

Staff Summary

Background

The department has initiated a review and update of its 12 wildlife area long range management plans originally developed in 1993. To date, the goals and objectives of five wildlife area management plans have been adopted by Commission action. The revision of two more wildlife area management plans is complete and final draft plans have been developed for Klamath and Ladd Marsh Wildlife areas.

Changes from previous review process

While the previous 1993 plan review process was aided by a wildlife area review committee, the current 2008 process relied heavily on local wildlife area and regional staff. Using the 1993 plans as a foundation, department staff developed draft management plans. Local stakeholder groups were informed of the planning process and were invited to help develop draft plans.

Final Draft Goals and Objectives

Wildlife area goals are broad, open-ended statements of desired future conditions that convey a purpose but do not define measurable units. In contrast, objectives are more concise statements of what, how and where the department wants to achieve, and who will be responsible for the work. Objectives are derived from goals and provide the basis for determining strategies, evaluating the success of strategies, and monitoring wildlife area accomplishments.

Using input from a formal public review process and internal review by staff, the department has finalized the goals and objectives of the two draft plans. These are listed below.

The goals and objectives for the Klamath Wildlife Area are:

Goal 1: To protect, enhance and manage upland habitats to benefit a wide variety of wildlife species, with emphasis on reducing depredation on adjacent agricultural lands by spring migrating geese.

Objective 1.1: Manage approximately 580 acres of agricultural upland habitat with emphasis on spring green forage.

Objective 1.2: Manage approximately 452 acres of sagebrush steppe habitat with grass and forb components consisting of 25 percent of the area with the remainder consisting of an open shrub layer of sagebrush and/or greasewood.

Objective 1.3: Maintain and protect approximately 20 acres of upland habitat where federally listed Applegate's milk-vetch occurs. This habitat is characterized by seasonally moist, strongly alkaline soils dominated by greasewood with sparse, native bunch grasses and patches of bare soil.

Objective 1.4: Protect approximately 100 acres of upland forest habitat, characterized by large Ponderosa pine, a habitat used by nesting and wintering bald eagles.

Objective 1.5: Maintain and improve wildlife area facilities, structures, and equipment used to conduct habitat management and public use projects.

Goal 2: To protect, enhance and manage wetland habitats to benefit fish and wildlife species.

Objective 2.1: Manage approximately 185 acres of palustrine semi-permanently flooded wetlands on Miller Island Unit, with a ratio no greater than 3:1 of robust emergent vegetation (dominated by cattails and bulrushes) to open water. These wetlands should have open water and interspersed stands of vegetation to create a mosaic of features within individual habitat management units. Water depths will generally not exceed 24 inches and open water areas will support rooted submerged aquatic plants in most locations.

Objective 2.2: Manage approximately 792 acres of palustrine seasonally flooded wetlands with a minimum plant coverage of 80 percent.

Objective 2.3: Enhance, manage and protect approximately 278 acres of palustrine intermittently flooded wetlands (alkali flats).

Objective 2.4: Maintain approximately 583 acres of lacustrine permanently flooded wetland habitats on Shoalwater Bay and Sesti Tgawaals Point units. Emphasis will be on maintaining productive stands of submerged aquatic vegetation such as sago pondweed.

Objective 2.5: Protect and enhance approximately 155 acres of riverine wetlands on Gorr Island Unit with a ratio of robust emergent vegetation (dominated by cattails and bulrushes) to open water of no greater than 3:1. These wetlands should have open water with interspersed stands of vegetation to create a mosaic of habitat features within the unit. Water depths will be dependent on the existing depth of the Klamath River.

Objective 2.6: Maintain and improve critical physical and functional infrastructure affecting wetland management activities.

Goal 3: To provide a variety of wildlife oriented recreational and educational opportunities to the public that are compatible with Goals 1 and 2.

Objective 3.1: Provide hunting, trapping, and angling opportunities in a manner compatible with habitat management objectives.

Objective 3.2: Provide wildlife viewing and education/interpretation opportunities compatible with Objective 3.1.

The goals and objectives for the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area are:

Goal 1: To protect, enhance and manage wetland habitats to benefit fish and wildlife species.

Objective 1.1: Manage approximately 45 acres of palustrine permanently flooded wetland habitats. Emphasis will be on maintaining productive stands of submerged aquatic vegetation such as sago pond weed interspersed with cattail and hardstem bulrush stands.

Objective 1.2: Manage approximately 110 acres of palustrine intermittently exposed wetlands. This habitat will be managed for a ratio of 3:1, open water to emergent wetlands.

Objective 1.3: Manage approximately 1,811 acres of palustrine semi-permanent wetlands with a ratio of no greater than 1:1, robust emergent vegetation to open water.

Objective 1.4: Manage approximately 658 acres of palustrine seasonally flooded wetlands (wet meadow) for foraging and nesting areas for waterfowl and other wetland birds.

Objective 1.5: Manage approximately 113 acres of palustrine intermittently flooded wetlands.

Objective 1.6: Manage approximately 116 acres of palustrine forested wetlands.

Objective 1.7: Manage approximately 26 acres of palustrine scrub-shrub wetlands.

Objective 1.8: Restore, enhance and manage approximately 11 acres of riverine wetlands on LMWA.

Objective 1.9: Maintain and improve critical physical and functional infrastructure affecting wetland management activities.

Objective 1.10: Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing sanctuary for waterfowl and wetland dependent wildlife. Designate 15-35 percent of the managed wetlands as seasonal sanctuary.

Goal 2: To protect, enhance and manage upland habitats to benefit a wide variety of wildlife species.

Objective 2.1: Enhance and manage approximately 1,581 acres of grassland habitat to benefit a wide variety of native wildlife and desired game species.

Objective 2.2: Enhance and manage approximately 307 acres of shrub habitat to benefit a wide variety of native wildlife and desired game species.

Objective 2.3: Enhance and manage approximately 397 acres of agricultural upland habitat to benefit a wide variety of native wildlife and desired game species.

Objective 2.4: Enhance and manage approximately 760 acres of mixed conifer habitat to benefit a wide variety of native wildlife and desired game species.

Objective 2.5: Enhance and manage approximately 38 acres of deciduous tree habitat to benefit a wide variety of native wildlife and desired game species.

Objective 2.6: Maintain and improve wildlife area facilities, structures and equipment used to conduct habitat management and public use projects.

Objective 2.7: Provide supplemental big game feed to protect upland habitats on Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area and adjacent private land.

Goal 3: To provide a variety of wildlife oriented recreational and educational opportunities to the public which are compatible with Goals 1 and 2.

Objective 3.1: Provide hunting and angling opportunities in a manner compatible with habitat management objectives.

Objective 3.2: Provide wildlife viewing and education/interpretation opportunities compatible with Objective 3.1.

Public Review Process

The department presented the draft management plans to the public at two formal public review meetings for Klamath Wildlife Area and one meeting for Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area, in mid-January 2008. These meetings were announced via local radio and news outlets, the department website and informational flyers given out at regional department offices. Below is a summary of these meetings.

Klamath Wildlife Area

The Klamath Wildlife Area draft plan was presented and discussed at two public meetings: January 15th in Central Point and January 16th in Klamath Falls. Two members of the public attended the first meeting. Two attended the second meeting in Klamath Falls.

Key issues and concerns raised at these meetings included: encroachment of bulrushes, questions about current wetland unit management activities especially draining and farming, providing green forage for spring geese, sources of water and the current hunter reservation system. Most of the verbal comments given at these meetings have been addressed in the strategies described in the final draft plan.

To date, about 20 hard copies of the draft plan have been distributed to adjacent landowners and area visitors, local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge staff, Klamath County

Commissioners, Klamath County Natural Resources Advisory Council, Klamath Tribe, Klamath Chapter of Oregon Hunter's Association and Pheasants Unlimited. The local Klamath Falls newspaper also ran an article about the wildlife area draft plan with instruction for submitting comments. Informational flyers were posted at the wildlife area office and the draft plan, with comment information, was accessible from the department's home web page and via weekly recreation reports. The weekly recreation reports are automatically emailed to approximately 2,387 readers who have signed up for emails regarding Southeast recreation zone information.

To date one written comment sheet has been received.

Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area

The Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area draft plan was presented and discussed at one public meeting on January 22nd in La Grande. Fourteen members of the public attended this meeting.

Key issues and concerns raised at the meeting included: acquiring more lands adjacent to the wildlife area especially as farm land is developed, pursuing more water sources such as wells or purchasing water rights to address ongoing drought conditions and big game management mainly during winter.

Since the January 22nd public meeting, an additional 10 hard copies of the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area draft plan have been handed out to area visitors, neighbors, local businesses and interest groups. LMWA staff has spoken to approximately 75 people about the plan, including the local OHA chapter, Ducks Unlimited, posted the draft plan on the local birding listserv and via direct email correspondence. The draft plan was also posted on the department's home page and as a link within the Northeast Zone weekly recreation reports. Approximately 2,823 readers receive automatic emails regarding the Northeast recreation zone. The draft plan was also given to the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society for detailed review.

Seven written correspondences have been received. Public correspondence received after March 14, 2008 will be presented to the Commission at the April 18, 2008 hearing, as an addendum. An opportunity for public testimony will also be provided at this Commission hearing.