RECOVERY OF COLUMBIAN WHITE-TAILED DEER

Proposing reclassification after 46 years

OVERVIEW

- Historic Distribution
- Why is this WHITE-TAIL DEER endangered?
- ESA Listing and Recovery Plan
- 5 Year review
- Where we go from here…
- Future delisting????

HISTORIC RANGE

(USFWS 1983)

Approximately 23,170 mi^2 (60,000 km^2) (Smith 1985).

- From Grants Pass, OR, in the south
- To Olympia, WA, in the north (along the Cowlitz River)
- From the Cascade Mountains in the east
- To the Coast Range in the west.

An ENDANGERED white-tail deer. What the heck?

- Evolved as a prairie edge/woodland-associated species, not confined to river valleys (Crews 1939).
- Loss of habitat is a key factor in CWTD declines
  - Habitat conversion
  - Draining beaver ponds and fire suppression
  - Introduction of non-native grasses
  - Unregulated hunting

- CWTD were forced into lower quality habitat
- Listed as Endangered since 1967 (32 FR 4001)

1983 RECOVERY PLAN (USFWS 1983)

In 1983 there were 300-400 CWTD in the Columbia River population.

Recovery criteria:

- 400 or more deer in the Columbia River population
- 3 viable subpopulations of 50 or more deer

- Downlisting: **2** of the viable subpopulations must be located on "secure" habitat
- Delisting: all **3** must be located on "secure" habitat

RECOVERY FOCUS: 1984-2012 (USFWS 2013)

Securing habitat through Acquisition or Agreement

- Wallace Island (562 ac)
- Areas in Westport (173 ac)
- 2/3 of Crims Island (473 ac)
- Anunde and Gull Islands (174 ac)
- Cottonwood Island (948 ac)
- 2 Columbia Land Trust parcels (250 ac across from Julia Butler Hansen NWR and 312 ac near Longview, WA)

Translocate CWTD to secure habitat

- 314 deer translocated as of May 2014

5- Year Status Review (USFWS 2013)

Analytic opportunity to look at the current status of CWTD and to gauge the effectiveness of the Service's recovery approach.

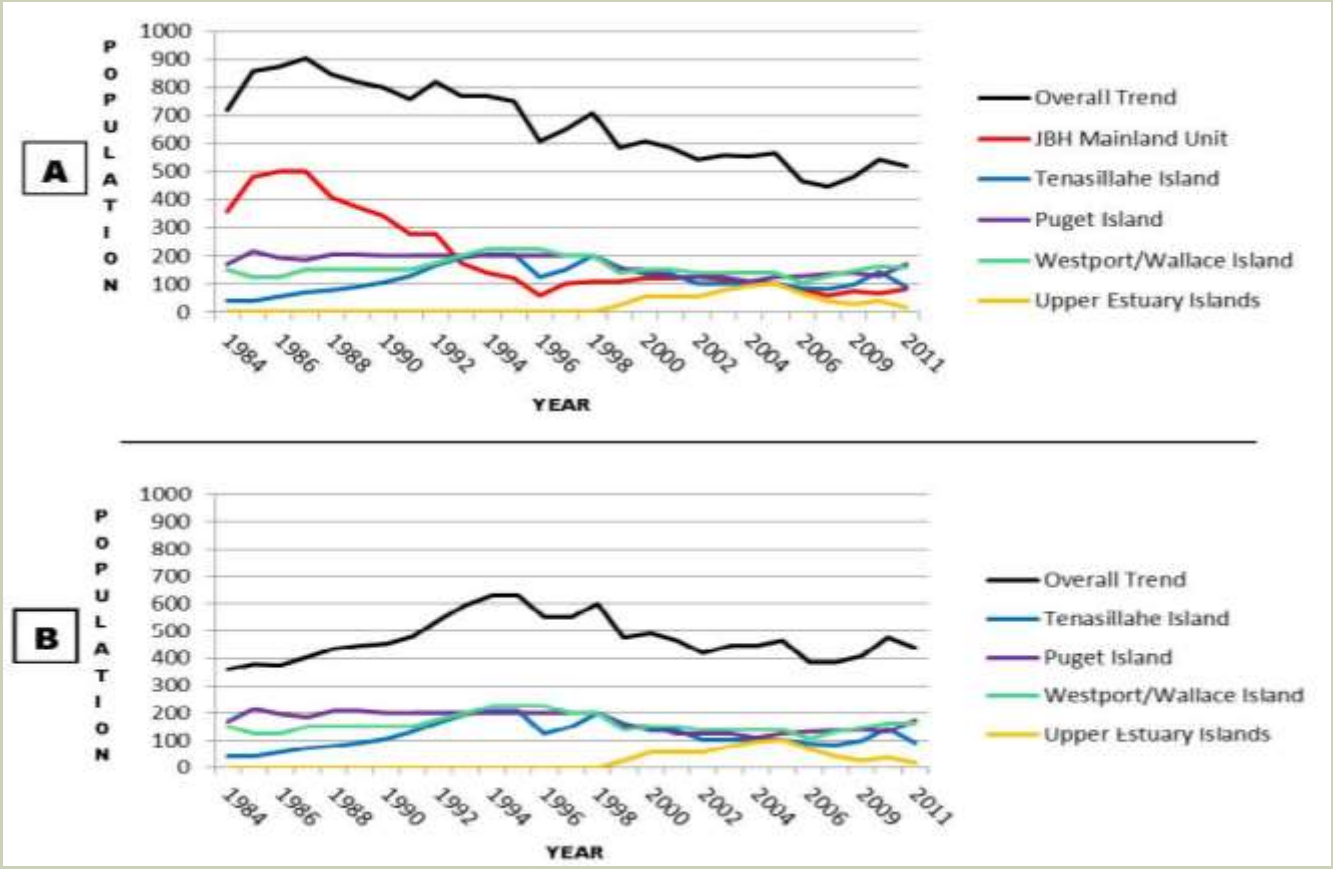
Results of analysis:

1. Our recovery efforts over the last 30 years may have been somewhat limited by the narrow focus on securing habitat through acquisition or agreement.

- For example: Upper Estuary Islands were acquired for CWTD conservation and the Service had a population goal of 50 deer for the island complex. Translocations began in 2003, and a total of 66 CWTD (33 to each set of islands) have been relocated there to date. Last survey (2011) showed 18 deer in the subpopulation.

5- Year Status Review (USFWS 2013)

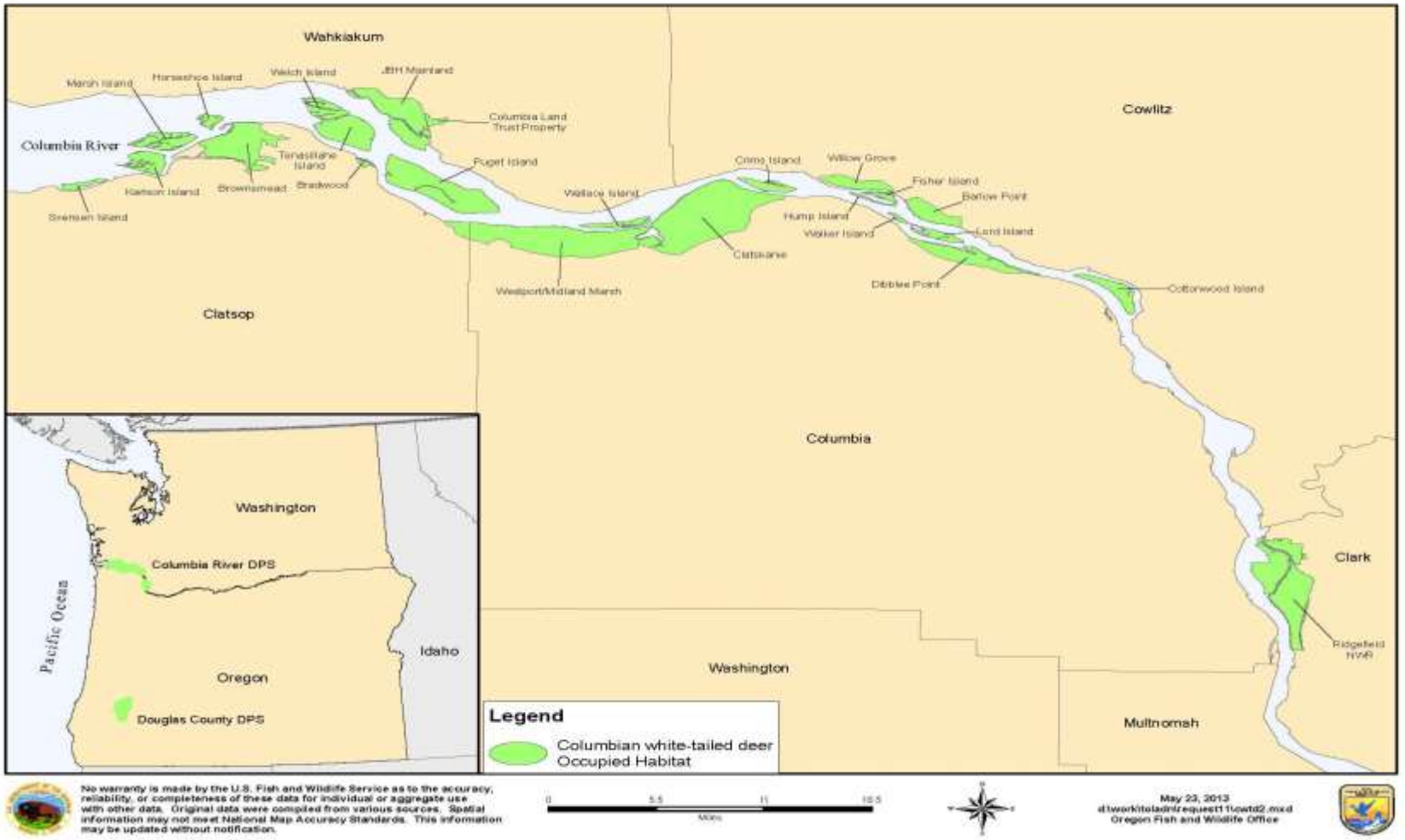
2. The Columbia River DPS is not at risk of extinction in the foreseeable future.



5- Year Status Review (USFWS 2013)

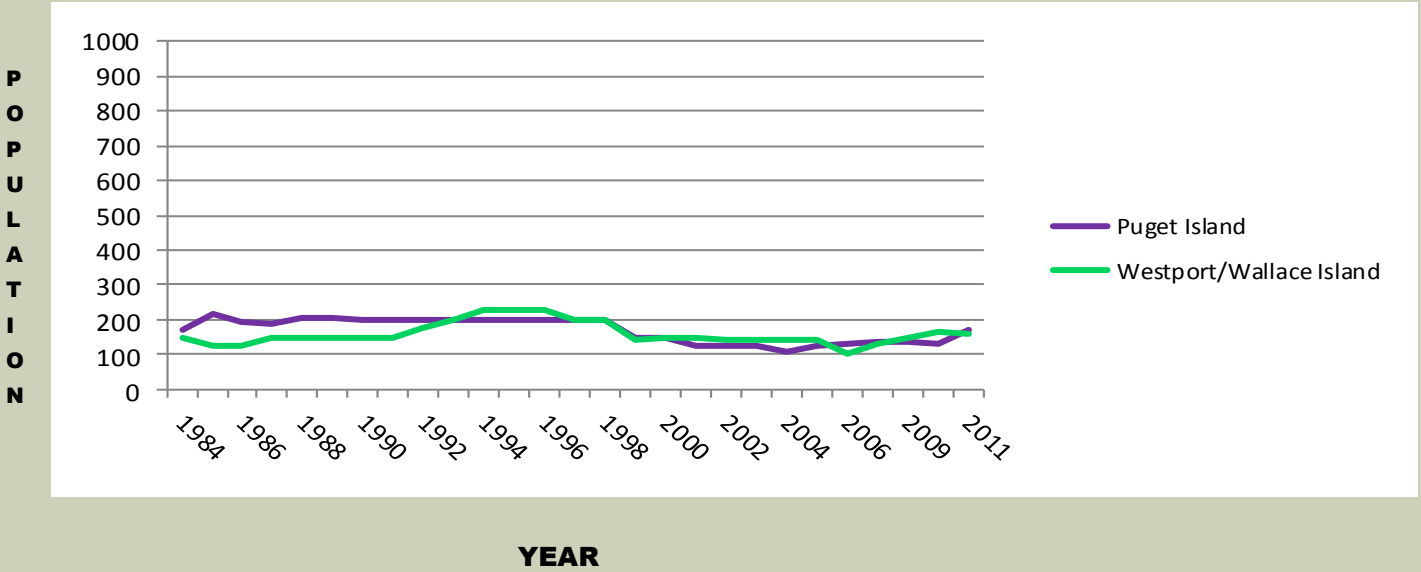
2. cont'd.

CURRENT RANGE OF COLUMBIA RIVER DPS



5-Year Status Review (USFWS 2013)

3. CWTD can maintain stable populations on suitable habitat that is not formally set aside by acquisition or agreement for the protection of the species.



5-Year Status Review (USFWS 2013)

4. The Columbia River DPS has met the Recovery Plan criteria for downlisting to threatened.

- The DPS has approximately 600 CWTD (based on the most recent comprehensive survey data from 2010 and 2011).
- There are 3 viable subpopulations: Tenasillahe Island, Puget Island, and Westport/ Wallace Island.

- Two of the viable subpopulations are secure: Tenasillahe Island, Puget Island.

Where do we go from here…

- Downlisting criteria have been met.
- USFWS is considering a downlisting proposal.
- Reclassification to threatened would provide additional tools and flexibility to our partners (state and tribal) that will promote and facilitate full recovery and delisting of the DPS (eg. Expanded sec. 6 authority and 4(d) rule)
- CWTD are on an upward trajectory toward full recovery.
- For delisting, still need a third viable and secure subpopulation to satisfy criteria.

Future delisting????

Possible avenues to that 3rd secure subpopulation and satisfying delisting criteria:

1. Carefully manage the population at Ridgefield NWR so that the new subpopulation grows and stabilizes somewhere over the viability threshold.

2. After the setback dike at the JBH Mainland Unit is completed, the habitat security will be restored for the JBH Mainland Unit subpopulation and their numbers will rebound.

3. If the Service can find a way to ensure that management activities in the Westport/ Wallace Island subpopulation remain compatible with CWTD, then that subpopulation could potentially be considered secure.

4. Identify potential translocation areas outside of the current occupied range CWTD that contain high quality upland habitat, and subsequently establish new subpopulations in these areas.

Literature Cited

Crews, A. K. 1939. A study of the Oregon white-tailed deer, Odocoileus virginianus leucurus (Douglas). Thesis, Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon. 69 pp.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC). 2004. "Appendix B: Other Species." In *Lower Columbia River Province Plan, Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program*. Portland, Oregon. Chapter 4, pp. 1-20).

Smith, W. P. 1985. Current Geographic Distribution and Abundance of Columbian White-Tailed Deer, Odocoileus Virginianus Leucurus(Douglas). Northwest Science, Vol. 59, No. 4. pp. 243-51.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1983. Revised Columbian White-tailed Deer Recovery Plan. U.S. Fsihand Wildlife Service. Portland, Oregon. 75 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013. Columbia River Distinct Population Segment of the Columbian White-tailed Deer *(Odocoileus virginianus leucurus)* 5-Year Review: Summary and Evaluation. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Oregon Office of Fish and Wildlife. Portland, Oregon. 51 pp.