



State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N - Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 - (360) 902-2200, TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office location: Natural Resources Building - 1111 Washington Street SE - Olympia, WA

DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

Name of Proposal: DNS 14-008: CLE ELUM RIVER RESTORATION

Description of Proposal:

Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT) through the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program (YTAHP) proposes to introduce large woody debris in the form of engineered log jams at specific locations in the lower Cle Elum River between river miles 5.25-7.2. The proposed project is intended to enhance instream, floodplain, and riparian function by distributing and maintaining perennial flow in five miles of side channel habitat that are predominately dewatered after irrigation storage releases from Lake Cle Elum are discontinued each fall. Flows in the lower Cle Elum River are controlled by irrigation releases from Lake Cle Elum Dam. The resulting regulated flow scenario delivers an annual hydrograph that is radically skewed from a natural flow scenario. The “flip flop” flow regime in the lower Cle Elum River, coupled with the presence of Cle Elum Dam, negatively impacts sediment and organic debris transport. Over time, the stream and floodplain processes have been degraded. The proposed project is designed to help restore these processes while increasing and enhancing salmonid habitat. Implementation of this project will reduce stranding of fish and other aquatic species when irrigation releases from Lake Cle Elum are reduced, resulting in the annual dewatering of the side channels.

The overall project includes constructing 10 Engineered Log Jams, 5 gravel nourishment bars and installing 55 ballasted and un-ballasted logs with rootwads in the Cle Elum River downstream of the Lake Cle Elum Dam. These instream structures are flow obstructions that will be strategically placed to divert mainstem flow into relic side channel systems. Excavation of the inlets to 5 side channels will facilitate restoring perennial flow and simultaneously supply native river materials for 5 gravel nourishment bars. The project will use helicopter assisted construction techniques and establish perennial flow in 5 miles of complex side channels to improve habitat for salmonids.

The purpose of the project is to increase populations of anadromous and resident fish in the upper Yakima River system. A primary project objective is to expand and enhance salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat by introducing perennial flow into 5 miles of ephemeral side channels in the lower Cle Elum River system. This project will increase the spatial availability of high-quality rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and steelhead, as well as expand spawning habitat for returning adults. Scarcity of rearing habitat is the primary limiting factor for restoration of populations of anadromous salmonids in the project reach. Restoration project work will increase the number of pools, instances of complex cover, channel length, area of spawning gravels and floodplain connectivity. This project has been proposed, designed, and funded to improve fish and wildlife habitat in this protected reach of the lower Cle Elum River.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
Attention: Jennifer Nelson
1701 S. 24th Avenue

Yakima, WA 98902
(509) 457-9307
Jennifer.Nelson@dfw.wa.gov

Location of Proposal, including street, if any: Lower Cle Elum River (River Miles 5.25-7.2), Kittitas County, Washington: Township 20N, Range 14E, Sections 11, 13, and 14.

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. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on February 25, 2014**.

Method of Comment:

The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

Responsible Official: Lisa Wood

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://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>. 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 Lisa Wood at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call her at (360) 902-2260.

DATE OF ISSUE: February 10, 2014

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 14-008. dns