



**DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

PACIFIC CASCADE REGION

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June 27, 2024

Notice of Final Determination

SHADY GROVE VDT Timber Sale, App. No. 30-106097

SEPA File No. 24-060501

FP No. 2942413

The Department of Natural Resources issued a Determination of Non-significance (DNS), Mitigated Determination of Non-significance (MDNS), Modified DNS/MDNS on 06/05/2024 for this proposal under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and WAC 197-11-340(2).

This determination is hereby:

Retained.

Modified. Modifications to this proposal include the following:

Withdrawn. This proposal has been withdrawn due to the following:

Delayed. A Final Determination has been delayed due to the following:

Responsible Official: Scott Sargent

Position/title: Pacific Cascade Region Manager Phone: (360) 577-2025

Address: P.O. Box 280 Castle Rock, WA 98611

Date: 6/27/2024

Signature: Scott Sargent

Summary of Comments and Responses (if applicable):

Informational Comment Summary:

Specific Comment Summary:

Friends of the Columbia Gorge –

Response:

Thank you for providing comments in your June 19, 2024 letter regarding the Shady Grove VDT Timber Sale, SEPA File No. 24-060501. This letter is in response to your comments and provides information outlining how this proposal is consistent with all applicable laws, rules, policies and procedures, including the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), the Policy for Sustainable Forests (PSF) and the Riparian Forest Restoration Strategy (RFRS).

I. “Proposed project is likely proposed near to landmarks, features, or other evidence of Indian or historic use or occupation”

The proposed project area was assessed by a DNR Cultural Resource Technician who reviewed historic maps and recorded cultural resources, and timber sale layout was conducted by a Forester trained in cultural resource identification. Supporting data for the cultural resource review included historical and aerial photographs, USGS and GLO maps, and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation database for architectural and archaeological resources and reports (WISAARD).

If currently unknown skeletal remains and/or cultural resources become known during project operations, DNR will comply with Discovery of Skeletal Remains or Cultural Resources procedure.

II. “Located in the Columbia Gorge Northern Spotted Owl Special Emphasis Area”

The DNR has a multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service concerning threatened and endangered species and their habitats, which requires the Department to manage landscapes to provide and sustain long-term habitat in exchange for an Incidental Take Permit. This agreement substantially helps the Department to mitigate for cumulative effects related to management activities.

This proposal is in the Columbia Planning Unit within the Rock Creek Spotted Owl Management Unit (SOMU) in designated next best habitat and non-habitat. Next best habitat is not actually habitat but are forest stands that are relatively close to developing into northern spotted owl (NSO) habitat over time and no NSO habitat will be removed as part of this proposal. This activity is a Variable Density Thinning (VDT), which is designed to speed up the trajectory of these stands into NSO habitat by enhancing the growth rate of the residual stand as well as creating additional vertical structure. The DNR HCP’s northern spotted owl conservation strategy is the foundation for the proposed harvest activities and this proposal is consistent with the HCP for conservation of NSO.

The DNR Trust Lands HCP and supplemental information utilized to develop this proposal includes:

- Final Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP; 1997)
- Final (Merged) Environmental Impact Statement for the Habitat Conservation Plan

(1998)

- NSO habitat layer

III. “Proposed harvest may also include priority habitat for bald eagles” and “Proposed project may affect habitat for marbled murrelet, as well as species of bear, cougar, salamander, and hawk”

This sale has been designed to comply with the Department’s State Lands HCP and provides for the protection of wildlife and their habitats. Scattered and clumped leave trees provide nesting, roosting and foraging areas for avian species. Well-engineered and constructed roads reduce the potential water quality impacts for downstream fish populations. Revegetating exposed soils aids water quality and provides forage for ungulates. Large diameter leave trees and leave trees with unique structure will remain post-harvest to enhance the wildlife habitat value of the future stand. In addition, RMZs are no-harvest riparian buffers. Trees within RMZs may be cut for safety or operational needs, and any trees cut will be left in place adding to down woody debris within riparian zones.

IV. “This proposed project is also in a riparian area”

Riparian management zones (RMZs) associated with this proposal are no-harvest riparian buffers. Trees within RMZs may be cut for safety or operational needs, but any trees cut will be left in place adding to down woody debris within riparian zones. The stream protection requirements per the DNR’s HCP meet or exceed Washington State Forest Practices requirements.

The Shady Grove VDT Timber Sale was designed to be consistent with DNR's management framework (WAC 332-41-665(1) (f)). The harvest was designed in accordance with DNR's Habitat Conservation Plan, Policy for Sustainable Forests and Riparian Forest Restoration Strategy. Your comment letter does not identify a probable or significant, adverse environmental impact that was not analyzed in the environmental impact statements for-programmatic decision making or an inadequacy in the SEPA checklist prepared for the Shady Grove VDT Timber Sale. The Shady Grove VDT Timber Sale is within lands available for harvest. Thank you for your comments.