

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Georgetown Summit Property Acquisition Funding and Stewardship Funding

Fish and Wildlife Project No. and Contract No. : 1995-057-00; 67495

Project Manager: Hannah Dondy-Kaplan

Location: T 10 S, R 43 E, Boise Meridian – Sec 27, SWSW; Sec 28, NE, E2NW, SWSW, NESW, SESE; Sec 33, NE, N2NW, SENW; Sec 34, W2NW in Bear Lake County, ID

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to fund the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to purchase the Georgetown Summit property, a 760-acre parcel of land located approximately 13.5 miles SE of Soda Springs in Bear Lake County, Idaho. The property is adjacent to the Georgetown Summit Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The property is currently leased by the State and managed as part of the WMA. The property would be placed under a conservation covenant to provide long-lasting fish and wildlife benefits by preventing the conversion of fish and wildlife habitat to other land uses. BPA would also provide stewardship funds toward maintenance of the property to the landowner, Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Funding the purchase of the property and long-term stewardship would serve as partial mitigation for the construction and operation of the Minidoka Dam on the mainstem Snake River. Funding for this purchase is part of the “Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Memorandum of Agreement between the State of Idaho and Bonneville Power Administration” to permanently address the protection, mitigation, and enhancement of wildlife habitat affected by the construction and operation of federal dams, and subsequent inundation of wildlife habitat, in southern Idaho. The overall goal of this acquisition is to preserve the property as winter habitat and a wildlife travel corridor as well as to provide calving, fawning, and nesting habitat in the riparian corridor and mountain brush communities. Acquisition of this property would preserve a two-mile swath of the Bear River riparian corridor. Additional benefits would include improved nesting cover for waterfowl and upland game, and an opportunity to improve stream habitat in the Bear River.

The property consists of riparian woodland and shrubland, mesic meadow, big sagebrush steppe, aspen forest, and woodland habitat. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game would provide long-term stewardship of the land and develop a management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The management plan would be reviewed by BPA for consistency with the agreement and purpose of the acquisition. If BPA proposes to fund any management activities on the property, additional environmental review would be conducted.

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) 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), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix A of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Jenny Lord

Jenny Lord
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Act 1 Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Donald L. Rose

Don Rose
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: August 19, 2015

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

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Project Site Description

The goal of the acquisition is to preserve the property as winter habitat, a wildlife travel corridor, and to provide calving, fawning, and nesting habitat in the riparian corridor and mountain brush communities. Acquisition of this property would preserve a two-mile swath of the Bear River riparian corridor. Additional benefits would include improved nesting cover for waterfowl and upland game, and an opportunity to improve stream habitat in the Bear River.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There would be no effect due to the land acquisition which includes transfer of title and the creation of a conservation covenant. To the extent that stewardship activities may have an effect, it is expected that the Idaho Department of Fish and Wildlife would comply with all applicable laws and regulations.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

- Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary: See explanation for #1 above.

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary: See explanation for #1 above.

- Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation, if necessary: See explanation for #1 above.

- 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, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation, if necessary: See explanation for #1 above.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Notification letters will be sent to adjacent land owners and other interested parties at a minimum of 15 days before the closing date of the sale. Ads will also be posted in local newspapers, and information will be posted on BPA’s public website prior to closing.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts on any environmentally sensitive resources.

Signed: /s/ Jenny Lord
Jenny Lord, KEC-4

Date: August 19, 2015