

INTRODUCTION

The Wayne E. Kirch Wildlife Management Area (KWMA) is located in the White River Valley in northeastern Nye County. State Route 318 is the major access route to the area. Ely is about 75 miles north of the area and Las Vegas is about 200 miles south of the area.

Settlement of the White River Valley progressed during the 1870s when isolated homesteads appeared, generally associated with meadows where a water supply was available. During the early 1900s, W. E. McGill and J. W. Adams formed the Adams-McGill Company which owned and operated a successful ranching empire for several decades with ranch land and associated federal rangeland totaling nearly 100,000 acres. Ervin Hendrix purchased the Sunnyside and Hot Creek Ranches in 1943 and operated the ranch until 1959. The Nevada Fish and Game Commission recognized the wildlife potential of the property and purchased the area in 1959. In May 1968, the area was established as the Wayne E. Kirch WMA in honor of Fish and Game Commissioner Wayne E. Kirch of Clark County. Today, KWMA is comprised of a total of 14,815 acres, including five major reservoirs. The Hot Creek Refugium, which is located in the north central portion of the area, has been designated as a National Natural Landmark and is also designated as critical habitat for the protected Moorman White River springfish.

HABITAT TYPES

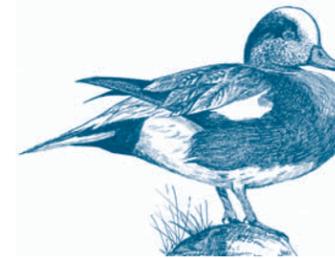
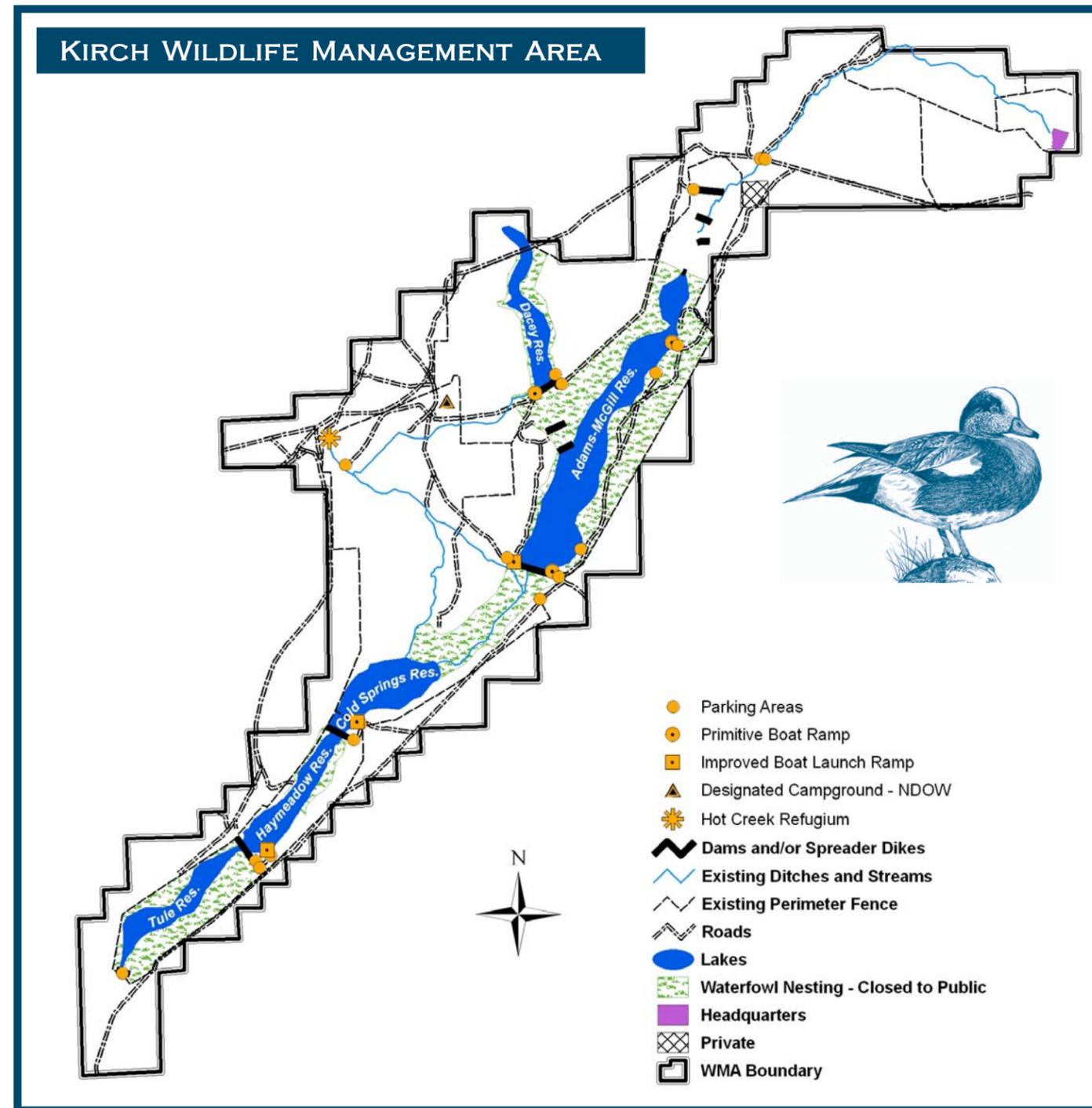
From sagebrush shrublands to wet meadows and grasslands, the habitats of KWMA support an abundance of fish and wildlife that contribute significantly to the biological diversity of central Nevada. Wetlands on KWMA include open waters (lacustrine), riverine, fresh emergent wetlands, and wet meadow. The lacustrine habitat encompasses the five reservoirs on the area: Tule, Adams-McGill, Cold Springs, Dacey and Haymeadow Reservoirs. The deep water provides habitat for fish, cormorants, and diving ducks. Shallow shore zones of the reservoirs provide feeding areas for puddle ducks and shorebirds. The riverine system includes wetlands and deep-water habitats contained within the White River corridor and floodplain, which bisects the area. Wet meadows and fresh emergent wetlands are among the most productive wildlife habitats in Nevada. They provide food, cover, and water for numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

Uplands on KWMA include sagebrush, alkali desert scrub, annual grassland and desert wash. The sagebrush ecosystem is important habitat for mule deer, pronghorn, sage grouse and nongame species. The desert wash habitat can be found in narrow corridors around intermittent streams carrying runoff from the Egan Range into the White River Valley.

AREA MANAGEMENT

Prescribed Grazing

At the Kirch WMA, prescribed grazing is used as a habitat management tool to stimulate green-up, help control the overgrowth of undesirable emergent vegetation, and to control invasive weeds. The grazed areas provide succulent feed for



waterfowl and improves habitat for other wildlife as well as increased hunter mobility by opening up thick stands of vegetation. Without prescribed grazing, many of these areas would remain fallow and the build up of dead vegetation would eventually minimize spring green-up of grasses, which would attract fewer birds.

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning is conducted on KWMA in late fall and winter to improve habitat conditions for resting, nesting and

feeding waterfowl. The burns remove excessive vegetation and optimize forage production for waterfowl.

Herbicide Spraying

Herbicide application, in conjunction with prescribed grazing and water management, is an effective method for managing undesirable vegetation. Aerial spraying is conducted every few years to open up thick stands of cattail and hardstem bulrush to make the wetland more attractive to waterfowl and other wildlife.

Invasive Plant Control

The invasion of non-native plants has become a major threat to the native habitats on KWMA. Controlling invaders such as tall whitetop, Russian knapweed, hoary cress and tamarisk is a difficult and time-consuming management concern. The competitive nature of these plants and their ability to spread impacts the natural plant diversity and ultimately the diversity of animals on KWMA.

WILDLIFE AND FISH

The wildlife of KWMA is extremely diverse due to the mosaic of habitats present and NDOW's efforts to develop as much wetland habitat as the area's water resources can sustain. The exceptional diversity in such a relatively small area emphasizes the biological importance of the area.

Waterfowl

The KWMA provides a valuable stopping place for ducks migrating within the Pacific Flyway. Over 24 species of ducks have been recorded on KWMA - the most common species being canvasback, pintail, widgeon, and gadwall. Waterfowl populations generally peak in October and early November with the spring migration occurring from March through April. Up to 12 species of ducks breed and raise their young on the area with the peak of hatch in late July through early August. Adams-McGill and Dacey Reservoirs produce most of the ducklings on the area.

Canada geese are the most common geese on the KWMA with white-fronted, snow and Ross geese being infrequent users of the area. Tundra swan are annual winter visitors to the White River Valley.

Upland Game and Mammals

Mourning dove have been observed on all upland habitat types on the KWMA but are most concentrated in the food plots next to the headquarters. White-winged dove are occasionally seen on the area.

Mammals seen on KWMA include black-tailed jackrabbit, cottontail rabbit, bobcat, coyote, spotted skunk, striped skunk, long-tailed weasel, badger and others. Four big game species have been recorded on the area. Mule deer use the area throughout the year with a population estimate of about 30 animals. Pronghorn continue to use portions of the area following their reintroduction into the White River Valley in 1984. Rocky Mountain elk are occasionally seen on the area, while a mountain lion sighting is regarded as rare.

NONGAME WILDLIFE

Although the area was originally purchased and developed to preserve wetland habitat, principally for waterfowl, many other wildlife species including raptors, shorebirds, wading birds and other water-associated birds have benefited from this project.

KWMA is visited by a variety of raptors during all seasons. Nesting species, including great horned owls and Northern

harriers, golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, and prairie falcons use the area primarily for feeding. Peregrine falcons and merlins inhabit the area during the spring and fall migration periods and bald eagles and rough-legged hawks visit the area for winter feeding.

Black-necked stilts, American avocets, greater yellow legs, plovers, dowitchers, long-billed curlews and marbled godwits are common shorebirds on the area. Shorebird populations are most numerous during the fall and spring migrations. One of the most important shorebird habitat areas is located below Kirch's southern boundary in the Murphy Meadows area where bottom land is flooded with winter and spring runoff water, creating a large expanse of shallow flooded area.

Wading birds common to the area include white-faced ibis, great blue herons, black crowned night herons, great egrets, snowy egrets and bitterns. Of those species, black-crowned night herons and great blue herons nest on the area.

Other water associated birds seen on the area include gulls, terns, double-crested cormorants and white pelicans – all foraging on the abundant fish life present in the waters of the area. Pied-billed and eared grebes nest on the area - primarily in the suitable habitat on the edges of Dacey and Adams-McGill Reservoirs, while Western and horned grebes are transient visitors. Emergent habitat necessary for Virginia rails and soras is provided on the area. Greater sandhill cranes are also occasional visitors to KWMA.

Passerine populations generally peak during the spring migration period. The greatest numbers occur near riparian habitat and in close proximity to marsh areas. Passerine birds that nest in or near the KWMA include horned larks, marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds, savannah sparrows and song sparrows.

The meadow and wetland areas are important habitat for voles, shrews, harvest mice and other small mammals. The uplands provide habitat for pocket mice, kangaroo rats, and other mice. In addition, the open water sources provide abundant insects for several species of bats.

FISH RESOURCES

Populations of both game and nongame fish are present at KWMA. Largemouth bass and black bullhead are self-sustaining game fish species on the area with bass utilizing the shallower shoreline areas of Cold Springs, Haymeadow and Adams-McGill Reservoirs for spawning activities. Hatchery-reared trout are stocked twice a year and provide a put, grow and take fishery in Cold Springs, Haymeadow and Adams-McGill Reservoirs. Dacey Reservoir is managed for a two-story fishery of bass and trout. Tule Reservoir is not managed as a fishery due to diminished water availability during the hot season and waterfowl management needs.

Four protected endemic species of fish are found in Flag and Hot Creek Springs and include the White River spinedace, the Moorman White River springfish, the White River speckled dace, and the White River desert sucker. The Hot Creek Refugium, which encompasses Hot Creek Springs, was officially designated in 1966 as a critical habitat for the protected Moorman White River springfish. Management of these four endemic species is directed toward preservation of existing habitat and perpetuation of the species.



WATER RESOURCES

The major sources of water for the KWMA are springs, ground water inflow, surface water inflow and precipitation. Water is usually abundant during winter, spring, and early summer, but is somewhat less than adequate to maintain levels in Cold Springs, Haymeadow and Adams-McGill Reservoirs during the late summer-early fall period. The KWMA is located near the northern end of the White River drainage basin and a considerable amount of water may flow through the area during runoff periods. The water distribution system is composed of approximately 17 miles of dirt ditches and about nine miles of natural stream channels. The Old Place, Dacey, Adams-McGill and Tule Reservoirs are managed for maximum utilization by waterfowl during the spring and fall migration periods and for waterfowl production. Cold Springs and Haymeadow Reservoirs are managed for high stable water levels on a yearly basis to maximize fisheries values.

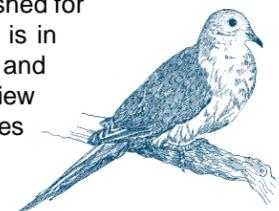
PUBLIC USES

Wildlife-Related Recreation

Wildlife observation, sightseeing, photography, horseback riding, camping, educational activities, swimming, and hiking are some of the wildlife-related activities available on KWMA. While swimming is permitted year round in Hot Creek Springs, NDOW recommends that users not use soap or other contaminants that may diminish the quality of water that is vital to the existence of the protected endemic fish in the springs. Camping is available at the Dave Deacon Campground. Boats are frequently used on KWMA by anglers and waterfowl hunters. Several developed boat ramps with docks and primitive boat ramps are available for easy access to the reservoirs. Roads throughout the area provide excellent viewing of wetland-dependent and upland wildlife.

Hunting

Hunting on KWMA provides a great amount of recreation - particularly for residents of southern and eastern Nevada. Waterfowl and dove hunting are the two most popular hunting activities on the area, while rabbit and quail hunting typically occurs incidental to other hunting activities. Hunting pressure is very light for mule deer on KWMA due to the low population level on the area and also due to weapons restrictions that have been established for safety purposes. The Kirch WMA is in both Hunt Management Units 132 and 133. Hunters are encouraged to review NDOW's hunting regulation brochures prior to hunting at KWMA.



Fishing

Fishing continues to be the most popular recreational activity on the area. Significant use by trout fisherman occurs from March through August while bass fishing activity picks up in May and continues through September. The fishing season on KWMA is open year round except for Dacey and Tule Reservoirs and the upper portions of Adams-McGill, Cold Springs, and Haymeadow Reservoirs, which are open to fishing August 16 through February 14. Hot Creek, due to its confluence with Adams-McGill Reservoir, is closed year round to fishing and a 100-yard radius around the inflow from Hot Creek to Dacey and Adams-McGill Reservoirs is closed to fishing January 1 through April. Anglers are encouraged to review NDOW's fishing regulation booklet prior to fishing at KWMA.

GETTING THERE
From Las Vegas (approximately 175 miles), take Interstate 15 north to U.S. 93, then take State Route 318 north. Kirch WMA is located about 60 miles north of Hiko.
From Ely (approximately 75 miles), take U.S. 6 south to State Route 318 and continue to Kirch WMA.



www.ndow.org

Kirch Wildlife Management Area is open year-round, without hourly restrictions. There is no charge for use of the area, but hunters, anglers and other users are asked to complete visitor cards before leaving. For more information, contact Kirch Wildlife Management Area at (775) 238-0240, or NDOW's Habitat Bureau at (775) 463-7816. This publication was developed by the Nevada Department of Wildlife's Habitat and Conservation Education Divisions, 1100 Valley Road, Reno, NV 89512.

This property is managed with Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act funds, which are derived from an excise tax on the sale of firearms and ammunition. This publication was partially funded through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration program.

