



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

South Central Region • Region 3 • 1701 South 24th Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902-5720
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January 20, 2023

Kelly Bacon
Kittitas County Community Development Services
411 N. Ruby Street, Suite 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

SUBJECT: WDFW COMMENTS ON RU-22-00006 Harmon

Dear Ms. Bacon,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the reasonable use application, RU-22-00006 Harmon, located on Yellowstone Road near Hyak. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has reviewed the application and supporting documents. Our comments are regarding the project's impact on priority fish and wildlife habitats, particularly the riparian zone of fish-bearing waters. The Type F stream located on the property is an unnamed tributary of Coal Creek. Coal Creek is rearing habitat for a suite of fish species, including Bull Trout. Bull Trout are listed under the Endangered Species Act and the local population is in severe decline and at risk for extirpation (extinction). The comments below center on two primary areas: 1. That the proposed building footprint does not appear to be minimal with respect to square footage in the riparian area and 2. The proposed mitigation plan is inadequate for the impacts proposed.

Building Footprint and Riparian Impacts

In the critical areas report, the total summation of riparian area impact is 3,892 square feet. The critical area report does not include how many trees and what sizes would need to be removed for this impact. One of the critical elements for maintaining healthy fish habitat is providing shade on the creek. *WDFW requests that the critical areas report be updated to include the trees planned for removal, their size and/or their shade influence on the creek.*

The overall footprint of the proposed building is a large footprint in an important riparian area where there has already been significant reduction due to existing buildings. Thus, additional removal of the riparian area is likely to substantially alter the stream environment. Elements of the proposed building footprint such as the deck or elevated causeway that either could be reduced, eliminated or relocated away from the stream adjacent areas. WDFW does not agree that the current proposed building which includes items such as the deck or the causeway is the minimum necessary impact to the critical area as stated in the critical areas report under question c.ii. *WDFW requests that a revised site plan be developed to further reduce riparian impacts. If it is of help to the applicant and the county, WDFW is willing to have a site visit to help minimize such impacts.*

Site Mitigation Plan

As currently proposed, the impacts to the riparian area where shade is a critical function is 3,892 sq ft. of removed riparian habitat. Clearing in this area is likely to remove multiple mature or semi-mature trees that are contributing shade to the creek. The proposed planting of 12 small conifer trees along the Type N creek does not adequately offset impacts of clearing along the Type F creek. In addition to updating the critical areas report to fully identify riparian impacts as requested in this letter, WDFW requests that a revised mitigation plan needs to be developed that will fully offset the impacts. The mitigation plan should include: 1. Replanting a sufficient number of native site adapted conifers to offset the removed conifers, the planting site should also be as close to the Type F creek as possible. 2. There will be temporal loss of shade from removal of mature and semi-mature conifer trees and planting new smaller trees. The temporal loss needs to be mitigated for. One potential option is placing some or all the removed trees in this tributary stream as shade and cover. Permits from WDFW would be needed for this instream work. Planting of fast-growing riparian shrubs along the creek can also be used to mitigate for loss of shade. WDFW requests to review an updated mitigation plan and is willing to meet on site with the applicant to discuss elements of an updated mitigation plan.

In summary, WDFW feels that the current information provided, the impact to the critical riparian habitat of fish-bearing waters is too great with insufficient mitigation proposed. If the applicant is willing to revise the building footprint to reduce the riparian impact and increase the mitigation proposed to offset the impact, WDFW would be willing to reconsider our comments regarding critical area impacts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and look forward to discussing this project further with the county and the applicant. Please contact me at 509-607-3578 or Scott.Downes@dfw.wa.gov to discuss these concerns.

Sincerely,



Scott Downes
Area Habitat Biologist

Cc:
Elizabeth Torrey, WDFW
Dan Carlson, Kittitas County CDS