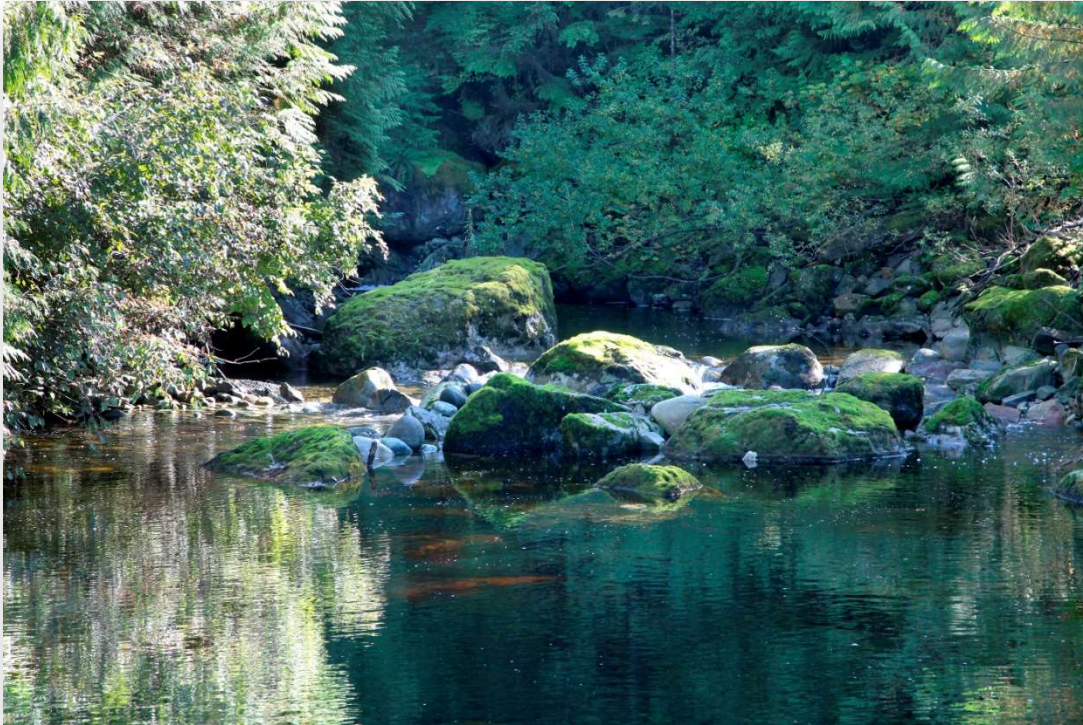


**Youngs Creek Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 10359**



WILDLIFE HABITAT MITIGATION PLAN
License Article 403

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared By:



Everett, WA

December 2020

Final – This document has been prepared for the District. It has been peer-reviewed by the District for accuracy and formatting based on information known at the time of its preparation and with that understanding is considered complete by the District. The document may be cited as:

Public Utility District No. 1 of Snohomish County (District). 2020. Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Plan (License Article 403) Draft Annual Report for the Youngs Creek Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 10359). December 2020.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAPA	Critical Area Protection Area
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Project	Youngs Creek Hydroelectric Project, FERC No. 10359
ROW	right-of-way
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
WHMP	Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

A license was issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on May 5, 1992 for the Youngs Creek Hydroelectric Project (Project) located south of Sultan, Washington. As part of the Order Issuing License, Article 403 directed that a final wildlife habitat mitigation plan be prepared. In 2011, Public Utility District No. 1 of Snohomish County (the District), current owner and operator of the Project, filed for an amendment to the 1992 Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Plan (WHMP). The amendment was approved by the FERC on September 8, 2011.¹

The WHMP identifies the elements of habitat protection, revegetation, and enhancement of Project lands and addresses ongoing monitoring and reporting. The District is to provide a written report to the FERC every five years,² and a written summary report to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) annually. This WHMP Annual Report details activities that were conducted from December 2019 through November 2020. WDFW and USFWS were provided a copy of the draft report on November 24, 2020, for a 30-day review and comment period (Appendix B); no comments were received.

¹ (136 FERC ¶ 62,206).

² The next 5-year report will be filed with FERC by December 31, 2022.

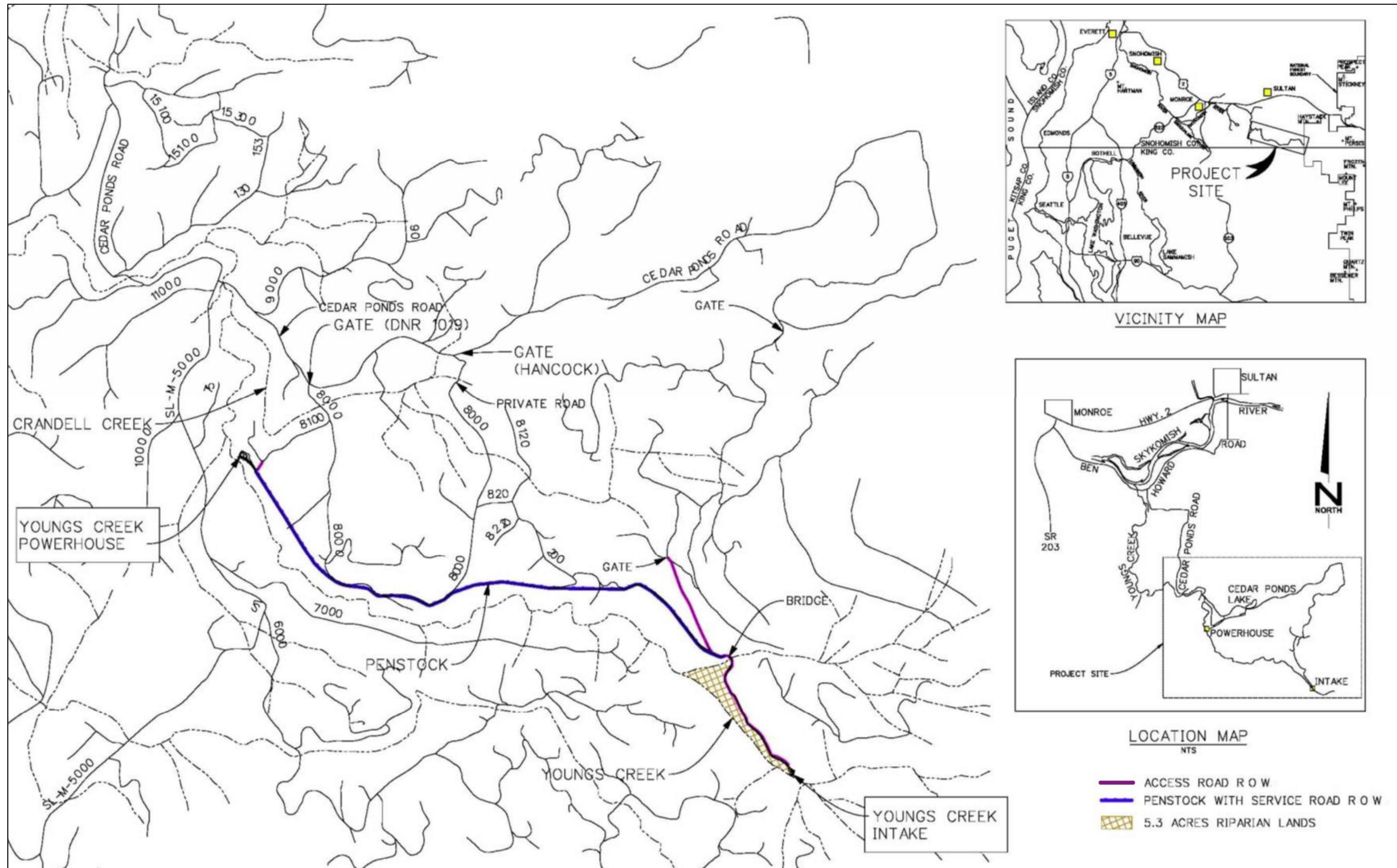


Figure 1. Map identifying penstock and access road right-of-ways.

2. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

As specified in the WHMP Section 3.0 (g) and (h), all mitigation areas were monitored during 2020 to ensure the objectives of the WHMP are being met. Monitoring of Project lands consisted of periodic checks on vegetative conditions and documentation or treatment of occurrences of noxious or invasive species. Revegetated and reseeded areas will continue to be monitored annually for the duration of the License. Coverage of shrubs and grasses will also be visually evaluated on an annual basis. If surveys indicate that coverage by bare ground is estimated to be more than 20 percent, reseeded areas will occur with the appropriate erosion control seed mix, as noted in the WHMP. Noxious weeds will be controlled during the growing season, as necessary. Monitoring of riparian and upland forest mitigation areas will consist of periodic checks of overstory vegetation.

2.1. Penstock Right of Way Revegetation

Following completion of Project construction activities, the penstock right-of-way (ROW) (Figure 1) was seeded in the fall of 2011 and reseeded, where necessary, in the spring of 2012. Vegetation continues to meet coverage requirements and no construction activities occurred during 2020 that precipitated the need to re-seed any portion of the ROW.

2.1.1 Line of Sight Reduction/Establishment of Hiding Cover

Growth of native vegetation will continue to be allowed along the penstock ROW to the extent practical without impeding visual monitoring of pipeline integrity. Trees will be allowed to grow in the outer 10 feet on either side of the ROW. To date, native shrubs have begun to re-establish in only a few locations along the ROW margins.

2.1.2 Noxious Weed Management

Pursuant to WHMP Section 3.0(a), a Noxious Weed Management Plan was developed for the Project in 2013. Accordingly, noxious and invasive weed control was performed over five days during the 2020 growing season to comply with applicable noxious weed regulations. The primary weeds controlled were Bull and Canada thistle, Oxeye Daisy, Scotch broom, and Butterfly bush. Methods of control consisted of manual removal of Scotch broom and Butterfly bush, and use of a non-selective, post-emergent Organic Materials Review Institute (ORMI) listed herbicide for all other weeds.

Monitoring of weed populations on Project lands was conducted by District biologists with locations of weed infestations noted and treatment measures implemented. Spatial information was partitioned into three forms of symbology: points (discrete locations along the ROW and spur roads), intermittent lines (weeds commonly intermixed with native ROW vegetation), and polygons (weeds intermixed with native vegetation confined to specific areas beyond the ROW boundary) (Figures 2 and 3). Road and penstock ROWs were patrolled multiple times during the growing season to identify areas where weed control was required.

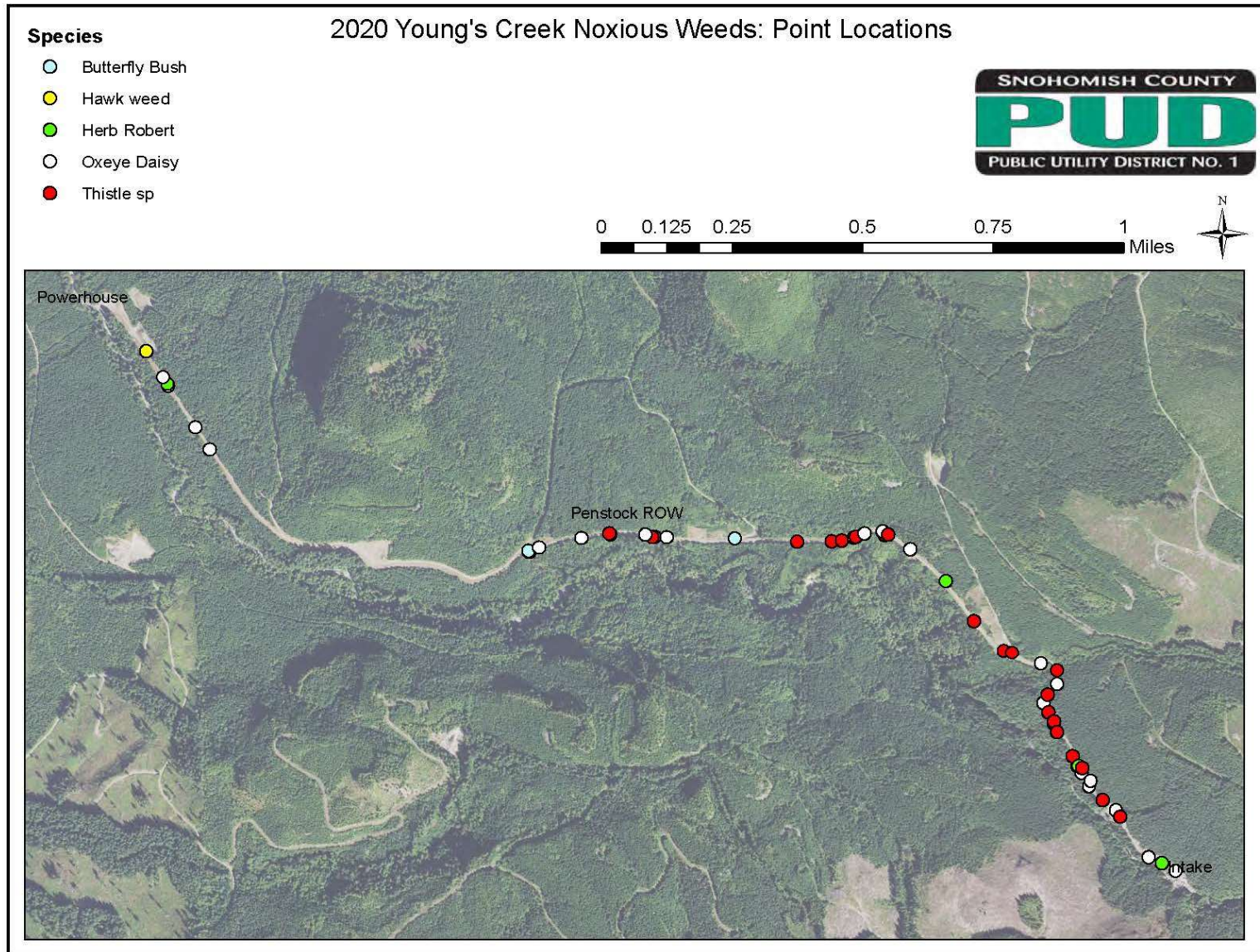


Figure 2. Map identifying discrete noxious weed locations.

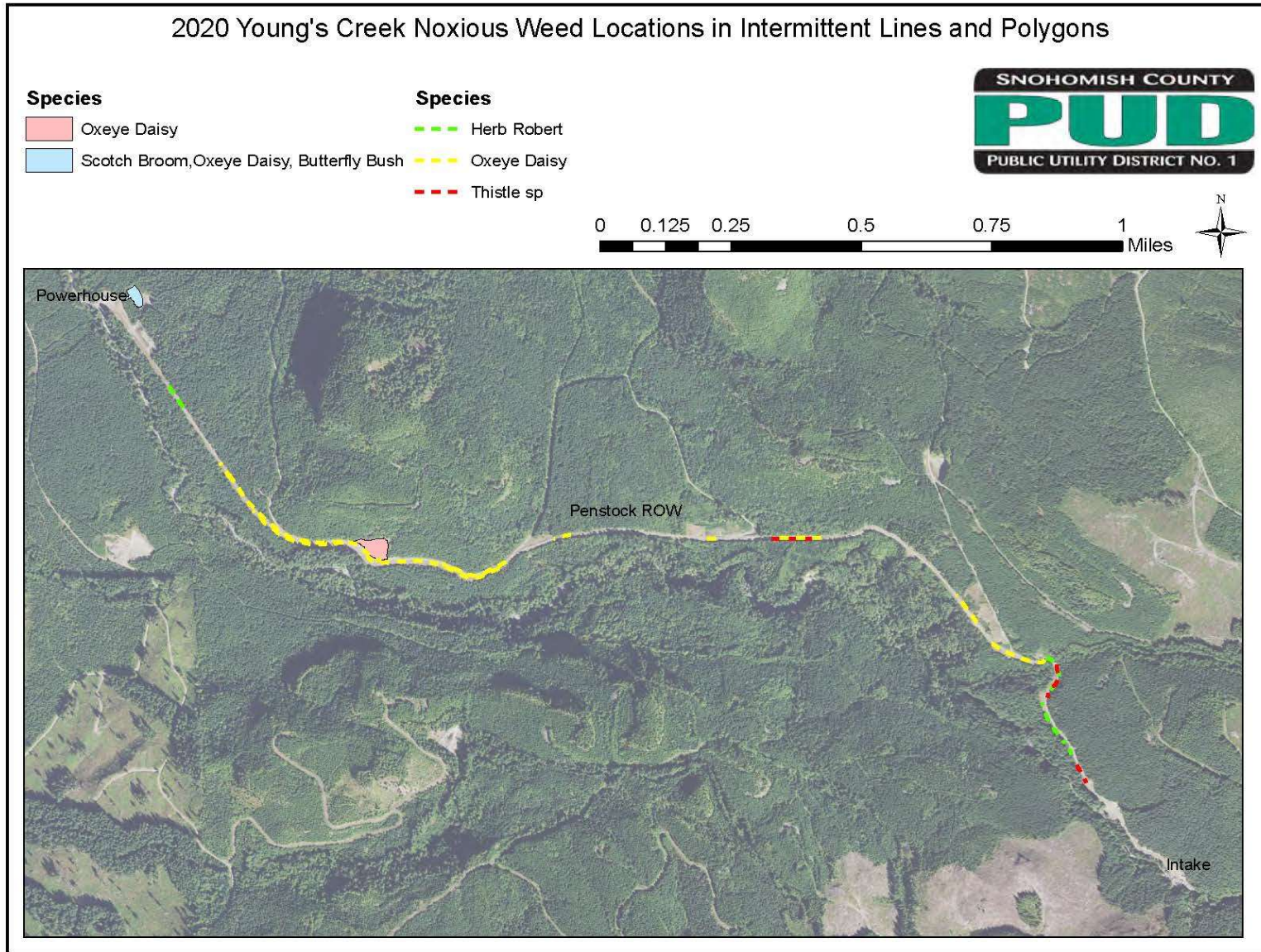


Figure 3. Map identifying noxious weed infestations in intermittent lines and polygons.

2.2 Access Road ROW Revegetation

The rights-of-way along the Project access roads (Figure 1) have been revegetated with the grass/forb mix noted in the WHMP. The former laydown areas were planted with Douglas-fir seedlings in 2011.

3. GATES

As required under WHMP Section 3.0(c), gates restricting access to the powerhouse and intake areas have been installed (Figure 1). Access is provided to District personnel and contractors for activities tied to normal Project maintenance. Access is also provided to adjacent landowners for professional silvicultural and forest management activities.

4. AVIAN NESTING AND PERCHING HABITAT

4.1. Nest Boxes

Prior to and following the nesting season, nest boxes were maintained by removing any debris and/or old nesting material from within the cavity of the boxes. Since the female gathers nesting materials in preparation for egg-laying, boxes are not provided with any supplemental nesting materials in advance of the nesting season. Nests were checked by the District biologist as required by the WHMP schedule (Appendix A).

Prior to the 2020 nesting season, two of the nest boxes were relocated and re-numbered. The pole that Box 12 was mounted to was struck by a tree and damaged. Box 12 was discontinued and re-numbered to Box 13 which was mounted to a tree along the right-of-way between Box 11 and Box 10 (Figure 4). Box 1 was destroyed by a small land and rockslide in the 5.3-acre CAPA and replaced with a solo tree mounted box between Box 2 and 3 and re-numbered Box 14 (Figure 4).

During the 2020 nesting season, tree swallows nested in four of the pole-mounted nest boxes and began nest construction in two additional boxes. One box has received use eight years in a row and six boxes have been used two or more years overall (Figure 4). To avoid excessive disturbance, eggs and chicks discovered in the nests were not moved during the counting process; as a result, numbers of eggs or fledglings are only estimates. In 2020, nest box surveys yielded a fledgling estimate of 13 tree swallows from 4 boxes. Monitoring associated with other nest box programs suggests that the installation of additional boxes should not be considered until a threshold of 50 to 80 percent successful usage is attained (Bellrose & Holm, 1994). No additional box installations are planned at this point.

In 2018, three owl boxes were placed in the 5.3-acre forested mitigation parcel. Target species were Northern saw-whet (*Aegolius acadicus*) and western screech (*Megascops kennicottii*) owls. Each box was placed between 10 and 15 feet above the ground on dominant trees within the densest areas of the forest. In 2020, the owl boxes had no observed use (Appendix A).



Figure 4. Map showing locations of nest boxes and perch poles.

4.2. Raptor Perch Poles

Seven raptor perch poles were erected on the penstock ROW in late 2011, based on field consultation between WDFW and District biologists. Perch poles were monitored concurrent with monitoring of nest boxes. During site visits in 2020, the immediate vicinity of each perch pole was inspected for signs of raptor use, including whitewash or owl pellets. No use of the perch poles was identified in 2020.

5. MITIGATION LANDS

As required under WHMP Section 3.0(e), 5.3 acres of mitigation lands were put into Critical Area Protection Area (CAPA) status in fall 2009 (Figure 1).³ Visual observations of the overstory were conducted concurrent with nest box and raptor perch pole checks. The site consists of mature second growth forest, approximately 70 years old, on a steep hillside above Youngs Creek. Tree diameter ranges between approximately 13 and 25 inches. Snags and coarse woody debris are present within the site. Understory exists primarily as sword fern and local patches of Devil's club. At this point, habitat is of good quality with natural conditions allowing for development into mature forests.

6. LITERATURE CITED

Bellrose, F.C. and D.J. Holm (eds.) 1994. Ecology and Management of the Wood Duck. Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA. 588p.

³ The 5.3 acres are recorded as CAPA under Snohomish County number 200910160192. The Snohomish County Assessor's property tax parcel/account number is 27083300100200 for this land.

APPENDIX A

Nest Box Monitoring Results

2020 Nest Box Details			
Box #	Style	Location	2020 Monitoring Results
Box 2	Bluebird Trailbox	Tree Mount in CAPA	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use
Box 3	Audubon	Tree Mount in CAPA	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use
Box 4	Woodlink	Co-mounted on perch pole	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: Nest built
			6/11/20: Adult on eggs
			6/24/20: 4-5 chicks
			7/15/20: At least 4 feathered chicks
			8/7/20: Empty nest; Fledged
			Result: Successful tree swallow nest
Box 5	Bluebird Trailbox	Solo mounted on pole	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: Partial nest
			5/27/20: Nest built
			6/11/20: Adult on eggs
			6/24/20: 3 chicks
			7/15/20: 3 feathered chicks
			8/7/20: Empty nest; Fledged
			Result: Successful tree swallow nest

Box 6	Bluebird Trailbox	Co-mounted on perch pole	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: Nest built
			5/27/20: Adult on eggs
			6/11/20: Adult on eggs
			6/24/20: 3 chicks
			7/15/20: 3 feathered chicks
			8/7/20: Empty nest; Fledged
			Result: Successful tree swallow nest
Box 7	Audubon	Solo mounted on pole	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: Partial nest
			6/11/20: Partial nest
			6/24/20: Partial nest
			7/15/20: Partial nest
			8/7/20: Old partial nest
			Result: Partial nest built
Box 8	Coveside Slant front	Solo mounted on pole	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: Nest and feathers
			5/27/20: Nest and feathers
			6/11/20: Nest built
			6/24/20: Nest built
			7/15/20: 3-4 chicks
			8/7/20: Empty nest; Fledged
			Result: Successful tree swallow nest
Box 9	Woodlink	Mounted on mature riparian tree	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use
Box 10	Woodlink	Co-mounted on perch pole	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: Partial nest
			6/11/20: Partial nest
			6/24/20: Partial nest
			7/15/20: Partial nest
			8/7/20: Probably squirrel nest

Box 11	Coveside Slant front	Solo mounted on pole	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: Partial nest and feathers
			5/27/20: Nest and feathers
			6/11/20: Adult in box
			6/24/20: Partial nest/feathers
			7/15/20: Partial nest and feathers
			8/7/20: Old nesting material
			Result: Partial nest built
Box 13	Coveside Slant front	Solo mounted on tree	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use
Box 14	Audubon	Tree Mount in CAPA	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use
Owl Box 1	Coveside Slant front	Forested mitigation parcel	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use

Owl Box 2	Coveside Slant front	Forested mitigation parcel	4/17/20: No use
			5/12/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use
Owl Box 3	Coveside Slant front	Forested mitigation parcel	5/7/20: No use
			5/27/20: No use
			6/11/20: No use
			6/24/20: No use
			7/15/20: No use
			8/7/2020: No use
			Perch pole monitoring results.
Pole #	2020		
RP1	0		
RP2	0		
RP3	0		
RP4	0		
RP5	0		
RP6	0		
RP7	0		

APPENDIX B

Consultation Documentation

From: McDonnell, Andrew
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 7:43 AM
To: Brock Applegate; Tim Romanski
Cc: Binkley, Keith; Spahr, Jessica; Presler, Dawn; Schutt, Mike
Subject: DRAFT 2020 Young's Creek Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Plan Annual Report
Attachments: 2020 YC WHMP AnnRpt_Draft.pdf

Hello Brock and Tim!

My hope is that you are both doing well and are staying safe during these challenging times. Attached for your review is the Draft Young's Creek WHMP Annual Report which summarizes activities at Young's Creek hydroelectric project over the past year. Please take the next 30-days to review and provide your comments and/or questions back to me by December 24, 2020.

Thank you for your review.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Andrew

Andrew McDonnell
Senior Environmental Coordinator
Generation – Natural Resources
Snohomish County PUD
2320 California Street
Everett, WA 98206
O: 425-783-1841
C: 425-308-7937