



# CONSERVATION

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## Bald Eagle Management

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## Bald Eagle Management & Protection in Washington State

### Recent Changes to Bald Eagle Management Planning

The Fish and Wildlife Commission, which sets rules and policies for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), recently amended the Bald Eagle protection rules. The result of the rule change is that state Bald Eagle Management Plans are no longer required unless Bald Eagles are listed as Threatened or Endangered in Washington State. WDFW will not be asking local governments to require a state Bald Eagle management plan prior to issuing local permits. However, there are other federal or local rules that still apply (see below).

#### *Reason for the rule change*

This amendment to the Bald Eagle rules was pursued mainly because of the species' recovery and down-listing in Washington. Beginning in 1978, Bald Eagles in Washington were protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. From a low of only 104 breeding Bald Eagle pairs in 1980, Washington's population has increased dramatically, due in part to the protection of breeding habitat. By 2005, an estimated 840 occupied territories were documented throughout the state. In July of 2007 the Bald Eagle was removed from the federal Endangered Species list.

There are now indications that the Bald Eagle population is nearing carrying capacity in parts of western Washington. Their numbers may still be increasing in northeastern Washington and along some rivers in western Washington. Although this dramatic recovery was the driving force behind the recent rule change, the decision also relieves agencies, local governments, and private landowners of the significant time commitment and other constraints associated with developing eagle plans.

#### *Regulations not affected by this change*

Landowners with existing state Bald Eagle plans who wish to carry out new clearing, construction or other management should consult the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) prior to conducting the project. Although there is no longer a state Bald Eagle management plan requirement, landowners must still comply with the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act to avoid impacting eagles. Landowners should consult the USFWS to determine if a permit is required when proposing land use activities within 660 feet of an eagle nest. Depending on the type of land use activity being proposed, the USFWS may recommend differing strategies based on whether the activity will occur within 330 or 660 feet of the nest. The federal eagle guidelines are found at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/eagle/guidelines/disturbnestingbaea1.html>.

Although the Bald Eagle is no longer listed as a State Threatened species, it remains classified by WDFW as a State Sensitive species. Sensitive species are any wildlife species native to the state that are vulnerable or declining and are likely to become Endangered or Threatened in a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. For that reason, cities and counties may continue to protect eagles under local critical areas rules pursuant to the Growth Management Act. Landowners should check with their local jurisdiction to determine whether there are local requirements for eagle protection, in addition to consulting with the USFWS.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What should I do if I want to develop property near a Bald Eagle nest?**

You should contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/eagle/contactus.html>). Key contact is Mark Miller 360-534-9347, [Mark\\_Miller@fws.gov](mailto:Mark_Miller@fws.gov).

#### **Do I need to renew my existing eagle management plan?**

If your ongoing activities are consistent with your existing plan there is no need to develop a new plan. If activities will be substantially different than those covered under the original plan, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/eagle/contactus.html>). Key contact is Mark Miller 360-534-9347, [Mark\\_Miller@fws.gov](mailto:Mark_Miller@fws.gov).

#### **How do I know if my proposed project is within 660 feet of a Bald Eagle nest?**

Please consult 'PHS on the Web' (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/phs>) to use tools that identify Priority Habitats and Species – including Bald Eagles – that are associated with your project area.

#### **Will WDFW continue to provide technical assistance to meet GMA mandates to protect bald eagles?**

Regulatory authority over Bald Eagles now resides with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. WDFW staff will no longer be providing



#### **IMPORTANT!**

Are you proposing to develop land, engage in construction, clear brush, harvest trees or other similar activities within 660 feet of a Bald Eagle nest? In addition, are you planning to use explosives within one mile of a communal roost site? If so, you should review the [federal management guidelines for eagles](#) or contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mark Miller 360-534-9347, [Mark\\_Miller@fws.gov](mailto:Mark_Miller@fws.gov)

If you would like to report information about an eagle nest or breeding territory, we are interested in the following types of information:

- the location of a new eagle nest or breeding territory,
- a new nest within a known territory,
- a more accurate location for an existing nest structure,
- loss of a nest structure or a nest tree,
- information about occupancy of the site by eagles between January and August,
- the number of young eagles observed in a nest.

Before submitting information to WDFW please consult 'PHS on the Web' to determine the location and name of the Bald Eagle territory in question, and then visit our [Bald Eagle Territory History](#) database to determine whether the nest tree location or particular territory history information is already in our database. To share your information with WDFW please contact Gretchen Blatz (360-902-2484; [Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov)).

technical assistance to develop site management plans. WDFW will continue to maintain its Bald Eagle database.

**What happens if our local jurisdiction's development regulations require a WDFW bald eagle management plan?**

Some local governments may need to amend their current codes to comply with the shift in regulatory authority from the state to the federal government. WDFW supports the USFWS guidelines as providing bald eagle nest protection.

**How do I report a new eagle nest?**

We appreciate as much information as you can provide, such as a street address and/or GPS location of the new nest, species of the nest tree, the length of time the nest has been present, and any photographs you might be able to take. Please submit Bald Eagle territory data to Gretchen Blatz (360-902-2484; [Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov)).

**How do I report information that more accurately reflects the location of a nest tree, or report a nest tree that has fallen or been damaged?**

We appreciate as much information as you can provide, such as a street address and/or GPS location of the new nest, species of the nest tree, the length of time the nest has been present, and any photographs you might be able to take. Please submit Bald Eagle territory data to Gretchen Blatz (360-902-2484; [Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov)).

**How can I report information on observations of nests or young eagles?**

WDFW will maintain its Bald Eagle database and is interested to obtain information about nest tree status, occupancy of the site by eagles and reproductive output. We are particularly interested to know about:

- the location of a new eagle territory,
- a new nest within a known territory,
- a more accurate location for an existing nest structure,
- whether a nest tree has fallen or a nest has fallen from the tree,
- information about occupancy of the site by eagles between January and August, and
- the number of young eagles observed in a nest.

For more information on submitting Bald Eagle territory data to WDFW contact Gretchen Blatz (360-902-2484; [Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Gretchen.Blatz@dfw.wa.gov)).

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