



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)

Name of Proposal: DNS 24-056: METHOW WILDLIFE AREA WINTER CLOSURE

Description of Proposal:

WDFW proposes to close portions of the Methow Wildlife Area from December 15 – April 1. This SEPA checklist is intended to cover the 2024-2025 closure, as well as potential closure in 2025-2026, and other future years of closure implementation. This will include partially closing five units: Texas Creek, Golden Doe, Methow, Big Buck and Rendezvous. The following units are NOT part of the closure: Hunter Mountain, Big Valley, and Early Winters.

The Methow Valley is home to one of the largest migratory mule deer herds in Washington state. Many of these deer take up wintertime residence on the Methow Wildlife Area. Much of the Methow Wildlife Area was purchased specifically for the protection of migratory corridors and mule deer winter range. Several factors including climate change, wildfire, land development/conversion, have resulted in both temporary and permanent reductions in mule deer winter range habitat quality and quantity, and the magnitude of these impacts has accelerated in recent decades. In addition, winter and early spring recreation has increased significantly in the watershed including on mule deer winter range. The displacement effects of human activity on deer are well documented in the literature. Increasing human use is also impacting habitat effectiveness (the ability/willingness of animals to use an area). Consequently, this closure is intended to conserve and perpetuate mule deer populations by reducing human pressure in critical habitat during the months when mule deer are most challenged by food scarcity and energetic demands. The proposed closure areas are centered on quality winter/spring range and known mule deer activity areas.

Areas to be closed within those units will be thoroughly delineated with closure signs and maps detailing the closure boundaries. No public access will be permitted within the closure boundaries. The closure will begin at 12:01 a.m. on December 15th, 2024 and end at 11:59 p.m. on March 31st, 2025. As noted above, there may be similar winter closures in subsequent years. U.S Forest Service and Okanogan County roads within the wildlife area remain open and are not impacted by this closure.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
Contact: Brandon Troyer
350 Bear Creek Road
Winthrop, WA 98862
509-996-2559
Brandon.Troyer@dfw.wa.gov

Location of Proposal: Five units of the WDFW Methow Wildlife Area, Okanogan County, Washington, as follows:

- Texas Creek and Golden Units: Township 31N, Range 22E; Township 32N, Range 22E; and Township 33N, Range 22E.
- Big Buck Unit: Township 33N, Range 21E; and Township 34N, Range 21E.
- Methow Unit: Township 33N, Range 22E and 23E; Township 34N, Range 22E and 23E; and Township 35N, Range 21E and 22E.
- Rendezvous Unit: Township 35N, Range 21E.

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 determination according to state rules.¹ Agencies, 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 December 10, 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 determinations. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal. Please submit your comments online through one of the following ways:

- Online at the Public Input comment portal for this proposal: [Methow Winter Closure](#)
- Email to: MethowWinterClosure@PublicInput.com

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](#). When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.

Responsible Official: Lisa Wood

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

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

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: November 26, 2024

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

1. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 24-056.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).