



**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT
OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
FINAL DETERMINATION OF
NON-SIGNIFICANCE**

December 01, 2005

State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE

Name of Proposal: DESIGNATION OF THE MAZAMA POCKET GOPHER AS A STATE THREATENED SPECIES (WAC 232.12.011) AND THE TAYLOR'S CHECKERSPOT BUTTERFLY AND STREAKED HORNED LARK AS STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES (WAC 232.12.014), AND DELISTING OF THE ALEUTIAN CANADA GOOSE FROM STATE THREATENED STATUS.

The status reports are available on the WDFW website <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/diversty/soc/concern.htm>, at WDFW regional offices, Olympia headquarters and at public libraries. To obtain a copy of the reports telephone (360) 902-2515; or send an E-mail request to wildthing@dfw.wa.gov.

Description of Proposal: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is evaluating the Mazama pocket gopher for possible listing as a state threatened species (WAC 232.12.011); the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly and streaked horned lark as state endangered species, and is evaluating the Aleutian Canada goose for possible delisting from state threatened status. Two rules are proposed to be amended: WAC 232.12.014, which identifies endangered species that are at risk of extirpation in the state and are in need of recovery actions to restore populations to healthy levels; and WAC 232.12.011, which identifies species in need of protection in Washington. The proposed amendments would classify the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly and Streaked Horned Lark as state endangered species, the Mazama Pocket Gopher as a state threatened species and would remove the Aleutian Canada goose from the state list of threatened species.

Native prairies are among the most endangered ecological communities in North America. Western Washington is generally known for its forests; it is less well known that the south Puget Sound area historically had large expanses of prairie and oak savannahs. These prairies and woodland communities developed during a warm dry period from 10,000 to 7,000 years ago on the droughty, gravelly soils deposited by the Vashon Glacier. In the recent past, glacial outwash prairie still existed on at least 150,000 ac, and grassland and oak woodlands occurred in smaller patches throughout the Puget Trough and south to the Columbia River. Local Native American tribes adapted to use the plants and game of these communities and maintained prairie in the area by burning the vegetation every few years during the last 4,000 years. Since settlement by Euro-Americans, the extent of these prairies has steadily declined with their use for agriculture and the cessation of burning that has allowed succession to Douglas-fir forest. Only about 8% of the original prairie still supports grassland vegetation and 2-3% is still dominated by native prairie vegetation. In addition to prairies on glacial outwash, native grasslands existed on perhaps 10,000 ac of coastal headlands, islands and rocky balds. Some of the wildlife of prairies, though now locally rare, are little different from abundant and widespread forms found across much of eastern Washington and in grassland communities elsewhere. A few of the wildlife species that inhabited these prairies and grasslands have been genetically isolated from their ancestral stocks for a long period of time and have evolved endemic forms found nowhere else. These unique forms have become rare with their habitat, and some are threatened with extinction. This report summarizes what is known about the natural

history and status of three species that have their center of abundance in Washington on the prairies of the southern Puget Sound: the Mazama pocket gopher; streaked horned lark; and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly.

Proponent: Endangered Species Section Manager
Washington Dept. Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way N
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360-902-2515

Location of Proposal, including street, if any: Statewide, Washington:

The **Mazama pocket gopher** (*Thomomys mazama*) is a regional endemic found only in western Washington, western Oregon and northern California. The subspecific taxonomy of *T. mazama* is in the process of being revised, but in Washington, *T. mazama* is likely represented by 3 surviving subspecies: *T. m. yelmensis* is found on locations scattered on the remnants of prairie in Pierce and Thurston counties; *T. m. couchi* is found on grassland at a few localities near Shelton in Mason County, including the airport; *T. m. melanops* is found on a few alpine meadows in Olympic National Park in Clallam County. Two additional subspecies that occurred around Tacoma (*T. m. tacomensis*) and in Wahkiakum County (*T. m. louiei*) appear to be extinct. Mazama pocket gophers are known to persist at about 27 sites scattered across the southern Puget Sound grasslands and on alpine meadows in the Olympics.

The **Taylor's checkerspot butterfly** was historically found on grassland habitats from over 70 sites from southeastern Vancouver Island, British Columbia through northwestern Oregon, including about 38 known locations in Washington. The subspecies is now restricted to 1 known population in British Columbia, small populations in 2 areas in Oregon, and a small scattering of 10 populations in Thurston, Pierce and Clallam counties in Washington.

The **streaked horned lark** historic breeding range included prairies and open grassland habitats in southwestern British Columbia, western Washington, and western Oregon. The center of abundance of the streaked horned lark in Washington was the prairies of southern Puget Sound, primarily in Pierce and Thurston counties. Streaked horned lark breeding in Washington is now limited only to 13 known sites: 6 sites in the south Puget Sound area; 4 sites along the outer coast; and 3 sites on islands in the lower Columbia River.

The **Aleutian Canada goose** migrates from breeding grounds in the Aleutian Islands in September, stopping along coastal areas of Washington and Oregon en route to wintering grounds in California and southwest Oregon. Washington contains migratory, not wintering, habitat. Principal migratory habitat in Washington is located in the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, Pacific County, and surrounding fields and farms.

Lead Agency: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

The lead agency for this proposal has determined that it does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c). This decision was made after review of the completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.

This DNS is issued under WAC 197-11-340(2); the lead agency will **not act on this proposal for 30 days** from the date of issue below. Comments must be submitted by: **November 30, 2005**

Responsible Official: Teresa A. Eturaspe

Position/Title: SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, Regulatory Services Section

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Please contact: Teresa A. Eturaspe **Phone:** (360) 902-2575 **Fax:** (360) 902-2946 or
e-mail: habitatSEPA@dfw.wa.gov if you have questions or comments about this determination.

DATE OF ISSUE: November 1, 2005

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Teresa A. Eturaspe".

SEPA Log Number: 05 -101. dns