



State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Main Office location: Natural Resources Building - 1111 Washington Street SE - Olympia, WA

DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

Name of Proposal: DNS 16-037: DOWNLISTING AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS FROM A STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES TO A STATE THREATENED SPECIES

Description of Proposal:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has evaluated the population status of the American White Pelican, which is currently a state endangered species. Two rules are proposed to be amended: WAC 232-12-014 and WAC 232-12-011. WAC 232-12-014 identifies endangered species in Washington as those that are seriously threatened with extinction in the state and are in need of recovery actions to restore populations to healthy levels. WAC 232-12-011 identifies species classified as protected, which are designated into three subcategories: threatened, sensitive, and other. Threatened species are those that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

Pursuant to WAC 232-12-297 (6.1.1) and (6.2), WDFW is proposing to amend WAC 232-12-014 and WAC 232-12-011 and is requesting that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the Department's recommendation to downlist the American White Pelican from a state endangered species to a state threatened species. Rationale for this action are presented in the *Draft Washington State Periodic Status Review for the American White Pelican*. 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 nation.

As described in the report, the population and range of American White Pelicans were reduced throughout the 19th and early 20th century due to habitat loss resulting from water projects, persecution, and contaminants. In more recent decades, populations have recovered from pre-1970 declines. Concurrent with rangewide increases, the numbers of American White Pelicans observed in Washington have increased substantially in the last 30 years. The single breeding colony in Washington is on the Columbia River north of Walla Walla. Numbers have grown steadily since its establishment in 1994. Over 3,000 birds were counted in 2015. Although White Pelicans have recovered substantially, populations remain somewhat vulnerable. White pelicans are highly sensitive if disturbed by humans or predators on breeding colonies and prone to desert or leave eggs and young exposed to predation. Other factors affecting white pelican populations include loss of breeding and foraging habitats due to water level changes, diseases, and severe weather. However, given the increase in numbers and new colony establishing just over the border in the Lower Columbia River, the Department's recommendation is to reclassify the White Pelican as a state threatened species.

Draft versions of the *Washington State Periodic Status Review for the American White Pelican* were evaluated by the scientific community, including both WDFW scientists and external scientists. Members of the public are also invited to review the draft periodic status review during a public comment period that extends from July 12 to October 10, 2016. After the close of the public review period, the Department will prepare the final periodic status review and delisting

recommendation.

The final listing recommendation is planned to be presented to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission on November 4-5, 2016 and the Commission is expected to take action on the recommendation on December 9-10, 2016.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
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Location of Proposal, including street, if any: The American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) is widespread in much of western and southeastern North America. It is frequently encountered at lakes, reservoirs, and rivers; it breeds at widely scattered island colonies that are relatively undisturbed by humans and mammalian predators. In Washington, the single breeding colony is located on an island of the Columbia River, in Walla Walla County.

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 90 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 October 10, 2016**.

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: July 12, 2016

SIGNATURE: 

Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 16-037.dns