



Forest fires destroyed more than 110,000 acres of forest land in Grant County in 2015.

MARISSA WILLIAMS PHOTO

WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

REMAIN STRONG DESPITE RECENT WILDFIRES

BY RYLAN BOGGS

Big game populations are ready for hunting season in Grant County.

Despite stress from recent fires, hot summers and harsh winters, elk populations have steadily increased, and deer populations have held steady, according to Ryan Torland, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife district biologist for Grant County.

Though the recent fires did directly kill a handful of deer, and possibly elk, they haven't adversely affected overall populations, he said.

Based on this winter's census, Torland said the Northside Unit has about 6,500 deer and 2,700 elk. The Murderers Creek Unit has about 6,200 deer and 1,900 elk. The Desolation Unit

has about 1,000 deer and 1,500 elk, he said, and the Beulah Unit has about 500 elk.

Some cases of epizootic hemorrhagic disease and adenovirus hemorrhagic disease have been observed in deer herds, Torland said, but nothing that worried him too much.

Torland estimated, based on this winter's populations, there are 150 bighorn sheep in the Aldrich Mountain area and 100 in the McClellan area, as well as 65 mountain goats in the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness.

Although deer and elk populations have not been affected by the fire, Torland expressed concern that bears may cause problems for residents while searching for food sources to replace those that were burned last year.

Though the recent fires did directly kill a handful of deer, and possibly elk, they haven't adversely affected overall populations.