



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 15-002: DELISTING STELLER SEA LIONS AS A STATE THREATENED SPECIES

Description of Proposal:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has evaluated the population status of the Steller Sea Lion, which is currently a state threatened species. One rule is proposed to be amended: WAC 232-12-011. WAC 232-12-011 identifies threatened species in Washington that are at risk of becoming endangered in the state and are in need of recovery actions to restore populations to healthy levels. The rule also identifies species listed as sensitive and species classified as protected wildlife.

Pursuant to WAC 232-12-297(6.1.1) and (6.2), WDFW is proposing to amend WAC 232-12-011 and is requesting that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the Department's recommendation to delist Steller Sea Lions as a state threatened species. Rationale for this action are presented in the Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Steller Sea Lion. The report provides an analysis of the factors cited in WAC 232-12-297(7.1.1) through (7.1.5) and considers all information relevant to the status of the species in Washington as well as in the entire eastern Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of Steller Sea Lions, which ranges from Southeast Alaska to California. As described in the report, Steller Sea Lions have demonstrated average annual population growth rates (for adults and juveniles combined) of 9.13% in Washington from 1989 to 2013 and 2.99% in the entire eastern DPS from 1979 to 2010. Adult and juvenile Steller sea lions recorded during summer trend counts in Washington increased from 289 animals in 1991 to 2,157 animals in 2014. Additional population recovery in Washington is demonstrated by the fact that although pupping did not occur in the state during most of the 20th century, small but increasing numbers of pups have been born at several sites since 1992, with the total growing to 60 pups in 2014. The report also discusses a number of known or potential human-related factors that could be adversely affecting the eastern DPS, including climate change, reduced prey abundance through competition with fisheries, human disturbance, incidental take in fishing gear, entanglement in marine debris, intentional killing, environmental contaminants, oil spills, diseases and parasites, and harmful algal blooms. None of these factors, however, has prevented the successful recovery of Steller sea lions in Washington or in the eastern DPS during the past few decades. Based on all of these considerations, it seems likely that Steller sea lion numbers in Washington will continue to increase until reaching carrying capacity with prey resources at some unknown point in the future.

Draft versions of the Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Steller Sea Lion were evaluated by the scientific community, including both WDFW scientists and external scientists. Members of the public were also invited to review the draft periodic status review during a public comment period that extended from September 12 to December 11, 2014. After the close of the public review period, the Department prepared the final periodic status review and delisting recommendation. The public will have an opportunity to review the final periodic status review, delisting recommendation, and SEPA findings from January 9-23, 2015. The final listing

recommendation is planned to be presented to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission on February 6-7, 2015 and the Commission is expected to take action on the recommendation on March 20-21, 2015.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
Contact: Penny Becker, Listing and Recovery Section Manager
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, WA 98501
(360) 902-2694
Penny.Becker@dfw.wa.gov

Location of Proposal, including street, if any: The range of Steller Sea Lions in Washington includes all marine waters, coastlines, estuaries, and the mainstem Columbia River upstream to Bonneville Dam.

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 January 23, 2015**.

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: January 9, 2015

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 15-002.dns