

Summary of Draft Wildlife Area Management Plan Revisions

Most of the changes to the January 2009 draft management plans were general housekeeping in nature, such as re-formatting to improve readability or correcting grammatical errors. Some important changes however were requested by the Commission and the public, through the public review process. Below is a list of key revisions made to each plan, with the relevant page number of the original draft plan. Insertions are **bold** and underscored, deletions are [bracketed] and ~~strikethrough~~.

Bridge Creek Wildlife Areas Draft Management Plan

- Housekeeping / Corrected Errors:

Cover: changed date to April 2009

Pg 4: added to paragraph: Federal-Private-State-Tribal partnerships to manage elk in the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington (1990 Blue Mountain Elk Initiative),

Pg. 12: Most habitats on the BCWA have been altered to some degree with respects to species composition and/or diversity. These alterations may be attributed to fire suppression and past land use practices such as timber harvest, overgrazing, agriculture, and invasive plant species. By employing various practices/techniques such as grazing management and restoration/enhancement (plantings, seeding, prescribed burning, etc) for their associated attributes, wildlife personnel have managed BCWA habitats to emphasize increased cover values (vertical and horizontal), compensatory growth, plant composition and diversity. Although wildfire will continue to be a factor in changing BCWA habitat types and their associated values; efforts towards active timber management, pruning, thinning, identification of high-value protection areas and facilitation of emergency response travel access will aid in reducing catastrophic effects of wildland fire.

Pg. 32, Objective 1.1, Strategy 7: Maintain and enhance 41 water resources (stock/wildlife ponds and troughs) for adequate wildlife and livestock distribution and use. Maintaining adequate depth and access of these resources will assist in emergency response for fire suppression activities.

Pg. 36, Objective 2.1, Strategy 9: Maintain and enhance 41 water resources (stock/wildlife ponds and spring troughs) to ensure adequate wildlife and livestock distribution as well as to meet habitat requirements for various amphibian and reptile species. Maintaining adequate depth and access of these resources will assist in emergency response for fire suppression activities.

Pg. 36, Objective 2.2, Rationale: Riparian and adjacent woodland areas are an important component of BCWA as they provide a variety habitat attributes to fulfill life history requirements for a number of terrestrial wildlife, invertebrates, and aquatic species. BCWA personnel maintain and enhance riparian and woodland habitats for high quality instream habitat to benefit anadromous and resident fish and to improve water quality and quantity. The North Fork John Day River Conservation Opportunity Area (2006

Oregon Conservation Strategy) is located adjacent to BCWA and contains key aquatic habitats. The riparian and adjacent woodland habitats are also managed to provide varying foraging, nesting, cover, travel corridor values for many species of the BCWA such as neotropical migrants. Additionally, woodland and riparian habitats on the BCWA serve to provide mule deer with seasonal travel corridors, thermal cover, hiding cover, fawning and escapement cover. Moist riparian habitats also provide for additional quality foraging area during spring and summer months. However, special management consideration is given to sensitive, threatened and endangered species.

- Changes resulting from Commission / Public Comments

Pg. 42. partnerships were added or descriptions enhanced per Commissioner Smith's comment at the January hearing:

Examples of current partnerships at work on BCWA include:

- Colvin Cattle Company and Currin Ranch – Grazing permittees and BCWA maintenance
- University of Idaho – Vegetation monitoring/Educational field exercise.
- OSU Extension – Advisement regarding vegetation
- **Blue Mountain Elk Initiative- Protection of winter range (noxious weed control, travel access)**
- Adjacent landowners - Property access. Observation/report of activities and security on properties.
- USFS – Coordination and management of resource activities (grazing, road closures, controlled burns, etc) within BCWA and on adjacent USFS lands.
- Oregon Department of Forestry – Advisement of forest issues and fire protection.
- CTUIR (Cultural Resource Protection Program) - Advisement of cultural resources present on the BCWA.
- BLM, OPRD, ODOT – **Coordination for management activities that occur on partner lands within BCWA for compliance to applicable Federal and State rules and regulations.**

Pg. 38, Objective 2.4, two strategies were revised per discussions with Oregon Department of Forestry as follows:

Strategy 3. Maintain public and administrative primitive roads in a manner conducive for emergency response and wildland fire breaks. Work will entail improving connectivity of roadways through grading, pruning, thinning, hand-piling, and underburning therefore compartmentalizing wildland fires and subsequent suppression efforts.

Strategy 5. Identify and implement fire protection/reduction projects for areas of key habitats and/or habitat attributes. Work will entail pruning, thinning, underburning, and hand-piling vegetation as well as improving emergency response access to those areas where applicable.

Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area Draft Management Plan

- Housekeeping / Corrected Errors:

Cover: changed date to April 2009

Pg. 1, In the Historical Background section, added text to clarify the purpose for the establishment of LDWA:

Located along the lower Deschutes River in the north central part of Oregon, LDWA encompasses 8,526 acres of land and water owned or administered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department). LDWA was established in 1983, with the initial donation of land by the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation (OWHF) of 2,758 acres. In 1986 **OWHF donated** an additional 5,158 acres of land to the department ~~by the OWHF~~. **The LDWA was initially established to provide permanent public angler access. However, especially with the 1986 acquisition, the wildlife area has grown to provide enhanced wildlife and fish habitat (i.e. through removal of livestock, riparian vegetation improvements, etc.) and more wildlife oriented recreational activities such as hunting, boating, hiking and biking.**

Pgs. 2 and 4, revised the vision statement to be consistent with the purpose of the wildlife area (habitat and public access):

*Habitat for **threatened and endangered fish species**, bighorn sheep, mule deer and other fish and wildlife species is enhanced and managed through sound stewardship practices, while [~~balancing the needs of other native and desired fish and wildlife species, as well as~~] providing recreational opportunities and access along the lower 18 miles of the Deschutes River for present and future generations.*

Pg. 3, revised and added text in the Purpose and Need of LDWA section:

The LDWA was established in 1983, for the primary purpose of providing permanent public angler access to the lower 11 miles of the Deschutes River. **The majority of these lands, which were immediately adjacent to the river, were donated by Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation (OWHF). In 1986, additional lands were acquired (through another donation by OWHF) which included seven more miles of permanent river access and much more upland habitat.** This second acquisition provided **important wildlife habitat** enhancement opportunities for [~~wildlife species~~] **the department**. LDWA is **now** [~~also~~] managed to improve and/or maintain habitats for native and desired fish and wildlife species and to provide wildlife oriented recreational opportunities to the public.

Pg. 13: Table 2 was corrected per ODFW Wildlife Diversity staff clarification as follows: Federal designation changed to SOC not SC, LT not T, LE not E and state status was changed to SC Sensitive, Critical and SV, Sensitive, Vulnerable.

Pg. 15, clarified Habitat monitoring:

Range Condition Analysis:

BLM range staff conduct ten 100-foot nested frequency transects, **which includes a series of photos taken at each transect.** on the lower 18 miles of the Deschutes River (eight on LDWA, one on BLM lands and one on OPRD property).

Pg. 16:

Water Use

Irrigation water **from Harris Spring** is monitored by LDWA staff and usage is annually reported to the Oregon Water Resources Department. ~~ODFW utilizes the water source through an agency agreement with BLM.~~ **Since the spring is on BLM land, a cooperative agreement with BLM was signed in 1990 to utilize the water.** Water is delivered through an underground pipe system to water grain fields and tree and shrub plantings. Monitoring is conducted using flow devices at the discharge locations.

Public Use

Monitoring public use (hunting, trapping, fishing, viewing, horseback riding) on the area is conducted to determine if the LDWA is providing the type of wildlife oriented recreational opportunities and experiences desired by the public. Hunting and angling activity surveys include: 1) interviews conducted in the field, at hunting camps, fishing sites, creel checks and 2) Non-consumptive use of the area is estimated based on random counts of individuals visiting the wildlife area and yearly BLM boater pass permits issued in Section IV of the Deschutes River. **Besides ODFW, public contacts are made by OPRD, BLM and Oregon State Police (OSP) personnel primarily during the peak summer usage period.**

Pg. 22: Educational/Interpretive

Due to the administrative road closures on the LDWA, the area has had very limited use **as a site** for education and interpretive purposes. **The vast majority of information is conveyed to the public via the department, OSP, BLM and OPRD staff during river patrols and incidental encounters.** In 2004, the department hosted the annual Wasco County Bull Tour for approximately 160 people to learn about activities on the LDWA.

Pg. 26, removed Strategy 1 of Objective 3.2 since it was too vague; re-numbered the strategies accordingly.

Pg. 28, Partnerships section:

- BLM
 - Co-mingled lands and fire protection
 - ~~Weed Control~~ **Vegetative Monitoring**

Riverside Wildlife Area Draft Management Plan

- Housekeeping / Corrected Errors:

Cover: changed date to **April** 2009

Pg. 1, 2: re-wrote the Malheur and Riverside tract descriptions to more accurately reflect department acquisition:

Riverside Wildlife Area consists of two discrete tracts: Riverside Tract and Malheur Tract. **Historically, these tracts have been managed separately with only the**

Riverside Tract acknowledged as RWA. As stated earlier, one of the purposes of this plan is to consolidate management of the Riverside Tract and Malheur River Tract under the RWA Management Plan.

Riverside Tract

The original Riverside Tract is adjacent to the Malheur River near the former railroad community of Riverside. It was purchased from the Blaylock family in 1976 and has been administered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) as the RWA since that time.

The purpose of this initial acquisition was to provide **public fishing and hunting** access, to a previously privately held portion of the Malheur River canyon. **In addition, this purchase provided the opportunity for the department to emphasize fish and wildlife habitat management in the river canyon.**

Additional acres were added to this tract in 1977 when the department purchased Union Pacific Railroad property and easements. Both of these purchases were made using Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) funds, a federal excise tax on fishing equipment and motor boat fuels.

A rail service corridor traverses the center of the Riverside Tract and provides some of the only level ground available in the area for walking. **Following purchase of the Union Pacific** properties, from 1977 until 1995, hunters, anglers, and others freely accessed the Riverside Tract along this corridor. When the rail service corridor was abandoned by the railroad **in 1995** the railroad sold the corridor to an adjacent private landowner **who closed it to public access**. In 2006, the department completed a land exchange with the private landowner to again establish public access to the rail service corridor and adjacent upland areas.

Malheur River Tract

In 1972, the department purchased the second tract, Malheur River Tract, also with SFR funds, from D.W. Williams. **Similar to the Riverside Tract**, the objective of this purchase was to provide public **fishing and hunting** access to formerly privately held sections of the Malheur River south of Highway 20.

At the time of the original purchase the northern boundary of the former Williams property (Township 23 S Range 36 E SW ¼ of Section 5) was not fenced on the property line. As a result, the adjacent landowner had been using the northern most 80 acres for his cattle operation for several decades.

To resolve this issue, in 2005 the department completed a land exchange with the adjacent private landowner to consolidate the property boundary. The land exchange was based on trading equal acreage of equal monetary value. The department and the private landowner traded a 25-acre parcel of land to each other.

The land exchange benefited both the department and **the private landowner**. The department **received improved access to the northern end of the Malheur River Tract** for its habitat management activities and public access for hunters and ~~[fishermen]~~

anglers. The private landowner gained better operational ground for his ranch. In July 2005, a fence was constructed along surveyed property lines to secure the land exchange.

Pgs. 3,6: changed Goal 1 and Goal 2 to be consistent with each other:

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

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

Pg. 3: re-wrote the vision statement:

The vision for RWA is as follows:

Habitat management is implemented to support native and desired game species while providing access along the Malheur River for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

Fish and wildlife habitats along the Malheur River are healthy and thriving, due to sound stewardship practices, while providing hunting, angling and other wildlife oriented recreational opportunities for present and future generations.

Pgs. 4,5, and 7,8: revised several paragraphs to avoid repetition of information by cutting and pasting text. No new information was added.

Pg. 15:

In relation to this plan's goals and objectives, the department will develop a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the department and the two respective BLM districts (Vale and Burns) to address fire suppression efforts on RWA. The following criteria will be addressed in the MOA:

Pg. 16: corrected the spelling of some scientific names

Pg. 16:

From April 1 through October 16, Warm Springs Reservoir releases irrigation water at approximately 400 - 450 cubic feet per second (cfs). Flows at this rate are continuous for three to four months. Then flows are reduced as storage capacities dwindle or irrigation demand subsides. At the end of irrigation season (~October 16), water flows into the Malheur River **downstream of Warm Springs Dam** are shut off. The only live water flow is at the confluence of the South Fork system, which lies approximately two miles below Warm Springs Reservoir. After irrigation season, flows in the Malheur River throughout RWA range from 10 to 20 cfs depending on reservoir seepage and contributing flows from the South Fork. **During years of extreme drought Warm Springs Reservoir does not fill and downstream irrigation flow releases occur during a much shorter time period.**

Pgs 28, 29:

Riverside Tract:

Longsiding Access Road, also known as the Riverside Access Road, is accessible from County Road 587. The access point is located approximately 10 miles south of Juntura on the east side of Twin Knowles. The road is a two-track side road that crosses five miles of BLM land before reaching the wildlife area. The road is not maintained and only 4x4 high clearance vehicles are recommended.

Riverside Access Road is also accessible from County Road 587 approximately 17 miles south of Juntura. Access point is two-track side road located 200 yards north of the historic town of Riverside. The road crosses approximately one mile of private land and is two miles in length prior to reaching the wildlife area gate.

The Riverside Tract can be accessed from Burns, Oregon by traveling 52 miles east on Highway 20 to the community of Juntura. Approximately 1/8 mile before Juntura, turn right on Riverside Road (County Road 587) and travel south towards the former railroad community of Riverside. There are two side roads that access the Riverside tract off of County Road 587.

Longsiding Access Road, is located approximately 10 miles south of Juntura off of County Road 587 on the east side of Twin Knowles. This road is a two-track side road that crosses five miles of BLM land before reaching the wildlife area. The road is not maintained and only 4x4 vehicles with high clearance are recommended.

Riverside Headquarters Road is also accessible from County Road 587, approximately 17 miles south of Juntura. After crossing the Malheur River and past the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) camp site, travel 3/4 mile to the first two-track road on the left. Follow that road for 1.5 miles. The road crosses approximately one mile of private land before entering department property. An orange gate marks the entrance to the wildlife area. Signs on the management area guide visitors to access sites.

Malheur River Tract:

Highway 20 Access Point is accessible one ¼ mile east from where the Malheur River crosses Highway 20. The access point is a crude two-track BLM side road that is not maintained and is seldom used by the public or staff. The road is recommended for 4X4 high clearance vehicles. Due to the infrequent use and roughness, the road is generally recreated every year by the first user in spring (generally locals, BLM or department staff). This is the only access to the northern section of the wildlife area.

Shurtz Field Access Road (also known as the Warm Springs Access Road) is accessible from County Road 311. From Highway 20, travel four miles south on the Warm Springs Access Road; head east five miles on the Shurtz Field Access Road to the wildlife area. The road is a two-track side road that is in good condition and may be accessed by average 4x4 vehicles. Travel is only recommended when roads are dry.

Highway 20 Access Road can be reached by traveling 43 miles east of Burns on Highway 20 to where the Malheur River crosses Highway 20. The access road is located ¼ mile east of the river crossing near the county gravel pit on the south side of the highway. It is a crude two-track BLM side road that is not maintained and is seldom used by the public

or staff. Only 4x4 vehicles with high clearance are recommended for use on this road. Due to the infrequent use and roughness, the road is generally recreated every year by the first user in spring (generally locals, BLM or department staff). This is the only access to the northern section of the wildlife area.

Shurtz Field Access Road can be reached by traveling 39 miles east of Burns on Highway 20 to its intersection with County Road 311 (also known as the Warm Springs Access Road). From Highway 20, travel four miles south on County Road 311 (Warm Springs Access Road); then head east five miles on the Shurtz Field Road to the wildlife area. The road is a two-track side road that is in good condition and may be accessed by average 4x4 vehicles. Travel is only recommended when roads are dry.

Pg. 33 Rationale for Objective 2.1 was re-written to improve clarity:

Prior to 1977, riparian habitat within the Malheur River Tract was degraded by 80 or more years of intense livestock grazing. Reduction and regulation of livestock grazing in the Malheur River Tract has improved the vegetative component of riparian areas thereby reducing potential for runoff into the Malheur River. Riparian conditions in the Malheur River Tract have also improved through the use of fencing to prevent cattle grazing in selected areas. The portion of the Malheur River which passes through the Malheur River Tract shows a positive return of riparian vegetation along the river channel due to the control of cattle grazing in riparian areas.

In the Riverside Tract improvements to riparian habitat have not been as dramatic due to the rough terrain which has limited the department's ability to fence cattle out of the streamside corridor. Through this plan the department intends to work closely with the the BLM and appropriate permittees to manage cattle grazing consistent with improved riparian health in the Riverside Tract of RWA.

Pg. 35, rewrote Rationale for Objective 3.1:

Annual maintenance and operation of RWA is funded entirely by hunter dollars through the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman Robertson) (75%) and hunting license receipts (25%). Hunting is the major public activity on the area during fall and winter months and, constitutes the largest annual recreational use. Department staff are committed to providing fish and wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities for the citizens of Oregon in the form of dispersed, non-motorized activities. **Currently, camping is not allowed on RWA due to the threat of wildfire, as well as lack of facilities and staff to monitor camping use. Through this plan the department intends to develop a recreational use plan to explore development of boater access sites and feasibility of providing primitive camp sites once funding and staffing are available.** Staff will continue to improve access and opportunities by providing quality fish and wildlife habitat and information on the wildlife area. **Improved signage is needed to identify access roads into both the Riverside and Malheur River Tracts. Currently, there are no signs on site identifying the Highway 20, Shurtz Field, Upton Mountain and Riverside Headquarters access roads to RWA.**

Public use of RWA will be monitored by department staff and/or OSP to make sure all rules and regulations are followed.

Pg. 36, Strategy 4. Maintain and improve developments including all parking areas, access roads and informational signs (including signs identifying locations of access roads).