

CHAPTER 9: WILDLIFE HABITAT PLAN

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Chelan PUD initiated the alternative relicensing process for the Lake Chelan Project in 1998, and for the Rocky Reach Project in 1999. A Natural Sciences Working Group (NSWG) was then established for each Project. The NSWG for the Lake Chelan Project consisted of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA Forest Service), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NOAA Fisheries, WA Department of Ecology (WDOE), WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and other interested Parties. The Rocky Reach NSWG consisted of same organizations, except for the Lake Chelan Sportsman's Association (LCSA), People for Lake Chelan (PFLC), and the City of Chelan, and includes the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The NSWGs decided that the wildlife resources associated with the two Projects should be managed on a coordinated basis. Accordingly, they prepared a comprehensive Wildlife Habitat Plan (WHP), now contained in this Chapter, to address the impacts of the Projects on wildlife resources.

Short-term and long-term wildlife habitat goals associated with both Projects are included in the WHP. It is intended to encourage a high degree of flexibility for funding resource needs within and between the two Projects, particularly since migrating wildlife are not confined to one Project Area. Moreover, Chelan PUD and the wildlife management agencies recognize that future needs of the wildlife resources may be difficult to predict. Therefore, a Lake Chelan Wildlife Forum (LCWF) will be established pursuant to section 18 of the Agreement. The LCWF is intended to provide recommendations to the relevant management agencies about the direction of the WHP, based on the highest needs and best use of funds in response to a crisis or other specific resource issue. The members of the LCWF are described in section 4 of this Chapter.

State lands included in the WHP are those of the WDFW and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Federal lands include those of the USDA Forest Service and the BLM. The primary areas of concern include: 1) public lands in Chelan County within approximately 6 miles of Rocky Reach Reservoir (including WDFW's Swakane, Entiat, and Chelan Butte Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)); 2) USDA Forest Service lands in the Lake Chelan Basin between the lake and the 3500 ft elevation; and 3) NPS lands in the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area (see Chapter 4). The LCWF will have the flexibility to recommend undertaking projects beyond these boundaries when it is demonstrated that there is an important wildlife/habitat link to primary areas (e.g., migration corridor, limiting factor).

The Lake Chelan Project license application was submitted to the FERC in March of 2002. As part of the Lake Chelan Project relicensing proceeding, Chelan PUD shall provide funding for high priority items for the Lake Chelan basin, as detailed in section 4.1 of this Chapter. Specific funding and priorities associated with the Rocky Reach Project will be determined in that licensing proceeding. The Rocky Reach Project application is due in June 2004.

SECTION 2: WILDLIFE HABITAT PLAN GOALS

Chelan PUD intends that funds allocated under the WHP will be expended on resources that are most valuable to wildlife and most compatible with wildlife land use in Chelan County. Those lands will include key habitat types, migration corridors, and shrub steppe, grassland, and riparian/wetland habitats that offer restoration or improvement opportunities. The primary goal of the WHP is to enhance wildlife habitat within portions of Chelan County bordering Rocky Reach Reservoir and Lake Chelan to:

1. Restore, maintain, or improve ecological quality and diversity;
2. Restore, maintain, or increase habitat for key indicator wildlife species; and
3. Provide for public use compatible with the ecological quality, diversity, and carrying capacity for key wildlife species goals.

Primary wildlife indicator species for purpose of the WHP include mule deer and bighorn sheep; threatened, endangered, sensitive, species of concern, or survey and management species; and riparian and wetland indicator bird and amphibian species.

SECTION 3: POTENTIAL HABITAT AND WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

To meet the goals summarized in section 2, Chelan PUD and the wildlife management agencies that participated in development of this plan (WDFW, USDA Forest Service, BLM, and USFWS) anticipate that habitat and wildlife enhancement activities could include, but are not limited to, the general management recommendations provided below. Several of these items are addressed through the Lake Chelan relicensing proceeding (section 4.1), while others may be funded through the Rocky Reach Project relicensing proceeding (section 4.2). Detailed protection, mitigation and enhancement measures for Rocky Reach will be developed in 2003. A potential enhancement alternative described below that is not specifically funded as an item under either relicensing may be a candidate to receive funds redirected by the LCWF, in accordance with section 18 of the Agreement.

3.1 Range

- Identify the needs and habitat types that address the biology of each of the indicator or key species.
- Use existing habitat inventories, to the extent possible, to guide habitat management on public lands in Chelan County adjacent to Rocky Reach Reservoir and Lake Chelan.
- Re-establish shrub steppe habitat and/or herbaceous cover in present agricultural fields and other suitable sites.

- Monitor and control noxious weeds, and re-establish competitive permanent, native vegetative cover.
- Plant shrubs in steppe habitat.
- Develop additional deer winter range using native and fire resistant browse species.
- Apply fertilizer, prune, and/or use controlled burns to maximize forage production and palatability.

3.2 Agronomy

- Establish annual and perennial irrigated wildlife plantings in Swakane Canyon.
- Establish dry-land wildlife/cover plots in suitable areas.

3.3 Tree and Shrub Plantings

- Plant shrub and trees to develop riparian strips, wetland areas, shorelines, and lands in irrigated and sub-irrigated areas.
- Establish corridors of evergreen trees to provide large mammal travel lanes and thermal cover.

3.4 Erosion Control

- Construct a series of erosion control structures in selected canyons.
- Plant herbaceous and woody vegetation in sediment basins and sub-irrigated areas associated with these structures.

3.5 Water Developments

- Optimize availability of water from springs and streams, improve developed springs, and develop new springs.
- Install water guzzlers where needed.
- Replace livestock tanks with wildlife watering basins.
- Maximize pond construction and water storage throughout the area to create wetlands, riparian habitat, and provide water for wildlife use, fire fighting, irrigation, and noxious weed control at strategic locations.

3.6 Irrigation

- Maximize irrigation water availability in Swakane Canyon by improving existing irrigation system.
- Develop irrigation systems at other locations.

3.7 Wildlife Feeding

- Optimize winter deer and bird feeder distribution throughout the area, as needed.
- Replace, repair, and or modify existing feeders.
- Provide and maintain wildlife feeders during severe winters as needed.

3.8 Nesting and Raptor Perching Structures

- Provide artificial nesting structures throughout the area, as needed.
- Increase kestrel population with nest boxes to control rodent population, especially in newly seeded areas.

- Provide raptor perch structures to control rodent population in newly seeded areas.
- Provide brush piles to offer dense escape cover during riparian habitat development stage.

3.9 Wildlife Re-establishment

- Re-introduce native wildlife that no longer exist in area vicinity (e.g., sharp-tailed grouse) or exist in low numbers.
- Transplant wildlife within an area as determined desirable.

3.10 Habitat Connectivity

- Restore, enhance, maintain, or protect habitat or key species corridors that provide landscape linkages, especially migration corridors.

3.11 Ecosystem Processes

- Provide for various ecological processes (fire, riparian large woody debris jams, cavities) that provide various “renewal” age classes, site condition changes, or development of natural features beneficial to wildlife.

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTATION

Chelan PUD shall provide funding per section 4.1.1 of this Chapter. To ensure better comprehensive assessment of short and long term wildlife habitat activities and needs, the LCWF will meet at least annually to coordinate efforts, and to make recommendations regarding the expenditure of funds and other resources. The work of the LCWF will be guided by criteria that it establishes in its initial meeting or meetings. Such criteria may include the following:

- Projects should address wildlife concerns on lands lying within the Lake Chelan basin or approximately within 6 miles west of Rocky Reach Reservoir.
- The WHP could address lands outside this general Project Area if the LCWF determines that those outside lands are directly related to the Project Area lands.
- Projects must be on publicly owned lands or privately-owned lands with conservation easements.
- Projects will only occur on lands for which livestock grazing control is available.
- Projects must have a responsible lead agency (federal, state or local organization).
- Projects must incorporate sound conservation and management principles.
- Habitat projects should be self-sustaining (e.g., not cultivated crops).
- The completed project should result in significant benefit to wildlife habitat or populations.
- Project results should be measurable and monitored for effectiveness.
- Project funding for materials, equipment, supplies, contracted services, etc. will be at 100 percent.
- Projects should meet or move toward goals described in the WHP.
- Wages, benefits, and expenses for labor required to address WHP goals.

WHP funds shall not be spent on projects that are inconsistent with the management plans of the affected state and federal land managers, or on lands outside the Project Area that are not directly related to the Project Area lands.

It is anticipated that in some years agencies could pool resources for mutually beneficial projects. Usually, resources would be spent on both state and federal lands, but in varying proportions each year. The primary goal of the LCWF should be to ensure that funds are spent where they will best meet goals of the WHP.

4.1 Lake Chelan Wildlife Measures

4.1.1 Wildlife Habitat Restoration

(a) **Wildlife Habitat Restoration.** (1) Chelan PUD shall make available \$220,000 to the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, for the acquisition of conservation easements in perpetuity on privately-owned lands located on the north shore of Lake Chelan. For purposes of this Chapter, all references to the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust refer to the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust or another organization selected pursuant to paragraph (a)(6) of Proposed License Article 9. The goal is to secure easements on 400 acres of land, and priority shall be given to easements on lands between elevations 1,100 and 1,400 ft.

(2) Chelan PUD shall make available additional funding of up to 15 percent of the cost of easement acquisition (not to exceed \$33,000) to the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, for fees associated with easement acquisition. Associated fees include administrative costs, appraisals, baseline inventories, escrow fees, hazardous substance assessments, legal fees, recording fees, stewardship fees, surveys, and fees relating to title reports and insurance.

(3) Chelan PUD shall make available \$32,000 to the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, for shrub-steppe/mule deer winter-range habitat restoration efforts on the lands, if any, for which an easement is acquired under paragraph (a)(1) of this subsection. Beyond making the \$32,000 available, Chelan PUD shall have no responsibility for the success of the restoration efforts to be carried out by the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, in coordination with WDFW. In its contract with the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, Chelan PUD shall require the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust to coordinate with WDFW in order to assure the highest likelihood of habitat restoration success.

(4) Chelan PUD and WDFW recognize the uncertainty of acquiring conservation easements on 400 acres, due to the variability of landowner participation. If less than 400 acres of conservation easements can be acquired, the funds remaining available under paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(3) of this subsection shall be made available by Chelan PUD to WDFW for habitat restoration within the Chelan basin.

(5) If easements on 400 acres of land can be acquired for less than the \$220,000 made available under paragraph (a)(1) of this subsection, 50 percent of any funds remaining available shall become available to WDFW for habitat restoration within the Chelan basin, and 50 percent of the funds remaining available shall no longer be available.

(6) To implement this section, Chelan PUD shall enter into a contract with the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust or another organization that Chelan PUD and WDFW find suitable. The contract shall provide that any easements under (a)(1) be acquired and maintained by the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust or other organization. If the organization with whom Chelan PUD initially contracts either dissolves or becomes unsuitable to Chelan PUD and WDFW, Chelan PUD shall enter into a contract with another organization that Chelan PUD and WDFW find suitable.

4.1.2 Upland Habitat Improvements

(b) **Upland Habitat Improvements.** (1) Chelan PUD shall make available to the USDA Forest Service \$20,000 per year during the term of the New License, and any subsequent annual licenses, for habitat and wildlife enhancement measures identified in section 3 of this Chapter.

(2) Chelan PUD shall make available to the USDA Forest Service \$5,000 per year for years one through three of the New License for noxious weed control at Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) plant locations.

(3) Chelan PUD, in coordination with WDFW, shall continue to conduct wildlife surveys similar to those conducted during the second FERC license for the Project, maintain upland bird feeders, and/or conduct habitat improvement projects for a cost not to exceed \$10,000 per year during the term of the New License, and any subsequent annual licenses. Chelan PUD shall provide an annual wildlife survey report to WDFW.

4.1.3 Riparian Habitat Improvements

(c) **Riparian Habitat Improvements.** (1) Chelan PUD shall make available to the NPS \$20,000 per year for the first five years of the New License, then \$10,000 per year for the remainder of the New License term, and any subsequent annual licenses, for Stehekin area habitat improvements.

(2) Chelan PUD shall make available:

- (A) \$50,000 to the USDA Forest Service to enhance riparian habitat in the Chelan basin;
- (B) \$50,000 to the NPS to enhance riparian habitat in the Chelan basin; and
- (C) \$35,000 to the WDFW to enhance habitat in the Chelan basin.

(d) **Transferability of Funds.** Upon the recommendation of the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust to the WDFW, and with the concurrence of WDFW, or upon the initiative of WDFW, Chelan PUD shall transfer available funds among paragraphs (a)(1), (a)(3), and (c)(2)(C) of section 4. If paragraph (a)(5) is applicable, only 50 percent of the remaining (a)(1) funds shall be transferred, and 50 percent of the remaining (a)(1) funds shall no longer be available.

4.2 Rocky Reach Wildlife Measures

This section of the Wildlife Habitat Plan will be developed in 2003 through the Rocky Reach relicensing process.

Ownership Retention. Chelan PUD shall retain ownership of, and shall take no action to significantly impact current condition of, Chelan PUD properties near Sun Cove (Sun Cove, Brays/Bairds landing/Bird Canyon), until an agreement is reached regarding a new Rocky Reach

Hydroelectric Project license, or until a New License is issued for that Project, whichever comes first. For the purpose of preserving the existing condition of the property, Chelan PUD will provide signage to indicate Chelan PUD ownership of the properties.