

SNOW PEAK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

IDAHO PANHANDLE
NATIONAL FOREST

IDAHO DEPARTMENT
OF FISH AND GAME

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this agreement is to promote joint management of 12,000 acres of Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) lands and 20,000 acres of National Forest lands in the Snow Peak-Canyon Creek area of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF). The IDFG received title to the property from Plum Creek Timber Corporation in 1989 through a complex exchange. The area now consists of a checkerboard ownership of State and National Forest lands (Figure 1). The objective of this plan is to manage the area for multiple use, with wildlife management receiving highest priority.

LOCATION

The Snow Peak Wildlife Management Area (WMA) lies in the Little North Fork of the Clearwater River drainage. The area includes the east side of Spotted Louis Creek and all of Canyon Creek and its tributaries including Caribou, Buck, Badger, Triple, Papoose, Bathtub and Lightning Creeks. Snow Peak (6,760 ft.), the most prominent landmark, is 18 airline miles southeast of Avery, Idaho.

The area to be jointly managed is delineated on the east and north by the Avery-Timber Creek Road (USFS Road #201); Spotted Louis Creek on the north and west the Little North Fork of the Clearwater River on the west; and USFS Trail #40 and USFS Road #201 on the south. The area is primarily roadless lying due north of and contiguous to the Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area.

(insert map here)

CLIMATE

Annual Precipitation in the WMA averages 40 inches with approximately 60 percent in the form of snow. In the summer, the average daily temperature is 64° F with a range from 40° F to 100° F. In the winter, the average daily temperature is 28° F with a range from -20° F to 40° F.

The first snowfall may come by mid-September in the upper elevations. The first permanent snow usually occurs in late October most years. Snow stays in the upper elevations generally until June. The lower elevations are usually snow free from March through October. Snow depths in the upper elevations may reach ten feet.

PHYSIOGRAPHY

Elevations in the WMA range from 2,300 feet at the mouth of Canyon Creek to just under 7,000 feet at the Snow Peak. Forty percent of the area lies over 5,000 feet. Most of the area is steep and broken with level ground found only on ridge tops. Slopes along the stream break usually exceed 50 percent while slopes of the general area vary from 30 to 40 percent.

SOIL AND MINERALS

The soils and landforms of this area are extremely variable. Both glaciated and residual soil landforms occur.

Glaciated landforms occur at the highest elevations and are on northerly aspects. Soils that have formed in the glacial till have little genetic development. They are also relatively infertile since they occur at high elevations where soil temperatures limit chemical and biological activity.

Residual landforms range from low to high elevations – 3,000 to 6,700 feet. Soils range from weakly weathered, relatively infertile to highly weathered, highly productive.

Surface erosion rates on the WMA are generally low under natural forested conditions. However, erosion rates can be elevated to moderate or high when roaded, tractor-logged or burned severely.

There are no known commercial deposits of minerals within the WMA.

VEGETATION

Forest habitat types identified are Douglas Fir-ninebark, Western Red Cedar-pachistima, Alpine Fir-pachistima, Mountain Hemlock-beargrass and Mountain Hemlock-menziesia (Daubenmire and Daubenmire, 1968). The existing diversity of habitat types is highly desirable for wildlife.

Much of the WMA was burned in 1910 and again in 1926. Portions of the burned areas are covered with conifers 60-65 years old. Pockets of mature conifers are found at the heads of those drainages missed by the fires. Low elevation, south-facing river breaks have scattered brush with only occasional groups of conifers.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES

The WMA contains excellent big game, small game and resident fish populations. This is primarily due to the terrain, remoteness, habitat diversity and the lack of road entry.

The WMA is included in the IDFG's Game Management Unit 9. Elk are the most sought after game species in the unit. Elk harvests for Unit 9 have been relatively stable for the last five years averaging 136 elk taken annually (Table 1). Hunter success rates for elk hunters average 15-20%. There are approximately 2,500 acres of elk and deer winter range in the WMA. The bulk of the winter range lies below 4,000 feet elevation on the south and west-facing slopes of Canyon Creek. Population dynamics information for elk have only recently been collected. The elk population estimate for all of Unit 9 calculated after the February 1991 elk sightability survey is 684 ± 162 .

An excellent population of mountain goats occurs in Unit 9 also. The bulk of the population is found in Canyon Creek and its tributaries on the south-facing slopes of Snow Peak. Smaller groups can also be found in Spotted Louis, Sawtooth and Foehl creeks. Aerial surveys of mountain goat populations on Snow Peak have been conducted frequently. The unit served as the State's sole source of transplant stock for many years. Over 150 goats have been trapped at the Snow Peak lookout tower and transplanted to other parts of Idaho, Colorado and Oregon. The most recent aerial survey of the unit was completed in March 1991 (Table 2).

Table 1. Five Year Average Annual Harvest Statistics For Big Game In Unit 9, 1985-1989.

Big Game Species	Average Harvest Estimate	Average Number Hunters	Average Number Hunter Days
Elk	136	654	4,948
Mule Deer	71	192	1,288
White-tailed Deer	35	97	599
Moose	2	2	10
Black Bear	15	No Data	No Data
Mountain Lion	1	No Data	No Data

Other big game animals commonly occurring in Unit 9 are mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, black bear and mountain lion. Average deer harvest estimates since 1985 are shown in Table 1. Population dynamics information collected of deer from the unit are inadequate due to small sample sizes. Moose, black bear and mountain lion harvest estimates are very low (Table 1).

Game birds in the WMA include all three species of native forest grouse-ruffed, blue and spruce grouse. Blue grouse are the most numerous and taken by hunters incidental to elk hunting.

There have been no systematic surveys of other mammals and birds in the WMA. Partial species lists for animals known to occur are found in Appendices I and II.

There are no known threatened or endangered animals or plants in the WMA. However, there have been documented wolf sightings within 15 miles of the WMA within the last ten years.

Table 2. Summary Of Mountain Goat Surveys In Unit 9 Since 1961.

Location	1961	1964	1965	1966	1971	1972	1976	1979	1981	1988	1991
Spotted Louis Creek- Hoodoo Peak	ND	2	3	1	3	ND	4	ND	4	12	7
Spotted Louis Point-- Culdesac Creek	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	4	2	ND	4	8	0
Canyon Creek--includes Triple, Lightning and Caribou Creeks	30	45	49	43	29	14	30	ND	52	28	16
Sawtooth Creek	25	13	10	13	4	9	8	ND	5	9	10
Mulligan's Hump- Larkins Creek	ND	0	1	0							
Foehl Creek	14	17	7	ND	ND	2	ND	ND	4	5	10
Totals	69	77	69	57	36	29	44	37	69	63	43

ND- No Data

FISH RESOURCES

The most prominent streams in the WMA are the Little North Fork of the Clearwater River, Canyon, Buck and Papoose Creeks. Smaller streams include Spotted Louis, Triple, Lightning, Caribou and Bathtub creeks.

Native game fish in the WMA include westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, and bull trout. Anadromous steelhead trout were once native to the drainage but were once native to the drainage but were eliminated by the construction of Dworshak Dam in the early 1970's.

Fish habitat in the WMA is in excellent condition and provides the necessary diversity for all life stages of fish. Both resident and fluvial populations of fish are present. Fluvial fish utilize tributaries for spawning and juvenile rearing and spend their adult life in the mainstream of the Little North Fork of the Clearwater. Resident fish spend their entire lives in tributaries.

Extensive reaches of Canyon and Spotted Louis creeks contain high quality spawning habitat. In addition to providing high quality rearing and spawning habitat, Canyon Creek also contributes to flow stability and the excellent water quality of the Little North Fork.

Although fish populations currently are very healthy, the abundance of fish is relatively low in spite of the pristine nature of the area. The low productivity of the water is due to the geology of the area, a mixture of granitic soils results in high natural levels of fine sediment in streams. The drainage is also subject to high runoff from both winter rain-on-snow events, spring and summer rains and spring snow melt. Protection of stream habitat conditions and limiting angler harvest will be necessary to maintain fish populations at historic levels.

RECREATION

The WMA is enjoyed by various user-groups including hunters, fishermen, photographers, backpackers, summer campers and sightseers. The main access route for the public is from the northeast on the Bluff Creek Road (USFS Road #509) to its intersection with the Avery-Timber Creek Road (USFS Road #201). The Beaver Creek road (USFS Road #303) also provides good access to Road #201 but is more primitive. The greatest influx of people occurs during the big game hunting season – September and October. Estimates of big game hunter numbers for all of Unit 9 are shown in Table 1. Estimates of other user groups are unavailable.

The existing trail network consists of approximately 50 miles in Canyon and Sawtooth creeks. These are accessed by seven trailheads on the Avery-Timber Creek Road (USFS Road #201),

which borders the north and east side of the WMA. The current National Forest Travel Plan prohibits motorized vehicle use on Trail #55 and several lateral trails that branch off – Trails #102 and #104.

The single most important reason the IDFG acquired the property in this location was to provide roadless elk hunting opportunity. Canyon Creek and its tributaries have become a destination point for Panhandle Elk Tag holders seeking a high quality elk hunt either on foot or using pack stock. According to the Idaho Rifle Elk Hunting Study conducted by the University of Idaho in 1987-1988, Idaho's highest quality hunting product as defined by the hunter is an unroaded natural setting with an abundance of wildlife species, few other hunters, the opportunity to pursue animals in all age classes, and a chance to use and practice hunting skills with companions (McLaughlin et al., 1989).

One licensed outfitter is operating in the WMA with a base camp at Granite Peak and drop camps at Buck Creek and Canyon Creek. His primary season of operation is during the fall for elk hunting.

MANAGEMENT GOALS

1. Protect and maintain the high quality wildlife and fish values of the WMA.
2. Provide unroaded, back-country recreational opportunities to meet the public needs.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

ROADS

There will be no new permanent road construction within the WMA. However, it may be necessary to develop landing sites adjacent to existing permanent roads to facilitate the removal of forest products to meet wildlife habitat and visual objectives. The Buck Creek road will be closed and converted to a trail. The Avery-Timber Creek Road (USFS Road #201) along the border of the WMA will remain a single lane road with turnouts.

BUILDINGS

Maintain administrative facilities such as the Snow Peak and Surveyor's Ridge lookouts. No new buildings will be erected in the WMA.

Helispots

Helispots may be constructed and maintained to protect and promote goals of the WMA.

Minerals

The IDFG lands are unavailable for mineral exploration. The National Forest lands are open to mineral entry. Mineral Exploration will be conducted without roads until road construction becomes the next essential step in the development of any mineral resource.

Grazing

The commercial livestock grazing will be permitted. Available forage in the excess of wildlife needs may be made available for riding and pack stock.

Recreational Use

Maintain existing types of recreational use; primarily hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, sightseeing, photography, and trail riding. Accommodate the expected level of increased use by development and maintenance of recreational facilities as long as they do not conflict with the stated management goals.

Trails

Trails will be managed, maintained and relocated for use and enjoyment of the WMA. Current restrictions on motorized vehicle use contained in the IPNF Travel Plan will be retained.

Livestock Handling
Facilities

Facilities may be developed at high-use trailheads to control surface damage to land by riding and pack stock. These facilities could include hitch racks, feed bunks, corrals, unloading ramps, ect.

Outfitters

Outfitters licensed by the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Board will be allowed to continue. Authorized outfitter camps will be allowed for the duration of the season and will be removed when not in use or within ten days of the end of the big game season. There will be no net increase in outfitting for big game and fishing in the WMA.

Caches

Camping equipment caches will be allowed for a period not to extend ten days. Equipment left longer than ten days will be considered abandoned and will be removed.

Signing Signs will be rustic. Designs and standards will be agreed upon by both agencies. Signing will be used to assist and direct the public use to meet the overall goals of the WMA.

HUNTING

Hunting will be allowed as authorized by the Idaho Fish and Game Commission for all of Game Management Unit 9. Seasons will be in accordance with the Department's five-year species management plans.

Elk The elk population will be managed to promote a quality back country experience. Quality will be measured by maintaining the percentage of mature bulls (at least 6 points on one antler) in the antlered segment of the harvest above 20%.

Mountain Goat The mountain goat population will be managed as a source of transplant stock statewide rather than being managed for harvest. Goat trapping will center around Snow Peak Lookout.

Deer Deer populations will be managed to maintain current numbers.

Moose The moose population will be managed to increase their numbers. Harvest will be on a controlled hunt basis for bulls only. Permit levels will be conservative.

Black Bear The black bear population will be managed to maintain current numbers by keeping the median age of harvested animals greater than or equal to five years old.

TRAPPING

Trapping will be allowed as authorized by the Idaho Fish and Game Commission for all of Shoshone County.

Furbearers Furbearing animals will be managed to maintain current populations.

Nongame Protect and maintain diverse habitats to meet requirements of the numerous nongame species in the WMA.

FISHERIES

The populations of westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, bull trout and mountain whitefish will be maintained at levels that will support a harvestable surplus of fish. The wild trout fisheries will be maintained by managing access and utilizing regulations designed for the productivity of the Little North Fork Clearwater River watershed.

HABITAT
MANAGEMENT

A diversity of habitat will be maintained. Vegetation will be managed to maintain a cover: forage ratio of 75:25 on big game summer range areas and a cover: forage ratio of 50:50 on big game winter range areas. Winter range forage may be maintained or enhanced by use of prescribed burns, slashing, fertilization and shrub plantings.

Fire

Prescribed fire may be used to promote and enhance the wildlife values of the WMA. Unplanned ignitions will be suppressed until a natural fire plan prescription is prepared cooperatively by both agencies.

Water Quality

The watershed will be managed so that natural hydrological and stream dynamic processes are maintained. All fish habitat components such as spawning, rearing and over-wintering will be maintained at a level that provides a harvestable surplus of wild trout. Fish habitat enhancement may be considered to maintain important habitat components.

Timber

Timber harvest will occur only for the purpose of enhancing wildlife habitat or visual improvement. This harvest may be accessed by temporary transportation systems. In today's terms, the methods of logging are envisioned as helicopter yarding; cable yarding; forwarder yarding; and specialized snow operations such as winter tractor. At the present time, DAW Forest Products Company has cutting rights to Section 11, T43N, R7E. A timber management agreement to minimize the impacts from timber harvest has been agreed to by DAW and the IDFG. DAW's timber rights in Section 11 expire in March 1996.

Old Growth

Old growth will be inventoried and retained to contribute to the National Forest's management of indicator species and biodiversity. The old growth stand (130 acres) in Section 11 has been purchased from DAW by the Bonneville Power Administration as mitigation for the loss of old growth due to the construction of Dworshak Dam.

INFORMATION
AND EDUCATION

A brochure and map will be developed to describe to the WMA to assist visitors.

Public Involvement

Both agencies will jointly solicit public review on the draft plan and incorporate appropriate recommendations. The plan will be updated at five-year intervals.

LITERATURE CITED

Daubenmire, R. and J. Daubenmire. 1968. Forest Vegetation of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho. Wash. Agric. Exp. Sta., Wash. State Univ., Pullman.

McLaughlin, W., N. Sanyal, J. Tangen-Foster, J. Tynon, S. Allen and C. Harris, 1989. 1987-88 Idaho Rifle Elk Hunting Study. Id., For., Wildl. and Range Exp. Sta., Univ. of Idaho, Moscow.

Appendix I

Mammals known to occur in the Snow Peak Wildlife Management Area.

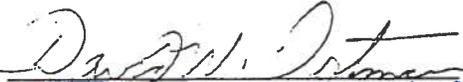
Elk
Mule deer
White-tailed deer
Moose
Black bear
Mountain lion
Mountain goat
Bobcat
Coyote
River otter
Beaver
Mink
Marten
Pika
Hoary marmot
Snowshoe hare
Pine squirrel
Bushy-tailed woodrat
Short-tailed weasel
Golden-mantled ground squirrel
Columbian ground squirrel
Chipmunk
Boreal redback vole
Northern pocket gopher
Deer mouse
Masked shrew

APPENDIX II

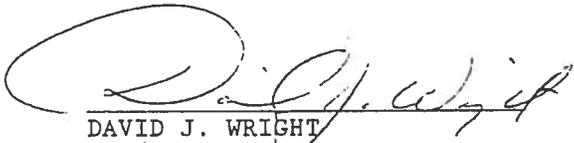
Birds known to occur in the Snow Peak Wildlife Management Area.

Blue grouse
Ruffed grouse
Spruce grouse
Stellar's jay
Clarks' nutcracker
Common crow
Dipper
Black-capped chickadee
Mountain bluebird
American robin
Varied thrush
Flicker
Black-billed magpie
Bohemian waxwing
Downy woodpecker
Golden-crowned kinglet
Hairy woodpecker
Mountain chickadee
Pileated woodpecker
Red-breasted nuthatch
Ruby-crowned kinglet
Great-horned owl
American kestrel
Red-tailed hawk
Golden eagle
Osprey

APPROVED BY:


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10-19-92
Date


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