



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Dear Interested Parties:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) titled, Statewide Steelhead Management Plan (SSMP). This Draft Environmental Impact Statement is presented to provide the public and other agencies with a process to review and comment on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's proposed Statewide Steelhead Management Plan.

This is a phased non-project review proposal. Phased review allows agencies and the public to focus on issues that are ready for decision and excludes from consideration of issues already decided or not yet ready.

The Department will use this statewide management plan to develop and implement regional management plans that identify the long-term goal, benchmarks for modifications to management actions, escapement objectives, and the expected trajectory for the diversity of, spatial structure, productivity, and abundance of each wild stock. Future phased review will be conducted for the following seven regional management plans: Puget Sound, Olympic Peninsula, Southwest Washington, Lower Columbia River, Mid-Columbia River, Upper Columbia River and Snake River. The SSMP and the collection of completed Regional Management Plans (RMPs) will be The Statewide Steelhead Management Plan for Washington.

This plan is necessary because in spite of seventy years of conservation efforts, many steelhead stocks are at a fraction of their historic numbers and five of the seven distinct population segments that exist in Washington are federally listed under the Endangered Species Act. To ensure long-term conservation of such stocks and production of fish for human use and ecological integrity, the Department of Fish and Wildlife started with a scientific foundation that summarized the distribution, status and previous management strategies in the draft report "*Oncorhynchus mykiss: Assessment of Washington State's Anadromous Populations and Programs*" (Draft July 21, 2006).

Findings and recommendations identified within the report represent the underpinnings of the proposed Statewide Steelhead Management Plan. The plan also takes into account how current science fits in with actions mandated by the Salmon Recovery Act of 1998 as well as protections provided by the Forest and Fish Act so that wild steelhead stocks can be effectively and efficiently restored and protected.

AREAS OF CONTROVERSY AND UNCERTAINTY

Stakeholders have clearly articulated that the foundation of a plan to restore and maintain wild steelhead must capture an increased level of commitment towards protecting wild stocks. The foundation and goal of the proposed *Statewide Steelhead Management Plan* is to “place the highest priority on the protection of wild steelhead and restoration of these stocks to healthy levels.” The placement of the “highest priority on the protection of wild steelhead and restoration of those stocks to healthy levels” creates a strong interconnection between natural production, artificial production and fisheries management. In addition, it also articulates a commitment towards habitat protection and restoration since it is key to achieving the long-term conservation goals. Actions that reduce the risks associated with artificial production and fisheries management are identified within the “preferred alternative”. The performance of steelhead program operations strategies must be carefully monitored to insure that the actions are restoring and maintaining abundance, distribution, diversity and long-term productivity to steelhead and their habitats.

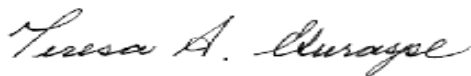
MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

This DEIS presents 4 alternatives containing 32 proposed policies grouped in 2 major policy categories: Steelhead Program Operations and Steelhead Program Administration. The DEIS considers the possible environmental effects of each. Selection of these policies will ultimately determine the contents of the *Statewide Steelhead Management Plan*.

*Following requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act, interested citizens can provide comments on this proposed project by attending the public meetings, or by sending comments on the DEIS via mail. **DEIS comments are due by August 30, 2007, 5:00 p.m.** See the “Fact Sheet” for details on meetings and commenting.*

WDFW believes this draft environmental impact statement will assist decision makers to identify the key environmental issues, and options associated with this action. Based on comments received from agencies and interested parties during public review of this draft document, WDFW will prepare and distribute a final environmental impact statement.

Sincerely,



Teresa A. Eturaspe
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Agency Responsible Official
Regulatory Services Division
Habitat Program