



State of Washington

## DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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### DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND ADOPTION OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

#### **Proposal: POTHoles RESERVOIR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

##### **Description of Proposal:**

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the analysis of four alternatives, including a “no action” alternative for resource management in the Potholes Reservoir Study area. The alternatives respond differently to the issues and concerns identified during project planning. The preferred alternative is Alternative B, which balances the management agencies’ and public’s long-term vision for Potholes Reservoir and recognizes the need to protect the natural and cultural environment while supporting the overall recreational interest of the visitors. The alternatives evaluated in this Final Environmental Impact Statement were developed by the Reclamation study team using the input received from the Land Management Agency and Ad Hoc work groups, state and federal agency representatives, and the public. The study team developed goals and objectives based on this input which are the underlying framework for the alternatives. Additional input from public and agencies on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) made minor modifications to the alternatives in the FEIS.

**Alternative B - Preferred Alternative:** This alternative reflects Reclamation’s preferred alternative for Potholes Reservoir. It balances the management agencies’ and public’s long-term vision for Potholes Reservoir and recognizes the need to protect the natural and cultural environment while supporting the overall recreational interests of visitors. By combining certain plan elements and features from Alternatives C and D, the Preferred Alternative was identified as the alternative that best satisfies the RMP goals and objectives. A mix of developed recreation areas and “designated” dispersed camping areas would be provided to accommodate the demand for recreation facilities and sites, and to direct use to specific areas environmentally suited for public use. Specific to the issue of ORV management within the study area, further ORV use restrictions are proposed to improve wildlife habitat, wildlife populations, sand dune integrity, and vegetative cover. This would be accomplished by permanently closing a portion of the

existing “Yellow Zone” to motor vehicle travel and ORV use, and keeping the remaining portion open seasonally from July 1 to October 1 (see Figure 2-4.1).

Under the Preferred Alternative, dispersed, unstructured activities would continue outside of the developed corridor at Potholes Reservoir. Seasonal and year-round primitive road closures would reduce “drive-in” public access opportunities. The designation of Habitat Management Areas would restrict dispersed camping to specified sites in sensitive habitat areas. In addition to the action common to all alternatives, Alternative B would have the following impacts to recreation resources:

## **Camping**

### Dispersed Camping

Seasonal and year-round limitations on dispersed camping within the RMP area would direct camping to designated sites, negatively affecting users accustomed to remote camping in these areas. Dispersed camping in the Upper West Arm and the Upper Crab Creek management areas (3,396 acres) would be limited seasonally to designated sites during the wildlife nesting and breeding season, March 15 through June 30. Within the 624-acre West Lind Coulee Arm and the 1,094-acre East Lind Coulee Arm management areas, dispersed camping would be restricted year-round to eight managed campsites. Within the 3,270 acre North Potholes Reserve management area, camping would be limited year-round to the Job Corp Dike site. The Eastern Dunes and Eastern Bluffs management areas, encompassing 799 total acres, would be closed year-round to dispersed camping, except in the designated campsites which are those waterfront sites currently most often used for dispersed camping. Because of this the seasonal and year-round closures would negatively affect only a small percentage of the overall users.

### Developed Camping

In addition to the proposed 11-acre expansion of Potholes State Park, the preferred alternative proposes the development of the 80-acre O’Sullivan-North site as a unit of Potholes State Park. Phased facilities and amenities, fully described in Chapter 2, include a concrete boat ramp with a courtesy dock, 50-100 vehicle and trailer parking area, 80-100 campsites, a group campsite and restrooms. These additional facilities would ease crowding and congestion during the peak season, resulting in long-term beneficial impacts.

In the interim period prior to development, the O’Sullivan-North site would be closed to dispersed camping and managed as a day-use only site. This would result in immediate, short-term negative impacts to campers who are accustomed to using this popular dispersed camping area.

## **Fishing**

The diked waters in the northern part of the lake would be managed as “carp-free” for blue gill and bass, providing long-term benefits for the area’s fisheries.

### **Boating**

The installation of courtesy docks at Glen Williams Boat Launch and the improvements at the cartop boat launch at Blythe Boat Launch would provide additional amenities to boaters.

Proposed provisions for periodic dredging at the base of public boat launches would improve boat access further into the season as the water level recedes.

### **Nature Study**

The proposed development of four “watchable wildlife” opportunities in this alternative would provide additional opportunities for wildlife observation without impacting other recreation resources.

### **Off-Road Vehicle Use**

A 919-acre portion of the “Yellow Zone” would be removed from the existing ORV area. Currently, the area is seasonally open to ORV use for three months of the year, from July 1 to October 1. User counts conducted during the recreation survey indicate that the area is not heavily used during the peak weekends of the open season. Only four groups over the peak weekends in the Yellow Zone as compared to approximately 320 in the Green Zone. Table 3

13.1 shows the ORV user counts conducted during the recreation sampling period.

The ORV boundary would be modified to include 320 acres of Reclamation land outside the RMP study area in the Eastern Dunes management area. Total area open year-round to ORV riding would remain at 2,435 acres.

### **Visitor Information**

Visitor education and information opportunities would be expanded under Alternative B including information kiosks, maps, signage, “watchable wildlife” sites, and the development of an “Environmental Education Center” This would provide direct and indirect benefits to recreation users at Potholes.

### **Access**

All public access would be prohibited in the south/central portion of North Potholes Reservoir (3270 acres) from March 15 through May 30 (77 days). Few people (2 groups) have been observed using this area during the proposed off-season closure. Therefore, impacts would be limited to a small percentage of recreation users.

Alternative B would permanently close 18.5 miles of primitive roads, and seasonally close 1.5 miles of the primitive road system to motorized travel. Approximately 40 miles of primitive road would remain open to motorized travel.

Installation of “No Parking/No Camping signs at the Powerline Boat Launch will improve vehicle access and circulation to that site.

The eastern portion of Powerline Road would remain open year-round to motor vehicle travel and ORV access.

### **Developed Recreation**

As requested by survey respondents, three temporary toilets and one permanent vault toilet would be placed strategically at high-use areas during the peak recreation months, providing more convenient access to more users and reducing the occurrence of inappropriate waste at busy sites.

### **NORTH POTHoles RESERVE**

Close to dispersed camping except at designated sites.

Restrict floating device use.

Seasonally restrict public access in south/central portion (3/15-5/30).

Maintain and enhance diking system.

Maintain grazing permit TP-01.

Develop North Potholes Reserve “watchable wildlife” area

### **PENINSULA NORTH**

Open year-round to dispersed camping

Maintain grazing permit TP-01.

Develop “watchable wildlife” interpretive vehicle route .

### **PENINSULA SOUTH**

Open year-round to dispersed camping.

Develop “watchable wildlife” interpretive vehicle route.

Provide vault toilet at Powerline Boat Launch.

### **UPPER WEST ARM**

Seasonally closed to dispersed camping (3/15-6/30).

Maintain grazing permit TP-01.

Seasonal minimum wake restriction for watercraft (3/15-6/30).

Designate as HMA.

Maintain and enhance diking system.

### **LOWER WEST ARM**

Open year-round to dispersed camping.

### **DUNES/SAND ISLANDS**

Open year-round to dispersed camping.  
WDFW may seasonally close specific islands during critical wildlife breeding/ nesting periods or to improve vegetation restoration efforts.

### **MAIN RESERVOIR**

No special management.

### **UPPER CRAB CREEK ARM**

Seasonally close to dispersed camping (3/15-6/30) except at designated sites.

Close to ORV use.

Provide West Lake/North Outlet “watchable wildlife” area. Designate as Habitat Management Area (HMA).

Seasonal minimum wake restriction for watercraft (3/15-6/30).

Maintain and enhance diking system.

Fence east side of Sand Dunes Road between South Outlet and Powerline Road to prevent indiscriminate ORV entry. Provide parking turnouts and non-motorized access routes leading to west shore of Moses Lake.

Designate and manage seven dispersed camping areas including North and South Outlets and five along west shore of Moses Lake.

### **LOWER CRAB CREEK ARM**

Open year-round to dispersed camping.

919 acres closed to motor vehicle travel/ ORV use.

Keep eastern portion of Powerline Road seasonally open to motor vehicle travel/ORV use.

Develop interpretive trail.

### **EASTERN DUNES**

Close to dispersed camping. Open to motor vehicle travel/ ORV use year-round.

Fence west boundary to control indiscriminate ORV entry into Lower Crab Creek Arm.

### **EASTERN BLUFFS**

Close to dispersed camping.

Close to motor vehicle travel/ ORV use.

Install road gates to prevent motor vehicle entry.

### **DEVELOPED CORRIDOR**

Close to dispersed camping. Allow campground expansion in Potholes State Park.

Develop asphalt-surfaced bike/pedestrian trail between Potholes State Park and O’Sullivan Dam. Allow camping at Blythe Boat Launch.

Improve car top boat launch at Blythe.

### **O’SULLIVAN SITE NORTH**

Close to dispersed camping.

Develop as unit of Potholes State Park. Until developed:

Provide seasonal toilets.

Fence parking area. Day Use only.

### **O'SULLIVAN SITE SOUTH**

Designate and manage as dispersed camping area until O'Sullivan Site North is developed as Unit of Potholes State Park.

### **WEST LIND COULEE ARM**

Close to dispersed camping except at designated sites.

Designate and manage seven dispersed camping areas.

Provide seasonal toilets in high-use areas.

Allow camping at Glen Williams and Road "M" Boat Launch sites.

Provide courtesy docks at Glen Williams Boat Launch.

### **EAST LIND COULEE ARM**

Close to dispersed camping except at designated sites.

Develop Lind Coulee North Arm "watchable wildlife" area.

### **SUMMARY**

Establishes two Habitat Management Areas (HMA). Provides for future recreation development, moderately controlled access and dispersed camping, a smaller ORV Area, as well as the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural resources.

### **Developed Recreation**

As requested by survey respondents, three temporary toilets and one permanent vault toilet would be placed strategically at high-use areas during the peak recreation months, providing more convenient access to more users and reducing the occurrence of inappropriate waste at busy sites.

**Proponent:** U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation

**Location of Proposal:** Access and land management activities would occur on WDFW's Potholes Wildlife Area in Grant County, South and Southwest of Moses Lake in multiple sections in Township 19 N, Range. 28 E, Township 17 N., Range. 28 E, Township 17 N, Range 27 E, Township 18 N. Range 28 E, and Township 18 N. R. 27 E. See attached maps.

**Lead Agency:** US Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation Pacific Northwest Region Upper Columbia Area Office Ephrata Field Office Ephrata, Washington

**Adoption of Existing Environmental Document:** Pursuant to WAC 197-11-630(1), after independent review the lead agency has identified and adopted the following document as being appropriate for this proposal.

**Title of document being adopted: POTHoles RESERVOIR RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT PLAN FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
NOVEMBER 2001**

**Agency that prepared document being adopted:** U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation Pacific Northwest Region Upper Columbia Area Office Ephrata  
Field Office Ephrata, Washington

**Date adopted document was prepared: November 2001**

**Description of document (or portion) being adopted:** The entire contents of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, which includes a summary; description of alternatives; assessments of purpose and need, existing condition and project impacts; and comments and responses to comments on the Draft EIS.

**If the document being adopted has been challenged (197-11-630), please describe:**  
N/A

**The document is available to be read at:**

SEPA Center, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 5<sup>th</sup> floor Habitat Program,  
Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE from 8:00 AM-5:00 PM  
Monday-Friday.

**The following electronic versions are available:**

[www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/rmp/potholes/eis-potholes2001.pdf](http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/rmp/potholes/eis-potholes2001.pdf) and also at WDFW  
SEPA Web site: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/sepa\\_final\\_docs\\_2012.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/sepa_final_docs_2012.html)

**EIS Required.** The lead agency has determined that this proposal may have a significant adverse impact on the environment. To meet the requirements of RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c), the lead agency is adopting the document described above. Under WAC 197-11-360, there will be no scoping process for this EIS.

We have identified and adopted this document as being appropriate for this proposal after independent review. The document meets our environmental review needs for the current proposal and will accompany the proposal to the decision maker.

**Name of agency adopting the document:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

This Determination of Significance/Adoption Notice is issued under WAC 197-11-360; the lead agency will not act on this proposal for seven (7) days from the date of issue below.

**Responsible Official:** Bob Zeigler

**Position/Title:** WDFW SEPA/NEPA Coordinator

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**DATE OF ISSUE: June 21, 2012**

**SIGNATURE:**

*Bob Zeigler*