
Summary

Meeting dates: February 16, 2018 (Conference Call)

Agenda item: Request to Approve the Robinson Canyon Forest Restoration Project on the LT Murray Wildlife Area

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

Background Summary:

Forests in the Robinson Canyon area of the LT Murray Wildlife are overstocked and unhealthy due to prolonged fire exclusion and timber management practices prior to the acquisition of timber rights by WDFW. Many stands are experiencing ongoing damage from insects and mistletoe. These dense, uniform stands also reduce structural diversity and habitat value for numerous wildfire species.

The area is at high risk of damage from wildfire. Smaller trees create ladder fuels and hinder the development of large, fire resilient trees. The project area is also the Wildland Urban Interface currently located 8 miles due west of downtown Ellensburg and close to numerous homes.

Due to the site's high value for wildlife and recreation, the project is funded with Recreation and Conservation Office State Lands Restoration grant.

This project will commercially treat an estimated 700 acres of forest and remove between 1 and 1.5 million board feet of wood. That translates to about 1/3 of a logging truck of logs removed per acre. Approximately 25-35 of the larger trees per acre will be retained including legacy trees over 24 inches in diameter. Drought and fire tolerant species associated with historic conditions, especially Ponderosa pine, will be favored. The project will use existing roads. Slash will be burned to reduce the wildfire risk.

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 follows the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review process for commercial thinning projects. No problems have arisen.

Action requested:

Approve the Robinson Canyon forest thinning project on the LT Murray Wildlife Area.

Draft motion language:

Approve the Robinson Canyon forest thinning project on the LT Murray Wildlife Area.

Justification for Commission action:

This project will help restore ecological integrity, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce wildfire risk.

Communications Plan:

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

Form revised 12/5/12