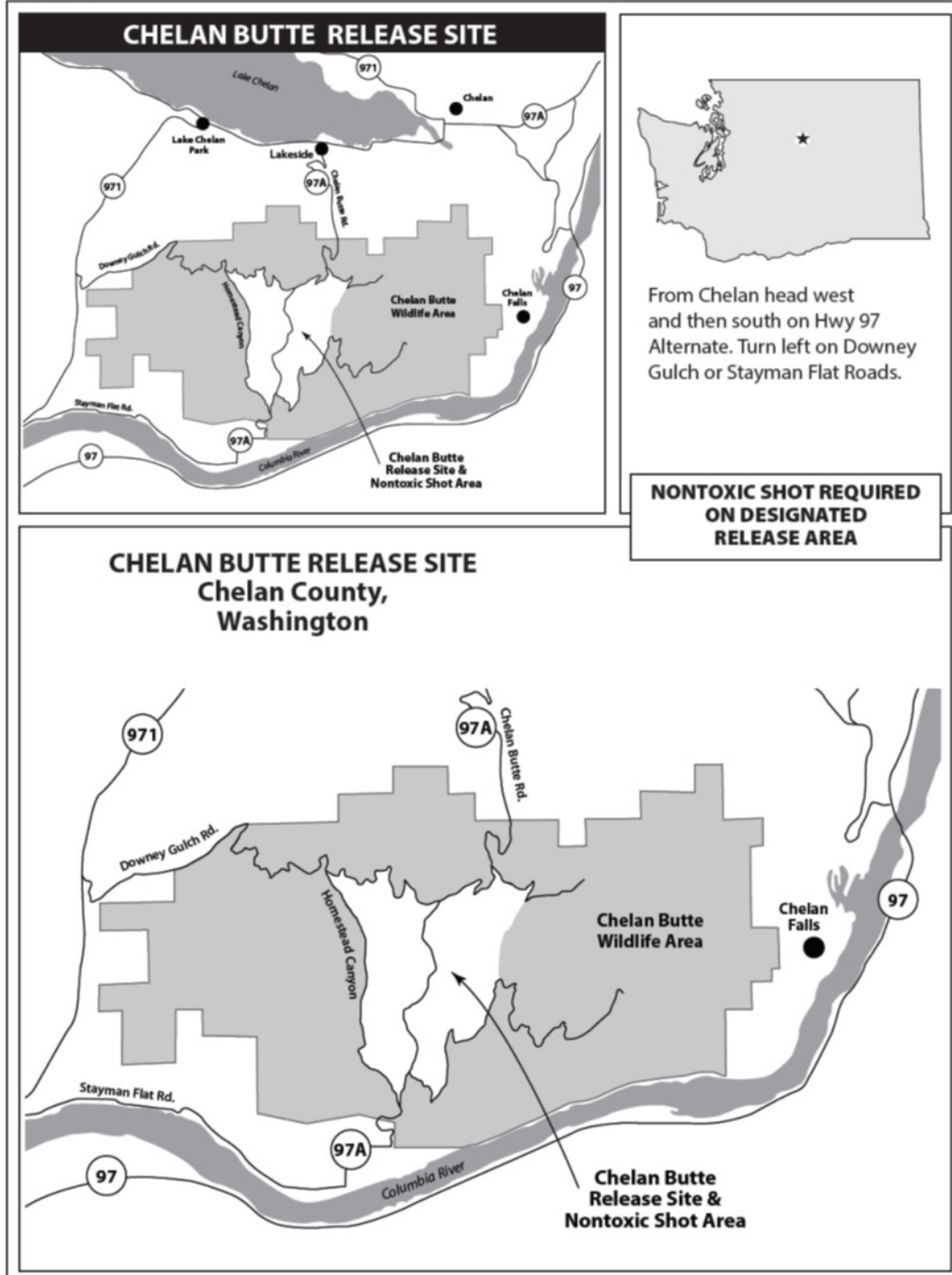
Wild populations of pheasants can be found on public and private land in a few locations in Douglas County. Hunters should focus on areas with a mixture of native shrubsteppe habitat, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasslands, and wet meadows/wetlands. Look for weedy and tall vegetation on the roadsides, 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. Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites in these units can visit the [WDFW hunting website](#) for more information.

2022 pheasant harvest figures will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Methods used for small game harvest analysis have been revised and this year's results will not be directly comparable to previous years.

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 by Adam Neff

While not a major waterfowl hunting destination, District 7 provides opportunity for duck and geese hunting in several areas across both counties. In Chelan County, most waterfowl hunting is focused along the Columbia River. It is important to note that, due to county ordinances and the expansion of Wenatchee City Limits, **there is a no-shooting zone from the Odabashian Bridge to the George Sellar Bridge** which connects Wenatchee and East Wenatchee.

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

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

2022 waterfowl harvest figures will be available online at [Game harvest reports | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). Methods used for small game harvest analysis have been revised and this year's results will not be directly comparable to previous years.

PRIVATE LANDS HUNTER ACCESS

WDFW maintains hunter access agreements with hundreds of participating landowners across the state, providing public hunting to on private lands. There are thousands of acres of Hunter Access Program lands in Douglas County to utilize throughout the season. Please respect any closures and be aware of all wildfire restrictions during hunting season. Access lands are marked with signs displaying contact information, and hunters can also locate all private land hunter access areas on [WDFW's website](#).

In Chelan County, private landowners often allow hunting access in areas of high deer or elk concentration, but there are no formal hunting access agreements. 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.

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 is a list of helpful resources to help you plan your hunting trip.

- [USGS Topo maps](#): downloadable topographical 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 snowfall data for the U.S.
- [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. District 7 encompasses [Chelan](#) and [Douglas](#) counties.