

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 eleven wildlife area management plans have been adopted by Commission action. A new plan has been developed for the Bridge Creek, Lower Deschutes and Riverside Wildlife areas.

Changes from previous review process

While the previous 1993 plan review process was aided by a wildlife area review committee, the current process relies heavily on local wildlife area and regional staff. The 2009 Bridge Creek, Lower Deschutes and Riverside Wildlife Area plans are newly developed and describe management goals and objectives for three wildlife areas.

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 Bridge Creek Wildlife Areas are:

Goal 1: To protect, enhance, and manage winter range habitats for Rocky Mountain elk.

Objective 1.1: Maintain and enhance 10,475 acres of grassland and 352 acres of shrubland habitat as key winter range for Rocky Mountain elk.

Objective 1.2: Maintain and enhance 3,919 acres of Ponderosa pine woodlands and 434 acres of riparian habitats as thermal, hiding, and escapement cover for wintering Rocky Mountain elk.

Objective 1.3: Monitor Rocky Mountain elk winter use and distribution.

Goal 2: To protect, enhance, and manage habitats to benefit native wildlife and desired game species, compatible with Goal 1.

Objective 2.1: To protect, enhance and manage upland habitats (10,475 acres grassland, 352 acres shrubland, 3,919 acres woodland) to benefit native and desirable non-native wildlife.

Objective 2.2: Protect, enhance and manage 434 acres of riparian and 3,919 acres of woodland habitat for high quality instream habitat, water quality and quantity, and proper functioning condition for resident and anadromous fish, native wildlife, and desirable non-native fish and wildlife.

Objective 2.3: Monitor wildlife presence and usage of BCWA habitats.

Objective 2.4: To maintain and enhance wildlife area facilities, structures, and equipment to conduct habitat management and public use projects on the wildlife area.

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

Objective 3.1: Provide hunting, trapping and angling opportunities to the general public, 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 Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area are:

Goal 1: To protect, enhance and restore aquatic and riparian habitats to benefit native fish and wildlife and desired game species.

Objective 1.1: Protect, enhance, and restore approximately 492 acres of freshwater aquatic and 61 acres of riparian habitats.

Goal 2: To protect, enhance and manage upland habitats to benefit native wildlife and desired game species.

Objective 2.1: Protect, enhance, and restore approximately 7,835 acres of mixed sagebrush/grassland and 131 acres of grassland habitats.

Objective 2.2: Enhance and manage approximately 7 acres of agricultural upland habitats.

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

Objective 3.1: Provide approximately 12,000 hunting and angling use days annually.

Objective 3.2: Provide approximately 8,000 wildlife viewing and

education/ interpretation use days annually.

The goals and objectives for the Riverside Wildlife Area are:

Goal 1: To protect, enhance and restore upland habitats to benefit native and desired wildlife species.

Objective 1.1: Protect, enhance, and restore approximately 3,126 acres of mixed sagebrush steppe/shrubland habitats.

Objective 1.2: Protect, enhance and manage approximately 46 acres of agricultural upland habitat.

Objective 1.3: Maintain and expand RWA facilities and equipment used to conduct habitat management projects and other administrative functions.

Goal 2: To protect, enhance and manage riparian and freshwater aquatic habitats to benefit native and desired fish and wildlife species.

Objective 2.1: Protect, enhance, and restore approximately 61 acres of riparian habitat.

Objective 2.2: Protect, enhance and manage approximately 21 miles of freshwater aquatic habitat.

Goal 3: To provide a variety of fish and wildlife oriented recreational and educational opportunities to the public.

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 and habitat management objectives.

Public Review Process

Throughout January 2009, the department presented the draft management plans to the public at one meeting for Bridge Creek Wildlife Area, three meetings for Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area and two meetings for Riverside Wildlife Area. 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.

Bridge Creek Wildlife Areas

The Bridge Creek Wildlife Area draft plan was presented and discussed at one public meeting on January 27th in Pendleton. Three members of the public attended this meeting.

Key issues that were discussed at this meeting included: annual review of range conditions for grazing and elk forage; support of fencing and grazing program as

compatible with wildlife use; any changes to management due to increased wildlife viewing; improved hunter ethics and hunter respect for private lands. Most of the verbal comments given at this meeting have been addressed in the final draft plan.

Hard copies of the draft plan have been given to the federal land management agencies (USFS, BLM) and ODF. 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 readers who have signed up for emails regarding Northeast Zone recreation reports.

To date one written correspondence has been received.

Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area

The Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area draft plan was presented and discussed at three public meetings: January 14th in The Dalles, January 15th in Moro, and January 21st in Madras. Four members of the public attended the first meeting. Four attended the second meeting in Moro. Unfortunately no one attended the meeting in Madras.

Key issues and concerns raised at the meetings included: seeding burned areas; discussion about fire prevention and fires resulting from numerous uses (i.e. railroad, boaters); historic buildings and water tank restoration; coordinating multiple uses (horseback riding, bicycling, hiking and boating); control of noxious weeds.

Several federal and state agencies were sent the draft plan as well as briefed by the Deschutes Watershed District Manager at the Lower Deschutes River Managers meeting. Leadership attending this meeting included Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, BLM, Oregon State Police, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and Jefferson County. The draft plan was also posted on the department's home page and as a link within the Central Zone recreation report.

Two written correspondences have been received to date.

Riverside Wildlife Area

The Riverside Wildlife Area draft plan was presented and discussed at two public meetings: January 13th in Ontario and January 14th in Burns. One member of the public attended the first meeting. Two attended the second meeting.

Key issues and concerns raised at the meeting included: declining chukar populations; support limiting ATV use and promoting foot travel; support grazing but limiting it to reduce impacts to riparian habitat; support a volunteer or technician at the homesite to prevent vandalism and maintain crop irrigation; need for signs marking the wildlife area's boundaries and more informational kiosks describing habitat management efforts.

Since the January 14 public meeting, six hard copies of the Riverside Wildlife Area draft plan have been handed out to area visitors, neighbors, permittees and interest groups. The

draft plan was also posted on the department's home page and as a link within the Southeast Zone recreation report.

One comment sheet and one written correspondence have been received to date.

Public correspondence received after March 13, 2009 will be presented to the Commission at the April 17, 2009 hearing, as an addendum. An opportunity for public testimony will also be provided at this Commission hearing.