



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 20-061: LISTING OREGON VESPER SPARROW AS A STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES

Description of Proposal:

WDFW proposes to classify the Oregon Vesper Sparrow as Endangered in the state of Washington under WAC 220-610-010. The estimated population of Oregon Vesper Sparrows in Washington is approximately 300 birds, with most (~75%) of them on a single site, JBLM's 91st Division Prairie. There have been several recent local extirpations at sites that supported a few pairs, the remaining sites with a few pairs are at great risk, and there has been no recent establishment of populations at sites with remnant prairie or savannah or with ongoing restoration.

The factors of habitat loss and degradation that historically precipitated population declines continue, but populations are now likely affected by demographic and genetic factors related to their small numbers (e.g., isolation of subpopulations, reduced genetic variability, and greater susceptibility to stochastic events). Nest predation has a greater impact in fragmented habitat, and seeds coated with neonicotinoid pesticides may be affecting Washington birds during migration and at wintering sites. Land use and disturbance activities are variable and sometimes intense during the breeding season depending on the site; thus, potentially negatively affecting reproductive success and putting small populations at extreme risk of extirpation.

Research recently initiated on limiting factors will provide essential direction for appropriate conservation actions. However, given the extremely small population size in Washington, the predominance of that population at one location, the many recent local extirpations or near-extirpations, and a variety of habitat, disturbance, and potentially demographic factors that continue to negatively affect them, it is recommended that Oregon Vesper Sparrow be classified as an endangered species in Washington.

Information on the current status and trends in Oregon Vesper Sparrow populations, factors affecting their continued existence, and management activities related to restoration are detailed in the *Draft Status Report for the Oregon Vesper Sparrow in Washington* currently available at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02147/>.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
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Location of Proposal, including street, if any: Washington's population of about 300 individuals is found primarily at sites in Thurston and Pierce Counties with a few more numbering only in the dozens estimated for both San Juan Island and islands in the lower Columbia River. The birds once occupied breeding locations dispersed widely from southwestern British Columbia and the San Juan Islands through the southern Puget lowlands.

Few breeding populations remain but are found in Mason, Thurston, Pierce, and San Juan Counties. Historically breeding populations also occurred in Clallam County. Miscellaneous records have also documented non-breeding individuals in Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Clark, Skamania, King, Snohomish, Skagit, Island, Whatcom, and Grays Harbor 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 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 28 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 28 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on January 19, 2021**.

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/licenses/environmental/sepa/open-comments>
- 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: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/closed-final>. 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 above or email SEPADesk2@dfw.wa.gov.

DATE OF ISSUE: December 22, 2020

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

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

SEPA Log Number: 20-061.dns

Individuals who need to receive this information in an alternative format or language, or who need reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities may contact Dolores Noyes at (360-902-2349), or TTY 771, or email (dolores.noyes@dfw.wa.gov). For more information https://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/reasonable_request.html.