



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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November 25, 2024

Zach Torrance-Smith
Community Development Services
Kittitas County
411 N. Ruby Street, Suite 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

SUBJECT: WDFW COMMENTS ON SP-24-00014 MLH SHORT PLAT

Dear Mr. Torrance-Smith,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed short plat near Cle Elum. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is familiar with this area and nearby critical areas that should be considered as part of this review and determination process. We offer the following comments for consideration to ensure all critical areas are protected as the land uses change in this area.

We understand that this proposal is a short plat, and no development actions are currently proposed. While no critical areas report is provided with the application materials, there are critical areas present on the subject parcels, including Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA). Prior to new parcels being created as part of this project, the applicants should clearly demonstrate that they are not creating lots that will require variances and/or reasonable use exceptions from the critical areas requirements or other relevant sections of code when development is proposed.

There is an unnamed tributary that has previously been captured by the old Masterson Ditch. This watercourse appears to continue through the parcel and irrigated land in a straightened ditch like feature, before crossing Masterson Road and eventually enters the Teanaway River. This watercourse should be acknowledged and shown in the plans to ensure appropriate riparian management zones are applied to future land uses. This project area is also in a known elk winter range area.

To ensure new parcels created will not require variances from the critical areas ordinance or other County Codes when development is proposed, we recommend the following:

- Prior to approval of this application, complete a critical areas report that identifies all critical areas present within the project area and the required setbacks. Completing this report and assessment will result in the identification of areas where development would be allowed without the need for variances or reasonable use exceptions.

- If a critical areas report is not completed prior to approval, we recommend identifying the water course and the development envelope outside of critical areas and their setbacks to ensure future development will protect the unnamed stream.

We welcome the opportunity to work with local landowners and help them understand the wildlife and habitats around them. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and please let me know if there are any questions or comments we can answer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Nelson".

Jennifer Nelson
Fish and Wildlife Biologist
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(509) 961-6639