



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200 • (360) 902-2200 • TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

**DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)
-PHASED REVIEW-**

Name of Proposal: DNS 21-054: NON-NATIVE GAME FISH AND FISHERIES POLICY

Description of Proposal:

WDFW proposes to establish a Non-Native Game Fish and Fisheries policy that will serve to guide the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) management of non-native gamefish statewide. This proposed policy will provide general guidance on when and where it will be appropriate for WDFW to manage fisheries for non-native game fish through the establishment of fishing seasons, bag or catch limits, and geographical areas where such activities will be permitted. These species already occur in the majority of inland waters in Washington and fisheries already occur on these species. This policy is not expected to significantly change how, when, or where WDFW prioritizes the management of non-native game fish, but will provide clear guidance as to where non-native game fish can be a priority for our management and where native species are a priority. The policy will also be consistent with WDFW's mandate under RWC 77.04.012 which requires WDFW to "preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage food fish, game fish, and shellfish in state waters...", as well as "maintain the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry in the state."

In addition to WDFW's mandate, additional guidance to this policy was provided by the Washington State Legislature through Title 77 in directing the Commission and WDFW to manage certain non-native fish species such that various native species including southern resident killer whales are not negatively impacted, after which the Commission undertook rule-making actions to liberalize daily bag limits for certain non-native game fish species in anadromous waters. Concurrently, through legislation of RCW 77.44.010, WDFW was directed create a warm water gamefish enhancement program "designed to increase the opportunities to fish for and catch warm water game fish including: Largemouth black bass, smallmouth black bass, channel catfish, black crappie, white crappie, walleye, and tiger musky."

This policy establishes the following:

- 1) This policy will support conservation and recovery of native species.
- 2) Actions under this policy will utilize best available science related to non-native game fish species impacts on native species of concern – particularly vulnerable salmonids - to systematically craft fisheries to meet the interests of non-native game fish anglers where appropriate.
- 3) The policy establishes management guidance in six broad categories: population management, fishing regulations, introduction/supplementation/translocation, habitat, and targeted control in six broad water body types.

- 4) This policy will be consistent with state laws, rules, Commission policies, and native species conservation plans.
- 5) This policy will use precautionary approaches to manage non-native game fish fisheries within the WDFW's available budget.
- 6) Provide clear and concise context and guidance as to where, when and how WDFW may manage non-native game fish to provide recreational opportunity.
- 7) Non-native game fish species play an important role in Washington's diverse recreational fishing landscape, generating hundreds of thousands of angler trips annually, and contributing millions to local and state economies.

The draft Non-Native Game Fish and Fisheries Policy accompanying this determination shows the preferred options highlighted in yellow.

The environmental review of this Policy and future projects under the Policy will be through a phased approach in accordance with WAC 197-11-060(5)(c)(i). This SEPA determination concerns the first phase of environmental review – a review of the actions specified in the draft Non-Native Game Fish and Fisheries Policy. The second phase(s) will concern environmental review of future actions that may be proposed under this Policy for which details are not yet known. Those actions would undergo a separate SEPA review as appropriate for the specific project. This policy is not intended to circumvent any requirement for environmental review of an individual project, where required under SEPA.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
Contact: Stephen Caromile, Inland Fish Program Manager
1111 Washington St SE
Olympia, WA 98501
(360) 902-8315
Stephen.Caromile@dfw.wa.gov

Location of Proposal, including street, if any: This is a statewide policy and will be implemented for all inland, fresh waters of the state.

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 November 19, 2021**.

Method of Comment:

SEPA documents related to this proposal can be reviewed at the WDFW SEPA website at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/open-comments>.

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 through one of the following ways:

- Online at the Public Input comment portal for this proposal: <https://publicinput.com/NonNativeGameFishPolicy>
- Email to 31045@publicinput.com.

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.¹

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, or have difficulty with the Public Input comment portal, contact Lisa Wood at SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov.

DATE OF ISSUE: November 5, 2021

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 21-054.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).