



State of Washington

## **DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N - Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 - (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 16-031: SUNSET FALLS FISH RELEASE SITE RELOCATION

#### **Description of Proposal:**

The project will relocate the upstream fish transfer, or fish drop, facility used to return salmonids to the South Fork of the Skykomish River after they have been trapped at the Sunset Falls trap and haul site. Sunset Falls trap and haul site is a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife owned facility that is co-managed with the Tulalip Tribes that traps and hauls adult salmonids above the impassable Sunset, Eagle, and Canyon Falls Barriers located on the South Fork Skykomish River between R.M. 51.5 and R.M. 54. The facility has been in operation since 1958 and annually hauls thousands of adult fish to colonize otherwise inaccessible habitat; providing key habitat and spawning area access for ESA listed Chinook, Steelhead, and Bull Trout. A key component to the trap and haul is the release site; few accessible sites exist that allow ready vehicle access to plant adult fish. The existing release site below Barclay Creek has been damaged by flooding events, and it has become non-functional. After a thorough investigation of alternative release sites on the South Fork Skykomish above Sunset Falls, it was discovered that very few areas have the necessary attributes of a successful release area. Those attributes include drive up access on a stable road that is safe and out of high traffic areas, a deep plunge pool where fish can be released and where they can recover after handling and hauling, and a somewhat stable river bank that is protected from high water. It is also desirable to have the site relatively close to Sunset Falls Trap in order to minimize hauling times.

During a search for alternate release sites, WDFW staff discovered a potential site immediately downstream of the bridge over the South Fork Skykomish that accesses the Money Creek campground, on parcel #2126119012. The site is on parcels belonging to WSDOT and USFS. It has two existing gravel access roads that lead to river access: one immediately below the bridge on the north bank of the river; the second 900' west of that bridge. The river bank is heavily armored with rip-rap and there is a large, deep resting pool immediately below the rip-rap that would be an ideal site for releasing adult fish. The site may be the only viable alternative to the existing site that will not function well due to recent erosion. Travel to the Money Creek bridge site will require transporting fish up to R.M. 62.3, 8.3 miles farther up-river.

WDFW proposes to improve the existing site by removing enough brush, limbs, and four red alder trees and three bigleaf maples to gain access for the planting truck, add gravel to the access roads, construct a gravel access road between them with space for the truck-to-pipe connector, and install gates to limit public access during transfer times.

WDFW would use this site for releasing fish by repairing the existing access roads, connecting these roads to create a loop with a spur back-in lane to bring the fish truck close enough to the bank above the resting pool where a pipe flume can be used to return fish to the River.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
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**Location of Proposal, including street, if any:** Sunset Falls Fish Drop at Money Creek Bridge, US Highway 2 between Grotto and Skykomish, King County, Washington: Township 26N, Range 11W, Sections 20 and 21.

**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. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on June 23, 2016**.

**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:** Lisa Wood

**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 Lisa Wood at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call her at (360) 902-2260.

**DATE OF ISSUE:** June 9, 2016

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

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