

# SEPA ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

## ***Purpose of checklist:***

Governmental agencies use this checklist to help determine whether the environmental impacts of your proposal are significant. This information is also helpful to determine if available avoidance, minimization or compensatory mitigation measures will address the probable significant impacts or if an environmental impact statement will be prepared to further analyze the proposal.

## ***Instructions for applicants:***

This environmental checklist asks you to describe some basic information about your proposal. Please answer each question accurately and carefully, to the best of your knowledge. You may need to consult with an agency specialist or private consultant for some questions. You may use "not applicable" or "does not apply" only when you can explain why it does not apply and not when the answer is unknown. You may also attach or incorporate by reference additional studies reports. Complete and accurate answers to these questions often avoid delays with the SEPA process as well as later in the decision-making process.

The checklist questions apply to all parts of your proposal, even if you plan to do them over a period of time or on different parcels of land. Attach any additional information that will help describe your proposal or its environmental effects. The agency to which you submit this checklist may ask you to explain your answers or provide additional information reasonably related to determining if there may be significant adverse impact.

## ***Instructions for Lead Agencies:***

Please adjust the format of this template as needed. Additional information may be necessary to evaluate the existing environment, all interrelated aspects of the proposal and an analysis of adverse impacts. The checklist is considered the first but not necessarily the only source of information needed to make an adequate threshold determination. Once a threshold determination is made, the lead agency is responsible for the completeness and accuracy of the checklist and other supporting documents.

## ***Use of checklist for nonproject proposals:***

For nonproject proposals (such as ordinances, regulations, plans and programs), complete the applicable parts of sections A and B plus the [SUPPLEMENTAL SHEET FOR NONPROJECT ACTIONS \(part D\)](#). Please completely answer all questions that apply and note that the words "project," "applicant," and "property or site" should be read as "proposal," "proponent," and "affected geographic area," respectively. The lead agency may exclude (for non-projects) questions in Part B - Environmental Elements –that do not contribute meaningfully to the analysis of the proposal.

## ***A. Background*** [\[HELP\]](#)

1. Name of proposed project, if applicable: Uplist Greater Sage-Grouse as Endangered in the state of Washington and add to the list of Endangered Species in WAC 220-610-010.
2. Name of applicant: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Taylor Cotten

3. Address and phone number of applicant and contact person:

Taylor Cotten

P.O. Box 43141, Olympia, WA 98504-3200

[taylor.cotten@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:taylor.cotten@dfw.wa.gov)

Cell: 360-701-8787

4. Date checklist prepared: 2/4/2021

5. Agency requesting checklist: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

6. Proposed timing or schedule (including phasing, if applicable): Hope to brief Fish and Wildlife Commission at the March commission meeting, for them to vote on at a later meeting in April. The Periodic Status Review is currently out for public review.

7. Do you have any plans for future additions, expansion, or further activity related to or connected with this proposal? If yes, explain. No

8. List any environmental information you know about that has been prepared, or will be prepared, directly related to this proposal. The Periodic Status Review provides biology, range, and threats for the species.

9. Do you know whether applications are pending for governmental approvals of other proposals directly affecting the property covered by your proposal? If yes, explain. No

10. List any government approvals or permits that will be needed for your proposal, if known. Fish and Wildlife Commission approval will be required for the WAC change.

11. Give brief, complete description of your proposal, including the proposed uses and the size of the project and site. There are several questions later in this checklist that ask you to describe certain aspects of your proposal. You do not need to repeat those answers on this page. (Lead agencies may modify this form to include additional specific information on project description.) We are proposing to uplist and reclassify the Greater Sage-Grouse as Endangered in the state of Washington under WAC 220-610-010. The purpose of this rule proposal is to uplist the "greater" sage-grouse as endangered in the state of Washington under WAC 220-610-010. Anticipated effects include the additional recognition and prioritization of the conservation need and actions around greater sage-grouse. If the status change is approved, "greater" sage-grouse will also be removed from WAC 220-200-100 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or finished, and added to WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species; administrative changes have been made to species names for consistency.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife bases its proposal to uplist Greater Sage-Grouse as endangered on scientific information contained in its report *Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Greater Sage-Grouse*. This report summarizes evidence that the Greater Sage-Grouse population is declining and is threatened with extinction in significant portions of its remnant range in the state. The report recommends that the species be classified as an endangered species.

**Reasons supporting proposal:** Greater sage-grouse in Washington were listed as threatened in 1998 with a recovery plan completed in 2004. The state-wide population estimate, based on lek counts, was 676 birds in 2019. Preliminary data for 2020 suggested that the population in Lincoln County declined

from 13 to ten, the population on the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) – Yakima Training Center (YTC) declined from 78 to 65, while the population in Douglas County increased from 585 to 653, for a statewide total of 770. Subsequent to those counts, the habitat of all three populations were affected by wildfires. Preliminary assessments suggest that the Douglas County population will be reduced by ~50% due to loss of sagebrush on half the occupied habitat, and mortalities primarily from high predation due to lack of cover. The struggling Lincoln County population will probably be extirpated.

The potential for wildfires to eliminate sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) on extensive areas has been the greatest ongoing threat to sage-grouse in Washington, as we have seen in 2020. However, with the continued decline, all of Washington's populations are now likely suffering from problems with genetic health and fitness related to small population size. Uncertainty about the long-term maintenance of habitat that depends on Farm Bill programs (CRP/SAFE) is also a major concern. Other major management issues include habitat that is fragmented by roads, agriculture, and development and degraded by past wildfires, historical excessive livestock grazing, fencing, electrical transmission lines, and exotic vegetation. Sage-grouse may suffer mortality rates above historical levels as a result of collisions with fences, powerlines, and vehicles, and higher populations of some generalist predators, especially ravens and coyotes.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and several partner organizations are working on habitat and other aspects of sage-grouse recovery. Without these efforts, the sage-grouse would likely decline to extinction in Washington. In Spring 2020, sage-grouse had not yet declined to populations levels indicated in the 2004 state recovery plan for uplisting (<650 birds); however, that was before the devastating fires of September, and the threshold assumed that the Douglas County and JBLM-YTC populations were connected, which now appears unjustified. Due in part to their polygynous mating system, the effective size of the three populations are ~107 birds for Douglas County and 10 birds for JBLM-YTC. Extinction of the Lincoln County population is all but certain, and of the JBLM-YTC within a decade or so is likely unless they can be increased substantially. The hope of any reintroductions in the future is tempered by the recent failure of the reintroduction project by the Yakama Nation, and the probable failure of the Lincoln County population, and the continued loss of habitat in suitable condition by wildland fire.

Concurrent with this troubling decline, genomic analysis has indicated that Washington's population is more distinct than the Bi-state population that was proposed for listing as a threatened 'Distinct Population Segment' under the Endangered Species Act (USFWS 2019). For these reasons, it is recommended the sage-grouse be up-listed to endangered in Washington.

12. Location of the proposal. Give sufficient information for a person to understand the precise location of your proposed project, including a street address, if any, and section, township, and range, if known. If a proposal would occur over a range of area, provide the range or boundaries of the site(s). Provide a legal description, site plan, vicinity map, and topographic map, if reasonably available. While you should submit any plans required by the agency, you are not required to duplicate maps or detailed plans submitted with any permit applications related to this checklist.

Sage-grouse persist in two main areas in Washington: one primarily on the U.S. Army's Joint Base Lewis McChord Yakima Training Center (JBLM-YTC) in Kittitas and Yakima counties and the other, often referred to as the Moses Coulee population, in Douglas County and potentially, adjacent parts of Grant County (Fig. 1). Populations were being re-established in Lincoln County (i.e. Crab Creek), and on the Yakama Indian Reservation, but with the 2020 fire, both have now probably failed.

## **B. Environmental Elements** [\[HELP\]](#)

### **1. Earth** [\[help\]](#)

a. General description of the site:

(circle one): Flat, rolling, hilly, steep slopes, mountainous, other \_\_\_Mostly flat to rolling hills,  
varies over bird's range\_\_\_\_\_

b. What is the steepest slope on the site (approximate percent slope)? Shrub-steppe habitat so  
predominantly flat to rolling hills.

Varies over the bird's range

c. What general types of soils are found on the site (for example, clay, sand, gravel, peat,  
muck)? If you know the classification of agricultural soils, specify them and note any  
agricultural land of long-term commercial significance and whether the proposal results in  
removing any of these soils.

Varies over the bird's range

d. Are there surface indications or history of unstable soils in the immediate vicinity? If so,  
describe.

Varies over the bird's range

e. Describe the purpose, type, total area, and approximate quantities and total affected area of  
any filling, excavation, and grading proposed. Indicate source of fill. Not applicable

f. Could erosion occur as a result of clearing, construction, or use? If so, generally describe.

Not applicable

g. About what percent of the site will be covered with impervious surfaces after project  
construction (for example, asphalt or buildings)? Not applicable

h. Proposed measures to reduce or control erosion, or other impacts to the earth, if any:

Not applicable

### **2. Air** [\[help\]](#)

a. What types of emissions to the air would result from the proposal during construction,  
operation, and maintenance when the project is completed? If any, generally describe and  
give approximate quantities if known.

Not applicable

b. Are there any off-site sources of emissions or odor that may affect your proposal? If so,  
generally describe.

Not applicable

c. Proposed measures to reduce or control emissions or other impacts to air, if any:  
Not applicable

### 3. **Water** [\[help\]](#)

a. Surface Water: [\[help\]](#)

- 1) Is there any surface water body on or in the immediate vicinity of the site (including year-round and seasonal streams, saltwater, lakes, ponds, wetlands)? If yes, describe type and provide names. If appropriate, state what stream or river it flows into.

Varies over the bird's range

- 2) Will the project require any work over, in, or adjacent to (within 200 feet) the described waters? If yes, please describe and attach available plans.

Not applicable

- 3) Estimate the amount of fill and dredge material that would be placed in or removed from surface water or wetlands and indicate the area of the site that would be affected. Indicate the source of fill material.

Not applicable

- 4) Will the proposal require surface water withdrawals or diversions? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

Not applicable

- 5) Does the proposal lie within a 100-year floodplain? If so, note location on the site plan.

Not applicable

- 6) Does the proposal involve any discharges of waste materials to surface waters? If so, describe the type of waste and anticipated volume of discharge.

Not applicable

b. Ground Water: [\[help\]](#)

- 1) Will groundwater be withdrawn from a well for drinking water or other purposes? If so, give a general description of the well, proposed uses and approximate quantities withdrawn from the well. Will water be discharged to groundwater? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

Not applicable

- 2) Describe waste material that will be discharged into the ground from septic tanks or other sources, if any (for example: Domestic sewage; industrial, containing the following chemicals. . . ; agricultural; etc.). Describe the general size of the system, the number of such systems, the number of houses to be served (if applicable), or the number of animals or humans the system(s) are expected to serve.

Not applicable

c. Water runoff (including stormwater):

- 1) Describe the source of runoff (including storm water) and method of collection and disposal, if any (include quantities, if known). Where will this water flow? Will this water flow into other waters? If so, describe.

Not applicable

- 2) Could waste materials enter ground or surface waters? If so, generally describe.

Not applicable

- 3) Does the proposal alter or otherwise affect drainage patterns in the vicinity of the site? If so, describe.

Not applicable

d. Proposed measures to reduce or control surface, ground, and runoff water, and drainage pattern impacts, if any:

**4. Plants** [\[help\]](#)

a. Check the types of vegetation found on the site:

- deciduous tree: alder, maple, aspen, other
- evergreen tree: fir, cedar, pine, other
- shrubs
- grass
- pasture
- crop or grain
- Orchards, vineyards or other permanent crops.
- wet soil plants: cattail, buttercup, bullrush, skunk cabbage, other
- water plants: water lily, eelgrass, milfoil, other
- other types of vegetation

All of these types of vegetation could occur within parts of the bird's range.

b. What kind and amount of vegetation will be removed or altered?

Not applicable

c. List threatened and endangered species known to be on or near the site.

Varies across the bird's range, may include: Columbia Basin Pygmy Rabbit, Ferruginous Hawk (state listed), and Sharp-tailed Grouse (state listed)

d. Proposed landscaping, use of native plants, or other measures to preserve or enhance vegetation on the site, if any:

Not applicable

e. List all noxious weeds and invasive species known to be on or near the site.

Varies across the bird's range

## 5. **Animals** [\[help\]](#)

a. List any birds and other animals which have been observed on or near the site or are known to be on or near the site.

Examples include:

birds: hawk, heron, eagle, songbirds, other:

mammals: deer, bear, elk, beaver, other:

fish: bass, salmon, trout, herring, shellfish, other \_\_\_\_\_

Varies across the bird's range

b. List any threatened and endangered species known to be on or near the site.

Varies across bird's range, may include: Columbia Basin Pygmy Rabbit, Ferruginous Hawk (state listed), and Sharp-tailed Grouse (state listed)

c. Is the site part of a migration route? If so, explain.

Varies across the bird's range

d. Proposed measures to preserve or enhance wildlife, if any:

Not applicable

e. List any invasive animal species known to be on or near the site.

Not applicable

## 6. **Energy and Natural Resources** [\[help\]](#)

- a. What kinds of energy (electric, natural gas, oil, wood stove, solar) will be used to meet the completed project's energy needs? Describe whether it will be used for heating, manufacturing, etc.

Not applicable

- b. Would your project affect the potential use of solar energy by adjacent properties? If so, generally describe.

Not applicable

- c. What kinds of energy conservation features are included in the plans of this proposal? List other proposed measures to reduce or control energy impacts, if any:

Not applicable

## **7. Environmental Health** [\[help\]](#)

- a. Are there any environmental health hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals, risk of fire and explosion, spill, or hazardous waste, that could occur as a result of this proposal? If so, describe.

- 1) Describe any known or possible contamination at the site from present or past uses.

Not applicable

- 2) Describe existing hazardous chemicals/conditions that might affect project development and design. This includes underground hazardous liquid and gas transmission pipelines located within the project area and in the vicinity.

Not applicable

- 3) Describe any toxic or hazardous chemicals that might be stored, used, or produced during the project's development or construction, or at any time during the operating life of the project.

Not applicable

- 4) Describe special emergency services that might be required.

Not applicable

- 5) Proposed measures to reduce or control environmental health hazards, if any:

Not applicable

### **b. Noise**

- 1) What types of noise exist in the area which may affect your project (for example: traffic, equipment, operation, other)?



Not applicable

2) What types and levels of noise would be created by or associated with the project on a short-term or a long-term basis (for example: traffic, construction, operation, other)? Indicate what hours noise would come from the site.

Not applicable

3) Proposed measures to reduce or control noise impacts, if any:

Not applicable

## **8. Land and Shoreline Use** [\[help\]](#)

a. What is the current use of the site and adjacent properties? Will the proposal affect current land uses on nearby or adjacent properties? If so, describe.

Not applicable

b. Has the project site been used as working farmlands or working forest lands? If so, describe. How much agricultural or forest land of long-term commercial significance will be converted to other uses as a result of the proposal, if any? If resource lands have not been designated, how many acres in farmland or forest land tax status will be converted to nonfarm or nonforest use?

Not applicable

1) Will the proposal affect or be affected by surrounding working farm or forest land normal business operations, such as oversize equipment access, the application of pesticides, tilling, and harvesting? If so, how:

Not applicable

c. Describe any structures on the site.

Not applicable

d. Will any structures be demolished? If so, what?

Not applicable

e. What is the current zoning classification of the site?

Not applicable

f. What is the current comprehensive plan designation of the site?

Not applicable

g. If applicable, what is the current shoreline master program designation of the site?

Not applicable

h. Has any part of the site been classified as a critical area by the city or county? If so, specify.  
Varies across the bird's range.

i. Approximately how many people would reside or work in the completed project?

Not applicable

j. Approximately how many people would the completed project displace?

Not applicable

k. Proposed measures to avoid or reduce displacement impacts, if any:

Not applicable

l. Proposed measures to ensure the proposal is compatible with existing and projected land uses and plans, if any:

Not applicable

m. Proposed measures to reduce or control impacts to agricultural and forest lands of long-term commercial significance, if any:

Not applicable

## **9. Housing** [\[help\]](#)

a. Approximately how many units would be provided, if any? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.

Not applicable

b. Approximately how many units, if any, would be eliminated? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.

Not applicable

c. Proposed measures to reduce or control housing impacts, if any:

Not applicable

**10. Aesthetics** [\[help\]](#)

- a. What is the tallest height of any proposed structure(s), not including antennas; what is the principal exterior building material(s) proposed?

Not applicable

- b. What views in the immediate vicinity would be altered or obstructed?

Not applicable

- c. Proposed measures to reduce or control aesthetic impacts, if any:

Not applicable

**11. Light and Glare** [\[help\]](#)

- a. What type of light or glare will the proposal produce? What time of day would it mainly occur?

Not applicable

- b. Could light or glare from the finished project be a safety hazard or interfere with views?

Not applicable

- c. What existing off-site sources of light or glare may affect your proposal?

Not applicable

- d. Proposed measures to reduce or control light and glare impacts, if any:

Not applicable

**12. Recreation** [\[help\]](#)

- a. What designated and informal recreational opportunities are in the immediate vicinity?

Not applicable but varies across the ir

- b. Would the proposed project displace any existing recreational uses? If so, describe.

Not applicable

- c. Proposed measures to reduce or control impacts on recreation, including recreation opportunities to be provided by the project or applicant, if any:

Not applicable

**13. Historic and cultural preservation** [\[help\]](#)

- a. Are there any buildings, structures, or sites, located on or near the site that are over 45 years old listed in or eligible for listing in national, state, or local preservation registers ? If so, specifically describe.

Not applicable

- b. Are there any landmarks, features, or other evidence of Indian or historic use or occupation? This may include human burials or old cemeteries. Are there any material evidence, artifacts, or areas of cultural importance on or near the site? Please list any professional studies conducted at the site to identify such resources.

Not applicable

- c. Describe the methods used to assess the potential impacts to cultural and historic resources on or near the project site. Examples include consultation with tribes and the department of archeology and historic preservation, archaeological surveys, historic maps, GIS data, etc.

Not applicable

- d. Proposed measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for loss, changes to, and disturbance to resources. Please include plans for the above and any permits that may be required.

Not applicable

#### **14. Transportation** [\[help\]](#)

- a. Identify public streets and highways serving the site or affected geographic area and describe proposed access to the existing street system. Show on site plans, if any.

Not applicable

- b. Is the site or affected geographic area currently served by public transit? If so, generally describe. If not, what is the approximate distance to the nearest transit stop?

Not applicable

- c. How many additional parking spaces would the completed project or non-project proposal have? How many would the project or proposal eliminate?

Not applicable

- d. Will the proposal require any new or improvements to existing roads, streets, pedestrian, bicycle or state transportation facilities, not including driveways? If so, generally describe (indicate whether public or private).

Not applicable

- e. Will the project or proposal use (or occur in the immediate vicinity of) water, rail, or air transportation? If so, generally describe.

Not applicable

- f. How many vehicular trips per day would be generated by the completed project or proposal? If known, indicate when peak volumes would occur and what percentage of the volume would be trucks (such as commercial and nonpassenger vehicles). What data or transportation models were used to make these estimates?

Not applicable

- g. Will the proposal interfere with, affect or be affected by the movement of agricultural and forest products on roads or streets in the area? If so, generally describe.

Not applicable

- h. Proposed measures to reduce or control transportation impacts, if any:

Not applicable

**15. Public Services** [\[help\]](#)

- a. Would the project result in an increased need for public services (for example: fire protection, police protection, public transit, health care, schools, other)? If so, generally describe.

Not applicable

- b. Proposed measures to reduce or control direct impacts on public services, if any.

Not applicable

**16. Utilities** [\[help\]](#)

- a. Circle utilities currently available at the site:  
electricity, natural gas, water, refuse service, telephone, sanitary sewer, septic system,  
other \_\_\_\_\_

Not applicable

- d. Describe the utilities that are proposed for the project, the utility providing the service, and the general construction activities on the site or in the immediate vicinity which might be needed.

Not applicable

**C. Signature** [\[HELP\]](#)

The above answers are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the lead agency is relying on them to make its decision.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ *Taylor Cotten* \_\_\_\_\_

Name of signee Taylor Cotten

Position and Agency/Organization Conservation Assessment Section Manager

Date Submitted: 5/22/2020

#### **D. Supplemental sheet for nonproject actions** [\[HELP\]](#)

(IT IS NOT NECESSARY to use this sheet for project actions)

Because these questions are very general, it may be helpful to read them in conjunction with the list of the elements of the environment.

When answering these questions, be aware of the extent the proposal, or the types of activities likely to result from the proposal, would affect the item at a greater intensity or at a faster rate than if the proposal were not implemented. Respond briefly and in general terms.

1. How would the proposal be likely to increase discharge to water; emissions to air; production, storage, or release of toxic or hazardous substances; or production of noise?

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce such increases are:

Not applicable

2. How would the proposal be likely to affect plants, animals, fish, or marine life?

This proposal does not directly affect any plants, animals, fish, or marine life other than Greater Sage-Grouse. There is no direct effect on the Greater Sage-Grouse population, as this action is necessary to move towards recovering the species' populations. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife bases its proposal to reclassify Greater Sage-Grouse as endangered on scientific information contained in its report *Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Greater Sage-Grouse*. This report summarizes evidence that the Greater Sage-Grouse population continues to be at risk of local extirpations and further declines increasing the risk of extinction in Washington. The report recommends that the species be reclassified from threatened to an endangered species.

Protective measures will remain in effect for Greater Sage-Grouse in Washington if an uplisting of endangered is approved. The species would become listed under the state's list of endangered species, removed from the list of threatened species, and is protected from "take", which includes hunting, fishing, and harassment.

Under Washington state law (WAC 220-610-110), Greater Sage-Grouse are currently threatened wildlife. RCW 77.15.130 outlines that threatened wildlife shall not be hunted, taken, or harassed nor shall their eggs or nests. Greater Sage-Grouse would also remain on the list of Priority Habitats and Species (PHS).

Proposed measures to protect or conserve plants, animals, fish, or marine life are:

Not applicable

3. How would the proposal be likely to deplete energy or natural resources?

Not applicable

Proposed measures to protect or conserve energy and natural resources are:

4. How would the proposal be likely to use or affect environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection; such as parks, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, threatened or endangered species habitat, historic or cultural sites, wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands?

Proposed measures to protect such resources or to avoid or reduce impacts are:

Not applicable

5. How would the proposal be likely to affect land and shoreline use, including whether it would allow or encourage land or shoreline uses incompatible with existing plans?

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce shoreline and land use impacts are:

Not applicable

6. How would the proposal be likely to increase demands on transportation or public services and utilities?

Proposed measures to reduce or respond to such demand(s) are:

Not applicable

7. Identify, if possible, whether the proposal may conflict with local, state, or federal laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

While not a true conflict with any local, state, or federal laws, if the Greater Sage-Grouse is classified as endangered, the state status will be different than the federal status. Greater Sage-Grouse in Washington are not protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.