



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 18-011: SCATTER CREEK WILDLIFE AREA OAK RELEASE AND PROTECTION – SOUTH UNIT

Description of Proposal:

The Scatter Creek Wildlife Area is home to rare plants, animals, and plant communities of remnant South Puget Sound grasslands and oak woodlands. The site is of conservation concern due to degradation pressure from a number of threats, including invasive species and altered disturbance regimes. The project goal is to restore these rare habitats, emphasizing needs for federal- and state-listed threatened and endangered species and WDFW's Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

The desired outcome is to perpetuate a legacy of prairie along with Oregon white oak savannah and woodland on the South Unit of the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, which will enhance habitat for WDFW Species of Greatest Conservation Need. This project will remove most live and dead Douglas fir that have encroached on 25.4 acres of native prairie. The largest Douglas fir trees, most of them over 40 inches in diameter at breast height), however, will be retained on the prairie as wildlife trees. The project will also release 12.4 acres of Oregon white oak while maintaining a healthy riparian buffer. Oak release will be conducted through conifer harvest and snag creation of conifers following guidelines by Harrington and Devine (A Practical Guide to Oak Release, 2006. GTR #666, U.S. Forest Service, PNW Region). Douglas fir trees will be thinned in approximately 1.1 acres of the outer zone of the Scatter Creek riparian management zone where necessary to release oaks from overtopping conifers to improve their survival and growth. The core and inner zones will remain untouched.

On August 22, 2017, a wildfire burned 345 acres on the South Unit of Scatter Creek Wildlife Area including 61 acres of trees. Approximately 28 of the 37.8 acres that will be treated in this project were burned to varying degrees of intensity. In many areas with pure Douglas and mixed Oregon White Oak/Douglas fir, the fire killed an estimated 80-90% of the Douglas fir. It is too soon to determine oak mortality. While the fire was intense in some areas, it did not kill enough of the Douglas fir to release many of the oak trees or halt the encroachment of Douglas fir onto the prairie.

Topography within the alternate plan area is generally flat and gentle. As the fire had minimal impact on the well-developed forest in the Scatter Creek riparian management zone, the project should pose minimal risk to Scatter Creek.

It is anticipated that harvest will be conducted between July and September of 2018. This project will be executed concurrently with a smaller project on the Northern Unit of the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area that was reviewed under SEPA and permitted in 2017. The smaller project was not completed in 2017 because it was too small to generate interest among contractors.

Following harvest, timber slash will be cut and chipped or burned. Other woody species

(hawthorn, cascara, crab apple, Oregon ash, etc.) that could complicate future prairie maintenance activities will also be chipped or burned.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
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Location of Proposal, including street, if any: South Unit of WDFW Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, Rochester, Thurston County, Washington: Township 16N, Range 3W, Sections 35 and 36.

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 March 22, 2018**.

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 Habitat Program, Protection Division

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

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: March 8, 2018

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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