



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 21-042: REGION 3 WILDLIFE AREA WINTER RANGE  
CLOSURE DATE STANDARDIZATION

**Description of Proposal:**

WDFW already has existing public entry and vehicle closures associated with elk feed sites and winter range. This proposal would standardize the start dates on the Wenas Wildlife Area: 7,060 acres; LT Murray Wildlife Area: 21,330 Oak Creek Wildlife Area-Cowiche Unit: 3,615 acres; Oak Creek Wildlife Area-Oak Creek Unit: 8,630 acres; Oak Creek Wildlife Area-Oak Creek Unit-Cleman Mtn Roads--~13 miles

During winter and spring elk are concentrated in large numbers on and near winter feed sites and on winter range and human disturbance can result in unnecessary stress on elk during this critical time period. The disturbance may also result in increased agricultural damage and significant costs to repair elk fence.

These areas already have closures in place (four closed to all public entry and one motorized vehicle closure), all of which end on May 1 at 6:00 am each year. However, the starting date currently varies from year to year and from site to site. Proposal is to set a standard closure date/time (December 15 at 12:01 AM) to afford consistency between feed sites and provide a uniform date for the public. Winter feeding often begins around this time and it is after the majority of hunting seasons close. December 15 is a compromise and comes with some risk that elk will begin concentrating on the feed sites prior to this date in years when we have early winter conditions. If conditions require (e.g. early snow resulting in a need to feed concentrating elk) an earlier start to the closures as a short-term resource closure will be implemented following WDFW Policy 6012.

All areas have existing closures and the type of closure at each location would not change. This modification would make the closure time periods consistent across wildlife areas and meet needed changes based on human activity. Areas around the winter feed sites and winter range (see attached maps) would be closed each year on December 15 at 12:01 AM. Currently the L.T. Murray and Wenas public entry closures begin when elk begin concentrating on the feed sites. This varies from year to year depending on weather, but typically occurs from early to late December. That effect will be minimal at the L.T. Murray, and Wenas locations where the standardized date will shift the closure start by 1-2 weeks in either direction. The Oak Creek and Cowiche public entry closure would change from a March 1 start date to December 15. The Oak Creek and Cowiche closure will have the most significant change where winter activities may be restricted in some areas (snowshoeing, cross country skiing and snowmobiling). Currently Oak Creek Road closes when elk start concentrating in the area this typically occurs in mid-December, this closure occurs under an agreement with the US Forest Service. There will be minimal change to this closure but the start date will be standardized. The start date for the

vehicle closure on the south side of Cleman Mountain would be changed from December 30 to December 15. End dates for all sites would continue to be May 1 at 6:00AM.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
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**Location of Proposal, including street, if any:** Portions of several WDFW Wildlife Areas in Kittitas and Yakima Counties in Washington: Multiple Townships, Ranges, and Sections.

Wenas Wildlife Area: 7,060 acres

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area: 21,330 acres

Oak Creek Wildlife Area – Cowiche Unit: 3,615 acres

Oak Creek Wildlife Area – Oak Creek Unit: 8,630 acres

Oak Creek Wildlife Area – Oak Creek Unit – Cleman Mountain Roads: about 13 miles

**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 law<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> **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 August 26, 2021.**

**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](mailto:SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov)
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at:  
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/open-comments>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946
- Mail to the address below.

**Responsible Official:** Lisa Wood

**Position/Title:** SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Habitat Program, Protection Division

**Address:** P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/closed-final>. 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.<sup>1</sup>

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, contact Lisa Wood at the address above or email [SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov).

**DATE OF ISSUE:** August 12, 2021

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 21-042.dns

*Individuals who need to receive this information in an alternative format or language, or who need reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities may contact the Title VI/ADA Compliance Coordinator by phone at 360-902-2349, TTY (711), or email ([Title6@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Title6@dfw.wa.gov)).*