

- 436.01 Introduction
- 436.02 Applicable statutes, regulations, executive orders, and agreements
- 436.03 Considerations during project development
- 436.04 Analysis and documentation requirements
- 436.05 External engagement
- 436.06 Internal Roles and responsibilities
- 436.07 Applicable permits and approval process
- 436.08 Abbreviations and acronyms
- 436.09 Glossary

436.01 Introduction

Sensitive wildlife, fish, plants, and their habitat require special consideration during project planning and development. Many federal, state, and local regulations apply to projects that may affect natural resources. The Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) policy is to follow and comply with all federal and state mandated regulations ([RCW 47.04.280](#)). Therefore, WSDOT biologists are involved in all stages of project development, evaluating potential adverse effects and recommending impact avoidance or minimization measures.

Projects with a federal nexus, meaning they have federal funding, requires a federal permit, or takes place on federal lands, must follow the most prominent laws; the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). All projects, regardless of funding source, must comply with Section 9 of the ESA, the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) ([RCW 43.21C](#)), Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA), and local ordinances.

Ferry, rail, airport, or non-motorized transport systems are subject to the same policies, procedures, and permits that apply to road systems, but are generally funded under different authorities such as Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Railway Administration (FRA), or Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Each of these federal agencies may have slightly different approaches for document preparation, review, and submittal procedures or overall process goals and directives regarding fish, wildlife, and habitat resources.

Washington State Ferries (WSF) must follow strict guidelines to work in nearshore environments (see [Section 436.06](#)). These guidelines include avoidance of eelgrass and forage fish spawning habitat, restrictions on construction materials, and specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) for removal of creosote treated wood associated with docks, pilings, and piers. In addition, some regulations may be more applicable to non-road projects. For example, ferry projects occur within marine waters and require consideration of regulations under the MMPA and the Shoreline Protection Act.

Public use airports must address specific wildlife hazards on or near airports. These issues are addressed in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Publication, *Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports*, (No. 150/5200-33C, February 21, 2020).

The main focus of this chapter is to summarize regulations associated with fish, wildlife, and habitat resources.

436.02 Applicable statutes, regulations, executive orders, and agreements

436.02(1) *Federal*

- 42 United States Code (U.S.C) 4321 National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA)
- Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)
- National Forest Management Act
- Northwest Forest Plan

436.02(2) *State*

- WDFW [RCW 77.12.240](#)
- [WSDOT State Habitat Connectivity Policy](#). Executive Order: “Protections and Connections for High Quality Natural Habitats.”
- [RCW 47.85.020](#) – A streamlining process that requires WSDOT to maintain programmatic agreements and permits, including the Programmatic Biological Assessment and General Hydraulic Project Approvals (GHPA). Also implements a multiagency effort with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to streamline the HPA permit process for fish passage barrier correction projects.
- WSDOT and WDFW have agreed on HPA application and review procedures through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Concerning Implementation of the Fish and Wildlife Hydraulic Code for Transportation Activities (henceforth referred to as the WDFW-WSDOT Hydraulic Code MOA). This WDFW-WSDOT Hydraulic Code MOA includes information on the Fish Passage Retrofit Program, the Chronic Environmental Deficiency (CED) Program, and deferred mitigation for maintenance and emergency activities.
- [RCW 77.55](#) Construction Projects in State Waters – WDFW laws for fish screens, fishways, and fish passage.
- [RCW 77.57](#) Fishways, Flow, and Screening – WDFW’s laws for HPA permitting.
- [WAC 220-660](#) – WDFW’s Hydraulic Code rules for HPA permits.

436.02(3) *Local*

- Local Comprehensive Plans and Critical Area Ordinances (CAO) – For additional details see [Chapter 455](#).

436.03 Considerations during project development

436.03(1) *Planning*

Sensitive wildlife, fish, plants, and their habitat require special consideration during project planning. Many federal, state, and local regulations apply to projects that may affect natural resources. Some considerations include timing restrictions to avoid or minimize project effects to species, and anticipated time to complete ESA consultation. Based on the location and preliminary nature of the project, many environmental issues can be anticipated. During scoping, the Environmental Coordinator and Project Biologist may be able to determine whether the project will be covered by a USFWS/NMFS programmatic consultation or will require an individual consultation. Depending on the project, the Fish and Wildlife Program may prepare a Habitat Connectivity memorandum for the region.

436.03(2) *Scoping*

During the Scoping phase, the Project Biologist will determine those state and federal regulations that will likely apply to the project. Bridge projects often require a bird management plan to comply with the MBTA. Projects with in-water pile driving may require a monitoring plan to determine if predicted noise levels are accurate. In marine waters, projects that generate underwater noise will likely require an MMPA Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) for marine mammals. If your project requires a HPA permit, see if your project qualifies for any existing GHPAs.

436.03(3) *Design*

The Project Biologist works closely with the Project Engineer to obtain details regarding stormwater design, new pollution generating impervious surface, pile driving and other project elements that may affect species and habitats. It is during the Design phase that the Project Biologist conducts early coordination with USFWS/NMFS liaisons. These initial pre-BA meetings are coordinated and facilitated by the Fish and Wildlife Program. The programmatic form or an individual BA are prepared by the biologist during this phase and submitted by the region. The programmatic consistency finding, letter of concurrence, or biological opinion must be received prior to construction.

Many I-4 fish passage and chronic environmental deficiency projects qualify for WDFW's Fish Habitat Enhancement Process (FHEP). FHEP is a streamlined process that does not require SEPA or local permits, except for Floodplain Development permits. WDFW requires applicants to submit a FHEP sponsorship letter and a form for most FHEP projects. However, WDFW does not require FHEP sponsorship letters and FHEP cover sheet for WSDOT-sponsored fish passage barrier removal FHEP projects that are on the WDFW fish passage list

If applicable, the biologist must also prepare an MMPA application and receive the IHA prior to construction. Similarly, coordination with the USFWS regarding the MBTA and BGEPA must be completed prior to construction.

436.03(4) Construction

Projects that require in-water work nearly always include work site isolation and moving fish out of the work area. In marine waters, MMPA compliance usually includes marine mammal monitoring. For Design Bid-Build projects, the Project Biologist is responsible for coordinating these efforts. For a Design-Build Project, a WSDOT manager may assign a Design-Build Directing Biologist responsibility for coordinating these efforts and a WSDOT Project Biologist or other qualified staff will verify the work is being done according to WSDOT protocols. Other requirements may include implementation of bird protection plans and monitoring specific habitat enhancement measures such as large wood placement in a stream. The Project Biologist is responsible for reinitiating ESA consultation if, among other things, the project changes significantly, allocated take limits are exceeded, or when a new species is proposed for listing.

WSDOT activities must comply with the Hydraulic Code in [RCW 77.55](#) and HPA permit provisions. Details of the Hydraulic Code WAC only apply when the habitat biologist (HB) includes them within the HPA provisions. If compliance issues arise, WDFW first seeks voluntary compliance by offering technical assistance and providing a reasonable timeline to achieve compliance; which could include site visits. The level of WDFW technical assistance will vary based on project complexity, site conditions, and potential impacts. WDFW can perform compliance inspections without notification (WDFW-WSDOT Hydraulic Code MOA).

When voluntary compliance does not occur, WDFW may use a range of increasingly strict enforcement rules which ranges from issuing notices of correction and stop work orders to penalties. Additional details about these tools are available in [WAC 220-660-480](#).

WDFW's HPA Compliance Program complements WSDOT's existing Environmental Compliance Assurance Policy (ECAP) process. Our agencies have a long history of working well together when non-compliance issues arise during construction and maintenance activities. We anticipate this will continue as WSDOT staff continue to follow ECAP and closely collaborate with WDFW when potential HPA non-compliance issues arise.

436.03(5) Maintenance and Operations

In some situations, a Maintenance activity may require a separate ESA consultation and other environmental permitting. Maintenance activities that may affect freshwater habitats are usually covered under the 4(d) rule. In terrestrial areas where potential disturbance to listed species may occur, the Fish and Wildlife Program has prepared species specific BMPs that avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive wildlife and habitat. There are no Operations phase requirements for Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation.

436.04 Analysis and documentation requirements

This section describes analysis and documentation requirements based on regulatory requirements. Determine level of detail based on complexity/size of project, expected severity of impacts, and potential for public controversy.

436.04(1) Analysis and documentation for NEPA

NEPA, [42 U.S.C 4321](#), requires that all major actions sponsored, funded, permitted, or approved by federal agencies undergo planning to ensure that environmental considerations such as impacts related to fish and wildlife are given due weight in decision making. Federal implementing regulations are at [23 CFR 771](#) (FHWA) and [40 CFR 1500-1508](#) (NEPA). WSDOT's policy is to follow all guidance and direction provided by the federal lead agency on NEPA related documents. The analysis of impacts to fish, wildlife and habitat can be recorded directly in the project's environmental document. In rare cases when warranted by the nature of the project, the analysis can be documented in separate [Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation](#) discipline reports. For additional details on NEPA procedures see Chapters [400](#) and [412](#).

436.04(2) Analysis and documentation for SEPA only (No federal nexus)

WSDOT typically documents SEPA as part of the NEPA documentation when both NEPA and SEPA are required. Find step-by-step guidance for compliance with SEPA rules in the Washington State Department of Ecology's (Ecology) [SEPA Handbook](#). For additional details [Chapter 400](#).

436.04(3) Analysis and documentation for ESA

Both the state and federal agencies regulate threatened and endangered species in Washington. WSDOT complies with the ESA, which is administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS is primarily responsible for terrestrial and freshwater species, while NMFS responsibilities lie mainly with marine wildlife and anadromous fish. Significant sections of the Act include:

- **Section 4** of the ESA allows for the listing of species as threatened or endangered based on habitat loss or degradation, over utilization, disease or predation, inadequacy of existing regulation mechanisms, or other human caused factors. Section 4(d) allows for the promulgation of regulations to provide for the protection and conservation of listed species. It may allow for "take" of threatened species.

In July 2000, NMFS adopted a rule under Section 4(d) of the ESA (65 FR 42422), which allows take of threatened fish species. Under this rule, the take prohibition is not applied to threatened species when the take is associated with one of NMFS's 13 approved programs or limits. The 13 limits can be considered exceptions to the 4(d) take prohibition. NMFS has determined that these programs, activities, and criteria contribute to species conservation and therefore it is not necessary to impose take prohibitions. NMFS updates the rule to include new species listed as threatened. The rule applies to any agency, authority, or private individual subject to U.S. jurisdiction that applies for coverage under the rule. In 2003, WSDOT applied for and received approval as part of the [Regional Road Maintenance Program \(RRMP\)](#) for take exception under the 4(d) rule.

WSDOT's routine, unscheduled, and emergency/disaster maintenance activities are covered under the Routine Road Maintenance limit along with 29 other cooperating agencies. The program defines general practices (such as adaptive management, monitoring, and training) and specific Best Management Practices that WSDOT uses to avoid adverse effects to aquatic environments.

- **Section 7** of the ESA requires each federal agency to ensure actions it carries out, authorizes, permits, or funds do not jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species. It describes consultation procedures and conservation obligations.

All projects with a federal nexus are subject to Section 7 of the ESA and an analysis is required to ensure compliance with the ESA. The project biologist – either a WSDOT biologist or a consulting biologist – conducts a preliminary evaluation to determine the level of project effects on listed species or designated critical habitat. Depending on the level of effect, preparation of a “no effect” letter or a biological assessment (BA) will be required. Templates are required for projects with FHWA as the lead action agency. WSDOT has developed extensive guidance and protocols for [ESA Section 7 Compliance](#).

There are three primary types of documentation that can be completed: No Effect Letter or Assessment, Programmatic Biological Assessment, or Individual Biological Assessment. For each listed species evaluated, a BA must arrive at one of three conclusions:

- The action will have “no effect” on the species.
- The action “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” the species.
- The action “may affect, likely to adversely affect” the species.

BAs prepared for WSDOT must follow [specific guidance](#) developed through cooperative agreements and in collaboration with FHWA, NMFS, and USFWS. The guidance standardizes analyses, improves consistency and facilitates quality control reviews. The guidance is updated regularly and the website should be checked often for current guidance. Guidance includes:

- [BA Preparation Seminars](#) taught regularly by WSDOT.
- Consulting biologists on contract with WSDOT must be [qualified to write BAs](#) for WSDOT.
- Required methods for [analyzing the effects of stormwater](#) on ESA listed fish species.
- Identifying the extent of [aquatic and terrestrial noise effects](#).
- Required method for analyzing [delayed consequences](#) of a project.

BAs are submitted to the appropriate Service (USFWS or NMFS) depending on the species addressed. A non-federal agency (such as WSDOT) designated by a federal action agency may submit a BA for informal consultation. During informal consultation, the Service reviews the BA and ascertains if they concur with the effect determination conclusions. If the agency concurs in writing, then no further consultation is needed. The agency may request additional information before giving concurrence and the project biologist should respond to such requests within two weeks. However, if the Service does not concur with the effect determinations, the consultation enters formal consultation at the request of the federal action agency.

Formal consultation involves a “may affect, likely to adversely affect” determination for one or more listed species or designated critical habitats. Formal consultation packages are submitted to the Service(s) by the federal action agency (i.e., FHWA, FTA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). During formal consultation, NMFS/USFWS may recommend modifications to eliminate or reduce adverse effects. If effects can be reduced to an insignificant or discountable level, then consultation proceeds informally. Formal consultation ends when NMFS/USFWS issues a biological opinion (BO). The ESA mandates that BOs be completed within 135 days, although extensions are possible at the request of the consulting Service. However, formal consultations typically take much longer (averaging 300 days or more) and this timeline should be factored into project schedules. Questions on current consultation timelines can be directed to the Environmental Services Office [Fish and Wildlife Program](#).

- **Section 9** of the ESA prohibits a “take” of listed species. “Take” is defined as to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in such conduct” (1532(18)). Through regulations, the term “harm” is defined as “an act which actually kills or injures wildlife. Such an act may include significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” Section 4(d) of the ESA allows for each service (USFWS and NMFS) to develop special rules (4(d) rules) to conserve species listed as threatened. These protections allow some take of threatened species that does not interfere with survival and recovery.

Section 4(d) protective rules for threatened species may apply Section 9 take prohibitions to threatened species. There may be an “exception” from the prohibitions if a program adequately protects listed species. In other words, the 4(d) rule can “limit” the situations to which the take prohibitions apply. Many of WSDOT maintenance activities are covered under existing Section 4(d) rules. All projects are required to conduct an ESA review. If during the review it appears that incidental take cannot be avoided, the project will be modified or a federal nexus identified for Section 7 consultation.

- **Section 10** of the ESA lays out guidance on permits that may be issued to authorize “take” as defined in Section 9.
 - Section 10(a)1(A) allows permits for take of listed threatened or endangered species for scientific research or purposes of propagation or survival.
 - Section 10(a)1(B) allows permits for incidental take of threatened or endangered species through the development and approval of Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

WSDOT has made ESA compliance an agency wide priority. Therefore, all WSDOT projects are required to comply with Section 9 of the ESA (prohibited acts). If the project has a federal nexus, such as federal funding, permitting, or is on federal lands, it is also subject to Section 7 of the ESA. Projects located on lands covered by an HCP must comply with rules defined in the plan. Standard maintenance operations are covered under Section 4(d) Rules for fish species under NMFS jurisdiction.

WSDOT identifies potential effects to listed or proposed species and critical habitats associated with a proposed action and then attempts to avoid, minimize, or eliminate these effects. For some actions, WSDOT conducts preliminary environmental reviews to identify likely effects early in the project design. This approach allows for design adjustments if effects to listed or proposed species or critical habitats are identified.

Analysis and documentation for MMPA

The [Marine Mammal Protection Act](#) establishes responsibilities for conservation and management to protect marine mammals. It establishes a moratorium on the taking and importation of marine mammals and marine mammal products. The MMPA defines “take” as “to hunt, harass, capture, or kill” any marine mammal or attempt to do so. WSDOT projects that involve marine waters, as well as the Columbia River up to Bonneville Dam, must consider potential effects of project activities and operation on marine mammals. If a project will impact marine mammals, a permit request for incidental harassment may be required from NOAA. Contact the Environmental Services Office [Fish and Wildlife Program](#) for additional information and guidance.

Analysis and documentation for MBTA and BGEPA

Two federal regulations administered by the USFWS mandate WSDOT's responsibilities to minimize impacts to protected bird species.

The [Migratory Bird Treaty Act \(MBTA\)](#) makes it unlawful to take, import, export, possess, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, with the exception of the taking of game birds during established hunting seasons. The law also applies to feathers, eggs, nests, and products made from migratory birds. This law is of particular concern when birds nest on bridges, buildings, signs, illumination, and ferry dock structures. WSDOT has developed guidance on avoiding active nests during highway construction, bridge maintenance, bridge inspection, and other relevant activities to ensure compliance with the MBTA. See Regional or Headquarters biology staff on how to proceed if guidance is necessary.

The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act \(BGEPA\)](#), similar to the MBTA, makes it unlawful to take, import, export, sell, purchase, or barter any bald or golden eagle, their parts, products, nests, or eggs. "Take" includes pursuing, shooting, poisoning, wounding, killing, capturing, trapping, collecting, molesting, or disturbing eagles. All WSDOT projects must comply with the BGEPA. To avoid potential disturbance to bald eagles, the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (guidelines) provide recommendations that will likely avoid take for a list of activities. WSDOT biologists and consultants address compliance with the BGEPA through a Bald Eagle database that documents compliance with the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. Contact the Environmental Services Office [Fish and Wildlife Program](#) to access the database. If take is unavoidable, contact regional or headquarters biologists on how to proceed.

State law also requires authorization to handle, kill, or collect wildlife of the state. The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) administers this law under [RCW 77.12.240](#) and applies to all wildlife. If you believe your project may require take of state wildlife, including birds, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, and mammals, contact the Environmental Services Office [Fish and Wildlife Program](#).

Analysis and documentation for Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act)

Under the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, NMFS was given legislative authority to regulate the fisheries of the United States. In 1996, this Act was amended to emphasize the sustainability of the nation's fisheries and create a new habitat conservation approach called [Essential Fish Habitat \(EFH\)](#). In 1999 and 2000, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) added provisions for the protection of EFH to three Fishery Management Plans (Coastal Pelagics, Groundfish, and Pacific Coast Salmon) in the Pacific Northwest. Federal agencies, and agencies working on their behalf, must consult with the NMFS on all activities, or proposed activities, authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agency that have or may have an adverse effect to EFH. The WSDOT [Biological Assessment Preparation Manual](#) contains a chapter detailing WSDOT procedures for completing EFH consultations with NMFS.

Construction in State Waters

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between WSDOT and WDFW addresses transportation construction work in state waters. The purpose of the MOA is to establish and promote mutual agreement of the needs and mandates of the respective agencies, to facilitate the consistent and efficient administration of Hydraulic Project Approvals (HPAs) for transportation projects under [RCW 77.55](#) (Construction Projects in State Waters), and [WAC 220-660](#) (Hydraulic Code Rules); to ensure that fish passage at transportation projects is facilitated through [RCW 77.57](#) (Fishways, Flow, and Screening); and facilitate the implementation of the WSDOT Chronic Environmental Deficiency Program.

436.05 External engagement

436.05(1) Working on Public Lands

Specific regulations apply to projects located on public lands. These projects may include a federal nexus as described previously, or not. In either case, public land managers (US Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), National Park Service (NPS), and others) may require additional review to meet their regulatory obligations and mission goals. WSDOT policy encourages coordination and cooperation with public land agencies and adherence to their regulations.

[National Forest Management Act](#) (NFMA, 16 U.S.C 1604 (g)(3)(B)) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to assess forest lands, develop a management program based on multiple use, sustained-yield principles, and implement a resource management plan for each unit of the National Forest System. The [NFMA](#) applies directly to lands administered by the USFS, but also provides direction for BLM plans. The BLM and USFS have integrated NEPA requirements with their land management regulations. In 2008, the USFS implemented new planning rules that offer a more strategic approach to land management plan development, amendment, and revision, as well as expanded public involvement.

The USFS has developed forest specific “forest plans” which identify “species of concern” found within each forest. Species lists are comprised of several categories of species such as federally listed species, USFS sensitive species, survey and manage species, and state listed species. Forest plans can cover a wide range of species (mollusks, lichens, mammals, and others). Individual forest staff or regional foresters decide which designated species to include on its species of concern list. Project requirements are associated with species ranking. However, actions on federal land must always comply with the ESA (see [Section 436.03](#)).

[Northwest Forest Plan \(NWFP\)](#) is a management plan affecting federal forest lands within the range of the northern spotted owl in western Washington, Oregon, and northern California. The standards and guidelines set forth in this plan supersede any existing forest plans within the range of the spotted owl. All WSDOT projects occurring on federal forest lands within the range of the northern spotted owl must follow the standards and guidelines within the [NWFP](#).

WSDOT projects that involve federal forest lands must comply with regulations under the NFMA and the NWFP. The USFS policy (FSM 2670.32) states that all programs and activities will be reviewed in a Biological Evaluation (BE) to determine the potential effect of such proposed activities on sensitive species. In most cases, WSDOT BA formats and Programmatic documents can meet USFS and BLM requirements by adding in information on sensitive species. Further, the policy states that impacts of such activities must be avoided or minimized and any permitted activities must not result in a loss of viability or

create significant trends towards Federal listing. Similar to the USFS policy, the BLM Manual 6840 describes policy regarding special status species on BLM lands. Lists of special status and sensitive species for USFS and BLM as well as recent policy can be obtained from the [Interagency Special Status/Sensitive Species Program](#).

The regional or state office of the federal agency responsible for the affected federal lands should be contacted to obtain a species of concern (special status or sensitive) list, information on necessary surveys and other guidance on needed documentation. Depending on the federal land ownership, this could include, but is not limited to, coordination with BLM, USFS, or NPS. Before any ground disturbing activity can occur, surveys may be required for each managed species that may be present in the project area.

436.05(2) Working on Tribal Lands

Projects on tribal lands may be subject to tribal laws that regulate fish, wildlife, and habitat. Projects not on tribal land could affect treaty reserved resources or species of tribal significance. The appropriate tribal biologist should be contacted to discuss any regulations that may apply to the project. Contact the [WSDOT Tribal Liaison](#) for more information or guidance.

436.06 Internal Roles and responsibilities

436.06(1) Project Engineer

The Project Engineer provides a detailed project description to the Project Biologist.

436.06(2) Project Environmental Office

The Project Environmental Office is responsible for preparing HPA permit applications, HPA commitments and resolving HPA issues.

436.06(3) Project Biologist

The project biologist can be either a WSDOT biologist or consultant. The project biologist conducts early coordination with state and federal agencies, works with the Project Engineer in addressing and minimizing environmental issues associated with the project, and prepares and submits environmental documents. This role requires a thorough understanding of ESA, MMPA, MBTA, and other federal and state regulations, and detailed knowledge of species biology.

436.06(4) Directing Biologist

A Directing Biologist can be Contractor-direct staff or a consultant. The Directing Biologist is responsible for construction field duties such as fish moving, marine mammal monitoring, MBTA monitoring, or other project specific activities. A Directing Biologist is responsible for submitting Fish Exclusion Plans, Marine Mammal Monitoring Plans, Bird Protection Plans or other required plans, and following required protocols and plans required for work during construction activities. A WSDOT Project Biologist, Lead Biologist, or other qualified staff may supervise a Directing Biologist's work to verify the DB is meeting all protocol/permit requirements.

436.06(5) Region/Mode Lead Biologist

The Lead Biologist provides technical assistance to project biologists and conducts quality assurance and quality control for all environmental documents.

436.06(6) ESO Multi-Agency Permit Program

The Multi-Agency Permit Program manages the HPA program including GHPAs.

436.06(7) ESO Fish and Wildlife Program

The Fish and Wildlife Program facilitates early coordination meetings between the Project Biologist, Project Engineer and USFWS/NMFS liaisons. The Program provides technical assistance throughout the process and conducts additional quality assurance and quality control services.

436.06(8) ESO Liaison Program

The Liaison Program provides technical assistance early in the ESA consultation process, ensuring that the Project Biologist has addressed all ESA concerns prior to document submittal.

436.07 Applicable permits and approval process**436.07(1) Federal**

Endangered Species Act (ESA) – If a project may affect a proposed or listed species, or proposed or designated critical habitat, WSDOT must obtain a Letter of Concurrence, Biological Opinion, or Programmatic Consistency Finding from the USFWS or NMFS.

The Fish and Wildlife Program also maintains ESA Section 10(a)1(A) permits that cover handling of some listed species.

Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) – If a project may affect essential fish habitat, WSDOT must prepare and submit an Essential Fish Habitat Assessment to NMFS. This assessment is included in an individual biological assessment or programmatic form. When ESA species are not present, a stand-alone EFH assessment may be required.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) – The Fish and Wildlife Program applies for an annual MBTA permit from the USFWS that covers most compliance issues. The project biologist will determine if a project requires the preparation of a Bird Protection Plan. This document includes measures to avoid or minimize impacts to nesting birds.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) – If a project may affect an active or inactive eagle nest, the project biologist will prepare a Bird Protection Plan, and coordinate with the Fish and Wildlife Program to obtain authorization from the USFWS.

Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) – Projects that may disturb marine mammals must apply for an Incidental Harassment Authorization from NMFS.

436.07(2) State

- WDFW [RCW 77.12.240](#) authorizes take of species under the jurisdiction of WDFW. The Fish and Wildlife Program applies for an annual permit from the WDFW that covers most compliance issues
- The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) requires HPA permits for hydraulic projects in, over, or near state waters [RCW 77.55](#). WDFW defines a hydraulic project as “construction or performance of work that will use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of any of the salt or fresh waters of the state.” [RCW 77.55.011](#) HPA permit provisions include measures that avoid and minimize impacts to fish life and fish habitat as WSDOT performs authorized activities. Provisions also cover requirements for notification, reporting, and compliance. Additional information about project activities that trigger HPAs and the permitting process is available on the [WDFW Fish](#) webpage.
- The Washington Deparns includng, and compliance. Additional information about project activities that trigger HPAs and the permitting process is available on the WDFW website and the WSDOT [Fish](#) webpage.
- Shoreline Management Acts (SMA). For more details see [Chapter 431](#).

436.07(3) Local

- Local Comprehensive Plans and Critical Area Ordinances (CAO) – For more details see [Chapter 455](#).

For more information on the permitting process, see [Chapter 500](#).

436.08 Abbreviations and acronyms

BA	Biological Assessment
BE	Biological Evaluation
BGEPA	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	Best Management Practice
BO	Biological Opinion
CAO	Critical Area Ordinance
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
ESA	Endangered Species Act
GHPA	General Hydraulic Project Approval
HPA	Hydraulic Project Approval
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFMA	National Forest Management Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NWFP	Northwest Forest Plan

PFMC	Pacific Fishery Management Council
RRMP	Regional Road Maintenance Program
Service(s)	United States Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WDFW	Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

436.09 Glossary

Candidate Species – Any species of fish, wildlife, or plant considered for possible addition to the list of endangered and threatened species. These are taxa for which NMFS or USFWS has on file sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to support issuance of a proposal to list, but issuance of a proposed rule is currently precluded by higher priority listing actions.

Critical Habitat – Under the Endangered Species Act, (1) the specific areas within the geographic area occupied by a federally listed species on which are found physical or biological features essential to conserving the species, and that may require special protection or management considerations; and (2) specific areas outside the geographic area occupied by a federally listed species when it is determined that such areas are essential for the conservation of the species.

Effects of the Action (ESA) – Effects that are caused by the proposed action and are later in time but are still reasonably certain to occur. ([50 CFR 402.02](#))

Endangered Species – Any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Federal Nexus – A project with a federal nexus either has federal funding, requires federal permits, or takes place on federal lands.

Habitat – The physical or natural environment where a species or population may live.

Incidental Take (ESA) – Take of listed species that results from, but is not the intention of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity.

Jurisdiction – Governing authority which interprets and applies laws and regulations.

Listed Species – Any species of fish, wildlife, or plant which has been determined to be endangered or threatened under Section 4 of the ESA.

Programmatic Biological Assessment – A biological assessment that establishes conditions allowing multiple actions on a program, regional or other basis to proceed through streamlined consultation processes with the Services.

Proposed Species – Any species of fish, wildlife, or plant that is proposed by NMFS or USFWS for federal listing under Section 4 of the ESA.

Take – Defined under the ESA as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct,” including modification to a species’ habitat.

Threatened Species – Any species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Viability – Ability of a population to maintain sufficient size so it persists over time despite normal fluctuations in numbers; usually expressed as a probability of maintaining a specific population for a defined period.

Watershed – Basin including all water and land areas that drain to a common body of water.