

Shepherds Flat North: Revegetation Plan
[SEPTEMBER 11, 2009]

I. Introduction

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

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

II. Description of the Project Area

The SFN site lies within Gilliam County (approximately 8,103 acres) in an area characterized by shallow soils. The area is used primarily for grazing of sheep, but low rainfall (approximately 9 inches of precipitation annually) limits forage, and sheep are typically removed from the area from May to November. There is no cultivated cropland within the site boundary. The site contains areas of bare sand, exposed rock and bare soil, and there are numerous unimproved roads and off-road vehicle tracks as well as several electrical transmission line corridors. Some locations are highly disturbed from congregation of sheep around watering and transport sites. Invasive species (such as cheatgrass and spring-Whitlow grass) are the predominant grass species in most areas, but native species (such as Sandberg’s bluegrass, needle-and-thread grass, bluebunch wheatgrass and six-weeks fescue) are also present.

III. Revegetation Methods

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

¹ This plan is incorporated by reference in the site certificate for Shepherds Flat North 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. Correction for Compaction

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

2. Revegetation of Wildlife Habitat Areas

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

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

Narrow areas of soil disturbance due to off-road trenching, off-road crane paths and other limited disturbance may be seeded and left without mulch. Hand seeding, rather than mechanical seeding, will be used in small areas where the use of planting equipment is likely to increase the area of disturbance. Larger disturbed areas will be seeded followed by application of weed-free straw or other mulch to protect against erosion and preserve moisture. No-till methods, such as drilling or broadcast seeding, will be employed.

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

3. Weed control

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

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1 IV. Monitoring

2 1. Revegetation Record

3 The certificate holder shall maintain a record of revegetation work. In the record, the
4 certificate holder shall include the date that construction activity was completed in the area to be
5 restored, a description of the affected area (location, acres affected and pre-disturbance
6 condition), the date that revegetation work began and a description of the work done within the
7 affected area. The certificate shall update the revegetation records from time to time, as
8 revegetation work occurs. The certificate holder shall provide copies of these records to the
9 Department at the time of submitting the annual report required under the site certificate.

10 2. Monitoring Procedures

11 The certificate holder shall monitor the revegetation of wildlife habitat areas as described
12 in this section, unless the landowner has converted the area to a use inconsistent with the success
13 criteria. The certificate holder shall employ a qualified investigator (an independent botanist or
14 revegetation specialist) to examine all non-cropland revegetation areas to assess vegetation cover
15 (species, structural stage, etc.) and progress toward meeting the success criteria described below
16 in subsection (3). Within representative sample plots, the investigator will estimate the
17 percentages of the area that are covered by bare soil, desirable native vegetation or invasive weed
18 species. The investigator will qualitatively assess the degree of erosion at each site. The
19 investigator will compare the sample plots with representative reference plots of the same habitat
20 category and subtype.

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

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

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

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

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

- 4 • Degree of erosion due to disturbance activities (high, moderate or low).
- 5 • Vegetation density.
- 6 • Relative proportion of desirable vegetation as determined by the average number
7 of stems of desirable vegetation per square foot or by a visual scan of the area,
8 noting overall recovery status.
- 9 • Species diversity of desirable vegetation.

10 3. Success Criteria

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

19 Revegetation will be considered successful when:

- 20 1. The percentage of vegetation cover by desirable native species in the sample plot
21 is greater than or equal to the percentage of desirable native species cover in the
22 reference plots.
- 23 2. The percentage of cover by invasive weed species in the sample plot is less than
24 10 percent; and
- 25 3. The percentage of bare soil in the sample plot is not greater than the percentage
26 of bare soil in the reference plot, unless the percentage of desirable native species
27 cover in the sample plot exceeds the percentage of desirable native species cover
28 in the reference plots as described in #4 below.
- 29 4. If the percentage of desirable native species cover in the sample plot exceeds the
30 percentage of desirable native species cover in the reference plots by 10 percent
31 or more, then the percentage of bare soil in the sample plot may exceed the
32 percentage of bare soil in the reference plot by up to 20 percent.

33 4. Remedial Action in Wildlife Habitat Areas

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

38 Indications that an area is not showing progress toward achieving revegetation success
39 include emergence of comparatively few plants one year after disturbance or low vegetation

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1 cover in the second monitoring year compared to reference plots and little increase in vegetation
2 between the first and second monitoring year.

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

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

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

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

21 **V. Amendment of the Plan**

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