



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:** WDFW Wooten Wildlife Area Tucannon River and Floodplain Restoration Projects

**Description of Proposal:**

This proposal is for river and floodplain restoration projects done from 2013-2018 on the W.T. Wooten W.A., using funding from the BPA contract (2010-077) Tucannon Habitat Programmatic administered through the Snake Region Salmon Recovery Board. The Wooten Wildlife Area encompasses 17 miles of Tucannon River headwaters that are considered critical spawning and rearing habitat for Lower Snake River Spring Chinook. The projects have been developed using a 2011 geomorphic assessment done by Anchor, QEA. The restoration actions in the Tucannon Basin are based on a framework proposed by Roni, et al (2002). 1. Protect and maintain natural processes – Promote natural hydrologic and sediment routing throughout the system, allow natural channel migration and wood recruitment, 2. Connect disconnected habitats- Reconnect oxbows, wetlands, and former main stem and side channels (floodplain), 3. Address roads, levees, and other human infrastructure impairing processes – Remove or modify culverts, levees, dredge spoils, diversion dams, and grade control structures, 4. Restore riparian processes – Isolate and protect healthy riparian areas, eradicate invasive species, and plant native communities, 5. Improve instream habitat conditions – Install large individual trees and Large Woody Debris structures in the main channel. This proposal is intended to cover Large Wood and Floodplain restoration projects identified using this framework. Anchor developed a set of conceptual (10%) designs for the Tucannon River, Reaches 8-10 and Project Areas 1-15 and 18 are located on the Wooten W.A. These conceptual designs were prioritized by Anchor and approved by the Tucannon Conservation Committee and SRSRB Regional Technical Team, into (3) tiered levels. The geomorphic assessment results identified Large Wood (LW) replenishment and restoring floodplain connection as two of the main objectives for Spring Chinook Habitat restoration. Restoring floodplain includes restoring large wood to the stream channel, to aggrade the channel and reconnects the river and its floodplain, removing dredge spoils and dikes to increase the floodplain area available to the river, and in some cases moving dikes back that provide protection for existing infrastructure. Large Wood (LW) replenishment/restoration includes using helicopters to place trees into the river, building constructed log jams, dropping dead trees into the river when opportunity presents itself, and using chainsaw winches or other devices to pull LW from the floodplain into the channel. The Tucannon River is disconnected from the floodplain and has very little habitat complexity. The short term goals for LW restoration is to restore habitat complexity in the form of more frequent pools, reconnect secondary channels, and provide more cover for salmonids and other native fish. The general project objectives are to increase in-stream habitat complexity, maximize linkages between the river and the floodplain, increase the number and length of ephemeral and perennial channels, and improve riparian health and function.

In 2013, there are two projects scheduled for implementation Project Area 14 (PA14) and Project Area 3 (PA3). PA 14 is sponsored by WDFW WST Biologist, Dave Karl, and it is a LW replenishment project from river mile (RM) 39.2 (downstream from the hatchery bridge) to RM 37.5 (Spring Lake). The project was designed by Tracy Drury, P.E. Anchor QEA and involves

construction of 8 basic types of Engineered Log Jams (ELJ's) through the roughly 1.5 mile reach (design drawing/report attached). PA 3 is sponsored by Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Tucannon Habitat Biologist, Eric Hoverson, and the project involves helicopter placement of full trees with root-balls from RM 48.6 (Little Tucannon confluence) to RM46.8 (Donnie Lake). The project was designed by Eric Hoverson and Gerald Middel (CTUIR) and reviewed by Bruce Heiner, WDFW Engineer. Helicopter placement is a low impact method for LW replenishment; however, some reaches require engineering to manage impacts to infrastructure and/or private property.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Dave Karl

1340 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Ave Walla Walla, WA 99362 (509) 527-4138

**Location of Proposal, including street, if any:** Tucannon River System, WDFW Wooten Wildlife Area, Approximately 12 miles southwest from Pomeroy and 12 miles East of Dayton, Washington, Columbia County; Sections 21, 22, 27, Township 10 North, Range 41 East WM Sections 29, 30, Township 9 North, Range 41 East WM.

**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. This means we must receive your comments by **March 14, 2013**.

**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/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

**Responsible Official:** Bob Zeigler

**Position/Title:** SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

**Address:** 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/> 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 Bob Zeigler at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call him at (360) 902-2578.

**DATE OF ISSUE:** February 27, 2013

**SIGNATURE:** 

Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 13 -017. dns