



State of Washington  
**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

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**DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)**

**Name of Proposal:** DNS 22-018: WEST ROCKY PRAIRIE FOREST THIN AND OAK RELEASE

**Description of Proposal:**

The project will perpetuate a legacy of prairie and Oregon white oak savanna and woodland on the West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area Unit, which will enhance habitat for WDFW Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The 99-acre commercial forest thinning involves three types of thinning:

- 50 acres of oak release and restoration: Douglas fir and other tree species will be thinned to release existing old-growth oak trees from competition or allow the growth of new oak where large oaks are currently deficient. Oak restoration thinning includes an Alternate Plan under the Forest Practices Rules so WDFW can save some of most impressive oaks in the South Puget Sound region that are present near seasonal streams. Thinning in the alternate plan areas and will protect 71 large oak trees of which 21 exceed 20" DBH and 5 that exceed 30" DBH. Some large Douglas fir will also be retained in the oak release areas and will be managed to more quickly reach their full potential as old growth trees.
- 40 acres of Douglas fir plantation release: Dense, largely monotypic plantations will be thinned to increase diversity and accelerate development of old-growth conifer forest conditions. As legacy stumps suggest that many of these areas were western red cedar forests, thinning is designed to encourage westerns red cedar where present.
- 9 acres of prairie restoration: Most Douglas fir will be removed from formerly open prairie areas. The largest Douglas fir trees (Typically over 36" in diameter at breast height) on the prairie, however, will be retained due to the challenges associated with removing such large trees from sensitive prairie habitat.

The project will include the following road work

Road Work	Details
Maintaining 3.2 miles of existing roads.	This includes grading of existing road surfaces and adding gravel only where needed. One rock ford will be installed in a non-fish wetland. Gravel and rock will come from a local quarry.
Constructing 1.8 miles of new permanent roads	Construction will involve the minimal grading necessary of native soils and adding gravel. A rock entrance and a small gravel parking area will be installed on flat ground by Tilley Road. Also, about 300 feet of road will be

	raised about one foot near Tilley road using gravel and rock from a local quarry.
Constructing and abandoning 1.2 miles of new temporary roads	Construction will involve the minimal grading necessary of native soils. Per Forest Practice Rules the temporary roads will be abandoned upon completion by seeding them, installing water bars to prevent erosion and tank traps to prevent vehicle access.
Abandoning 0.3 miles of existing road.	Soil disturbing activities may include the installation of water bars and tank traps as well seeding.

After the initial thinning is completed, slash materials will be piled and burned. Once slash is cleared, the site will be planted with native prairie and woodland species. Following the initial establishment of native species, the site will be maintained via mowing with a tractor to control Scotch broom. Prescribed fire will also be used to maintain prairie and woodland vegetation.

The 810-acre property is home to rare plants, state and federally listed butterflies and federally threatened Mazama pocket gophers as well as critically imperiled plant communities i.e. prairies and oak woodlands. The site is of conservation concern due to fire-suppression related conifer encroachment and invasive species including Scotch broom and Himalayan blackberry. The project goal is to restore these rare habitats with an emphasis on the needs for federal- and state-listed threatened and endangered species as well as other WDFW Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
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**Location of Proposal, including street, if any:** West Rocky Prairie Unit of the WDFW Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, east of Tilley Road SW and north of 143<sup>rd</sup> Ave SE in Thurston County, Washington: Township 6N, Range 2W, Sections 2, 11, and 12.

**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 law<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> **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 April 18, 2022.**

**Method of Comment:**

SEPA documents related to this proposal can be reviewed at the WDFW SEPA website at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/open-comments>.

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 through one of the following ways:

- Online at the Public Input comment portal for this proposal: <https://publicinput.com/WRockyPrairie>
- Email to: [WRockyPrairie@PublicInput.com](mailto:WRockyPrairie@PublicInput.com)

**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.<sup>1</sup>

If you have questions about this determination or the details of the proposal, or have difficulty with the Public Input comment portal, contact Lisa Wood at: [SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov).

**DATE OF ISSUE:** April 4, 2022

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 22-018.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 the Title VI/ADA Compliance Coordinator by phone at 360-902-2349, TTY (711), or email ([Title6@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Title6@dfw.wa.gov)).*