

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: April 19, 2024

Agenda item: Scatter Creek Phase 3 Forest Restoration Project

Presenter(s): Rod Pfeifle

Background summary:

Conifer encroachment is displacing rare prairie and oak savanna habitats on the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area. This project will restore prairie and oak savanna to benefit several species of greatest conservation need including Mazama pocket gophers.

Staff recommendation: Complete the following project

The Scatter Creek Phase 3 project will remove approximately 1.2 million board feet from 52 acres. WDFW will release about 27 acres from excessive competition oaks and create about 25-acres of prairie/conifer transition zones with large, fire-resilient Douglas fir trees.

The area will be treated using ground-based equipment including feller bunchers and rubber-tired skidders. The project will meet or exceed State Forest Practice Regulations.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

This project is designed to restore ecological integrity, improve habitat quality for prairie and oak woodland species including mazama pockets gophers. The project will also expand the amount of area potentially available for pheasant hunting.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

It is anticipated that this project will be cost neutral. Any timber revenue will be reinvested in post-harvest actions to transform cleared areas into prairie including slash cleanup, brush removal, pile burning, seeding, and weed control. Similar projects in 2018 were cost neutral. A similar project in 2023, however, had to be subsidized with 100K of legislatively appropriate forest health funds due to poor market conditions.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife follows the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review process.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Approval of the proposed Forest Restoration Thinning Project.

Draft motion language:

Motion: I move to approve the proposed commercial thinning project as presented.

Post decision communications plan:

Wildlife Area staff will notify the public regarding temporary access impacts.
