

memorandum

DATE: September 12, 2012

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

TO: Dorie Welch
Project Manager – KEWM-4

Proposed Action: Chahalpam Property Funding.

Fish and Wildlife Project No.: 2011-003-00, Contract # BPA-006468

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.25 Real Property transfers for cultural protection, habitat preservation and wildlife management.

Location: Stayton Quadrangle, in Marion County, Oregon (near Stayton, Oregon).

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposed Action: The BPA is proposing to provide funds to Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) to purchase the 338-acre Chahalpam property near Stayton in Marion County, Oregon for the purposes of fish habitat conservation. Western Rivers Conservancy will own and manage the land, and BPA will receive a conservation easement on the property to ensure that the habitat values are protected in perpetuity.

By funding this easement BPA partially fulfills commitments made in the 2010 “Willamette River Basin Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Wildlife Habitat Protection and Enhancement between the State of Oregon and the Bonneville Power Administration”. This is part of ongoing efforts to mitigate for the impacts to fish and wildlife of the construction and operation of federal flood control facilities in the Willamette River Basin. Placing this property in a conservation easement will provide long-lasting wildlife benefits as part of a growing network of conservation lands in the Willamette Valley by preventing the conversion of fish and wildlife habitat to other land uses.

The Chahalpam (Place of the Halpam People) property, has more than two miles of mainstem and off-channel frontage along the North Santiam River, including seven side channels and sloughs as well as portions of Dieckman Creek. Willows line the river frontage, which is then bounded by a 130-acre mature stand of black cottonwoods, big-leaf maples and red alders. Over twenty acres of palustrine wetlands are located on the property, including a slough that is designated critical habitat for Oregon chub, and ESA listed Threatened species. The riparian forest and wetlands are contiguous with riparian forests and wetlands of similar composition and structure on the adjacent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) parcel that straddles the North Santiam River. Their combined areas make this site the largest stand of riparian forest along a nine-mile stretch of the North Santiam, from an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

(ODFW) managed refuge downstream to an extensive forested area on private lands upstream of Stayton. Within this context, the Chahalpam-BLM forests represent the most significant patch of natural habitat within a landscape that encompasses almost 50 square miles.

A number of at-risk or listed wildlife species have been documented at Chahalpam, including four listed Species of Concern: pileated woodpecker, hooded merganser, western pond turtle, and red-legged frog. There is also potential and/or suitable habitat for Pacific lamprey, Lewis' woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, little willow flycatcher, western bluebird, and vesper sparrow. In addition, the property provides habitat for Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon, winter steelhead, and Oregon chub, all listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Native Santiam cutthroat and rainbow trout also benefit from the habitat within the property.

Successful acquisition of the Chahalpam will protect key habitat for native fish and wildlife, listed species, as well as allow for restoration of 120 acres to native bottomland forest and 50 acres of native wet prairie. These actions help ensure the North Santiam River continues to function as a major producer of fish and important haven for native wildlife in the Willamette Basin.

When the transaction is complete the WRC will own the property and will develop a management plan in coordination with BPA and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Western Rivers Conservancy intends to manage this land to provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and will give the public an opportunity to review and comment on the plan. BPA and ODFW must review and approve the plan before it can be implemented. It is anticipated that WRC will restore and enhance habitat on the property and provide long-term stewardship of the land according to the actions defined in the management plan. BPA will conduct further environmental review before funding additional land management activities outside of the purchase of the conservation easement.

Findings: BPA has determined that the proposed action complies with Section 1021.410 and Appendix B of Subpart D of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011). The proposed action does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. The proposal is not connected [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(1)] to other actions with potentially significant impacts, has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion, is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(2)], and is not precluded by 40 C.F.R. 1506.1 or 10 C.F.R. 1021.211. Moreover, the proposed action would not (i) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, (ii) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities, (iii) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases, (iv) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, or (v) involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained

or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements.

Israel Duran

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Environmental Protection Specialist – KEC-4

Concur:

/s/ Stacy Mason

Stacy Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 12, 2012

Attachment:

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Name of Proposed Project: Willamette Wildlife Fund: Chahalpam Property Funding

Work Order #: Project 2011-003-00, Contract # BPA-006468

This project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts on the following environmentally sensitive resources. See 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B for complete descriptions of the resources. This checklist is to be used as a summary – further discussion may be included in the Categorical Exclusion Memorandum.

<u>Environmental Resources</u>	<u>No Potential for Significance</u>	<u>No Potential, with Conditions (describe)</u>
1. Historic Properties and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. T & E Species, or their habitat(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Floodplains or wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Areas of special designation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Health & safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Prime or unique farmlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Special sources of water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Other (describe)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed: /s/ Israel Duran

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