

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates:	March 15, 2019 – Conference Call
Agenda item:	Stemilt Forest Restoration Project on Colockum Wildlife Area in Chelan County
Presenter(s):	Richard Tveten

Background summary:

The proposed Stemilt Forest Restoration Project includes 272 acres of commercial thinning on the Colockum Wildlife Area. Commission approval is required timber harvest projects equal to or exceeding one million board feet and the anticipated harvest volume is 1.2 million board feet.

The project is supported with a \$389,000 US Forest Service Stemilt Partnership grant and revenue from the sale of logs. WDFW is working collaboratively with Chelan County Natural Resources to accomplish watershed restoration activities in the 30,000 acre Stemilt-Squilchuck planning area.

The WDFW Statewide Forester, Colockum Wildlife Area staff and the Chelan County Natural Resources staff selected units to be included in the Stemilt Forest Restoration Project. The project areas were selected due to high-grade logging practices prior to acquisition that have resulted elevated pathogen levels (dwarf mistletoe and root rot) and insect activity (spruce budworm and bark beetles) as well as continuous, dense fuels.

Staff recommendation:

Thinning prescriptions will focus on removing excess small trees. WDFW will leave between 25 and 35 (in general) of the best available trees per acre to maximize habitat quality and put forests on accelerated trajectories to once again develop into resilient, fire climax forests. The project will also protect and create snags.

Timber will be harvested using conventional ground-based equipment including feller bunchers and rubber-tired skidders on continuous slopes of 40% or less. To the maximum extent possible, WDFW will use existing roads (open or abandoned), skid trails and landings. There will be a minimal amount of temporary road construction and abandonment. Previously abandoned roads and new temporary roads (if any) will be abandoned at the discretion of the Colockum Wildlife Area Manager. All Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) buffers, leave tree requirements, and other harvest requirements meet or exceed State Forest Practice Regulations.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

- Restore ecological integrity
 - Improve wildlife habitat quality for multiple wildlife species including deer and elk
 - Address forest health concerns
 - Reduce wildfire risks
 - Increase the proportion of large diameter trees in the stand
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Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

No fiscal impacts beyond the status quo.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife follows the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review process.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Approval of the proposed Stemilt Forest Restoration Thinning Project.

Draft motion language:

Motion: I move to approve the proposed commercial thinning projects as presented.

Post decision communications plan:

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

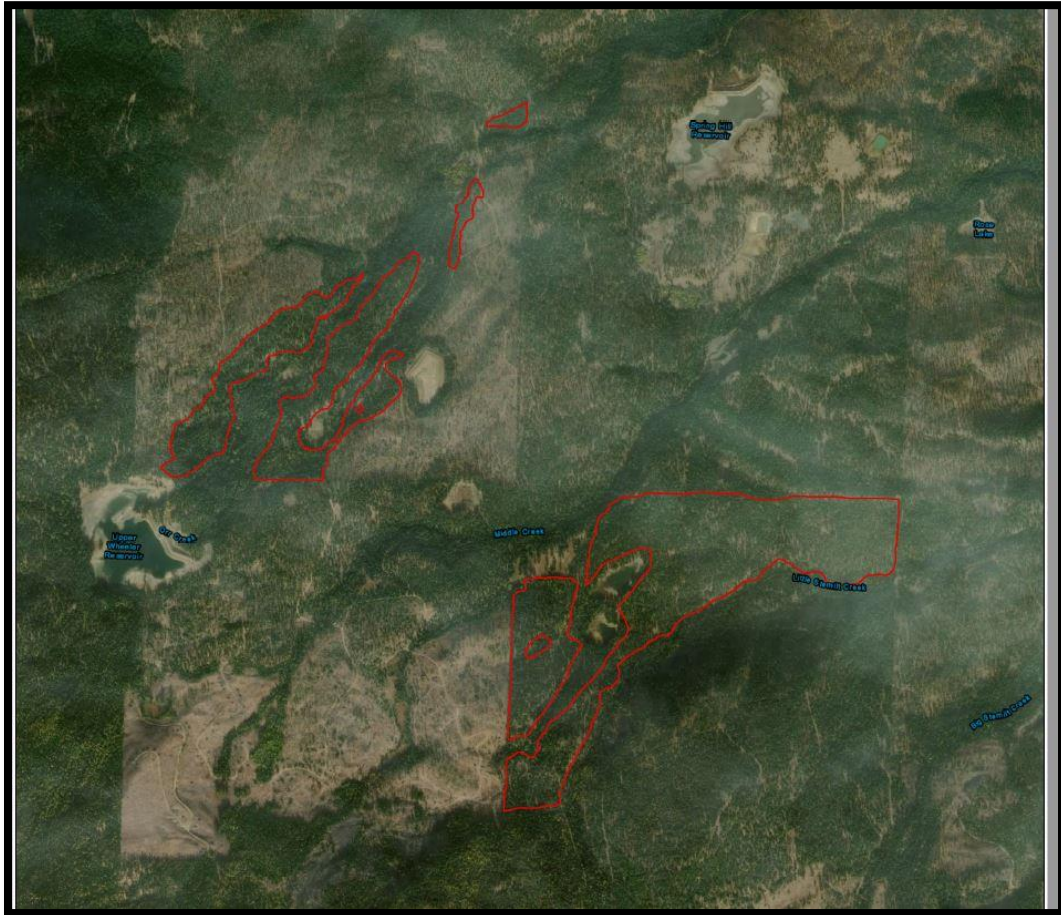
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Stemilt Forest Restoration Project – Supplemental maps and photographs

Locator Map



Aerial Photograph of Project Area (Hazy due to wildfire smoke)



Photographs from a similar 2017 project on the LT Murray Wildlife Area show what we plan to do.

Untreated



Treated



The immediate post-treatment treated photograph does not show the desired future conditions. Thinning reduces the immediate wildfire risk and put forests on a faster trajectory to reach the desired future condition: A diverse mosaic containing more open, mature forests with large, resilient trees.

Mature, open forests provide missing habitat components and increase landscape resiliency



With this and future projects we hope to re-establish a more resilient landscape and reduce the probability of another large, intense wildfire (like 2012 Table Mountain the 2013 Colockum Tarps wildfires which already burned much of the wildlife area) from burning the remaining forests.

Table Mountain fire



Brushy Creek drainage after the Tarps fire

