

Wetlands as Varied as Our Region

The Pacific Northwest is highly varied geologically and biologically. This leads to an equally diverse range of wetlands types, including Sitka spruce/skunk cabbage swamps near the coast, willowchoked stream canyons and seasonally-wet salt grass flats east of the Cascades, remnant river channels and wet prairies in the Willamette Valley, and lodgepole pine/sedge forests and saturated meadows in the Cascades.

In Oregon and Washington, more than 50% (and up to 70% in some areas) of our original wetlands have been lost, mostly by conversion to agricultural or urban uses. Many other wetlands have been severely degraded through poor land use practices and by invasion of undesirable plants. Wetlands, like streams, are very sensitive to surrounding and upslope land uses. Unlike many activities that permanently alter wetlands, forest management can be compatible with good wetland management.

Why would you, as a woodland owner and/or manager, be concerned about wetlands? Wetlands provide

a wide range of important functions and values, though the benefits that wetlands provide vary greatly by type, location, and condition. Many landowners manage and protect wetlands to improve wildlife habitat for their own enjoyment or to improve the potential for fee-hunting income. Other managers may be motivated mostly

by the desire to comply with state and federal wetland regulations, and still others are motivated by a sense of personal responsibility for maintaining their land in a healthy and productive condition. This

condition. This bulletin will provide some basic information about wetlands and identify management techniques that protect the functions and values of these

lands.

Importance of Wetlands to Fish and Wildlife

Wetlands are highly effective at converting the sun's energy into food. The plant material and small organisms produced in abundance in



Number of wildlife species using riparian zones or freshwater wetland habitats.

Source: Brown, 1985. Volume 2, Appendix 8 gives specific information on these 414 species, including their use of different wetland types for breeding, resting, and/or feeding, and whether the wetland type is a primary or secondary habitat (see Reference section for full citation).

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Class	Number of westside wildlife species	Number of species using riparian or wetland plant communities	Number of species using riparian zones or wetlands as a specialized habitat but not using plant communities	Total number of species using riparian zones or wetlands
Amphibians & Reptiles	44	35	2	37
Birds	267	192	38	230
Mammals	103	91	1	92
Total	414	318	41	359

Box 2

teeming with small organisms. The swarms of swallows, flycatchers, and bats scooping up insect hatches over wetlands are one common indicator of the high productivity of wetlands.

Importance to Fish

Stream-associated wetlands provide essential fish habitat. Plant material and organisms produced in stream-associated wetlands are important food sources for fish. Also, side channels and backwater pools are used by fish as rearing areas and as "refuges" during high stream flows.

Young cutthroat trout and Coho salmon grow many times faster in a stream-associated wetland than in the main stream. This is because fish reared in calm waters of wetlands use most of the food they consume for growth, whereas fish reared in stream currents must convert a large

Wetland Functions and Values

Wetlands vary greatly in location and type, and therefore not all provide the same functions and values that wetlands in general are known to provide.

Flood Storage and Stream Flow Augmentation—

Stream-associated wetlands store water during high flows, reducing flood peaks. Then the areas augment summer stream flows by slowly releasing stored water back into the stream system.

Water Quality Protection—Wetlands reduce pollution by filtering and processing harmful substances.

Fish and Shellfish Production—Wetlands are important spawning and nursery areas for fin and shellfish.

Timber Production—Forested wetlands are a source of commercially valuable timber.

Erosion and Sediment Control—Wetlands reduce flood velocities, reduce erosion, and trap water-borne sediments.

Recreation—Wetlands provide opportunities for fishing, hunting, boating, plant identification, scientific study, and wildlife observation.

portion of the food they consume into energy. Also, wetland habitats such as beaver ponds, side channels, and seasonal swamps are critical to salmonids for winter survival. One study found that 15% of a watershed's Coho production came from fish that overwintered in wetlands that are dry during the summer. The survival rate of Coho salmon that over-winter in abandoned beaver ponds that are dry in the summer was about twice as high as the survival rate

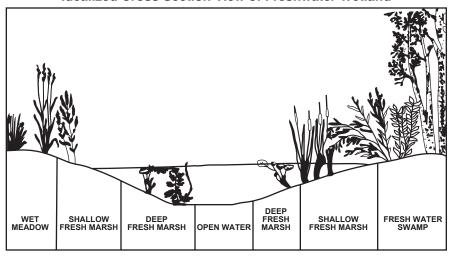
Importance to Wildlife

for the overall stream system.

Wetlands and streamside riparian areas are crucial to the survival of many wildlife species. These habitats provide food in abundance, water, refuge from summer heat, shelter from winter cold, hiding cover, and late-summer green forage when upland areas are dry, as well as critical breeding and rearing habitats.

Despite comprising a relatively small portion of the landscape, wetlands and riparian areas are relied on heavily by nearly all of the wildlife in Oregon and Washington. Of 414 western Oregon and Washington wildlife species, 359 use riparian zones or wetlands during some season or parts of their life cycle (see Box 1, page 2). The situation is similar east of the Cascades. Of 378 terrestrial species in the Blue Mountains, 285 are either directly dependent on wetlands and riparian areas or utilize them more than other habitats.

Idealized Cross Section View of Freshwater Wetland



How to Recognize Wetlands

What are Wetlands?

Although there are many types of wetlands in the Pacific Northwest, they share three common characteristics. **Most important is an abundance of water.** Whatever the water source—high water table, rainwater "perched" on impervious layers in the

WETLAND DEFINITION

Wetlands are areas inundated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that normally do support, mostly vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil.

soil, frequent flooding, or groundwater seeps—prolonged saturation is what creates the wetland. Saturated soils form distinctive, visible physical characteristics and are called hydric soils. Most often, these saturated conditions support a plant community dominated by **hydrophytes**—plants that survive in permanently or seasonally saturated soils.

However, plants, like animals, have varying degrees of specialization. While some species adapt readily to a wide variety of conditions and may be referred to as "generalists" (weeds are prime examples), other plants are specialists and thrive in a very specific habitat. For this reason, some plant species are better indicators

of wetlands than others. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has compiled a list of plants that grow in wetlands. Each species is given a wetland indicator status based on the frequency with which it occurs in

wetlands. For example, skunk cabbage is an **Obligate Wetland species** and is found only in wetlands. **Facultative Wetland species** occur in wetlands 66–99% of the time; they are found in either permanent or seasonal wetlands and can be used to identify seasonal

wetlands during the dry time of the year. Facultative species are often the generalists—they occur in a wide variety of sites, including seasonal wetlands, and are especially common in areas disturbed by farming, grazing, or other activities. As generalists, they are the least reliable "indicators" of wetlands.

Where Will You Find Wetlands?

Wetlands are usually found in the lowest portion of the landscape. They may be stream-associated or "isolated." Landscape position, climate, and soil type all influence wetlands formation. Expect to find wetlands:

- in low areas with a very high winter water table
- in valley flats or depressions where impervious soil layers create a "perched water table"
- near rivers and streams
- low on slopes where groundwater seeps or breaks out as springs
- in mountain meadows watered by gradual snowmelt
- in broad river valleys with side channels or abandoned stream channels

Types of Wetlands

There are many types of wetlands and many terms used to describe them.
Terms such as "swamps," "bogs," "marshes," and "wet meadows" all refer to types of wetlands. Wetlands

Box 3

EXAMPLES OF WETLAND TYPES AND TYPICAL VEGETATION

Open Water Wetlands

water lily pondweed duckweed bladderwort water-cress

Marsh

common cattail hardstem bulrush yellow iris spike rush reed canarygrass water parsley

Wet Meadows

creeping buttercup willow dock giant horsetail sedges gum weed

Shrub Wetlands

Pacific willow Douglas' spirea sweetgale

Forest Wetlands

red alder Oregon ash

Overstory

Sitka spruce western redcedar

Typical Understory

lady fern water parsley slough sedge skunk cabbage Douglas' spirea wapato slough sledge bur-reed rice cutgrass marsh speedwell water plantain

nodding beggars-tick American sloughgrass fragrant popcorn flower tufted hairgrass soft rush Pacific

Willow

Salix

Lastandra

Benth

red-osier dogwood alpine bog laurel bog birch

Overstory

lodgepole pine quaking aspen Engelmann spruce

Typical Understory

aquatic sedge widefruit sedge Baltic rush Douglas spirea bog blueberry



scientists have developed formal terms that are used to classify and map wetlands, lakes, streams, and estuaries. Types of wetlands are grouped mainly by their vegetative characteristics. For example, wetlands dominated by trees are classified Forested Wetlands, while those dominated by sedges and grasses are classified Emergent Wetlands. One wetland can be a mix of various types.

Forested wetlands may be particularly difficult to identify

because many of the trees in the forested wetlands are classified as "facultative," that is, they are generalists that occur in both wetlands and uplands. Therefore, the presence of these tree species does not mean that area is or is not a wetland. For

Box 4

Are There Wetlands On Your Land?				
A YES answer to any of the questions <u>may</u> indicate that the site is a wetland.				
Yes No ☐ ☐ Are there natural drainage channels or swales?				
\square Is the ground soggy underfoot in the spring?				
\square Are there depressions where water pools for two to three weeks in the spring?				
☐ ☐ Do you avoid the area with heavy equipment for fear of getting bogged down?				
☐ ☐ Has the site been ditched to dry it out?				
□ □ Are seeps or springs present?				
\square Is the soil black or light gray rather than brown or reddish brown?				
□ □ Is there evidence of surface scour from running water?				
□ □ Do you see many clumps of rushes (round stems), sedges, (triangular stems), skunk cabbage, willows, or Oregon ash? (These are just a few of the many plants that grow in wetlands.)				
$\ \square$ In forested areas, are there large hummocks, trees with fluted bases, and trees grown on nurse logs?				
A Word of Caution—Seasonal wetlands may look very dry in mid-to-late summer. Use the checklist to evaluate your land, and consult a specialist before doing work in an area that may be a wetland. Many activities in wetlands are regulated by state and federal law.				

forested
wetlands
then, the
understory
species as well as
the soil characteristics and the
hydrology of the site provide
the needed clues for wetlands
identification. In addition, well
developed forested wetlands
often exhibit a hummock and
hollow topography, with trees
restricted to the hummocks.

Some wetlands are agriculturally managed and have been used many years for grazing or to grow crops. Some of these have been ditched, drained, or diked to remove the water, thus converting them to non-wetlands. Others, however, still have wetland hydrology and still pond water for several days in the spring. When cropped, these agricultural wetlands may not look at all like wetlands; when abandoned, however, the wetlands plant species gradually reappear.

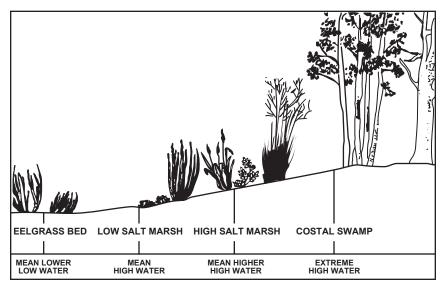
There are a number of regional publications that serve as excellent guides to wetlands types and identification in Oregon and Washington (see References).

Management Considerations

The many functions that wetlands provide make protection, restoration, and wise management of wetlands important to landowners and the general public. Forestry can be compatible with sound wetland management. While most forestry activities may alter the wetland, they need not convert it to an upland. The goal in managing woodlands and wetlands, then, is to avoid activities that may convert the wetlands to uplands and to manage site alterations to retain the benefits provided by the wetlands.

Wetlands change in a variety of ways. Some change is inevitable, as landscapes are changing all the time. While some change is natural, other change is not, or is accelerated by the activities of people. The key to managing wetlands and woodlands is to plan carefully and thoughtfully, and to be aware of the effects your activities will have on the landscape. Some wetland sites may be so sensitive and so difficult to reforest that you may want to consider excluding them from your harvest plans.

The amount and duration of water on a site affects soil development. Soil development, in turn, affects the plant community characteristics. Just as specific water, soil, and vegetation characteristics define a wetland, it is these characteristics that we must manage with care in order to maintain the functions and values of wetlands. Some potential forest practices disturbances to wetlands are: alteration of hydrologic functions; soil compaction; introduction of invasive plant species; changes in the microclimate due to vegetation removal in and around the wetland; alteration of habitat through the removal of vegetation, snags, and downed wood; and reduction of woody debris that simplify the composition, structure, and stability of wetlands.



Idealized cross sectional view of spatial and vertical relation of estuarine wetland types.

Management Techniques

Forestry activities that demand careful planning to minimize damage to wetlands include road and landing construction, heavy equipment use in and around wetlands, reforestation, and harvesting.

Roads and Landings

Road building and landing construction are activities that may require filling. These activities should be avoided in wetlands, as they may seriously or permanently alter the wetland. When deciding on road or landing locations, conduct an inventory of all sensitive areas (wetlands, riparian areas, sensitive wildlife sites, high risk sites, etc.) and outline operational considerations. Weigh all of these factors before deciding on a road or landing location.

If you must build a road in or near a wetland, minimize its impact. Use clean, temporary fills, minimize the amount of fill you use, and minimize the road width. Give careful consideration to the size, spacing, and orientation of culverts, particularly in systems with wide water table fluctuations or with seasonal flows. Use adequate culvert sizes and increase the frequency of culvert spacing.

Equipment Use

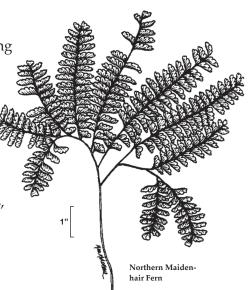
Excessive soil disturbance can reduce site productivity, alter drainage patterns, and prepare seed beds for invasive plant species which are adapted to disturbed sites. These pest species, such as reed canarygrass and purple loosestrife, are very aggressive and hardy, can clog culverts and streams, are of low value to wildlife, and displace native vegetation.

Wetland soils may not be wet year round. In fact, during the some parts of the year, they may be quite dry. These soils can be sensitive to disturbance, and the heavy use of equipment on these sites should be avoided. If heavy equipment must be used in wetlands, confine its use to dry periods, and, even then, keep the equipment on any available high spots. Low ground pressure equipment can be very effective in protecting wetland sites.

Reforestation

The key to successful reforestation is to plan before harvest begins. Many forested wetlands have developed over a long period of time under limiting conditions. For instance, in forested wetlands with hummock and hollow topography, regeneration may be confined to the hummocks.

Similarly, in some spruce swamps, the existing trees became established on nurse logs, and in order for seedlings to become established again, the seed source must be good and nurse logs must be available. Prior to harvesting, land managers should develop a plan to provide these special components of successful reforestation.



Harvesting

For harvest operations involving wetlands, managers should consider soil moisture, proximity to water, regeneration problems, potential for windthrow of residual trees, and wildlife habitat.

If the wetland is associated with a stream, harvesting operators should plan for the retention of leave trees near the stream to provide for shade, canopy, and the contribution of future large woody debris to the stream system. For wetland sites away from streams, leaving snags, downed wood and leave trees of varying sizes and species will provide essential and diverse habitat for many species of birds, small mammals, and big game. Generally, leaving trees that are representative of the stand, both in species and size class, will benefit the wetlands. It is important to retain trees, particularly conifers, even on small wetlands. Also, remember to retain downed logs as nurse logs and for wildlife habitat.

Vegetation left around wetlands can accomplish several things. It can protect the site from sedimentation. Also, vegetation will help regulate temperature and moisture conditions by providing windbreaks and shading, providing a buffer between human activities and wetlands, and providing for thermal covers, browse, and other habitat components for many wildlife species. The optimal size of a leave tree area varies in relation to a number of factors including slope, erodibility of uplands, the stocking level of the stand, and the potential for windthrow.

Wetlands vary greatly by species composition, region, land use, and other site-specific variables. It is also advisable to consult a local biologist for management advice.

Related Land Uses

Grazing and other agricultural activities can also substantially alter wetlands. Heavy livestock grazing in and around wetlands can change the plant species composition and disrupt the banks of adjacent water bodies. Controlling the number of animals and the timing of the grazing in sensitive areas can alleviate much damage, often bringing improvement to forage and moisture conditions. Consider fencing some of the more sensitive areas.

For forest management advice on wetlands, contact the Oregon Department of Forestry or the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Before beginning any ditching, draining, filling, clearing, or other alteration of wetlands, consult your county Extension agent, Department of Agriculture representative, and/or the wetland regulatory agencies. Anyone receiving U.S. Department of Agriculture benefits should consult the Natural Resources Conservation Service prior to altering wetlands. Penalties for wetland conversion may include loss of benefits and/or fines.

Incentive Programs and Regulations

Landowner Incentive Programs

Assistance is available to landowners who wish to improve wildlife or fisheries

habitats on their land. For information and assistance, contact:

- the Oregon or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- your local Soil and Water Conservation Service
- the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Service Foresters of the Oregon Department of Forestry or the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

Wetland Regulations

Many activities in or adjacent to wetlands are regulated by local, state, and/ or federal laws. (See Agencies under Information Sources.) Activities in wetlands or stream that may be regulated include:

- filling
- excavation
- timber harvest
- stump removal
- bulldozing or grading
- alteration of stream banks or stream course
- plowing or discing natural wetlands
- ditching
- construction
- draining

Oregon

In Oregon, commercial forest operations conducted on private land are regulated by the Oregon Department of Forestry under the state Forest Practices Act (FPA). Activities in or near wetlands that are part of a commercial forest operation and comply with the FPA do not require a separate permit from the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) or the Army Corps of Engineers. However, it is important to remember that if the timber harvest activity is related to a change in land use (to a non-forestry use), a DSL and/or Corps of Engineers permit may be required for subsequent activity, including stump removal. Wetland fills or

alterations not directly related to forest management are generally regulated by DSL and the Corps of Engineers.

Washington

In Washington, commercial forest operations on private land are regulated by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) under the state Forest Practices Act. The Department of Ecology also has regulatory authority over those forest practices which can affect water quality. Activities in or near

wetlands on forest land are regulated by a forest practices permit, which is processed by the DNR and distributed to other agencies.

When a change in forest land use (to a non-forestry use) is proposed, city or county government may require compliance with a clearing and grading ordinance or Shoreline Master Program. The Corps of Engineers may require another permit. Local planning and public works agencies can assist with determining local requirements.

Information Sources

References

Bigley, R.E. and S. W. Hull. 2000. Managing Wetlands on State Forest Lands in Washington. http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/lm/field_guides/managing/acknowledge.html.

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 1984. Wetland Plants of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle District.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1988. National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands.

Tools

National Wetlands Inventory

National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps are produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Information Sources

Service and are available for all of Oregon and Washington. Most NWI maps are at a 1:24,000 scale. Wetland information is displayed is on a USGS topographic base map. The mapping is based on aerial photograph interpretation, with limited field checking. The inventory in itself is not sufficient to determine the precise boundaries or the resource values of a particular wetland. The NWI is perhaps least reliable in identifying forested wetlands, as these are among the most difficult to identify through air photo interpretations. You may obtain maps from the Department of State Lands or at http://www.fws.gov/nwi/.

USGS Topographic Maps

These maps, at a scale of 1:24,000 or 1:62,5000, are a source of topographic clues for wetlands location. Information about these maps is available on the USGS Website.

Aerial Photographs

Aerial photographs are frequently very useful in identifying the boundaries of wetlands and are an important tool for evaluating large areas.

County Soil Survey

County soil surveys are available for much of Oregon and Washington. Soil surveys include maps of major soil units and a vast amount of information about the soils. Hydric (wet) soil types are a clue in wetlands identification. Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office can provide you with a survey (if available) and assist you in using it. They can also provide you with a list of hydric (wet) soils.

OREGON AGENCIES

Department of Forestry

2600 State St., Salem, OR 97310

Phone: 503/945-7200

- Administers Forest Practices Act
- Provides forest management assistance

Department of State Lands

775 Summer Street NE, Salem, OR 97301-1279

Phone: 503/986-5200

Eastern Region Office, Bend, OR

Phone: 541/388-6112

- Administers state Removal-Fill Law
- Sources for National Wetlands Inventory maps
- Wetland identification assistance

Department of Fish and Wildlife

3406 Cherry Ave. NE, Salem, OR 97303-4924 Phone: 503/947-6000

- Assistance with management plans and habitat enhancement plans
- Wetland identification assistance
- Assistance with wetland restoration
- Administers state Endangered Species Act for wildlife and fish

Soil and Water Conservation Districts, county offices

• Assistance with conservation projects

Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Division

635 Capitol Street NW, Room 212, Salem, OR 97310

Phone: 503/378-3810

- Assistance with land management practices
- Administers State Endangered Species Act for plants

Oregon State University, Extension Forestry

Peavy Hall 119, College of Forestry Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331 Phone: 503/737-3700

Technical assistance, publications, videos

WASHINGTON AGENCIES

Department of Natural Resources

Forest Practices Division 1111 Washington St. SE P.O. Box 47012, Olympia, WA 98504-7012 Phone: 360/902-1400

Administers water quality provisions of the FPA

Information Sources

Department of Fish and Wildlife

1111 Washington St. SE Olympia, WA 98501-1091 Phone: 360/902-2200

- Protects food fish and their habitat
- Protects wildlife, gamefish, and bullfrogs and their habitat

FEDERAL AGENCIES

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

Portland District, Regulatory Program P.O. Box 2946, Portland, OR 97208-2946 Phone: 503/808-2946

Seattle District, Regulatory Branch P.O. Box 3755, Seattle, WA 98124-3755 Phone: 206/764-3495

 Administers federal Clean Water Act (wetland regulations)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Portland Field Office 911 NE 11th Ave. #1, Portland, OR 97232

Phone: 503/231-6121

Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office

510 Desmond Dr., Lacey, WA 98503-1263

Phone: 360/753-9440

Upper Columbia River Fish and Wildlife Office

11103 E. Montgomery Dr., Spokane, WA 99206-4779

Phone: 509/891-6839

Assistance with habitat improvements and wetland restoration

U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service

Oregon State Office 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 900 Portland, OR 97232 Phone: 503/414-3200

Washington State Office 316 W. Boone Ave., Suite 450 Spokane, WA 99201-2348 Phone: 509/353-2900

- Assistance with conservation programs
- Assistance with soils

A Woodland Fish and Wildlife Project Publication

Βv

Rosemary Mannix and Janet Morlan
Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Division of State Lands.
Illustrations courtesy of Oregon Department Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Woodland Fish and Wildlife Project is a cooperative effort among the World Forestry Center, Oregon State Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, University of Washington College of Forest Resources, Oregon State University Extension, Service, Washington State University Extension, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, Oregon Small Woodlands Association, Washington Farm Forestry Association, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Western Forestry and Conservation Association.

The Woodland Fish and Wildlife Project was initiated to provide information on fish and wildlife management to private woodland owners and managers. It is the intent of the organizations involved in this project to produce publications that will serve as practical guides to woodland owners.

Each publication is intended to be complete in itself. Users may find it convenient to *collect all publications in this series* in a three-ring binder to form a permanent reference file. Woodland Fish and Wildlife Project publications range from an overview of fish and wildlife opportunities on woodland properties to specific publications concerning techniques for managing individual species.

Titles available in the Woodland Fish & Wildlife series:

Is There a Place for Fish and Wildlife in Your Woodland?	MISC0132
Riparian Areas: Fish and Wildlife Havens	MISC0133
Managing Small Woodlands for Grouse	MISC0141
Wood Ducks on Small Woodlands	MISC0142
Managing Ponderosa Pine Woodlands for Fish and Wildlife	MISC0158
Managing Small Woodlands for Cavity-Nesting Birds	MISC0160
Trout in Small Woodlands	MISC0161
Managing Small Woodlands for Elk	MISC0164
Coastal Douglas-fir Forests and Wildlife	MISC0168
Hawk, Eagle and Osprey Management on Small Woodlands	MISC0169
Wetlands as Varied as our Region	
Wildlife on White Oak Woodlands	MISC0180
Quail on Small Woodlands	MISC0187
Managing Deer on Small Woodlands	MISC0189
Beaver, Muskrat, and Nutria on Small Woodlands	MISC0196
Managing Forest Habitats for Neotropical Migrant Songbirds	MISC0198
Habitat Management for Bats on Small Woodlands	MISC0226
Managing Western Juniper for Wildlife	MISC0286
Wildlife in Broadleaf Forests of Oregon and Washington	MISC0534
Habitat Management for Turkeys on Small Woodlands	MISC0535

These publications may be ordered from Washington State University Extension Publishing and Printing, (800) 723-1763 or online http://pubs.wsu.edu/. You may also download copies at: http://www.WoodlandfishandWildlife.org.



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