



FEMA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Scout-A-Vista Fuels Reduction Project
Chelan County Natural Resources Department
FM-5100-05-WA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program-Post Fire

The Chelan County Natural Resources Department (NRD) applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD) for a grant under FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for a wildfire fuels reduction mitigation project. The HMGP is authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 (Public Law 93-288, as amended, 42 U.S. Code § 5121-5207).

The purpose of the proposed project is to slow the spread of wildfire and reduce the risk of wildfire impacts on people and property. The NRD would implement the project in partnership with the Cascadia Conservation District (CCD) to reduce hazardous fuels on approximately 29 acres of privately-owned land within the southern portion of the Scout-A-Vista (SAV) Property (Section 18 treatment area). The proposed action is focused on lands that contain dense forest and have a high risk of wildfire spread. Thus, the proposed action may contribute to wildfire containment, reducing the intensity and extent of wildfires, which ultimately reduce the risks to people living in and near the project areas.

The proposed action includes the following fuels reduction activities in the Section 18 treatment area:

- The removal of trees up to 11 inches at diameter breast height (dbh). This would leave the largest and healthiest crowned trees in a 25 to 30 foot spacing for a total of 50 to 70 trees per acre.
- The healthiest ponderosa pine, western larch, and disease-free Douglas fir trees will be retained.
- All remaining trees will be pruned to ensure limb tips are 8 feet above the ground vegetation or 15 feet above the ground vegetation on steep slopes. Dead brush that poses ladder fuel threats will be removed.
- All cut material would be hand-piled in small piles and burned. Slash piles would be no more than 10 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet.
- There is a small chance some of the work could be completed using new technology (logging equipment with self-leveling cabs and a mastication/chipper head), but most of the work will occur with hand crews.
- The Section 18 treatment area would likely be accessed through the adjacent Forest Ridge neighborhood rather than from the Boy Scout facilities. Any access through the Forest Ridge

neighborhood would be coordinated and agreed upon prior to implementation and would be voluntary in nature.

FINDINGS

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and FEMA's implementing Instructions 108-1-1, FEMA prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate potential environmental effects resulting from the alternatives presented in the EA and to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Note that the EA analyzed this project and a second adjacent and complimentary Chelan County NRD project (HMGP 5182-08 Stemilt Basin Fuels Reduction Project) which is a separate grant. Alternatives evaluated in the EA included: 1) no action, and 2) the combined proposed action to reduce wildfire hazards through fuels reduction in the treatment areas. Other alternative methods to reduce wildfire risks were considered but not carried forth and are described in the EA.

The following resources will not be affected by the proposed action either because they do not exist in the project area or the alternatives will have no effect on the resources: geology, wild and scenic rivers, sole source aquifers, coastal resources, wetlands, floodplains, cultural resources, environmental justice populations, land use and zoning, and public services and utilities. During implementation of the proposed action, negligible to minor impacts on soils, visual quality and aesthetics, air quality and climate, vegetation, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, noise, and transportation are anticipated. There will also be a negligible to minor short-term threat of soil and water contamination from equipment use. With implementation of conditions to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts as listed in Attachment A, none of these potential impacts will be significant. In the long-term, the proposed action will have beneficial effects on several resources from the reduced risk of wildfire damage. FEMA coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and federally recognized Indian tribes with interests in the area to identify potentially affected resources and appropriate measures to avoid and minimize potential impacts.

A public scoping notice was published on August 23, 2020 for a 30-day comment period to notify the public and provide an opportunity to comment on the proposed action, potential alternatives, and preliminary identification of environmental issues. Three comments were received, including one public comment, one comment letter from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and one comment letter from Washington Department of Natural Resources; these comments were incorporated into the draft EA. The draft EA was made available to interested parties for a 30-day public comment period from October 31, 2020 through November 29, 2020. One comment letter was received by WDFW and their comments were incorporated into the final EA. The proposed action is the preferred alternative and selected alternative because the no action alternative would not address the purpose and need stated in the EA and no other practical alternatives were identified.

CONCLUSION

Based upon conditions and information contained in the HMGP grant application, the EA, and Attachment A of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and in accordance with FEMA's Directive 108-1-1, Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Responsibilities and Program Requirements; Executive Orders (EOs) addressing floodplains (EO 11988), wetlands (EO 11990), and environmental justice (EO 12898); the DHS Instruction Manual 023-1-1; and the CEQ regulations in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter V for implementing NEPA; FEMA has determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the quality of the natural and human environment. As a result of this FONSI, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared and the project, as described in the grant application, the EA, and the conditions in Attachment A may proceed.

EHP APPROVAL

Science Kilner
Regional Environmental Officer
FEMA Region 10

Date

EHP ENDORSEMENT

Jackie Pritchett Jr.
Hazard Mitigation Assistance Branch Chief
FEMA Region 10

Date

Attachment A

PERMITTING, PROJECT CONDITIONS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Chelan County NRD, in coordination with CCD, shall implement the proposed action and comply with the following project conditions and mitigation measures and document compliance as part of the grant's closeout.

- Any necessary local, state, or federal permits needed to conduct the proposed work will be obtained. A WDNR burn permit may be required for pile burning and a Washington State Forest Practices Act permit may be required for implementation of the project.
- The following measures will be incorporated into treatment approach to avoid and minimize potential harm to Endangered Species Act-listed species and habitat:
 - o For Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) habitat in Section 18, no fuels reduction work would be completed within the seventy acres of highest quality suitable NSO habitat surrounding the NSO site center during the nesting season (March 1 through August 31).
 - o Vehicles would be kept on pre-existing roads.
 - o Potential noise effects on NSO behavior would be mitigated by implementing project actions during the day.
 - o Vegetation buffers would be retained along waterways to maintain stream shading and filtration of surface water runoff:
 - Maintain a 75-foot buffer around perennial streams; ladder fuels may be removed at 40 feet from the stream.
 - Maintain a 30-foot buffer around intermittent streams; ladder fuels may be removed at 15 feet from the stream.
 - o Habitat piles would be built with five layers and would be 20 feet in diameter, and 6 feet high. One to three piles would be created per acre.
- The following measures would be implemented to reduce impacts on fish, wildlife, and birds:
 - o Within the Section 18 treatment area, two slash piles would be retained per acre to provide supplemental wildlife habitat.
 - o To avoid impacts on migratory birds as well as ESA-listed species, vegetation clearing would not occur during the peak breeding season from March 1 through August 3.
- Additional guidelines developed by the Woodland Fish and Wildlife Group address snags and logs, old growth trees, work timing, and pruning to maintain wildlife habitat features during fuels reduction work. These suggestions would be incorporated when applicable and where possible and may include the following options:
 - o Establish 6 foraging snags per acre and 1 to 2 cavity nesting snags per acre. Strive for snags and logs greater than 15 feet long and greater than 12 inches DBH.
 - o When cutting trees ranging from 15 to 20 inches DBH, habitat snags may be retained by high stumping the trees (cutting at a height of approximately 20 feet).
 - o Keep any large trees (>16 inches DBH), including defective trees.
 - o Openings can vary from 0.1 to 5.0 acres in size and can comprise 5 to 15 percent of the landscape and have irregular shapes.
 - o Patches can be 30 to 50 feet across, 100 to 300 feet in length, and comprise 10 to 20 percent of the landscape.

- o Maintain the shrub species that are most valuable for wildlife habitat and keep them in clumps beyond overhanging limbs from adjacent trees.
- o Schedule activities during the fall when it is the best time to avoid wildlife nesting and denning and insect outbreaks.
- o When pruning, retain one-third of the total live branches to maintain tree vigor. Prune trees during October through March when they are dormant to avoid insect infestation.
- The following measures would be implemented to minimize impacts from burning:
 - o Piles would be burned once dry and only in accordance with state regulations and requirements (Washington Administrative Code [WAC] 332-24-205 for rules on all fires and WAC 332-24-211 if burning does not require a permit).
 - o Regardless of whether a burn permit is needed, permission is required from the local fire district prior to the burn. The fire will be kept 50 feet from any structure and 500 feet from forest slash, be attended at all times, and an extinguisher will be kept nearby. The work will also follow any general instructions or advisories associated with fire danger instructions issued by WDNR.
 - o Burning would not be conducted during the dry summer or early fall season.
 - o Slash piles will be small and kept away from retained vegetation to avoid scorching residual trees. Slash piles in the Section 18 treatment area would be no more than 10 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet.
- The following best management practices (BMPs) pertaining to the use of mechanical equipment:
 - o Heavy equipment would not be used in steeper areas to reduce potential erosion issues.
 - o Equipment and skidded logs would not be driven or pulled frequently over the same area to reduce soil compaction.
 - o Vehicle and equipment would be kept running as little as possible.
 - o Any spills during construction will be contained and cleaned immediately.
 - o Equipment will be kept in good condition.
 - o All equipment, actions, and operations would adhere to local regulations to reduce the risk of hazardous leaks and spills.
 - o All machinery used will meet applicable local, state, and federal noise control regulations, including Chelan County Code Chapter 7.35. Noise-producing equipment will occur during less sensitive, waking hours (7 a.m. to 10 p.m.).
- The following measures would be implemented to mitigate impacts on cultural resources:
 - o In the event that any archeological resources are discovered during project implementation, work would immediately cease, the area would be secured, and the Chelan County NRD would notify the Washington Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation and FEMA for further evaluation.
- The following measures would be implemented to mitigate impacts on transportation:
 - o If road improvements are completed in conjunction with forest management activities, gates and/or signage would be installed to mitigate potential traffic impacts.
 - o Seasonal road closures would be considered through late spring to reduce damage to the road from off road vehicles using the road when snowmelt and runoff are high.
- Any change to the approved scope of work would require re-evaluation for compliance with NEPA and other laws, regulations, or Executive Orders before implementation.