



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: WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (WDFW)/
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (WDNR) LAND
EXCHANGE PHASE 1

Description of Proposal:

Much of the state public land ownership pattern in eastern Washington today resembles a checkerboard. This is largely a result of how lands were distributed after Washington gained statehood in 1889. Some of the inadvertent effects of that checkerboard ownership pattern are the fragmentation of wildlife habitat, difficulty implementing long term management strategies and viable long term planning, and the higher management costs among different ownerships and management directives. In two large checkerboard landscapes, WDNR and WDFW own or manage every other square mile in a 170,000-acre landscape with different management goals and legal mandates. Exchanging lands would allow each agency to better address its specific management goals. The exchange would not reduce the total amount of public land available for wildlife or recreation.

Phase 1 exchange is to implement, approximately 14,435 total acres that would be traded between WDFW and WDNR. The Proposed Action would result in the acquisition of approximately 9,019 acres of shrub-steppe and lower elevation forest habitats for WDFW and approximately 5,416 acres of higher elevation forest habitat for WDNR. The primary public benefits of the exchange would be 1) protection/enhancement of important big game (e.g. elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, etc) habitat, habitat for shrub-steppe obligate species (e.g. sage grouse, sage thrasher, sage sparrow and Brewer's sparrow, etc) and habitat for forest obligates (e.g. goshawk, pileated woodpecker, white headed woodpecker, forest grouse, etc), 2) maintenance of public access and potential for recreation opportunities and 3) generation of revenue for the trust beneficiaries.

This exchange project is only a small part of a larger plan to exchange approximately 121,500 (possibly as much as 150,000) total acres between WDFW and WDNR. If the larger plan is fully implemented WDFW would acquire approximately 83,658 acres of shrub-steppe and lower elevation forest habitats and WDNR would acquire approximately 37,842 acres of higher elevation forest habitat. The exchanges are based on each agencies desire to continue blocking up their respective ownerships to consolidate important habitat types as well as improving public access for recreation and enhancing management efficiencies of State of Washington trust lands.

This land exchange project is the first phase in what is hoped to be three phases of land exchange. If subsequent phases are successfully implemented the aforementioned exchange acreage totals would be met. The first phase involves lands that were acquired with state funds. Subsequent exchanges would involve lands that were acquired with different types of federal support. The second phase may involve up to 50,000 acres of land and may occur in 2010. A timeline has not been established for a third phase to exchange the remaining lands.

Proponent/Applicant:

Department of Fish and Wildlife, 600 Capital Way North; Olympia, WA 98501-1091,
Jennifer Quan, Lands Division Manager, WDFW

Department of Natural Resource, P.O. Box 47014, Olympia, WA 98504-7014,
Stephen Saunders, Asset Management and Recreation Division Manager, WDNR

Location of Proposal, including street, if any: Kittitas, Okanogan, Yakima, Thurston Counties, Washington. Maps (including parcel lists) showing the parcels included in the Phase 1 exchange and potential future exchanges can be viewed at:

<http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hab/sepa/sepa.htm>

The bulk of the lands in this proposed Phase 1 exchange between WDFW and DNR are in Kittitas County but also include state owned lands in Okanogan, Yakima and Thurston Counties. While each agency's acreage contribution would not be equal due to the different values of land being exchanged (forest land vs. shrub-steppe land), the exchange is expected to be balanced, with each agency receiving the same value as they contribute. Table 1 shows the approximate acreage of potential parcels by county what may be included in the exchange. Table 2 includes the locations of the parcels that would be exchanged.

Table 1

	WDFW to DNR	DNR to WDFW	Total State Ownership
Kittitas	4,176	9,018	Unchanged
Okanogan	920		Unchanged
Thurston		1	Unchanged
Yakima	320		Unchanged
TOTAL	5,416	9,019	Unchanged

Table 2. Locations of Transfer parcels

From WDFW to WDNR				From WDNR to WDFW			
Township	Range	Section	County	Township	Range	Section	County
17	16	3	KITTITAS	17	17	4	KITTITAS
17	16	11	KITTITAS	18	17	16	KITTITAS
17	16	18	KITTITAS	18	17	18	KITTITAS
17	16	19	KITTITAS	18	17	20	KITTITAS
17	16	20	KITTITAS	18	17	30	KITTITAS
17	16	29	KITTITAS	18	17	32	KITTITAS
17	16	31	KITTITAS	19	21	2	KITTITAS
17	16	33	KITTITAS	19	21	4	KITTITAS
35	24	10	OKANOGAN	19	21	12	KITTITAS
35	24	11	OKANOGAN	19	21	14	KITTITAS
16	16	4	YAKIMA	19	21	16	KITTITAS
				19	21	22	KITTITAS
				19	21	24	KITTITAS
				19	21	26	KITTITAS
				19	21	34	KITTITAS
				19	21	36	KITTITAS
				19	22	18	KITTITAS
				16	2	28	THURSTON
				18	22	24	KITTITAS

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. This means we must receive your comments by **August 18, 2009**

You can submit your comments by email to SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov, through the WDFW SEPA website comment link at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hab/sepa/sepa.htm>, fax to (360) 902-2946, or mail to the address below. When you send us your comments, please provide the name of the proposal in your comment letter.

Responsible Official: Teresa A. Eturaspe

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

Address: 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hab/sepa/sepa.htm>. 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 Teresa Eturaspe at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call her at (360) 902-2575.

DATE OF ISSUE: August 4, 2009 **SIGNATURE:** 

Footnotes

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

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