

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: October 27-28, 2017

Agenda item: Forest Restoration Projects: Scatter Creek Wildlife Area

Presenter: Richard Tveten, Forest Management Team Lead, Lands Division,
Wildlife Program

Background Summary:

Without frequent, low intensity wildfires, the prairies and oak woodlands on the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area are slowly disappearing due to encroachment by Douglas fir. This encroachment threatens several priority species and unique recreational opportunities associated with prairies. For these reasons a project was designed and scheduled to counteract forest encroachment on the North Unit in 2017. Preliminary planning was underway for a similar project on the South Unit in 2018 or 2019 before a fire burned across it in August.

Unfortunately, no contractors bid on the North Unit due to its small size (250,000 board feet) and the South Unit project planning area partially burned in August limiting the timing options for an economically viable project. The only way to successfully treat these areas may be to combine both units into one project and move forward as quickly as possible before the burned South Unit trees lose their value.

Despite the fire in the Southern units the goals and prescriptions for both areas are the same: 1) restoring ecological integrity 2) improving habitat quality and 3) reducing severe wildfire risk.

Project Details

County	Thurston
Acres treated	61 (28 burned and 33 unburned)
Estimated volume	Possibly 1.2 million of board feet (MMBF)
Number of leave trees per acre	Highly variable. Remove nearly all Douglas fir from prairies. In oak woodlands leave all oak trees plus large Douglas fir in numbers similar to legacy stumps where present.
Snag protection /creation	Dead oak will be retained. Topped Douglas fir along power lines will be retained. Three burned units plus lone dead trees on the prairie and trees that can't be fallen without harming oaks will also be retained as snags.
Roads	One new ½ mile long road will be built and remain as a permanent fire break. A few short temporary spurs will also be built and abandoned.
Timing	Between winter of 2017 and fall of 2018.
Priority species	Mazama Pocket Gopher, Taylor's Checkerspot, and Mardon Skipper.

The project would involve commercial thinning as well as fuel reduction treatments. Logging equipment will be ground based and likely involve a feller buncher and rubber tired skidders.

Work will likely occur in the winter or 2017-2018 or summer of 2018.

All streams and wetlands shall be protected according to Forest Practices Rules. An alternate plan has been approved to allow limited thinning in the riparian buffer on the north unit where necessary to release oak trees from competition.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

Responsible land stewardship through appropriate forest management and habitat rehabilitation.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

WDFW will follow the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review process. SEPA has already been completed for the North Unit.

Action requested:

Approval of the proposed commercial thinning projects.

Draft motion language:

I move to approve the proposed timber harvests projects as presented.

Justification for Commission action:

This action will 1) restore ecological integrity 2) improve habitat quality and 3) reduce severe wildfire risk.

Communications Plan:

Wildlife Area staff will notify the public regarding temporary access impacts.

Form revised 12/5/12