



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 16-073: TANEUM FOREST RESTORATION THINNING

Description of Proposal:

The Taneum Forest Restoration Thinning Project is intended to improve ecological integrity ratings, create sustainable habitat for multiple wildlife species and improve forest health. Unit 1 comprises 181 acres, Unit 2 comprises 251 acres and unit 3 comprises 188 acres for a total of 620 acres treated.

Unit 1 is an industry model plantation that was planted after an even-aged harvest operation approximately 40 years ago. Approximately 300 Douglas-fir seedlings per acre were planted with good survival rates. The stand is currently over-stocked with 278 trees per acre (TPA) with an average 6" diameter at breast height (dbh). Naturally regenerated western larch and ponderosa pine are also found in the unit. Overstocked conditions, declining forest health and an increased risk of a stand replacement fire have resulted in declining ecological integrity ratings. Thinning the stand now will result in a significant increase in growth rates and overall health of the residual trees in the stand.

Leave trees in Unit 1 will be spaced at approximately 18 foot intervals, resulting in a residual leave tree density of approximately 130 TPA post thinning. This operation is a "non-commercial thinning," meaning that trees selected for removal will be dropped and left on site to decompose. Most leave trees will be Douglas-fir since that is what was planted. However, natural western larch and ponderosa pine have become established and will be the preferred leave tree species where available. Only those trees less than 8" dbh will be removed. Those trees over 8" dbh and those expressing dominant traits will be selected to leave. This operation will accelerate the successional trajectory of the stand to a late seral stand condition and potential habitat for the Northern spotted owl.

In units 2 and 3, the thinning prescription will use a combination of Individual, Clumps and Openings (ICO) techniques and stocking/spacing strategies. The complexity of the prescription necessitated the need to mark leave trees prior to the actual thinning operation. The following criteria were used during the leave tree selection process:

- Species preference, in declining order of preference, included ponderosa pine, western larch, Douglas-fir and grand fir.
- Leave "unique" species that are limited to micro-sites in the stand (western red cedar and Engelmann spruce).
- Leave large diameter "legacy" trees.
- Leave trees with good growing characteristics (good crown ratios and relatively free of pathogens and/or insect attack).
- Leave defective trees with unique characteristics (trees with cat faces, "wolfy" crowns, large limbs, etc.) for Wildlife Reserve Tree (WRT) recruitment.
- In snag deficient areas, mark trees 10" dbh and greater with defect in the butt log with 2 orange bands for WRT recruitment. This indicates to the logging contractor that he needs to "snip off" the tree as high as he can reach with the harvester to create a WRT.

- In general, attempt to leave a residual stand with a post-treatment stocking level of between 25 (average 42' spacing) and 35 (average 35' spacing) TPA. Realize that these stocking/spacing guidelines are only intended as a spatial reference starting point.
- Scatter tree clumps (2 to 5 trees per clump) across the unit (e.g. desirable tree species, legacy trees, unique trees, etc.) where appropriate
- Create small openings (0.5 to 1 acre) across the unit where appropriate. Take advantage of pre-existing openings with good production of browse species where appropriate.
- Minimum diameter for leave trees is 8" dbh.
- In general, leave all trees >24" dbh unless they pose a safety threat (e. g. tree is at risk of falling over a main line road) or they are a non-preferred species with preferred species surrounding (e.g. grand fir surrounded by ponderosa pine, western larch or Douglas-fir).
- Snags will not be marked as leave trees with orange paint. All snags that do not pose a safety threat, as per L & I guidelines, are required to be left by the logging contractor. Those snags dropped for safety reasons by the logging contractor will be left in place.
- Dwarf mistletoe infected trees provide important habitat to a variety of wildlife species and will be left individually or in clumps as appropriate (lower hillside, adjacent to non-impacted tree species, draw bottoms, etc.). The goal will be to reduce the threat of the mistletoe spreading to adjacent host species and throughout the stand.

The project will be accessed using existing roads, including the green dot Shadow Creek and Moonlight Canyon Roads. Access to interior portions of the units will be primarily on existing orphaned/abandoned roads. These roads will be temporarily re-opened for the duration of the project and then re-abandoned post-treatment.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
 Contact: Rod Pfeifle
 DNR SE Region Office
 713 Bowers Road
 Ellensburg, WA 98926-9301
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Location of Proposal, including street, if any: Approximately 6 miles west of the Taneum Creek exit off I-90 on Taneum Road, LT Murray Wildlife Area, Kittitas County, Washington: Township 19N, Range 16E, Sections 30, 31, 32, and 34.

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 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 December 20, 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

- 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.¹

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: December 6, 2016

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 16-073.dns