

Western Gray Squirrel

2015 Annual Report to the Board



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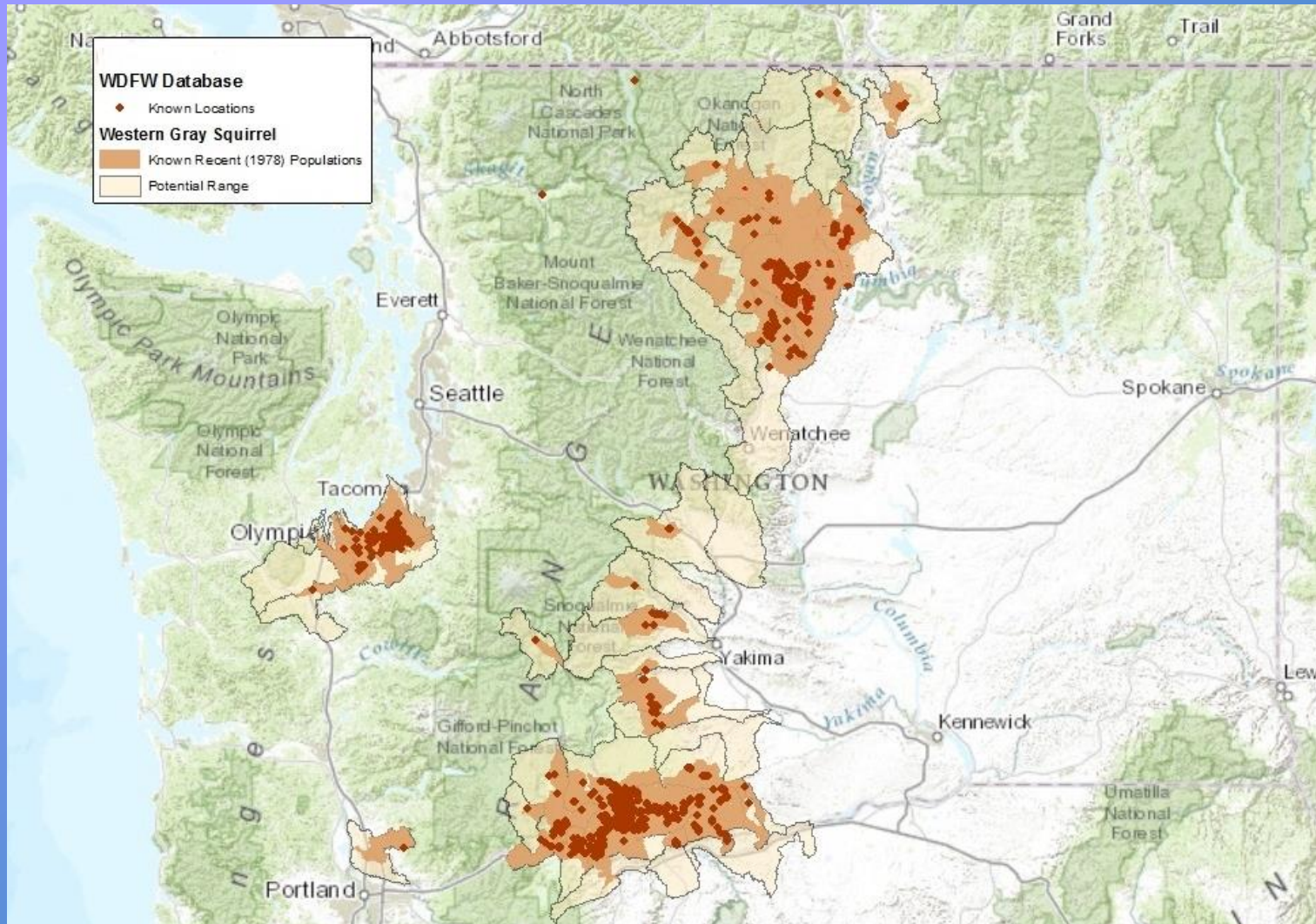
Brandon Austin – Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Species Background

- State Listed as Threatened – November 1993
- Inhabits oak woodlands and conifer forests
- Nesting:
 - Stick nests for resting and sleeping
 - Cavity nests for raising young



Distribution



Threats to the Species

- **Habitat loss and fragmentation**
 - **Land conversion**
 - **Logging**
 - **Conversion of oak woodlands to softwood stands through fire suppression**
 - **Fires**
- **Sheep grazing**
- **Disease/mange**



History of Board Actions

- **2013 – Administrative and Operational Improvements:**
 - Note presence of potential WGS or habitat on DNR office checklist.
 - Notify WDFW, DNR Foresters, and interested stakeholders of potential FPA “hit” for WGS.

History of Board Actions

- **2013 – Administrative and Operational Improvements (continued):**
 - Note included on FPA Decision page of potential presence and refers applicant to WDFW staff for assistance.
 - Annual reporting to the Board on Voluntary Protection Approach.

Forest Practices Applications/Notifications

- **All FPA/Ns are screened for potential impacts to WGS using WDFW data**
 - **WGS presence, nests, and/or potentially suitable habitat**
- **WDFW is notified of potential impacts within 1/4 mile**
- **WDFW completes additional screening**

2015 WDFW Tracking Data

FPA/Ns

73 FPA/Ns with possible WGS hits:

- 56 Klickitat County
- 16 Okanogan County
- 1 Clark County

Of 73 FPA/Ns:

- 25 Large Forest Landowners
- 48 Small Forest Landowners



2015 WDFW Tracking Data

WGS Site Management Plans

Of 73 FPA/Ns with possible WGS hits:

- All needed further review (confirming presence of WGS or nests).
- 52 did not require management plans:
 - 36 resulted in no WGSs or nests
 - 16 FPAs were for “Carlton Complex” salvage

2015 WDFW Tracking Data

WGS Site Management Plans (cont.)

Of 73 FPA/Ns with possible WGS hits:

- **21 required WGS management plans:**
 - **11 Large Forest Landowners**
 - **10 Small Forest Landowners**
 - **2 included less than ideal protection
Small Forest Landowners – Klickitat Co.
(e.g. leaving only nest trees)**

WDFW Periodic Status Review

- **January 2016, WDFW Periodic Status for WGS was presented to the WA Fish & Wildlife Commission**
 - **Species' relatively small population size**
 - **Continuing threats**
 - **Lack of information suggesting that populations have reached down-listing goals or substantially declined since 2005**
 - **Fish & Wildlife Commission took action to keep WGS as “State Threatened”**

WDFW Surveys and Research

Population/Habitat:

- Statewide (2015-2017) hair tube surveys to determine distribution and factor into abundance
- JBLM: Research on effects of forestry practices

Next 3 years:

- Evaluation of habitat change in Klickitat County
- Evaluation of impacts of recent wildfires in North Cascades



Other Landowner Efforts

Hancock Forest Management Research:

- Klickitat County
- Model for probability of nest detection, quantifying relationship between nests and WGS abundance, & quantifying use in response to forest management

SDS Lumber Company:

- Working with WDFW to develop a landscape-level habitat management plan for WGS
- Incorporating WDFW's PHS management recommendations for WGS

Moving Forward

In addition to on-going efforts:

- **Need additional funding/resources for data on distribution and abundance**
- **Need additional resources/funding for Effectiveness and Compliance Monitoring to better inform success of voluntary protection approach**
- **Explore opportunities for landscape management approaches**
- **Economic incentives for Small Forest Landowners**

