

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Big Meadows III Property Acquisition Funding

Fish and Wildlife Project No. and Contract No. : 1992-061-02; BPA-008677

Project Manager: Hannah Dondy-Kaplan

Location: Bonner County, Idaho

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 Kalispel Tribe of Indians to purchase Big Meadows III property, a 15-acre parcel of land located 25 miles west of Priest River in Bonner County, Idaho. BPA would hold a conservation easement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance wildlife and wildlife habitat on the property.

Funding the purchase of the property would serve as partial mitigation of wildlife losses associated with the construction and operation of Albeni Falls Dam and Reservoir, part of the Federal Columbia River Power System. This land purchase would specifically satisfy some of BPA's commitments made in the 2000 "Northern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Agreement" between the Tribe and BPA, as amended in 2006.

The property would be part of the Big Meadows Wildlife Management Unit previously acquired by the Tribe with BPA funds. It is the last un-developed parcel of land that offers expanded wet meadow and forested wetland habitat contributing flows to Goose Creek (where westslope cutthroat and bull trout habitat is being restored) and will be important in improving elk and deer migration corridors, cover, and forage. The Kalispel Tribe of Indians would 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 conservation easement and the purpose of the acquisition. If BPA proposes to fund any additional activities on the property, further environmental review may 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/ Jennifer Snyder

Jennifer Snyder
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ David K. Kennedy, for

Kevin Cannell
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Date: May 20, 2016

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

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 15-acre property is comprised of wet meadow, forested wetland, and upland mixed conifer forest habitat along the northern perimeter of Blanc Creek and Goose Creek Floodplain. It lies on the southern edge of Squaw Valley Road. The property has been identified as a rural development parcel for single family residence or recreational use and has been used for forestry and recreational visits in the past. Areas on the west and south have older permanent perimeter fencing.

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 easement. To the extent that stewardship activities may have an effect, it is expected that the Kalispel Tribe of Indians 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:

- 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:

- 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:

- 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:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Notification letters will be sent to adjacent landowners and other interested parties at a minimum of 15 days before the closing date of the sale. Advertisements 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/ Jennifer Snyder
Jennifer Snyder ECF-4

Date: May 20, 2016