



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building – 1111 Washington Street SE – Olympia, WA

MITIGATED DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (MDNS)

Name of Proposal: MDNS 14-070: FENDER MILL SIDE CHANNEL RESTORATION

Description of Proposal:

The intent of this project is to enhance groundwater fed surface flows and in-channel habitat complexity features within an alcove side channel of the Methow River. This project has been identified and developed through coordination with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Methow Restoration Council to improve habitat conditions for juvenile stages of ESA listed fish stocks in the Big Valley Reach of the Methow River.

The goal of this project is to reestablish a better connected alcove/backwater habitat unit within the floodplain of the Methow River where such habitat types have been lost due to human development in the area. Our plan is established on the concept of increasing the amount of low flow surface water habitat within a significant length of the side channel without dramatically affecting or altering the high flow conveyance characteristics of this particular floodplain side channel. To accomplish our habitat enhancement goals, we shall install an approximately 480 linear foot gravity fed groundwater collection gallery buried within the floodplain at depths appropriate to contact static groundwater elevations at low flow conditions (depths ranging from 4 to 8 feet from the existing surface grade). The groundwater collection gallery shall feed into a 1,300 foot long conveyance pipe also buried at depths ranging from 6 to 12 feet below existing surface grade, that will outlet into an enhanced section of the Fender Mill Side Channel (approximately 2,500 linear feet of enhanced channel). The groundwater gallery is expected to produce flows near 7 cubic feet per second during low flow conditions, potentially resulting in a minor bypass reach on the Methow River for just under 0.7 miles. Diverted water will return to the Methow River at the downstream end of the side channel.

Within the enhanced section of channel, the channel bottom shall be deepened by 2 to 10 feet from existing surface grade. Native alluvial cobbles and gravels will continue to make up the channel substrate. An assortment of wood structures will be added to the enhanced channel as habitat complexity elements, and the channel bottom and banks will be contoured to contain pool/riffle habitats and wetland and riparian vegetation communities. At the head of the enhanced channel a grade control structure composed of logs will be installed to eliminate the potential for upvalley headcutting during natural flood events interacting with the steepened channel grade. The side channel enhancement will encompass 5 acres of restored habitat. 1 acre will be temporarily impacted to install the groundwater gallery collection and conveyance pipes. 2.5 acres of temporary construction impact will be required for equipment and materials staging transportation corridors. In total roughly 7.5 acres of construction impact will occur in relationship to this project.

Intensive native plant restoration is planned for the project site once major construction activities are completed. A thorough native and agricultural plant restoration plan is being developed that will provide details on weed control efforts, anticipated native plant vegetation community establishment by project zone, browse protection plans, plant installation techniques, mulching protocols, and soil de-compaction techniques.

The proponent shall incorporate the following mitigation measures into the project:

Fish

- Construction activities in the side channel will not directly affect fish populations as the side channel will be dry when construction begins. A soil plug will be left in place between the side channel and the wetted river channel during side channel excavation and enhancement actions. In mid-August a bulk bag coffer dam will be built in the wetted river channel around the mouth of the side channel. Once side channel excavation and enhancement actions are completed the soil plug will be removed and the resulting turbid waters will be pumped back onto the floodplain to allow for sediment dropout to occur prior to the construction water entering the fish bearing river channel. Once the water in the side channel is running clean, the bulk bag coffer dam will be removed.
- Defishing activities will occur following approved protocols for in-water work within the coffer dam area.
- Appropriate best management practices will be implemented during construction to protect fish life.
- 0.41 miles of new groundwater fed perennial side channel habitat will be created that will provide critical low flow rearing habitat for a variety of fish species including juvenile Chinook salmon and steelhead.

Water Quality

- Residential wells will not be impacted by the project.
- Appropriate water quality best management practices will be implemented at the project site during construction.
- Areas of the project site disturbed during construction will be re-vegetated to stabilize the soils and minimize sediment inputs to watercourses and bay.
- The restored riparian communities and wetlands will provide biofiltration benefits.

Public Access and Recreation

- The access road onto the public property will be retained.
- Existing watchable wildlife recreation activities will be retained.
- Hunting and fishing access will be retained.

Proponent/Applicant: Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
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Location of Proposal: 20 Grizzly Mountain Road, near Winthrop, Okanogan County, Washington: Township 35N, Range 20E, Section 15 WM

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 mitigated determination of nonsignificance (MDNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this MDNS according to state rules.² We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the MDNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or MDNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on October 14, 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 MDNS 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: September 29, 2014

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 14-070. mdns