



## MODIFIED DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE

**Description of proposal:** The Department of Natural Resources is currently proposing to continue converting lands from historical grazing and dispersed ORV use to irrigated agriculture and includes the following:

- Water rights changes to add additional acres of land to be used for irrigation;
- Issue new leases allowing for the development of up to 500 acres as shown in the locations below. DNR intends to conduct Public Auctions and issue leases allowing irrigation of the parcels. Some road construction, issuance of easements for development of new roads, attain access easements or other agreements to said lands across private property if needed, trenching for pipelines, and installation of irrigation equipment, power connections, plus some small construction projects for storage buildings are anticipated.

The Goose Gap/Red Mountain development project began in 1992. Through efforts which included spreading water, the development of irrigated lands, and the acquisition of additional properties surrounding the project area, DNR now has an area where it can irrigate approximately 3,260 acres of lands within the entire project area described in Exhibit B as shown in the SEPA checklist. Within the project area, there are currently approximately 2,768.7 acres being irrigated.

### Water rights:

Within the project, for water supply DNR will rely on its existing Goose Gap/ Red Mountain (GGRM) groundwater rights portfolio and will continue with its long term plan of crop conversions and vineyard/orchard development. DNR's previous GGRM water right changes spread existing rights by removing higher duty crops and planting new vineyards with the water savings. The current phase of the project, to lease and develop an additional 500 acres, continues this long term plan with the water right change applications listed above. Specifically, applications include changes to place of use and conversions from alfalfa to wine grapes with an associated increase in irrigated acres limited by annual consumptive quantity ("spreading"). The applications also include proposals that are part of a broader effort to ensure that DNR is in compliance with its water rights. In addition to the groundwater rights, DNR plans to use Kennewick Irrigation District surface water to irrigate 220 acres of the 500 acre project.

### **Description of document being modified:**

#### **Determination of Non-significance – Goose Gap/Red Mountain Development Project 15-090301**

**Description of Modification:** DNR's goal is that the remaining shrub-steppe will be higher quality than what is currently on-site. To accomplish this, we will be requiring the lessee to remove noxious weeds, as much as possible, and plant targeted areas with perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The objective of the targeted areas is to improve the quality of habitat they currently offer and provide corridors of shrub-steppe that will be retained during the conversion to irrigated agriculture. These areas will also receive less ORV disturbance than they currently experience. The purpose of providing corridors is to increase the capacity to facilitate movement of species through a matrix of native vegetation and irrigated agriculture. For example, corridors can provide cover and food for migrating birds. Designing this particular conversion as a matrix will sustain the overall landscape permeability.

**Proponent:** The Department of Natural Resources

**Location of proposal, including street address, if any:**

- South ½ Section 10, Township 9 North, Range 27 East, south of Hwy 224, 80 acres.
- N ¾ Section 14, Township 9 North, Range 27 East, north of I-82, 260 acres (KID water in part).
- NE ¼ Section 20, Township 9 North, Range 27 East, south of I-82, 60 acres.
- NE ¼ Section 24, Township 9 North, Range 27 East, north of I-82, 60 acres, KID water (all).

*Note: The project area in whole is shown in the SEPA document described as Exhibit B*

**Lead agency:** The Department of Natural Resources

The lead agency for this proposal has determined that it does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c). This decision was made after review of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.

**This DNS is issued under 197-11-340(2); the lead agency will not act on this proposal for 14 days from December 22, 2015. Comments must be submitted by January 05, 2016.**

**Responsible official:** Todd Welker

**Position/title:** Southeast Region Manager    **Phone:** 509-925-8510

**Address:** 713 Bowers Road, Ellensburg, WA 98926

**Date** 12/22/15

**Signature** Todd Welker

**There is no DNR administrative SEPA appeal.**