

Shepherds Flat Central : Revegetation Plan

[SEPTEMBER 11, 2009]

1 **I. Introduction**

2 This plan describes methods and standards for restoration of areas of construction
3 disturbance. This plan applies to the areas surrounding the permanent facility components of
4 Shepherds Flat Central (SFC).¹ The objective of revegetation is to restore the disturbed areas to
5 pre-disturbance condition or better. The site certificate for the facility requires restoration of
6 these areas. This plan has been developed in consultation with the Oregon Department of Fish
7 and Wildlife (ODFW).

8 The areas of construction disturbance include cultivated or otherwise developed
9 agricultural land (cropland) as well as areas of grassland, shrub-steppe habitat and other habitat
10 subtypes (wildlife habitat areas). The intensity of construction impact will vary. In some areas,
11 the impact will be relatively light, but in other areas, heavy construction activity will remove all
12 vegetation, remove topsoil and compact the remaining subsoil. Where vegetation has been
13 damaged or removed during construction, the certificate holder must restore suitable vegetation.
14 In addition, the certificate holder shall maintain erosion and sediment control measures put in
15 place during construction until the affected areas are restored as described in this plan and the
16 risk of erosion has been eliminated. The plan specifies monitoring procedures to evaluate
17 revegetation success of disturbed wildlife habitat areas. Remedial action may be necessary for
18 wildlife habitat areas that do not show revegetation progress. Additional mitigation may be
19 necessary if revegetation is unsuccessful.

20 **II. Description of the Project Area**

21 Most of the SFC site lies within Gilliam County (approximately 6,886 acres).
22 Approximately 49 acres within the site boundary lie within Morrow County. Much of the area in
23 the northern part of the site is characterized by shallow soils. The area is used primarily for
24 grazing of sheep, but low rainfall (approximately 9 inches of precipitation annually) limits
25 forage, and sheep are typically removed from the area from May to November. The site contains
26 areas of bare sand, exposed rock and bare soil, and there are numerous unimproved roads and
27 off-road vehicle tracks as well as several electrical transmission line corridors. Some locations
28 are highly disturbed from congregation of sheep around watering and transport sites. Invasive
29 species (such as cheatgrass and spring-Whitlow grass) are the predominant grass species in most
30 areas, but native species (such as Sandberg’s bluegrass, needle-and-thread grass, bluebunch
31 wheatgrass and six-weeks fescue) are also present. Portions of Eightmile Canyon lie within or
32 near the site boundary. Eightmile Canyon contains an intermittent stream and is cultivated in
33 some areas. The southern part of the site contains deeper soils. Most of the southern area is
34 cultivated for dryland wheat farming.

¹ This plan is incorporated by reference in the site certificate for Shepherds Flat Central and must be understood in that context. It is not a “stand-alone” document. This plan does not contain all mitigation required of the certificate holder.

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1 **III. Revegetation Methods**

2 The certificate holder shall begin restoration of disturbed areas as soon as possible after
3 completion of facility construction activity in the area to be restored. Restoration measures
4 include soil preparation and seeding as described below. Planting should be done at the
5 appropriate time of year to facilitate seed germination, based on weather conditions. The
6 certificate holder shall choose planting methods based on site-specific factors such as slope,
7 erosion potential and the size of the area in need of revegetation.

8 **1. Correction for Compaction**

9 In the northern section, soils are generally too shallow to become compacted by
10 construction activities. Deeper soils in the southern section may become compacted. The
11 certificate holder shall examine disturbed areas as soon as construction is finished in the area.
12 Areas that appear to be affected by compaction will be treated by deep tillage or ripping
13 (scarification) using the method preferred by the landowner. In some areas, compaction might
14 not become evident until vegetation indicates the condition through poor seed sprouting, stunting
15 or plant death. Where that occurs, the area will be tilled or ripped and then re-seeded.

16 **2. Revegetation of Cropland**

17 In the dryland wheat areas, the larger disturbed areas will be cultivated as soon as
18 possible after construction work is done. If it is the proper season for wheat planting and the
19 disturbed area is within a field that is not intended to remain fallow, the area will be planted with
20 a wheat variety selected by the landowner. Otherwise, cultivation and planting will occur on the
21 same schedule as in surrounding fields. The certificate holder will reimburse landowners for the
22 work if landowners prefer to perform the plowing and planting themselves.

23 **3. Revegetation of Wildlife Habitat Areas**

24 The predominant wildlife habitat subtype that will be disturbed by facility construction is
25 grassland. The seed mix used for revegetation in these areas will contain a mixture of species
26 expected to perform well in the affected soils and including, as available, seed adapted to the
27 local environment. The certificate holder will select a seed mix through consultation with the
28 parcel landowner and the grazing right lessee, ODFW, the Oregon State University Extension
29 Service, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy and the Oregon
30 Department of Energy (Department). The certificate holder shall use seed provided by a
31 reputable supplier and complying with the Oregon Seed Law.

32 After construction activities are completed, disturbed areas will be evaluated to determine
33 whether restoration seeding is needed. In some areas where existing vegetation has been crushed
34 but not removed during construction, recovery is likely to occur in a reasonable time without
35 intervention. Seeding will not be done in areas where the pre-construction condition was exposed
36 rock, bare soil or sand that is unlikely to support vegetation.

37 Narrow areas of soil disturbance due to off-road trenching, off-road crane paths and other
38 limited disturbance may be seeded and left without mulch. Hand seeding, rather than mechanical
39 seeding, will be used in small areas where the use of planting equipment is likely to increase the
40 area of disturbance. Larger disturbed areas will be seeded followed by application of weed-free

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1 straw or other mulch to protect against erosion and preserve moisture. No-till methods, such as
2 drilling or broadcast seeding, will be employed.

3 In the arid climate of the site, successful seeding is limited to mid-fall through very early
4 spring. If seeding of large disturbance areas cannot be accomplished within this optimal seeding
5 period within two months after construction disturbance, the areas will be mulched or otherwise
6 treated to minimize erosion until seeding can be done in the fall.

7 **4. Weed control**

8 In the spring and early summer (approximately April through June), weeds commonly
9 found on the site can be identified before they seed. After construction, all disturbed areas
10 (except areas of exposed rock, bare soil and sand) will be evaluated annually in the spring for the
11 presence of invasive weed species. The certificate holder shall implement weed control measures
12 recommended by Gilliam County and Morrow County weed control authorities. Annual weed
13 inspection and treatment of revegetation areas will be discontinued in areas that are determined
14 to be successfully revegetated, but the certificate holder shall continue to implement a weed
15 control program during facility operation, as required by Condition 38 of the site certificate.

16 **IV. Monitoring**

17 **1. Revegetation Record**

18 The certificate holder shall maintain a record of revegetation work for both cropland and
19 wildlife habitat areas. In the record, the certificate holder shall include the date that construction
20 activity was completed in the area to be restored, a description of the affected area (location,
21 acres affected and pre-disturbance condition), the date that revegetation work began and a
22 description of the work done within the affected area. The certificate shall update the
23 revegetation records from time to time, as revegetation work occurs. The certificate holder shall
24 provide copies of these records to the Department at the time of submitting the annual report
25 required under the site certificate.

26 **2. Monitoring Procedures**

27 Cropland

28 During the first growing season following planting of cropland previously disturbed by
29 facility construction, the certificate holder shall consult with the landowners on soil compaction,
30 construction-related erosion or poor crop growth in disturbed areas. The certificate holder may
31 rely on the judgment of the landowner regarding any corrective measures needed.

32 Wildlife Habitat Areas

33 The certificate holder shall monitor the revegetation of wildlife habitat areas as described
34 in this section, unless the landowner has converted the area to a use inconsistent with the success
35 criteria. The certificate holder shall employ a qualified investigator (an independent botanist or
36 revegetation specialist) to examine all non-cropland revegetation areas to assess vegetation cover
37 (species, structural stage, etc.) and progress toward meeting the success criteria described below
38 in subsection (3). Within representative sample plots, the investigator will estimate the
39 percentages of the area that are covered by bare soil, desirable native vegetation or invasive weed
40 species. The investigator will qualitatively assess the degree of erosion at each site. The

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1 investigator will compare the sample plots with representative reference plots of the same habitat
2 category and subtype.

3 The investigator will survey at least 20 percent of the disturbed area. The investigator
4 will select sample plots that are representative of all habitat subtypes disturbed. Sample plots
5 must proportionally represent areas of light disturbance (crushed vegetation) and areas of heavier
6 disturbance (scraped or heavily compacted soil). Reference plots will be selected from nearby
7 undisturbed areas within the same habitat subtype and category. Reference plots should have
8 similar slopes, soil depth and prevalence of rock outcrops as the sample plots to which they will
9 be compared.

10 The investigator shall use the same reference and sample plots for every survey, unless
11 the investigator finds that a plot is no longer suitable for survey purposes. If the investigator
12 finds a plot is no longer suitable, the investigator will select a suitable replacement plot and
13 report the reasons for the replacement to the certificate holder, the Department and ODFW.

14 Revegetation monitoring surveys will be conducted annually beginning one year after
15 initial restoration seeding and continuing until there is sufficient evidence of progress for the
16 Department to conclude that additional revegetation efforts in the area are not necessary.
17 Thereafter, the restored areas will be surveyed at five-year intervals for the life of the facility.²

18 The investigator will report to the certificate holder, the Department and ODFW
19 following each inspection. In the report, the investigator shall include an assessment of whether
20 the revegetated areas are trending toward meeting the success criteria. The investigator will
21 include in the report any remedial actions recommended. The investigator shall include a report
22 on the success of weed control measures.

23 Within each revegetation area, the investigator shall evaluate the progress of habitat
24 recovery in comparison to the reference area. The investigator shall evaluate the following site
25 conditions (both within the revegetation area and within the reference area):

- 26 • Degree of erosion due to disturbance activities (high, moderate or low).
- 27 • Vegetation density.
- 28 • Relative proportion of desirable vegetation as determined by the average number
29 of stems of desirable vegetation per square foot or by a visual scan of the area,
30 noting overall recovery status.
- 31 • Species diversity of desirable vegetation.

32 **3. Success Criteria**

33 Cropland

34 Cropland areas are successfully revegetated when the replanted areas achieve crop
35 production comparable to adjacent non-disturbed cultivated areas. The certificate holder shall
36 consult with the landowner or farmer to determine whether these areas have been successfully
37 revegetated and shall report to the Department on the success of revegetation in these areas.

² As used in this plan, “life of the facility” means continuously until the facility site is restored and the site certificate is terminated in accordance with OAR 345-027-0110.

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Wildlife Habitat Areas

A wildlife habitat area is successfully revegetated when its habitat quality is equal to, or better than, the habitat quality of the reference area as measured by the site conditions listed above in subsection (2). When the Department finds that the condition of a revegetated wildlife habitat area satisfies the criteria for revegetation success, the Department will conclude that the certificate holder has met its restoration obligations for that area. If the Department finds that the landowner has converted a wildlife habitat area to a use that is inconsistent with the success criteria, the Department may conclude that the certificate holder has no further obligation to restore the area for wildlife habitat uses.

Revegetation will be considered successful when:

1. The percentage of vegetation cover by desirable native species in the sample plot is greater than or equal to the percentage of desirable native species cover in the reference plots.
2. The percentage of cover by invasive weed species in the sample plot is less than 10 percent; and
3. The percentage of bare soil in the sample plot is not greater than the percentage of bare soil in the reference plot, unless the percentage of desirable native species cover in the sample plot exceeds the percentage of desirable native species cover in the reference plots as described in #4 below.
4. If the percentage of desirable native species cover in the sample plot exceeds the percentage of desirable native species cover in the reference plots by 10 percent or more, then the percentage of bare soil in the sample plot may exceed the percentage of bare soil in the reference plot by up to 20 percent.

4. Remedial Action in Wildlife Habitat Areas

After each monitoring visit, the certificate holder's qualified investigator shall report to the certificate holder regarding the revegetation progress of each wildlife habitat area. The investigator shall make recommendations to the certificate holder for reseeded or other remedial measures for areas that are not showing progress toward achieving revegetation success.

Indications that an area is not showing progress toward achieving revegetation success include emergence of comparatively few plants one year after disturbance or low vegetation cover in the second monitoring year compared to reference plots and little increase in vegetation between the first and second monitoring year.

The certificate holder shall take appropriate action to meet the objectives of this revegetation plan. If soil compaction is suspected as the reason for lack of progress, the compacted areas may be deep tilled or scarified to reduce compaction, followed by re-seeding. The certificate holder's qualified investigator shall assess the vegetation that has appeared in the disturbed area to determine specific recommendations for remediation.

On an annual basis as part of the annual report on the facility, the certificate holder shall report to the Department the investigator's recommendations and the remedial actions taken. The Department may require re-seeding or other remedial measures in those areas that do not meet the success criteria.

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1 If a wildlife habitat area is damaged by wildfire, the certificate holder shall work with the
2 landowner to restore the damaged area. The certificate holder shall report to the Department on
3 the damage caused by wildfire and the cause of the fire, if known. The certificate holder shall
4 continue to report on revegetation progress as described in this plan.

5 If an area is not trending toward meeting the success criteria by the fifth monitoring year
6 (and has not been converted by the landowner to an inconsistent use), the certificate holder may
7 conclude that revegetation of the area was unsuccessful and propose appropriate mitigation for
8 the loss of habitat quality or quantity. The certificate holder shall carry out mitigation actions
9 approved by the Department, subject to review by the Oregon Energy Facility Council (Council).

10 **V. Amendment of the Plan**

11 This Revegetation Plan may be amended from time to time by agreement of the
12 certificate holder and the Council. Such amendments may be made without amendment of the
13 site certificate. The Council authorizes the Department to agree to amendments to this plan. The
14 Department shall notify the Council of all amendments, and the Council retains the authority to
15 approve, reject or modify any amendment of this plan agreed to by the Department.