

WAC 197-11-960 Environmental checklist.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

Purpose of checklist:

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), chapter 43.21C RCW, requires all governmental agencies to consider the environmental impacts of a proposal before making decisions. An environmental impact statement (EIS) must be prepared for all proposals with probable significant adverse impacts on the quality of the environment. The purpose of this checklist is to provide information to help you and the agency identify impacts from your proposal (and to reduce or avoid impacts from the proposal, if it can be done) and to help the agency decide whether an EIS is required.

Instructions for applicants:

This environmental checklist asks you to describe some basic information about your proposal. Governmental agencies use this checklist to determine whether the environmental impacts of your proposal are significant, requiring preparation of an EIS. Answer the questions briefly, with the most precise information known, or give the best description you can.

You must answer each question accurately and carefully, to the best of your knowledge. In most cases, you should be able to answer the questions from your own observations or project plans without the need to hire experts. If you really do not know the answer, or if a question does not apply to your proposal, write "do not know" or "does not apply." Complete answers to the questions now may avoid unnecessary delays later.

Some questions ask about governmental regulations, such as zoning, shoreline, and landmark designations. Answer these questions if you can. If you have problems, the governmental agencies can assist you.

The checklist questions apply to all parts of your proposal, even if you plan to do them over a period of time or on different parcels of land. Attach any additional information that will help describe your proposal or its environmental effects. The agency to which you submit this checklist may ask you to explain your answers or provide additional information reasonably related to determining if there may be significant adverse impact.

Use of checklist for nonproject proposals:

Complete this checklist for nonproject proposals, even though questions may be answered "does not apply." IN ADDITION, complete the SUPPLEMENTAL SHEET FOR NONPROJECT ACTIONS (part D).

For nonproject actions, the references in the checklist to the words "project," "applicant," and "property or site" should be read as "proposal," "proposer," and "affected geographic area," respectively.

A. BACKGROUND

1. Name of proposed project, if applicable: *Sagebrush Flat pygmy rabbit large enclosure #2.*
2. Name of applicant: *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 2, (Contact, Penny Becker)*
3. Address and phone number of applicant and contact person:

*Dr. Penny Becker, Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Coordinator
WDFW Region Two
1550 Alder St. NW
Ephrata, WA 98823
509-754-4624 (Ext. 240)*
4. Date checklist prepared: *28 July 2011*
5. Agency requesting checklist: *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*
6. Proposed timing or schedule (including phasing, if applicable):

Construction will begin in late August or September 2011. There are future pygmy rabbit recovery scenarios that would include the construction of additional enclosures; however, no definite plans have been finalized.

7. Do you have any plans for future additions, expansion, or further activity related to or connected with this proposal? If yes, explain.

Recovery efforts for pygmy rabbits on the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area, and in other areas in eastern Washington, are envisioned to continue for an extended period of time. During the recovery process, we will be exploring multiple methods to reestablish rabbits in native habitat. Several of these proposed methods may require the construction of additional large enclosures within the recovery area. At this time we are not scheduling construction of additional enclosures, however, we may decide in the future that more enclosures are need.

8. List any environmental information you know about that has been prepared, or will be prepared, directly related to this proposal.

Pygmy rabbit management and recovery efforts have been ongoing in Washington for several decades. The amount of materials associated with these efforts is too great to list here. Relative to the construction of enclosures on the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area, cultural surveys were completed in the area in the winter of 2011, with the report finding no evidence of any cultural concerns. An additional cultural survey will be completed prior to the construction of this enclosure.

9. Do you know whether applications are pending for governmental approvals of other proposals directly affecting the property covered by your proposal? If yes, explain.

The only governmental approval required is the completion of cultural surveys prior to construction. The process for completing cultural surveys has been started and will be complete prior to the start of construction. We are also working in close coordination with Wildlife Area staff and have the support of the Wildlife Area for this project.

10. List any government approvals or permits that will be needed for your proposal, if known.

Completion of cultural surveys.

11. Give brief, complete description of your proposal, including the proposed uses and the size of the project and site. There are several questions later in this checklist that ask you to describe certain aspects of your proposal. You do not need to repeat those answers on this page. (Lead agencies may modify this form to include additional specific information on project description.)

We propose to construct a 10.85 acre (3001 foot perimeter) fenced enclosure of native shrub-steppe habitat on the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area as a temporary holding area for reintroduced Columbia Basin pygmy rabbits. The final enclosure will be six to seven feet high, with 12-18 inches of the fence buried below the soil surface to exclude predators. Fence panels are composed of 1/2" x 1" welded wire. The support structures for the fence will be 7 foot wooden post, with steel t-posts placed between wooden posts. A number of artificial burrows will be dug in deeper soft soils to provide shelter for introduced rabbits. The enclosure will be a temporary structure that will be removed. Once removed, any habitat disturbed during construction will be replanted and the site recovered.

12. Location of the proposal. Give sufficient information for a person to understand the precise location of your proposed project, including a street address, if any, and section, township, and range, if known. If a proposal would occur over a range of area, provide the range or boundaries of the site(s). Provide a legal description, site plan, vicinity map, and topographic map, if reasonably available. While you should submit any plans required by the agency, you are not required to duplicate maps or detailed plans submitted with any permit applications related to this checklist.

Section 27/ Township 23/ Range 25

Maps attached.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS

1. Earth

a. General description of the site (circle one): Flat, rolling, hilly, steep slopes, mountainous, other

Flat shrub-steppe (sagebrush) habitat.

b. What is the steepest slope on the site (approximate percent slope)?

Two (2) to three (3) percent slope maximum, across very small areas. Total topographic relief in the area may be as little as 10-15 vertical feet .

c. What general types of soils are found on the site (for example, clay, sand, gravel, peat, muck)? If you know the classification of agricultural soils, specify them and note any prime farmland.

Very shallow to moderately deep, well drained soils that formed in residuum and colluvium or loess over older loess over bedrock

d. Are there surface indications or history of unstable soils in the immediate vicinity? If so, describe.

No.

e. Describe the purpose, type, and approximate quantities of any filling or grading proposed. Indicate source of fill.

None.

f. Could erosion occur as a result of clearing, construction, or use? If so, generally describe.

No.

g. About what percent of the site will be covered with impervious surfaces after project construction (for example, asphalt or buildings)?

None.

h. Proposed measures to reduce or control erosion, or other impacts to the earth, if any:

Minimize disturbance to soils in the area during construction. Following removal of the fence, any disturbed soils or vegetation will be replanted and the site restored.

2. Air

a. What types of emissions to the air would result from the proposal (i.e., dust, automobile, odors, industrial wood smoke) during construction and when the project is completed? If any, generally describe and give approximate quantities if known.

Minimal amounts of dust will be created in digging a shallow trench to bury roughly 12- 18 inches of fence beneath the surface of the soil. The use of a gas-powered trencher, auger and trucks is required for completion. The fence should be completed within one week.

b. Are there any off-site sources of emissions or odor that may affect your proposal? If so, generally describe.

None.

c. Proposed measures to reduce or control emissions or other impacts to air, if any:

We will minimize the amount of time taken for construction.

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3. Water

a. Surface:

1) Is there any surface water body on or in the immediate vicinity of the site (including year-round and seasonal streams, saltwater, lakes, ponds, wetlands)? If yes, describe type and provide names. If appropriate, state what stream or river it flows into.

None.

2) Will the project require any work over, in, or adjacent to (within 200 feet) the described waters? If yes, please describe and attach available plans.

None.

3) Estimate the amount of fill and dredge material that would be placed in or removed from surface water or wetlands and indicate the area of the site that would be affected. Indicate the source of fill material.

None.

4) Will the proposal require surface water withdrawals or diversions? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

None.

5) Does the proposal lie within a 100-year floodplain? If so, note location on the site plan.

None.

6) Does the proposal involve any discharges of waste materials to surface waters? If so, describe the type of waste and anticipated volume of discharge.

None.

b. Ground:

1) Will ground water be withdrawn, or will water be discharged to ground water? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

None.

2) Describe waste material that will be discharged into the ground from septic tanks or other sources, if any (for example: Domestic sewage; industrial, containing the following chemicals. . . ; agricultural; etc.). Describe the general size of the system, the number of such systems, the number of houses to be served (if applicable), or the number of animals or humans the system(s) are expected to serve.

None.

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c. Water runoff (including stormwater):

1) Describe the source of runoff (including storm water) and method of collection and disposal, if any (include quantities, if known). Where will this water flow? Will this water flow into other waters? If so, describe.

There will be no associated runoff.

2) Could waste materials enter ground or surface waters? If so, generally describe.

No

d. Proposed measures to reduce or control surface, ground, and runoff water impacts, if any:

None, there will be no associated runoff.

4. Plants

a. Check or circle types of vegetation found on the site:

_____ deciduous tree: alder, maple, aspen, other

_____ evergreen tree: fir, cedar, pine, other

_____ shrubs

_____ grass

_____ pasture

_____ crop or grain

_____ wet soil plants: cattail, buttercup, bullrush, skunk cabbage, other

_____ water plants: water lily, eelgrass, milfoil, other

_____ other types of vegetation

b. What kind and amount of vegetation will be removed or altered?

Shrub-steppe (sagebrush) vegetation. The construction associated with the 3001 feet of fence will impact roughly 0.7 acres of habitat

c. List threatened or endangered species known to be on or near the site.

Puzzling rockcrest, State threatened

d. Proposed landscaping, use of native plants, or other measures to preserve or enhance vegetation on the site, if any:

Native plants inside enclosure will be irrigated in order to produce increased forage for translocated rabbits. When the enclosure is removed, native vegetation (sagebrush and grass species) will be planted in any areas disturbed.

5. **Animals**

a. Circle any birds and animals which have been observed on or near the site or are known to be on or near the site:

birds: hawk, heron, eagle, songbirds, other: *prairie falcon, short-eared owl, northern harrier.*
mammals: deer, bear, elk, beaver, other: *Washington ground squirrels*
fish: bass, salmon, trout, herring, shellfish, other: *None*

b. List any threatened or endangered species known to be on or near the site.

Greater Sage-grouse, State threatened
Pygmy Rabbits, Federal endangered

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c. Is the site part of a migration route? If so, explain.

No

d. Proposed measures to preserve or enhance wildlife, if any:

Habitat within the enclosure will be irrigated, which will increase productivity and the amount of available forage.

6. **Energy and natural resources**

a. What kinds of energy (electric, natural gas, oil, wood stove, solar) will be used to meet the completed project's energy needs? Describe whether it will be used for heating, manufacturing, etc.

A solar-powered pump will be used at an existing well on the wildlife area to provide irrigation to the enclosure. A solar-powered electric fence will be used to exclude predators from the enclosure.

b. Would your project affect the potential use of solar energy by adjacent properties? If so, generally describe.

No

c. What kinds of energy conservation features are included in the plans of this proposal? List other proposed measures to reduce or control energy impacts, if any:

Only solar generated power will be used.

7. **Environmental health**

a. Are there any environmental health hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals, risk of fire and explosion, spill, or hazardous waste, that could occur as a result of this proposal? If so, describe.

No

1) Describe special emergency services that might be required.

None required.

2) Proposed measures to reduce or control environmental health hazards, if any:

None required.

b. Noise

1) What types of noise exist in the area which may affect your project (for example: traffic, equipment, operation, other)?

None.

2) What types and levels of noise would be created by or associated with the project on a short-term or a long-term basis (for example: traffic, construction, operation, other)? Indicate what hours noise would come from the site.

Area of construction is far removed from any residences. The nearest residence is 2.4 miles from the site. Short term construction noise will be produced for the period of one week during operation of a trencher (digging ditch) and an auger (digging post holes). There will not be any long term noise production from the project.

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3) Proposed measures to reduce or control noise impacts, if any:

Construction will be completed in one week or less. Location is removed from any local residences.

8. Land and shoreline use

a. What is the current use of the site and adjacent properties?

The current site is maintained and managed as the WDFW Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area. It consists of native sagebrush habitat and some old agricultural fields that have been replanted to native habitat. Adjacent properties are both public lands and privately owned properties. Some of the property is in active agriculture and some is in Conservation Reserve Program status.

b. Has the site been used for agriculture? If so, describe.

Some old rehabbed agricultural field exist on the wildlife area, however, the site of the project is in native habitat. Native habitat is required to support pygmy rabbits.

c. Describe any structures on the site.

No structures exist.

d. Will any structures be demolished? If so, what?

Does not apply, no structures exist.

e. What is the current zoning classification of the site?

Rural Resource 20

f. What is the current comprehensive plan designation of the site?

From the Douglas County comprehensive plan:

“Rural Resource 20 – 1 unit per 20 acres -- The purpose of this designation is to encourage and maintain the county’s rural character; provides opportunities for compatible agricultural, grazing, forestry and other rural land uses; is sensitive to the site's physical characteristics; and provides greater opportunities for protecting sensitive critical/environmental areas. This designation may have rangeland use and buffers resource areas from incompatible activities. Clustering or other innovative techniques are encouraged, provided significant areas are retained in open space for grazing, deer migration corridors, critical habitat areas and/or other similar uses.”

g. If applicable, what is the current shoreline master program designation of the site?

Not applicable

h. Has any part of the site been classified as an "environmentally sensitive" area? If so, specify.

Native shrub-steppe sagebrush habitat has a PHS designation under WDFW.

i. Approximately how many people would reside or work in the completed project?

None

j. Approximately how many people would the completed project displace?

None

k. Proposed measures to avoid or reduce displacement impacts, if any:

None

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l. Proposed measures to ensure the proposal is compatible with existing and projected land uses and plans, if any:

Proposed project has been developed in conjunction with Sagebrush Wildlife Area staff and meets the overall goals of management plans for the area.

9. Housing

a. Approximately how many units would be provided, if any? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.

None

b. Approximately how many units, if any, would be eliminated? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.

None

c. Proposed measures to reduce or control housing impacts, if any:

None

10. Aesthetics

a. What is the tallest height of any proposed structure(s), not including antennas; what is the principal exterior building material(s) proposed?

7 feet above ground level.

b. What views in the immediate vicinity would be altered or obstructed?

None

c. Proposed measures to reduce or control aesthetic impacts, if any:

None

11. Light and glare

a. What type of light or glare will the proposal produce? What time of day would it mainly occur?

None

b. Could light or glare from the finished project be a safety hazard or interfere with views?

No

c. What existing off-site sources of light or glare may affect your proposal?

None

d. Proposed measures to reduce or control light and glare impacts, if any:

Does not apply.

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12. Recreation

a. What designated and informal recreational opportunities are in the immediate vicinity?

The wildlife area is primarily used for hunting recreation.

b. Would the proposed project displace any existing recreational uses? If so, describe.

No, the construction of this enclosure would not displace existing recreational uses.

c. Proposed measures to reduce or control impacts on recreation, including recreation opportunities to be provided by the project or applicant, if any:

Not Applicable.

13. Historic and cultural preservation

a. Are there any places or objects listed on, or proposed for, national, state, or local preservation registers known to be on or next to the site? If so, generally describe.

None.

b. Generally describe any landmarks or evidence of historic, archaeological, scientific, or cultural importance known to be on or next to the site.

A cultural resource survey was conducted within 1000 meters of the site in the spring of 2011; no cultural resources were discovered. Prior to starting the construction of the enclosure a cultural survey will be completed for the site.

c. Proposed measures to reduce or control impacts, if any:

If any cultural resources are discovered during the survey, WDFW will follow the recommendations in the report to avoid or minimize impacts.

14. Transportation

a. Identify public streets and highways serving the site, and describe proposed access to the existing street system. Show on site plans, if any.

The site is only served by WDFW internal roads on the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area. The nearest county road is C SE, located roughly 0.7 miles to the west of the site.

b. Is site currently served by public transit? If not, what is the approximate distance to the nearest transit stop?

No.

c. How many parking spaces would the completed project have? How many would the project eliminate?

None and none.

d. Will the proposal require any new roads or streets, or improvements to existing roads or streets, not including driveways? If so, generally describe (indicate whether public or private).

No.

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e. Will the project use (or occur in the immediate vicinity of) water, rail, or air transportation? If so, generally describe.

No.

f. How many vehicular trips per day would be generated by the completed project? If known, indicate when peak volumes would occur.

Roughly 4-5 per week during times when pygmy rabbits are on site.

g. Proposed measures to reduce or control transportation impacts, if any:

Minimize trips to the site when possible.

15. Public services

a. Would the project result in an increased need for public services (for example: fire protection, police protection, health care, schools, other)? If so, generally describe.

No.

b. Proposed measures to reduce or control direct impacts on public services, if any.

None.

16. Utilities

a. Circle utilities currently available at the site: electricity, natural gas, water, refuse service, telephone, sanitary sewer, septic system, other.

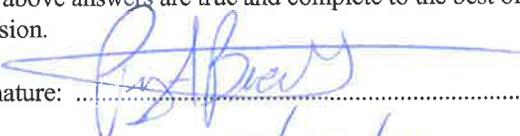
None.

b. Describe the utilities that are proposed for the project, the utility providing the service, and the general construction activities on the site or in the immediate vicinity which might be needed.

None are proposed.

C. SIGNATURE

The above answers are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the lead agency is relying on them to make its decision.

Signature: 

Date Submitted: *7/29/11*

D. SUPPLEMENTAL SHEET FOR NONPROJECT ACTIONS

(do not use this sheet for project actions)

Because these questions are very general, it may be helpful to read them in conjunction with the list of the elements of the environment.

When answering these questions, be aware of the extent the proposal, or the types of activities likely to result from the proposal, would affect the item at a greater intensity or at a faster rate than if the proposal were not implemented. Respond briefly and in general terms.

1. How would the proposal be likely to increase discharge to water; emissions to air; production, storage, or release of toxic or hazardous substances; or production of noise?

There will be a brief increase in noise and creation of small amounts of dust during construction.

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce such increases are:

Minimize construction activities to as few days use of mechanical means, and use hand labor where possible.

2. How would the proposal be likely to affect plants, animals, fish, or marine life?

The project would exclude some wildlife from the roughly 10.85 acres within the enclosure. Once the project is complete the habitat will once again be made available for all species. When successful, the project will reestablish Columbian Basin pygmy rabbits to the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area, and to eastern Washington.

Proposed measures to protect or conserve plants, animals, fish, or marine life are:

Removal of the enclosure when recover efforts are finished on the site.

3. How would the proposal be likely to deplete energy or natural resources?

Only solar-powered systems will be used (pumps and electric fences).

Proposed measures to protect or conserve energy and natural resources are:

Any energy use would come from solar-powered systems (pumps and electric fences).

4. How would the proposal be likely to use or affect environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection; such as parks, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, threatened or endangered species habitat, historic or cultural sites, wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands?

The project would impact roughly 0.7 acres of shrub-steppe habitat in the construction of the fenced enclosure, and excluded some wildlife from using the internal 10.85 acres of habitat within the enclosure. During the project habitat within the enclosure will be irrigated, increasing its productivity and forage quality. On project completion, the fence will be removed and the habitat replanted and the site restored.

Proposed measures to protect such resources or to avoid or reduce impacts are:

Minimize the amount of habitat disturbed during construction. Irrigate habitat during the project to maintain productivity. Replant and restore vegetation on completion.

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5. How would the proposal be likely to affect land and shoreline use, including whether it would allow or encourage land or shoreline uses incompatible with existing plans?

It would not affect land use, nor promote incompatible use under the WDFW management plans.

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce shoreline and land use impacts are:

None required.

6. How would the proposal be likely to increase demands on transportation or public services and utilities?

The proposal will not increase demands on transportation, public services or utilities.

Proposed measures to reduce or respond to such demand(s) are:

None required.

7. Identify, if possible, whether the proposal may conflict with local, state, or federal laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

The proposal is compatible with local, state, and federal environmental laws and is being conducted under the cooperation of WDFW and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

