

**Jesse McCarty**  
Entiat Ranger District  
2108 Entiat Way  
Entiat, WA 98822

October 17, 2014

Dear Rocky Reach Wildlife Forum:

The summer of 2014 has yet again brought large wildfires within the Rocky Reach Wildlife Area (RRWA). Much of the RRWA on the Chelan County side of Rocky Reach Reservoir has been impacted by wildfires in the last four years. The 2010 Swakane fire burned more than 14,000 acres, the 2012 Byrd fire burned more than 14,000 acres, and the 2014 Mills Canyon fire burned more than 22,000 acres across US Forest Service, US Bureau of Land Management, and Department of Fish and Wildlife lands. Dalmatian toadflax and diffuse knapweed are already sprouting in the recently burned areas. These noxious weeds compete with native vegetation for resources and ultimately reduce the available forage for wildlife species inhabiting the project area.

It is typical to hand seed bulldozer- and hand-lines in the fall prior to snow fall to stabilize the soils that have been disturbed and rehabilitate disturbance areas to combat noxious weed infestations. Native grass seeds have been gathered from the Tenas George area in past years and propagated for just such a wildfire. However, the extent of seeding required is very likely to exhaust the current seed stock. It is expected that only 100 pounds maybe seeded with what remains of the propagated seed in noxious weed sites.

For the 2015 Rocky Reach Wildlife Forum (RRWF) Integrated Terrestrial Invasive Plant Control Plan (Chelan PUD 2012) project, I propose hand seeding at a rate of 4-6 pounds of native seed per acre in the RRWA at known noxious weed infested sites on public land within the perimeter of the Mills Canyon fire. This seeding would be done in the fall of 2014, in conjunction with the seeding of bulldozer- or hand-lines by US Forest Service district personnel. The quantity of seed purchased would be replaced by the 2015 RRWF Integrated Terrestrial Invasive Plant Control Plan project funds and labor will be matched by the US Forest Service.

Seeding some of the weedy areas with native grass seed may provide competition for noxious weeds that otherwise may not exist. However, weeds will still be an issue in the burn area particularly in the first year or two. The RRWF has agreed that releasing Bio-control agents is an effective method in combating infestations of noxious weeds. The recent wildfire may have disturbed or destroyed the sites the control insects where inhabiting or the individual control insects directly. Therefore, I propose the Integrated Terrestrial Invasive Plant Control Plan project for 2015 include the release of biological control agents, Knapweed seedhead weevil (*Larinus minutus*), Stem-mining Weevil (*Mecinus jathinus*), and Large knapweed root weevil (*Cyphocleonus achates*) or other USDA approved biological control agents where the RRWA and the Mills Canyon fire perimeter overlap. This would be accomplished by the Washington State University Chelan/Douglas County Extension with project manager Dale Whaley as has been done in past years.

#### PROPOSED BUDGET

The seed that will be used is propagated from Benson Farms, Inc. with local biotypes at \$13-20 per pound. It is estimated that at \$20/lb for 100 lbs is \$2,000 for seed replacement of existing seed used in this project. The remainder of the 2015 Weed funds should be used to enter into a contract to collect and release bio-control agents *Larinus minutes*, *Mecinus jathinus*, and *Cyphocleonus achates* or other appropriate USDA approved biological control agents at an amount not to exceed 18,000. In total, the RRWF Integrated Noxious Weed Control plan for 2015 would not exceed \$20,000.

Chelan PUD will pay up to \$2,000 to Benson Farms Inc. for seed propagation and harvest to replace existing seed used under this project proposal.

Chelan PUD will negotiate a contract with the WSU extension not to exceed \$18,000 to collect and distribute biological control agents on public land. Priority will be given to those areas within the RRWA that overlap the Mills Canyon Fire area. Any additional releases would occur on public land between the Entiat River and Knapp tunnel to supplement the 2013 RRWF weed control project (Figure 1).

The Rocky Reach Wildlife Forum will review complete project reports and approve payment of project costs with Rocky Reach Wildlife weed control funds.

#### CLOSING

In past years, the Integrated Noxious Weed Plan has focused on the bio-control agent releases to reduce or halt the spread of noxious weeds. This year's wildfires have created an opportunity to take another approach to succeed in the campaign against weeds.

Sincerely,

**Jesse McCarty**  
*Entiat/Chelan District Wildlife Biologist*  
*US Forest Service*

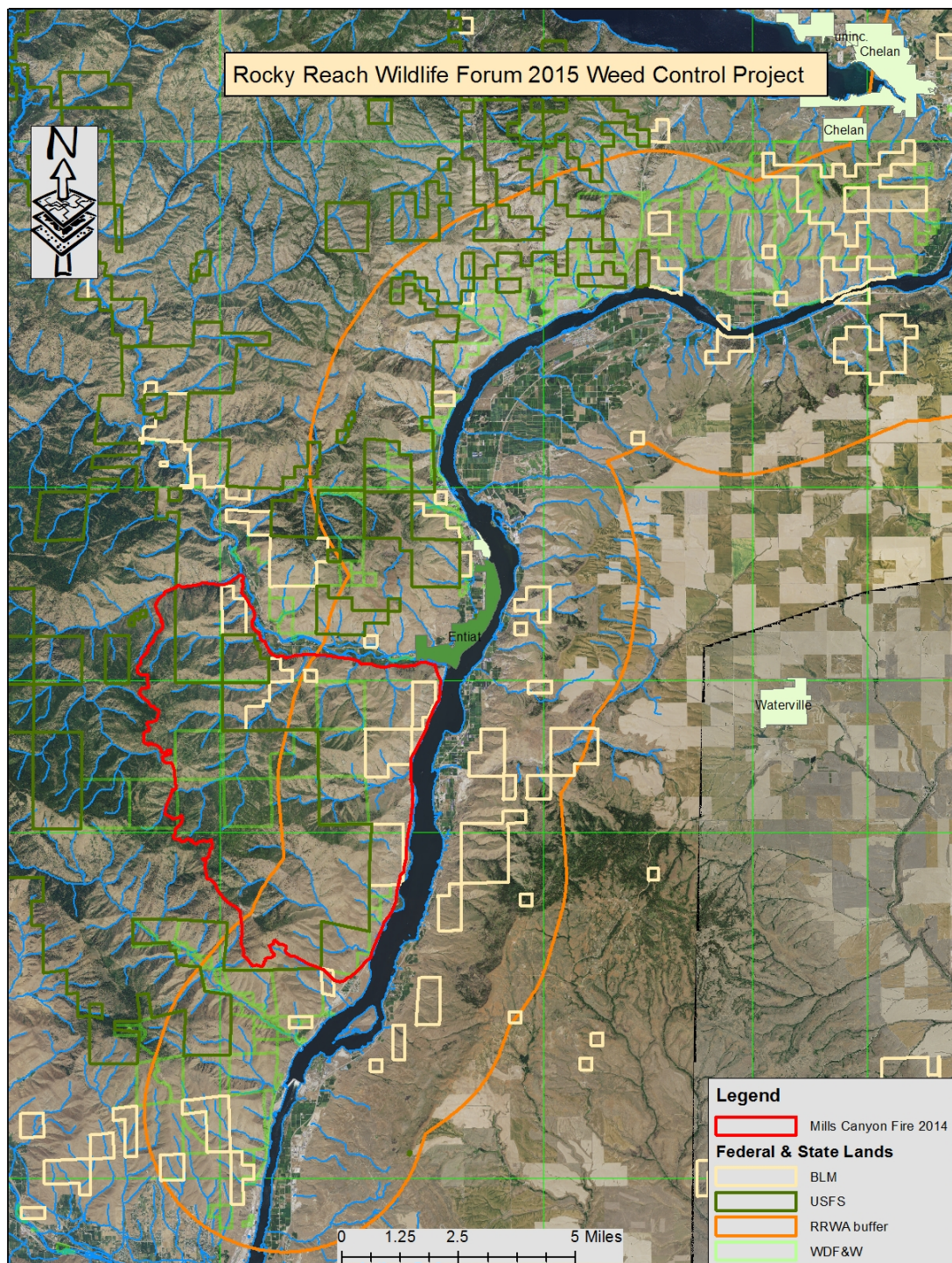


Figure 1. Rocky Reach Wildlife Area (RRWA) and Mills Canyon Fire perimeter where release of biological controls will occur.

## Rocky Reach Wildlife Forum (RRWF) Meeting Minutes

Date: January 13, 2015  
Time: 9:00 pm – 12:00 pm  
Location: Chelan PUD Headquarters, Wenatchee, WA  
1st Floor Conference Room

Call in number: (509)661-4844, Password is 4000.

Meeting called by: Von Pope, Chelan PUD

Type of meeting: RRWF Meeting

Note taker: Kelly Cordell-Stine

### *Representatives*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
Ellis, Erik	BLM	(509) 665-2100	edellis@blm.gov
Matt Kerec (via phone)	ALCOA	(412) 553-4361	matthew.kerec@alcoa.com
Lewis, Steve	USFWS	(509) 665-3508 x14	stephen_lewis@fws.gov
Pope, Von	Chelan PUD	(509) 661-4625	von.pope@chelanpud.org
Volsen, Dave	WDFW	(509) 663-9764	volsedpv@dfw.wa.gov

### *Participants*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
McCarty, Jesse	USDA-FS	(509) 784-4630	jmccarty@fs.fed.us
Cordell-Stine, Kelly	Chelan PUD	(509) 661-4762	kelly.cordell-stine@chelanpud.org
Fox, Ron	WDFW	(509) 665-3383	ron.fox@dfw.wa.gov
Ranne, Brigitte	USDA-FS	(509) 784-1511	branne@fs.fed.us

Meeting Purpose: Meeting of the Rocky Reach Wildlife Forum to continue Rocky Reach license implementation

### Minutes

Von Pope welcomed everyone to the Rocky Reach Wildlife (RRWF) meeting and informed the group that there would be voice recording for the purpose of note-taking.

Members and Participants present introduced themselves; Matt Kerec participated via the conference line.

Von reviewed the agenda; it was noted that the agenda should read “review 10/1/2014 meeting minutes” instead of “11/1/2015.”

Von reviewed the meeting minutes from 10/1/2014. No comments had been received and these meeting minutes were finalized on 10/21/2014. Von reviewed the action items from the 10/1/2014 meeting.

### **2015 Weed Control Proposal:**

Von reviewed the proposal submitted by the USFS for 2015 weed control funds through the Integrated Terrestrial Invasive Plant Control Plan (ITIPCP). Thus far, 1 day of labor has been spent on the project by the USFS. Von will work with Jerry Benson (BFI Native Seeds) to obtain invoices for replenishment of the native grass seed. The seed consists of a mix of primarily bluebunch wheatgrass and Sandberg’s bluegrass (collected in the Tenas George



vicinity, located within the RRWA). Von also reviewed the proposal to again release biological controls within the Mills Canyon fire area in Chelan County to combat weeds. One comment was made to change a “#” to a “\$” within the proposed budget section. No other comments were received, and the RRWF members voted unanimously to approve the 2015 weed control proposal submitted by the USFS. The RRWF will receive and vote to approve an invoice for this work during Fall of 2015.

#### **2010-2014 DRAFT 5-Year Summary:**

The 2010-2014 DRAFT 5-Year Summary of the Rocky Reach Wildlife Habitat Management Plan (RRWHMP) was reviewed, and a discussion regarding timeline for agency input/comment, review, and submittal of the summary ensued. Von is requesting feedback from agencies regarding their specific sections, as there may be information not included on the variance forms for the work completed through the end of 2014 included in the 5-Year Summary. The Summary only covers work completed through the end of 12/31/2014, as the RRWF needs to submit a new Plan to be able to allow time of approval by the FERC, in order to have a budget so that new payment agreements can be drafted prior to expiration of the existing payment agreements (exp. 12/31/2015). The next 5-Year Summary for work completed under the new plan (2016-2020) will also include any work that was conducted during 2015 under the old Plan.

Von reminded the RRWF that there is a required 30-day review period for the RRWF following a final draft and prior to submittal of a Final document to the FERC. Von stated that the RRWF is behind the original deadline the RRWF had set (January 1) for the DRAFT 5-Year Summary and the new 5-Year Plan, and the RRWF needed to decide how to proceed:

Option 1--make a goal of agency to have all agencies input for both the 5-Year Summary and the new 5-Year Plan by January 30 and submit a draft for RRWF comment by mid to late February 2015 in order to submit a Final document to the FERC no later than March 31, 2015.

Option 2--wait until September 2015 to submit the 5-Year Summary and new Plan, but because the approval time from FERC can be approximately 6-9 months, the RRWF runs the risk of going on into 2016 with the current Plan, requiring payment agreement modifications (which will have to be done for any work under current Plan beyond 12/31/2015, as they expire) and necessitating a request for an extension from FERC. RRWF members indicated that the January 30 timeline for agency comment is adequate, and should be pursued.

Agency input and comment are requested for the entire 5-Year Summary, but more specifically, Section 2. If all looks well, Von would like to know that information. It is requested that any updates to Tables retain the format presented in the original Plan. For both the USFS and the BLM sections of the DRAFT 5-Year Summary, tables, maps, and some sections of text require little review and/or modification. For WDFW, Von requested some time be set aside so that he and Ron Fox may work through some of the tables and text so as to adequately describe actions taken under the current Plan for the DRAFT 5-Year Summary. Ron will provide Lat/Long coordinates for guzzler/spring improvements and feeders such that Von can append the current figures in the DRAFT Five-Year Summary. Von will also add the recent fire overlays to the current figures in the DRAFT Five-Year Summary. Von still needs the variance forms for work completed by WDFW in November and December of 2014.

Some discussion regarding Sun Cove easement requirement. CCPUD owns the property and it is within the project boundary, so no easement was necessary. Dave Volsen inquired whether there were any current impacts from neighboring Sun Cove community and about any existing habitat management requirements (no requirements currently). Von stated that, currently there is no requirement for habitat quality assessment on the parcel. The Sun Cove community has been pushing for a developed trail system on the parcel, but Chelan PUD requires a taxing

authority as a permittee, and Douglas County is uninterested. The property does have disburbed beach access, and it is public property, so people do use it, but to what extent is currently unknown at this time.

Some discussion about other license requirements for habitat quality, management, and survey requirements ensued. None currently exist within Rocky Reach license, but one habitat management requirement exists under the RI license. Dave inquired why some of the wildlife work that CCPUD and WDFW collaborate on at times is not wrapped up as a wildlife assessment for the FERC. Von clarified the raptor nest monitoring surveys, marmot and beaver trapping, and other wildlife projects that CCPUD does are not license requirements but do support CCPUD's Avian Protection Plan (APP) and other permits for facility maintenance. Much of the avian monitoring conducted by CCPUD is mostly in support of preventative maintenance for osprey issues on Transmission and Distribution lines, which are separate assets from the operation and maintenance of the RR Project and are not FERC-required activities with ties to any Licenses for the hydros. Only bald eagle nesting and wintering surveys and goose nest monitoring are required by the RRWF under the RRWHMP in the RR License.

The current RRWHMP wildlife survey activities were essentially carried over from historic wildlife assessment activities. No additional issues or management concerns were identified by the agencies for negotiation in the new license and/or the resulting RRWHMP for 2010-2014. The annual budgeted amount of \$10,500 (or equivalent man-days) is available for this monitoring effort. Von read the Original Settlement Agreement language, which indicates the intent of the funding is to survey and monitor TES species on a periodic schedule as directed by the RRWF. Techniques and schedules for such monitoring will be to be decided by the RRWF every 5 years for the RRWHMP. CCPUD is to report the results of these surveys annually to the RRWHMP, and every 5 years to the FERC.

Dave inquired if FERC had any requirements to report or assess impacts of the project on wildlife and habitat, and Von reiterated that the necessary wildlife studies to assess potential impacts as a result of the operation and maintenance of the RR pool were completed during the relicensing effort in the late 1990's-early 2000's, and no wildlife impacts were identified. (Ute ladies' tresses, however, were identified for potential impacts). Thus, during license negotiations the Natural Resources Technical Group decided to set aside wildlife monitoring dollars for future efforts as a side agreement. The FERC separated the TES plant monitoring (*Spiranthes*) and made it into a separate license Article in the new License.

Von indicated that now is the time for the RRWF to change the wildlife survey component of the new 5-year plan as the agencies see fit. In the DRAFT 5-Year Summary, Von indicated that CCPUD is proposing a reduction in the bald eagle winter survey effort, reducing the number of surveys from 5 to 1 (to coincide with the national mid-winter count). Dave stated that WDFW is still interested in eagle and goose data due to lead poisoning concerns and area population trends, but that he sees potential for reducing some survey effort for those species and including wildlife surveys for other species (i.e., deer, golden eagles, reptiles, amphibians, and arthropods). Dave stated that he will confer with WDFW staff to identify needs. Dave will also visit with the new waterfowl biologist. Dave mentioned that it may be good to include long-term data trends in the graphs along with the 5-Year Summary data to support a proposed reduction in some wildlife survey effort going forward in the new Plan, but will review the Wildlife Survey data in the DRAFT 5-Year Summary.

Von reiterated that CCPUD will need to receive comments from agencies regarding wildlife surveys via a proposal to be included in the 2016-2020 Plan. The new goal is to have the new Plan submitted to the FERC by late March 2015. If we get a final draft by mid-February such that it can be sent out for RRWF review, then it is possible to meet that deadline.

Von noted that the \$10,500 budgeted annually is adjusted for inflation. During the 2010-2014 Plan, budget

numbers were not set up to track expenses accrued aside from labor (i.e., fuel, boat costs). As a result, it is unknown at this time if the funds are under spent or overspent for the work under the first Plan. Going forward, Von has changed work orders to be more specific to be able to better budget to the annual amount.

Dave inquired as to whether it would be a good approach for the Forum to vote on Wildlife survey activities on an annual basis, similar to how project funds are disbursed for weed control projects under the ITIPCP. Von stated that it should be alright with FERC, and if the RRWF wanted to pursue that approach, then language similar to the ITIPCP should be included in the new Plan. Dave inquired whether they would need to have necessary protocols in place for the new Plan, and Von indicated that was not necessary. It is possible that if the wildlife survey actions were being held up by the development of a survey protocol, the Wildlife Survey proposals could be submitted at a later date, requiring submission of a section revision and subsequent FERC approval (takes about 5 months). However, wildlife survey protocols do not need to be submitted the new Plan rather it could be left up to the RRWF to propose and approve wildlife surveys annually.

Again, a discussion of CCPUD's APP and raptor nest survey efforts ensued. CCPUD's raptor nest survey efforts are primarily to identify potential issues (especially in regards to osprey nests on distribution lines) such that CCPUD can be proactive in addressing issues as they may pertain to take under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The intent of the monitoring is not primarily focused on productivity data, it is based on occupancy and proximity to CCPUD's electric distribution system.

Von wrapped up discussion of the DRAFT 5-Year Summary eagle and goose surveys. Von requested that if the RRWF had questions regarding the data presented, to please comment so that it can be addressed for the final. Dave inquired as to how long data has been collected for geese along RR, and commented that it would be good to include error bars on summary graphs for the long term data.

#### **2016-2020 New Plan discussion:**

CCPUD proposes to reduce the winter eagle survey count to one effort during the historic peak count, to coincide with the National winter eagle count (January). The bald eagle has been delisted, and the entities (USGS, ACOE) that coordinate and summarize data for the National mid-winter bald eagle survey have notified participants that funding for the MOA for the agencies includes one last trend analysis (30-yr, 1986-2015), following the January 2015 eagle survey, then sunsets in April 2017.

Von used the BLM's Fire Response section as an example of how the other agencies might format some of their projects in developing the 2016-2020 Plan. It is suggested that instead of listing the projects as "contingency projects," agencies should instead list projects as a response to fire (as it has frequently impacted the project area recently). The FERC does not prefer to see contingency projects listed, and this will help to build flexibility into the Plan when and if catastrophic habitat change occurs within the project area.

Von would like to have the 2016-2020 New Plan comments in by February 1, so that CCPUD can get a draft out for RRWF review by mid-February (along with the DRAFT 5-Year Summary). January 30 is a Friday, and the RRWF decided to have comments in on that date for both the DRAFT 5-Year Summary and the 2016-2020 New Plan. Von will modify Sections 6 and 7 using the language from the ITIPCP as a template to build in flexibility for annual wildlife surveys, similar to the RRWF weed control activities under the ITIPCP.

**Action Items**

- Fix typo on meeting agenda for 1/13/2015 to read “review 10/1/2014 meeting minutes” instead of “11/1/2015.”
- BLM and USFS to review maps in both the DRAFT 5-Y Summary and the 2016-2020 Plan, and send Von updates as necessary
- Fix the “#” typo to a “\$” in the 2015 Weed Control Proposal
- Von will contact Jerry Benson of BFI Native seeds to obtain invoices for the \$2,000 worth of seed to be replenished under the 2015 Weed Control Proposal, and ensure to get the specific mix requested by the USFS.
- Ron to get lat/long coordinates to Von
- Von will import the lat/long coordinates from WDFW for guzzlers, spring improvements, and feeders into the figures for the WDFW sections of the DRAFT 5-Year Summary.
- Von will also add the fire overlays to all map figures in the DRAFT 5-Year Summary.
- Comments due to DRAFT 5-Year Summary on January 30, 2015
- Proposals and edits due to the 2016-2020 New Plan January 30, 2015
- BLM Table 2 needs to be updated in 2016-2020 New Plan
- Von to add language from ITIPCP to the 2016-2020 New Plan in Sections 6 and 7 to use as a basis for the annual wildlife survey plans (RRWF-directed activities) and send out to the RRWF by 1/14/2015 to assist agencies in formulating proposals.
- Both the DRAFT 5-Year Summary and the 2016-2020 New Plan will be sent out to the RRWF for review in mid-February.