



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Coastal Region • Region 6 • 48 Devonshire Road, Montesano, WA 98563-9618
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October 17, 2024

City of DuPont
ATTN: Barbara Kincaid
1700 Civic Drive
DuPont, WA 98327

Dear Barbara Kincaid:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Application PLNG2022-031 for DuPont 423-DuPont West. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and perpetuating the state's fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities. In recognition of our responsibilities, we submit the following comments for the Application PLNG2022-031 for DuPont 423-DuPont West. Other comments may be provided in the future.

Project Area of Potential Effect:

The project is located at 1700 Center Drive, NW 1/4 of Section 26, Township 19 N, Range 1 E

Fish and Wildlife Resources and Recommendations:

Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*) is Washington's only native oak species. Oak woodland habitat in the Pacific Northwest has been reduced to less than 10% of its pre-settlement extent, largely due to the conversion of land to agriculture and urbanization. Further, there is concern about the species itself as the decline in available habitat has resulted in the decline of individual trees and small stands of trees that have important ecological value. The proactive conservation of individual oak trees as well as oak stands is strongly encouraged to avoid the future need to list the species as State and/or Federally Threatened or Endangered.

Oak woodlands, stands, and individual oak trees provide an entire suite of ecological functions and valuable opportunities for wildlife movement through the environment at a landscape scale. Oaks provide important roosting, nesting, and feeding habitat for resident and migratory wildlife regardless of the oaks age, size, or current condition. DuPont's tree retention for landmark trees, including OWO retention is outlined in [25.120.030 \(2\)](#).

For the reasons above, WDFW appreciates that efforts have been made to avoid impacts to OWO to the extent possible for the DuPont 423 development. WDFW has new guidance to assess the function of individual Oregon white oak and accurately identify oak stands and woodlands provided in the [Best management practices for mitigating impacts to Oregon white oak priority habitats](#) publication (BMPs for OWO). Avoidance is the first step of WDFW's best management practices document and is also the most preferred action to protect OWO. The retention of the

majority of oaks on site in tree retention areas A and B, especially the landmark oaks according to Dupont City Code, readily achieves avoidance of impacts to OWO. WDFW's preference is to preserve as many oaks as possible in addition to the landmark oaks that meet the city's municipal code. There are several actions that can be taken to compensate for the loss of oaks throughout the rest of the property.

WDFW first recommends the enhancement of the retained oak canopy in tree retention areas A and B. This can be achieved through removal of adjacent conifers that are crowding OWO within the tracts. For more details on this action, please refer to page 14 of the BMPs for OWO. The retained oaks would also benefit from invasive vegetation removal from the understory and native understory plantings. Enhancement of existing and degraded oak groves is a more appropriate approach to addressing temporal loss of function compared to oak replanting due to the length of time oaks take to establish themselves. A second recommendation is to replant oaks within the tree areas to compensate for oaks that were removed. If both actions are taken concurrently, then these replantings would also benefit from canopy enhancement, as well as reduced resource competition. Finally, WDFW recommends conducting a site visit to further identify landmark trees that aren't shown in the available site plan (Attachment 2), such as tree #12, a 42" DBH OWO to be removed.

If a future landscaping plan includes replantings, then a maintenance plan should be included as a part of the mitigation plan to support the establishment and survival of the newly planted oaks at the mitigation site. Irrigation, browsing protection, and controlling invasive vegetation are three key pieces of an OWO maintenance plan. For more information on creating a maintenance plan, please refer to pages 17-19 of the BMPs for OWO. WDFW also recommends including a monitoring plan that guides the implementation of a developed maintenance plan to ensure that important mitigation benchmarks are met. For more information on creating a monitoring plan, including further details on types of benchmarks and years of monitoring, please refer to page 19 of the BMPs for OWO.

Finally, WDFW recommends using construction best management practices (BMPs) to minimize direct and indirect impacts from construction activities. The [Tree Protection on Construction and Development sites](#) published by Oregon State Extension Service (OSES) provides some guidance and is also referred to in the BMPs for OWO. For example, delineating and fencing off the critical root zone protects a tree's root system from direct impacts of construction work. Please refer to pages 3-7 in OSES's protection document for how to establish a critical root zone and BMPs that tie into this practice. Minimization is the second step in WDFW's mitigation sequence framework for OWO, and utilizing construction BMPs will help protect the remaining OWO adjacent to the project.

Please consult the [Best management practices for mitigating impacts to Oregon white oak priority habitats](#) publication to offset impacts to Oregon white oak and work with a WDFW habitat biologist to develop a mitigation plan.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (360) 480-3510 or Portia.Leigh@dfw.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Portia Leigh".

Portia Leigh
WDFW Habitat Biologist
1111 Washington St SE
Olympia, WA 98501

Cc: Gwen Lentes, Regional Habitat Program Manager (Gwendolen.Lentes@dfw.wa.gov)

Elliott Winter, Assistant RHPM (Elliott.Winter@dfw.wa.gov)

Jessica Bryant, Regional Land Use Planner (Jessica.Bryant@dfw.wa.gov)