

Public Lands Answer To The Where To Hunt Question

By Dennis L. Clay, Columbia Basin Herald

It is a question that is posed at local restaurants, motels and resorts each year during the hunting season, "Where can I hunt?"

Providing the information has become a tradition in the Columbia Basin Herald's annual hunting section.

Savvy hunters will seek permission to hunt private lands months ahead of time. But the Columbia Basin contains many acres of land available for hunting on public hunting.

Where are those lands? This is why the resorts and eateries ask this information appear each year in this section. It serves as a ready reference, as the person receiving the question need only hand it to the person asking for it.

Remember, finding birds and an animal at a specific place and on a specific day is always a gamble. Sometimes you just have to roll the dice and give this or that spot a try.

The many acres of public land available to all hunters provide hours and hours of successful hunting each season.

Potholes Reservoir

Perhaps the most famous spot to hunt in the Basin is the sand dune area of Potholes Reservoir.

Just take your boat and decoys to the islands on the north end of the reservoir and enjoy a hunt for ducks and maybe some geese.

Hunters who don't have a boat might try these spots:

- From Moses Lake, travel south on Highway 17 to Road M. Take a right on M and travel 6 miles to Road 6 and take another right.

Drive another three miles and take the dirt road to the left.

You should be on the edge of Potholes Reservoir heading south again.

After you drive a few hundred yards, you can park and walk the edge of the reservoir and jump ducks.

- From the Road M turn on to Road 6, travel to the white rock house and turn left.

Travel south on the dirt road until you reach the edge of a body of water. This is close to where Lind Coulee enters into Potholes Reservoir. Once again, you can walk that area and jump ducks and sometimes geese.

- Go over O'Sullivan Dam, past Mar Don Resort and head west past Potholes Reservoir to Dodson Road, a distance of about 11 miles. Take a right and head north for about one mile.

You will come to a spot near Frenchman Hills Wasteway.

Park there and hike east along the wasteway to jump shoot ducks or take a few decoys along for a spread. Be alert, for you may flush a pheasant or two.

- Five or six miles farther north on Dodson Road from Frenchman Hills Wasteway will put you near Winchester Wasteway. Walk east along the wasteway for birds.

Near Moses Lake

- From Moses Lake, get to the south side of I-90 by taking the overpass near the Moses Lake City Park (Blue Heron).
When you get across I-90 and come to the first T, take a left and drive to the first Public fishing and hunting sign.
Take a right and drive to the Crab Creek outlet, known locally as the spillways as there is a second one a bit beyond the first one.
The hike along the Creek, between Moses Lake and Potholes Reservoir, can be productive.
The two spillways become one a short distance below the outlet of Moses Lake.
- Go back to the first T, then take the Frontage Road.
Again this is south of I-90 across from the Moses Lake City Park (Blue Heron) area, and this time turn right and head west until you reach the Power Line Road.
Turn south (left) on the direct road. At the first Y, take a left and again, a left at the second Y.
You will be in a parking lot overlooking the area of Crab Creek between Moses Lake and Potholes Reservoir.
If you go back to that second Y and go down the hill, you will be at the point where Crab Creek enters Potholes Reservoir. There is a parking lot and a boat launch. There are miles of hunting north of this spot.
- Go back to the power line road and go to the right (this would be at the first Y). On that road you can explore the north end of Potholes Reservoir. Again there are miles and miles of waterline to hunt.
- Rock Ford Creek, northwest of Moses Lake, can provide a productive hunt. Take Highway 17 to the second sign indicating Neppel Road. Take a left at the paved road, then a right, about 100 yards, at the direct road.
At the end of this road is a parking lot. The creek and a duck blind are about a one-mile hike from this spot.
The duck blind is reserved for physically impaired persons, but anyone can use the blind unless it's occupied.
- Take Stratford Road north out of Moses Lake until you reach Road 7.

Take a right and travel one mile and take another right on Road K. Turn left at the Columbia Basin Hatchery sign. When you arrive at the hatchery buildings, stay to the left to reach the parking lot.

The right side of the hatchery is the housing area for the employees. Respect their privacy and stay clear of this area.

From the parking lot, walk east (toward the hill) to a little stream called Hatchery Creek.

This is a short hunt, but it can be productive.

I've taken ducks woodcock and pheasants in this area from the time I was in high school (almost 40 years ago).

- Go back to the spot where Road 7 crosses Crab Creek, halfway between Stratford Road and Road K, and stop in the parking lot. Hunt north along the creek.
- Head north on Stratford Road to Road 10. Put the rig in the parking lot and hunt north along Crab Creek.
- Continue out Stratford Road and take a left on Road 12. Head west for about two miles to the end of the road. Hike north and you will find Magpie Lake and Homestead Lake. There are also numerous small streams in this area, along with Crab Creek farther to the west.
- There are many other places scattered throughout the Basin. Some of the spots I've described can consume an entire day of hunting.

A couple of hunters with a lunch can hike along some portions of Crab Creek or Potholes Reservoir for hours and still be in a productive hunting area.

Other hunters may want to take along a couple of decoys each to put out a mini-spread while resting.

I've seen hunters arrive at a parking lot as I was returning from a walk in one of these areas.

The hunters left thinking I had cleared the area of birds.

In fact these areas can be productive even after being hunted a couple of times a day.

How can that be? The ducks and geese move along the creeks and reservoirs after being jumped in other areas.

While ducks are the primary birds taken in these areas, I've also taken pheasants and geese during these hunts.