

WDFW Continues to Protect Public Lands

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : March 5, 2012 at 6:30 am

OLYMPIA, Wash. - The issues seem to be limitless: gang graffiti, garbage dumping, vandalism, drug dealing, marijuana plantations, thefts and off-road destruction... and that's just for starters. Washington's Department of Fish and Wildlife says they're doing something about it



The Fish and Wildlife Commission passed an improved set of land conduct rules four years ago to allow the department to address problems more easily. Since then the WDFW Law Enforcement Bureau has begun collaborating with volunteers and other police agencies to target problem sites and implement a number of strategies.



For example, Officer Haw successfully investigated the dumping of hulk boats and trailers on WDFW Wildlife Area properties. A dumped vessel and trailer were traced to the original registered owners, and then to the owner of a storage facility that had gone out of business.



The person had posted ads on Craig's List for free boats and trailers on the condition that the hulks were removed from the DFW facilities. Of course Officer Haw answered the advertisement. After several denials, the suspect was confronted by a mountain of evidence, including a boat being advertised as "free"; parked in his yard

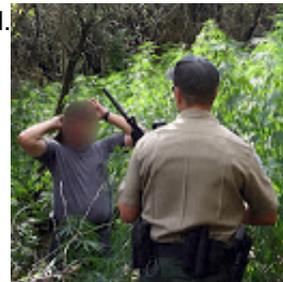


Contributing to the dumping problem are some camps used as long-term hovels. The occupants are now easily evicted, where before the department didn't have many options.

We can't even begin to quantify the number of wildfires that have been prevented by being able to enforce much clearer rules related to camping and keg parties. - WDFW Spokeperson



On a more challenging front, the department says they are attempting to address the gang presence and industrial marijuana growing on your lands, with the two issues often interrelated. The latest trend is the live-in grow site, complete with structures, human refuse and armed security guard.



A specially trained team of Fish and Wildlife Police Officers that network with our law enforcement partners has been very effective in maintaining a safer recreational area for the public, and eradicating these grow sites to prevent further destruction of valuable habitat. Clean-up efforts and emphasis patrols are beginning to send a clear message: The public's investment in state lands is not a wasted effort, and we will not tolerate the "anything goes" attitude when it comes to protecting the public's investment. But WDFW says they can't do it alone.



We are very fortunate that most of Washington's citizens share our same passion for protecting our state's lands. We'd like to thank those who step forward to report offenders who abuse our public lands, and we'd especially like to recognize the folks who have volunteered to clean up the LT Murray Wildlife Area (an area hit particularly hard by garbage, vandalism, and graffiti). The Wenas Valley Muzzleloaders and Kittitas County Field and Stream Club have been instrumental in organizing annual spring clean-ups for several years, and we've even had some private citizens from the hunting community step up to coordinate separate clean-up events. As law enforcement, we will do our best to ensure your public lands remain clean and open for use, long after the clean up is over!