



**State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

**Eastern Region • Region 1 • 2315 North Discovery Place, Spokane Valley, WA 99216-1566
Telephone: (509) 892-1001 • Fax: (509) 921-2440**

July 15, 2018

United States Forest Service
Attention: Monte Fujishin, District Ranger
71 West Main
Pomeroy WA 99347

RE: WDFW Comments Sunrise Vegetation and Fuels Management Project- Final EIS

Dear Mr. Fujishin:

Please see enclosed (Attachment 1) comments provided to the United States Forest Service by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in regards to the Final EIS, Sunrise Vegetation and Fuels Management Project proposed to be conducted on the Pomeroy Ranger District. The Department supports vegetation management and fuels reduction within forested areas as a method to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire and to improve/maintain wildlife habitat. We conduct these same activities on the land we manage for the State of Washington and understand the complexities surrounding implementation of a project such as this. These comments are intended to identify ways that the project may be improved through clarification of the current impacts analysis and reduction to effects on wildlife during implementation.

The major concern from our analysis of this project is the potential impacts to elk within the project area. As you are probably aware, the Lick Creek subherd has experienced a sharp decline in numbers in recent years. Our concern is that this project may cause even more unintended reductions to this struggling population. Two parts of the project represent the greatest risk to elk. The sheer volume of vegetation reduction will affect security cover for elk. This could negatively influence mortality, in particular from hunting. Additionally, opening of closed roads and creation of temporary roads could negatively impact the health of this subherd by increasing hunting success and disturbance during critical periods. We believe that Alternative C addresses potential affects in these two areas more effectively than Alternative B and request that you use this alternative to implement this project.

We have a long and successful history of excellent relations and collaboration with the Umatilla National Forest, and in particular the Pomeroy Ranger District. Please accept the attached comments in that same spirit of collaboration. I would, along with additional Habitat and

Wildlife staff, like to meet with you and your staff to discuss our comments. Either Tom Schirm or myself will contact you to arrange this meeting if this is acceptable to you. Please contact myself (509) 892-7860 or Tom Schirm (509) 382-1266 if you have questions or if we can be of any service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Wachtel', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mark Wachtel, Habitat Program Manager
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Eastern Region, Region 1

cc: Paul Wyk, District Wildlife Biologist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Tom Schirm, Habitat Biologist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Steve Pozzanghera, Regional Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Kevin Robinette, Wildlife Program Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife