



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

Name of Proposal: DNS 21-008: ANADROMOUS SALMON AND STEELHEAD
HATCHERY POLICY C-3624 SUPERSEDES POLICY C-3619

Description of Proposal:

This proposal is non-project specific and will guide the management of WDFW hatcheries in Washington state using the best available science and adaptive management practices. The purpose of policy C-3624 is to guide hatcheries and their individual rearing programs to advance the conservation and recovery of wild salmon and steelhead by continuing to implement hatchery reform measures; to perpetuate salmon and steelhead in accordance with existing mitigation programs and agreements for permanently lost habitat; and to provide sustainable economic and stability benefits to recreational, commercial and tribal fisheries in Washington State as appropriate. Policy C-3624 implements the following elements:

- 1) Establishes an overall philosophy as to the purpose, intent, and goals of anadromous salmon and steelhead hatchery production from WDFW-operated hatchery facilities. This philosophy establishes the conservation of natural resources as the highest priority for the policy. The policy also directs WDFW to “safely perpetuate salmon and steelhead resources to support sustainable fisheries.”
- 2) The policy directs WDFW to establish “clear goals for each hatchery program, conducting scientifically defensible-operations, and using a well-informed monitoring and evaluation program to make adaptive changes to achieve hatchery program goals.”
- 3) Hatchery programs will be designated as either conservation, mitigation, or fishery supplementation programs.
- 4) WDFW will operate hatcheries consistent with all applicable state and federal laws and state-tribal fishery management agreements, and by maintaining strong working relationships with tribes.
- 5) Makes clear that this policy is not a “Tribal Co-Manager-agreed joint policy agreement, an element of Tribal fishing rights case law, or a component of the Puget Sound Salmon Management Plan.” However, the policy does direct WDFW to work with Tribal Co-managers to establish a joint hatchery policy that would supersede all or parts of C-3624. The new joint policy would require a separate SEPA environmental review.
- 6) The policy makes clear that there exist significant risks and benefits to hatchery programs, and that hatchery operations should be conducted by balancing these risks and benefits. The Policy directs WDFW to achieve balance through a structured decision-making process that includes science-based risk management and adaptive management frameworks. The policy does not define how risks and benefits will be balanced, but directs the agency to establish the risk management framework, adaptive management framework, and the structured decision making process in a technical procedures document to be produced within a year of the approval of this policy.

- 7) Requires that management direction for each hatchery program be described in a Hatchery Management Plan (HMP). The HMPs will be based on the technical procedures document described above. The policy establishes a priority order for the production of HMPs, including the fact that HMPs cannot be implemented until the technical procedures document has been subjected to an appropriate SEPA environmental review, and approved by the Commission.
- 8) Consistent with Governor Inslee's Executive Order, the Governor's Southern Resident Orca (SRO) Task Force, and the Fish and Wildlife Commission's SRO Prey Initiative, WDFW is to consult with "Tribal Co-Managers and work with the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop an implementation plan for the SRO prey initiative."
- 9) All Chinook, Coho, and steelhead propagated in WDFW operated hatcheries will be externally marked, except where exempt by the policy.
- 10) WDFW should seek funding to accomplish specific tasks, including the identification of wild populations that would receive "an elevated level of protection," and compliance with environmental regulations.
- 11) WDFW will plan and implement methods to "separate hatchery and natural origin salmon and steelhead below natural spawning grounds where scientifically justified, logistically feasible, and agreed to with area-specific Tribal Co-Managers."
- 12) Finally, until HMPs are developed, approved, and implemented, which first requires the development and environmental review of the technical procedures document, all "existing hatchery operational plans, goals and objectives in effect on June 14, 2018 shall remain intact as current policy direction." There are three exceptions to this policy directive: The SRO prey initiative described above, Columbia River Salmon Fishery Management Policy, and the Willapa Bay Salmon Fishery Management Policy, will take precedent on any issues where they may be inconsistent with the hatchery policy and objectives in effect on June 14, 2018.

The environmental review of this Policy will be through a phased approach in accordance with WAC 197-11-060-5(c)(i). This SEPA determination concerns the first phase of environmental review – a review of the actions specified in the Policy C-3624. The second phase will concern an environmental review of a technical procedures document, to be developed as a requirement of Policy C-3624.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
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Location of Proposal, including street, if any: This is a statewide policy. The scope or range for implementation will be conducted by geographic regions such as Puget Sound, Washington Coast, Lower Columbia River, Middle Columbia River, Upper Columbia River and Snake River that match or are similar to the federal ESA salmon recovery units (ESU/DPS) and will be addressed during Phase 2.

Lead Agency: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law¹ does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this determination of nonsignificance (DNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this DNS according to state rules.² **We will not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the DNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or DNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on March 23, 2021**.

Method of Comment:

The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/open-comments>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946
- Mail to the address below.

Responsible Official: Lisa Wood

Position/Title: SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Habitat Program, Protection Division

Address: P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/closed-final>. Once the status is posted as final, applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.¹

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, contact Lisa Wood at the address above or email SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov.

DATE OF ISSUE: March 9, 2021

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 21-008.dns

Individuals who need to receive this information in an alternative format or language, or who need reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities may contact Dolores Noyes at (360-902-2349), or TTY 771, or email (dolores.noyes@dfw.wa.gov). For more information https://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/reasonable_request.html.