



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 18-031: UPLISTING SHARP-TAILED GROUSE FROM A STATE THREATENED SPECIES TO A STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES

**Description of Proposal:**

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has evaluated the population status of the Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*), which is currently a state threatened species. Two rules are proposed to be amended: WAC 220-610-010 and WAC 220-200-100. WAC 220-610-010 identifies endangered species in Washington as those that are seriously threatened with extinction in the state and are in need of recovery actions to restore populations to healthy levels. WAC 220-200-100 identifies species classified as protected, which are designated into three subcategories: threatened, sensitive, and other. Threatened species are those that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

Pursuant to WAC 220-610-110 (6.1.1) and (6.2), WDFW is proposing to amend WAC 220-610-010 and WAC 220-200-100 to reclassify the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse from a state threatened species to a state endangered species. An opportunity to reclassify the species was requested by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. The *Draft Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse* provides an analysis of the factors cited in WAC 220-610-110 (7.1.1) through (7.1.5) and considers all information relevant to the status of the species in Washington as well as in the nation.

Sharp-tailed Grouse persist in eight scattered populations in Lincoln, Douglas, and Okanogan counties, and the Colville Indian Reservation. Declines of some remnant populations have continued due to degradation of habitat, isolation, and possibly declining genetic health. At least one local population (Horse Springs Coulee) has gone extinct since 2000. The statewide population estimate increased partly in response to translocations and habitat restoration from 665 in 2004 to 894 in 2015, but after the 2015 fires, dropped to 608 in 2017. The recent fires, which affected >700,000 ac of historical sharp-tailed grouse habitat, may have improved habitat condition in the longer term, but the immediate effect was negative, and some riparian cover will likely need to be replanted. The recovery plan stipulates that the species will be considered for up-listing to endangered status if the population drops below 450 birds. However, all of the local populations have dropped below 200, and the leks in the Tunk, Siwash, and Greenaway areas are all precariously low.

Draft versions of the *Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Sharp-tailed Grouse* were evaluated by the scientific community, including both WDFW scientists and external scientists. Members of the public were also invited to review the draft periodic status review during a public comment period that extended from August 25 – November 23, 2017. After the close of the public review period, the Department presented it to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission on December 8, 2017, with the recommendation that the species remain listed as threatened, consistent with the recovery plan. During public testimony, representatives of

conservation organizations and the Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council suggested that the species be up-listed to endangered. The Commission directed the Department to initiate the process for a possible listing change. The Commission is scheduled to consider uplisting the species at a meeting from June 14-16, 2018 and may vote on that change during a meeting from August 10-11, 2018.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
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**Location of Proposal, including street, if any:** The Sharp-tailed Grouse occurs only in eastern Washington. Historically the most abundant game bird in steppe and prairie in eastern Washington, it is now restricted to parts of Douglas, Okanogan, and Lincoln counties.

**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 May 24, 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](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 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.<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:** May 10, 2018

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 18-031.dns