

RECEIVED

DEC 05 2011

HABITAT PROGRAM

**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:

**L.T. Murray Thinning Project**

2. Name of applicant:

**Yakama Nation (YN) through the Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Program (YKFP)**

3. Address and phone number of applicant and contact person:

**Applicant:**

**Yakama Nation**

**Harry Smiskin, Chair**

**P.O. Box 151**

**Toppenish, WA 98948**

**Contact Person:**

**Scott Nicolai-YN YKFP Habitat Biologist**

**201 North Pearl Street**

**Ellensburg, WA 98926**

**(509) 962-6142**

**[ykfphabitat@elltel.net](mailto:ykfphabitat@elltel.net)**

4. Date checklist prepared:

**November, 8, 2011**

5. Agency requesting checklist:

**WDFW**

6. Proposed timing or schedule (including phasing, if applicable):

**The project will be implemented for up to five years, beginning in November 2011.**

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

**The proposed project is warranted because of the over-stocked nature of the stands and the corollary "watershed health" relative to fish and wildlife species.**

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

- **Forest Practices Application**

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.

**None known**

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

**SEPA Determination-WDFW**

**Forest Practices Permit -- WDNR**

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.)

**The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is a large landowner in the Taneum Watershed, including the property surrounding approximately seven creek miles. With few exceptions, habitat conditions within this area have improved over the last few decades due to active and passive management. Riparian buffers, in-stream flow, water quantity and quality, and floodplain connectivity appear adequate or are improving; however, lands encompassed in the L.T. Murray Wildlife Refuge display the over-stocked timber stands that are a result of broad-scale even-aged management, and concomitant fire suppression has transformed the upland coniferous forest from a ponderosa pine, to a ponderosa pine-true fir/douglas fir forest, with unnaturally high fuel loads. Where funding is available, forest managers are striving to shift the forest stand back to the historic pine stand by under story thinning and introduction of prescribed fire.**

**This project will selectively thin over-stocked trees from selected areas. Target tree spacing is fifteen to twenty feet, however the work will be intentionally random to maintain escape and hiding cover for game species. Some clumps of dense timber stands will remain untouched to maintain habitat diversity. Thinning will be done by a six-person Washington Conservation Corps labor crew. At some times two crews may be working on the project. The work will be done with chainsaws and manual pull saws. Thinned trees will be left on the ground to provide organic material and nurse logs. In some areas trees will be lain cross-slope to retard surface runoff. Some trees will be "high-stumped" to enhance snag habitat. Some of the felled boles will be walked upon, to increase log-soil contact. Some trees will be longitudinally kerfed with a chain saw to test whether this increases the rate of fungal growth.**

**The residual stand will have a more open canopy. It is expected that this will improve tree vigor, in turn enhancing development of old-growth forest characteristics. The project will reduce fuel loads and the corollary risk of catastrophic fire.**

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.

1. Located within WDFW's L.T. Murray Wildlife Area on Taneum Creek (Figures 1 & 2)
2. Township 18N Range 16E Section 3. Township 19N Range 16E Sections 33, 34.
3. Parcels: 563633 and 613533.
4. WRIA 39—Upper Yakima River Basin

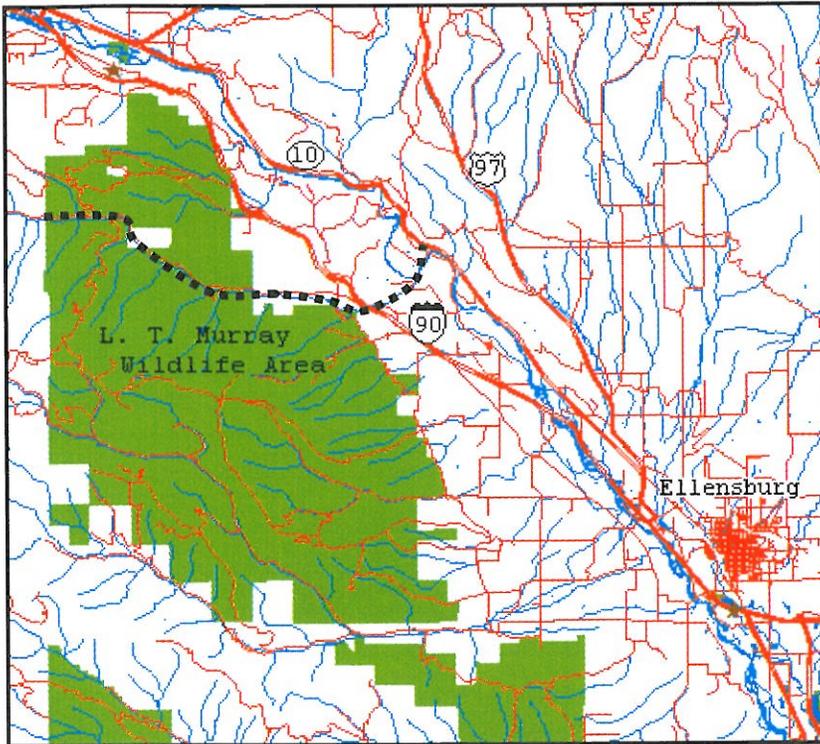
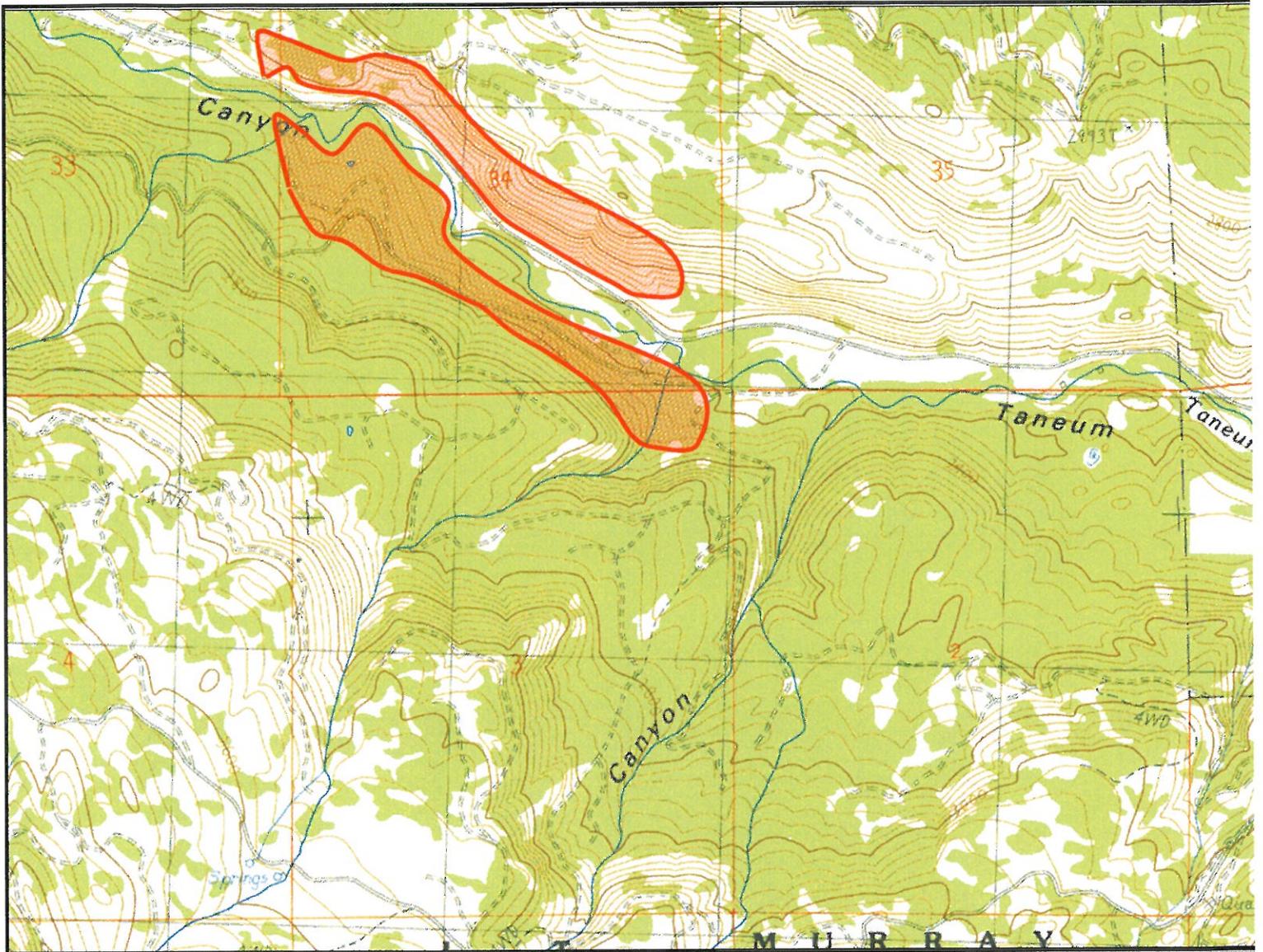


Figure 1. This map illustrates the location of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area in relation to Interstate 90 and Ellensburg. Taneum Creek is identified with a dotted line; the all treatment reaches will be within the Wildlife Area.

Township 18 Range 16 (Sect. 3) Township 19 Range 16 (Sect. 33&34)



## B. ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS

## 1. Earth

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

**Hilly with some steep slopes and some flat meadow areas; trees will be cut from terraces well above the current bank full elevation.**

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

**90%; no trees will be cut on slopes greater than 70%**

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.

**Patnish-Mippon-Myzel complex and Loneridge ashy loam**

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

**The soils appear relatively stable, even on the steep slopes due to the density of vegetation. There are areas of erosion where the creek has removed the toe of the bank.**

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

**None, there will be no filling or grading associated with this project.**

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

**Not likely, there will be no clearing or excavation. Roots and stumps will remain intact to maintain soil stability.**

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

**There will be no new impervious surfaces associated with this project.**

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

**Ground disturbance will be unlikely because the entire project will be done with hand-held tools. Trees will mostly be left where they fall, while a few of the smaller trees may be positioned cross-slope to retard surface erosion. Thinned trees will be selected from overstocked areas.**

## 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.

**There will be minor emissions from chainsaws and pickups driving to the work sites. There will be no additional air emissions upon completion of the project.**

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

**None known**

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

**Chainsaws will only be on when in operation. Manual pull saws will be utilized where appropriate. Project personnel will carpool to the work areas as much as possible and vehicles will be turned off when not in use.**

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.

**Taneum Creek is a tributary to the Yakima River and a Shoreline of the State. It is the nearest water body to the proposed thinning area. Yahne Creek and two unnamed tributaries to Taneum Creek flow through the proposed area for thinning. All work will occur at least 50 feet from the ordinary high water mark.**

- 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.

**The only thinning that would occur within 200 feet will be approved by the WDNR.**

- 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, there will be no fill or dredge material associated with this project.**

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

**No**

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

**No, the entire project will be up-slope and outside of the geomorphic floodplain.**

- 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.

**No**

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.

**No**

- 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, not applicable**

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.

**This project is not likely to impact the amount of runoff. Ground disturbance will be minimal and there will be no excavation or impervious surfaces that might impact runoff and/or storm water management.**

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

**There is a chance that petroleum products could leak from chainsaws or vehicles onto the ground. All equipment will be kept in good working condition to minimize this risk.**

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

The project is planned to enhance habitat, and best management practices will be applied to eliminate negative impacts. There will be no thinning in or around wetland areas. Heavy machinery will not be involved in this project, there will be no excavation or ground disturbance, and there will be no addition of unnatural material. The project will jump start natural processes (thinning/selection) while reducing fire potential.

#### 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?

**Douglas fir, ponderosa pine and true fir trees will be thinned throughout the project area as approved by WDNR under a Forest Practices Application. There will be minimal disturbance to shrubs and ground vegetation.**

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

**Ute ladies'-tresses and Showy Stickseed are federally listed, but are not known to be present in Kittitas County.**

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

**Thinning will reduce competition and will increase the vigor of the remaining tree stands, returning the forest to a more natural condition.**

#### 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: owls

mammals: deer, bear, elk, cougar, beaver, other: small mammals

fish: bass, salmon, trout, herring, shellfish, other: native minnows, suckers, sculpin

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

**Mardon skipper-butterfly-State listed as Endangered**

**Bull trout-fish-Federally listed as Threatened, State listed as Candidate**

**MCR Steelhead-fish- Federally listed as Threatened, State listed as Candidate**

**Northern leopard frog-amphibian-State listed as Endangered**

**Bald eagle-bird-State listed as Threatened**

**Northern Spotted Owl-bird-Federally listed as Threatened, State listed as Endangered**

**Western gray squirrel-mammal-State listed as Threatened**

**Fisher-mammal- State listed as Endangered**

**Gray Wolf-mammal-Federally listed as Endangered, State listed as Endangered**

**Grizzly Bear-mammal-Federally listed as Threatened, State listed as Endangered**

**Canada Lynx-mammal-Federally listed as Threatened, State listed as Threatened**

**None of the above animals are likely to be negatively impacted due to implementation of this project. Although not listed as threatened or endangered, Northern Goshawks occur in the Taneum Watershed.**

Some of the project area is on the extreme northern edge of the elk winter closure area and some work may occur during the closure period. However, the project is well north of the feed sites where the elk are concentrated. If winter(s) are deemed exceptionally harsh, thinning activities may be curtailed until spring. This will be determined in consultation with the wildlife area manager, assistant manager and technicians.

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

**Yes, Taneum Creek supports steelhead and coho salmon that migrate through the project reach to spawning areas upstream. Additionally, migratory birds and mammals use the watershed for seasonal habitats. The surrounding public land ownership provides adequate habitat for a variety of animals throughout the year.**

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

**As proposed, the project will provide additional cover for many songbirds and other wildlife species. Growth of remaining coniferous trees is expected to be more vigorous, thus accentuating the health of species dependent on more mature timber stands. The project is designed as a habitat enhancement project and no long-term negative impacts to wildlife are anticipated.**

## **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.

**Upon completion, there will be no need for an energy source at the project site.**

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

**Not applicable; the project area is surrounded by public lands, unlikely to need solar energy capabilities. Regardless, the proposed project would not likely affect the potential use of solar energy.**

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:

**Upon completion, there will be no consumptive uses of energy or natural resources. Chainsaws will use gasoline during the thinning project.**

## **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.

**There is a slight risk of fire caused by use of the chainsaws to fall the trees. The chainsaws also pose a potential risk of a petroleum spill during refueling or if the gas tank leaks. All equipment will be kept in good working condition to reduce the risks of a chemical spill or sparks causing a fire.**

1) Describe special emergency services that might be required.

**Due to the nature of the activity, there is a chance that emergency personnel such as EMT, fire fighters, and sheriff's deputies may need to respond to the project area during implementation.**

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

**Most of the trees will be cut during the colder, damp fall and winter seasons to reduce the fire danger associated with using chainsaws. All equipment using petroleum products will be in good working condition and kept away from the creek and creek bed as much as possible to prevent any contamination of the water.**

**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.

**The short-term noise associated with this project will include chainsaws and tree falling as well as 2-5 additional vehicles bringing work crews to the project sites during implementation. There will be no long-term increase in noise due to this project.**

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

**Chainsaws will be turned off when not in use and will only be used during normal working days during the daylight hours.**

**Traffic noise will be reduced by carpooling as much as possible to the project sites.**

**8. Land and shoreline use**

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

**The property throughout the project area is owned and managed by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as part of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area.**

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

**Livestock grazing occurred until approximately 25 years ago. The project area is forested and has been harvested historically.**

c. Describe any structures on the site.

**Taneum Road is adjacent to the project work area.**

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

**No**

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

**Commercial Forest**

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

**Commercial Forest**

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

**Conservancy**

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

**Yes, there are some wetland meadow complexes throughout the project reach. Additionally, the project area provides fish and wildlife habitat for several culturally and ecologically important species.**

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:

**Not applicable**

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

**Pertinent management plans support silvicultural treatments to promote old-growth forest characteristics. There will be no change to the existing land use because of this project. The downstream end of the project is +/- 1000 feet upstream of the private ownerships that begin at the Section 35/36 boundary.**

#### 9. Housing

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

**None, not applicable**

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

**None, not applicable**

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

**None, not applicable**

#### 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?

**N/A**

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

**None, tree thinning is not likely to increase views because trees will only be cut in areas of dense vegetation and stream shading will not be reduced.**

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

**There will be no new human-made material associated with this project. The project is planned to expedite the natural processes of tree growth and the associated hydrological changes. Thinning will be accomplished during winter months so associated ground disturbance will be buffered by snow and frozen ground.**

#### 11. Light and glare

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

**Not applicable.**

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:

**None, not applicable**

12. Recreation

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

**The project area is within public lands that are heavily used throughout most of the year. Hunters, anglers, hikers, birdwatchers, mountain bikers, and campers use the L.T. Wildlife Area and the Forest Service property upstream of the proposed project area throughout the year.**

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

**No, the project will have no long-term impact on the existing recreational users. Noise associated with project implementation may impact wildlife movement during the short-term. Project implementation will cease during modern firearm hunting seasons for deer and elk to ensure crewmember safety and fair hunting opportunities.**

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

**The project is proposed for implementation during the time when there will be the least environmental impacts and the least impacts on recreational uses.**

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 known.**

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

**The project area is adjacent to a decommissioned railway bed.**

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

**None deemed necessary for this timber thinning proposal.**

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.

**Taneum Road is adjacent to Taneum Creek throughout the project reach and it will be used to access each treatment area.**

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

**No, there is no public transit available in Kittitas County and this is in a remote area.**

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

**None, not applicable**

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. Treatment areas will be accessed through existing roadways and trails as much as possible.**

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.

**None, not applicable**

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

**Not applicable**

**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.

**Not applicable**

**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**

**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: *Athena Sanchez*  
**Harry Smiskin, Tribal Council Chairman**  
**Yakama Nation**

Date Submitted: *11/30/2011*  
**November , 2011**