



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

### MITIGATED DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (MDNS)

**Name of Proposal:** MDNS 17-002: COLUMBIA BASIN WILDLIFE AREA FRENCHMAN REGULATED ACCESS AREA WETLAND ENHANCEMENTS

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

The 230 acre FRAA project area consists of a series of wetlands, and borders the Bureau of Reclamation Frenchman Reserve property. Both areas provide valuable wintering habitat and sanctuary for large numbers of waterfowl and other wildlife. The seed production, invertebrates, and shallow depth of wetlands attract waterfowl and other wildlife. In the spring, the receding waterline provides forage opportunity for migrating waterfowl and other waterbirds. The areas are valuable locations for hunters to harvest waterfowl and upland gamebirds, as well as offer accessibility to disabled hunters through on-site parking and established hunting blinds.

This enhancement project aims to improve wetland function and wildlife habitat that has degraded due to succession by increasing open water in two wetland cells, contouring 1 wetland cell, creating a 2 swales to help deliver water to wetlands, and installing 2 water control structures to improve water flow and retention. While the project area boundaries span across 130 acres, only 4.24 acres will actually be manipulated. Activities include: (1) earthwork to re-grade topography for improved vegetation management and increase wetland area, (2) improving islands for nesting and loafing for waterfowl, sandhill cranes, and other wildlife, (3) creating or improving waterways for better water delivery to wetland cells, which will improve wetland vegetation management and allow for flowing ice-free water in winter providing waterfowl areas to feed and rest, and (4) improving an access crossing at the north end of a wetland cell, which will improve the ability to manage the wetlands.

#### **The proponent shall incorporate the following mitigation measures into the project:**

##### *Plants*

Native plant restoration is planned for the project site once earthwork activities are completed. This will be accomplished through returning any wetland topsoil moved to the area to allow the seedbank to rapidly replenish the plant community. Topography will be shaped to conform to adjacent terrain. Levees will be compacted and have a 3:1 (horizontal:vertical) slope. All enhanced upland areas and bare-soil caused by the project will be seeded with various mixtures of drought-tolerant native willow, bunch grasses, or similar species, or will be covered with straw mulch while awaiting re-growth once work is completed. Efforts will be taken to quickly revegetate all disturbed areas as quickly as possible. Non-native Russian olive trees will be removed from the project area over the course of 5 years. WDFW Biologists will conduct plant and wildlife surveys annually to evaluate regrowth and occupation of the site, and intervene to improve circumstances as needed. Weed control measures will likely be included in site rehabilitation for the first couple of years.

##### *Fish*

Enhancement activities will be performed during low-water conditions and will have minimal impact upon fish. The wetlands and downstream habitat are a complex of a man-made irrigation

wasteway system, with no fish of concern inhabiting wetlands or the wasteway. Most fish species present are non-native and invasive. This project area is not used by fishermen.

### *Wildlife*

The proposed work will create two swales connecting more directly to the Frenchman Hills Wasteway, thereby improving water flow to wetland pools and improving habitat for waterfowl and other water-associated wildlife. The water would circulate back into the wasteway after flowing through the wetland cells.

### *Water Quality*

Water involved in this project area comes from precipitation and farm irrigation which are not tied to residential wells or city drinking water supplies. Water quality impacts will be minimal due to the low-water conditions anticipated during the planned work period; increased turbidity may be a potential factor for a couple weeks in a segment of the wasteway that is not used for human purposes and would not affect wildlife to any measurable extent. No waste materials are anticipated to be discharged to any surface waters, and machines will be checked previous to work to ensure no leaks are evident. Appropriate water quality best management practices will be implemented at the project site during construction. The restored riparian communities and wetlands will provide biofiltration benefits.

### *Public Access and Recreation*

No alteration to public access roads will occur. Existing watchable wildlife recreation activities will be retained and improved in long-term. Hunting and fishing access will be retained and improved in long-term.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
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**Location of Proposal:** Frenchman Regulated Access Area on the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, approximately 9 miles southwest of Moses Lake, Grant County, Washington: Township 17N, Range 27E, Sections 8 and 9.

**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 mitigated determination of nonsignificance (MDNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this MDNS according to state rules.<sup>2</sup> We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the MDNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or MDNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on February 16, 2017**.

**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 MDNS 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:** February 2, 2017

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 17-002.mdns