

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: January 16, 2020

Agenda item: 2020 Forest Restoration Briefing and Project Approval Requests

Presenter(s): Richard Tveten

Background summary:

WDFW adopted the *Management Strategy for the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife's Forests in 2014*. The briefing includes a summary of forest thinning and prescribed burning work completed to date. The project approval requests include two upcoming projects that require commission approval because the harvest volumes exceed one million board feet.

Staff recommendation: Complete the following projects

Weatherly – Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex. Thin 1.8 million board feet on 300 acres. WDFW will leave between 20 and 40 (in general) of the best available trees per acre to improve habitat quality and put forests on accelerated trajectories to once again develop into resilient, fire-climax forests. The project will also protect and create snags.

Windy Point - Oak Creek Wildlife Area. Thin excess small trees on up 1.6 million to 800 acres totaling. WDFW will leave between 25 and 35 (in general) of the best available trees per acre to maximize habitat quality and put forests on accelerated trajectories to once again develop into resilient, fire climax forests. The project will also protect and create snags.

In both cases fire suppression and high-grade logging practices prior to acquisition have resulted overstocked conditions with 1) elevated pathogen levels, insect activity and wildfire risk and 2) less diverse and less resilient wildlife habitat. Timber will be thinned using ground-based equipment including feller bunchers and rubber-tired skidders on slopes of <40%. WDFW will maximize the use of existing roads (open or abandoned), skid trails and landings. Previously abandoned and new temporary roads (if any) will be abandoned at the discretion of the Wildlife Area Manager. The project will meet or exceed State Forest Practice Regulations.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

These projects are designed to restore ecological integrity, improve habitat quality for multiple species including deer and elk, address forest health concerns, reduce wildfire risks and increase the proportion of large diameter trees.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

The Weatherly project will likely generate some timber revenue.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

WDFW will follow the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review process.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Approval of the proposed Weatherly and Windy Point forest restoration thinning projects.

Draft motion language:

Motion: I move to approve the proposed commercial thinning project as presented.

Post decision communications plan:

Wildlife Area staff will notify the public regarding temporary access impacts.