



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 24-035: OBSERVATORY FOREST HEALTH THINNING

Description of Proposal:

The Observatory Forest Health Thinning Project is intended to improve ecological integrity ratings, improve habitat for multiple wildlife species, improve forest health and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

There are 358 acres on 4 units that will be commercially thinned to more closely reflect the historic range of variability. This will include reducing stocking levels to 25 to 35 trees per acre, 10" + DBH. Leave trees in all 4 units have been leave tree marked, with orange paint, using the following prescription:

In all units, the thinning prescription will use the Individual, Clumps and Openings (ICO) leave tree strategy in an attempt to move the units closer to the "historic range of variability." All 4 units will be leave tree marked with orange paint. The criteria listed in A.11 of the Environmental Checklist for this proposal will be used during the leave tree selection process.

Logging slash will be piled at landings and will be burned as per burn permit conditions issued by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. The units will be assessed in 1 to 2 years post-harvest to determine the timing of prescribed broadcast burning (if funding is available). The goal of future treatments will be to continue the process of restoring forest stand structure (including species composition, tree densities and spatial arrangement) within the historic range of variability found on these sites prior to 1880, when natural disturbance regimes were the primary ecological process.

Designated new construction and reconstruction roads will be abandoned or gated at the discretion of the Wenas Wildlife Area Manager and agency road management objectives. Final road work will be completed after thinning operations have been completed. For roads to be abandoned, this work will include culvert removal, installation of water bars, spreading slash and debris over the road prism at the beginning of the road, and grass seeding with a mix of native species as per Wenas Wildlife Area Manager guidelines. New gates will be built and installed according to meet Wildlife Area Manager and agency road management objectives. All abandonment work will be completed as per DNR road abandonment guidelines for light abandonment.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
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Ellensburg, WA 98926
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Location of Proposal, including street, if any: WDFW Wenas Wildlife Area, approximately 15 miles west of Ellensburg, Kittitas County, Washington: Township 17N, Range 17E, Sections 12, 21, 22, and 23.

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 Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this determination. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this document. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on September 17, 2024**.

Method of Comment:

SEPA documents related to this proposal can be reviewed at the WDFW SEPA website at: [SEPA documents available for public comment | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

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: [Observatory Thin](#)
- Email to: ObservatoryThin@PublicInput.com

Responsible Official: Lisa Wood

Position/Title: SEPA Responsible Official and SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Director's Office

Address: PO Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this determination on the WDFW SEPA website: [Final SEPA documents | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#). After 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 determination 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 3, 2024

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 24-035.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).