



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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

MITIGATED DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

Name of Proposal: MDNS 22-041: MILLTOWN ISLAND ESTUARY RESTORATION

Description of Proposal:

The goal of the Milltown Island Estuary Restoration is to enhance crucial existing habitats to Chinook and other salmonids by connecting existing channels and removing impediments to natural estuarine processes ensuring habitats are accessible, self-sustaining, and resilient to climate change. This project will improve the quality and quantity of rearing habitat for juvenile salmonids through the creation of blind tide channels and blind channel alcoves, levee-lowering zones, and the formation and planting of wetland habitat mounds. The design includes 13 new channel networks totaling approximately 9,050 linear feet with 12 new direct breach locations to South Fork Skagit River distributaries; these channel networks include 37 blind channel alcoves off the primary and secondary tide channels. The existing levee will be removed and replaced with open channels. 3 tidal headwater areas, each encompassing approximately 0.5 acre, will be created and will outlet to tidal channels. There will be approximately 12 acres of native vegetation planting with a majority of plating focused on the creation of scrub-shrub and forested tidal wetlands.

This project has been approved as a Habitat Recovery Pilot Program (HRPP) project because it is a habitat recovery project that benefits freshwater, estuarine, or marine fish, or their habitats. Under RCW 77.55.480, this project is not subject to environmental review under RCW 43.21C.030(2) (SEPA). WDFW is voluntarily conducting a SEPA review of this project to provide individual and groups the opportunity to review the proposal and provide comment.

The proponent shall incorporate the following mitigation measures into the project:

- Culvert removal – two 30-inch culverts which are currently not passable by fish will be removed and replaced with an open channel
- Blind tide channels – 13 new channel networks will be created totaling approximately 9,050 linear feet for juvenile salmonid use
- Blind channel alcoves – 37 blind channel alcoves will be added with the expectation that over time they will evolve into longer tide channels as the site continually develops providing even more habitat for juvenile salmonids
- Tidal headwaters – the project will create 3 tidal headwaters in the central portion of the island and will outlet to tidal channels to prevent fish stranding

- Levee-lowering – these zones will occur adjacent to a proposed tide channel or in a location identified by hydraulic monitoring and are designed to improve tidal and fluvial connectivity by eliminating artificial barriers that are preventing geomorphic processes on the island. These zones will increase distribution of sediment, wood, and high-energy flows on the island during flood events.
- Wetland habitat mounds – These mounds will be planted with native species identified by the Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC) and are designed to increase topographic and vegetative heterogeneity. This will increase habitat complexity on the island and is intended to increase vegetative structure and diversity (identified by Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project as an important component to restoring functions and processes on the island).
- Work will be completed during summer and early fall when river levels are typically low and most work will occur during low- to mid-tide when water is partially drained from the high-marsh surface.
- Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented during construction. BMPs are physical, structural, and/or managerial practices that can prevent or reduce the erosion and pollution of water caused by construction activities. The following mitigation measures and BMPs will be incorporated to minimize the potential for erosion:
 - A Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control (TESC) Plan will be required to prevent sediment transport from the project area.
 - All in-water work will adhere to the conditions, including timing restrictions, of local, state, and federal permits and approvals. Other erosion control measures will be incorporated, as necessary, in accordance with Skagit County and Department of Ecology requirements.
 - Straw wattles shall consist of straw wrapped in biodegradable tubular plastic or similar encasing material. Wattles shall be 8 to 10 inches in diameter.
 - A turbidity curtain will be installed around the in-water work area to reduce turbidity flowing downstream/upstream depending on tidal effects
 - Refueling will take place more than 100 feet from surface waters where practicable.
- Four 30-inch culverts are slated for removal. The culverts are likely not fish passable and carry flow through the perimeter levee or were likely a remnant of an old road on the island. All culverts will be removed and replaced with tidal channels for free flow of water and fish passage.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
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Location of Proposal: Milltown Island, on the lower South Fork Skagit River at the Skagit Bay Estuary, approximately two miles south of Conway, Skagit County, Washington: Township 33N, Range 4E, Sections 30 and 31.

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 mitigated determination of nonsignificance (MDNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this MDNS according to state rules.² **We will not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the MDNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or MDNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on September 23, 2022.**

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/MilltownIsland>
- Email to: MilltownIsland@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 MDNS 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: September 9, 2022

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-350.

SEPA Log Number: 22-041 mdns

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).