

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Cape Horn Vista Land Acquisition Funding

Project Work Order No.: 00341036

Project Manager: Emmanuel Jaramillo, TEP-TPP-1

Location: Two contiguous tax lots located in Skamania County WA:

- Tax lot 01051000140000, the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10, T2N, R 5E (40 acres)
- Tax lot 01050900070000 a portion of Section 9, T2N, R 5E (18.2 acres)

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 acquisition of two contiguous parcels consisting of a total of about 58 acres in Skamania County, Washington. The funding would be provided to the Columbia Gorge Land Trust (Gorge Land Trust) to acquire these parcels, which are known as Cape Horn Vista. The parcels are located about six miles east of the city of Washougal and about a one-quarter mile west of the intersection of Salmon Falls Road on Washington State Road 14 (SR14).

These parcels are currently undeveloped forest lands located within about 0.5 mile of the Columbia River within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (National Scenic Area). The National Scenic Area was established in 1986 by the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act (16 U.S.C. 544-544p). The parcels provide habitat for wildlife species and are vegetated with native plant communities.

This land acquisition would protect the scenic and natural landscape from potential residential development, mining, or timber harvest, as well as preserve the habitat for wildlife and native plant communities. Acquisition would create a larger contiguous block of protected habitat because approximately two thirds of the property is adjacent to public lands.

This land acquisition would protect scenic resources within the National Scenic area. The parcels are visible from SR 14, Oregon's Interstate 84, the Historic Columbia River Highway, Multnomah Falls, Cape Horn overlook, and the Columbia River, all of which are designated Key Viewing Areas within the National Scenic Area. Both parcels are visible from the Nancy Russell Overlook on the Cape Horn Trail, a public trail located above the property to the north.

BPA does not propose to fund ongoing management of the Cape Horn Vista parcels. The Gorge Land Trust would manage the Cape Horn Vista parcels for scenic resource preservation and plant and wildlife habitat protection and provide long-term stewardship, consistent with the Management Plan. Accordingly, these parcels would be managed to continue to function as open space. As part of this management, in the future the Gorge Land Trust also may propose trails on the property to connect to existing trails on adjacent U.S. Forest Service property. The Gorge Land Trust would ensure any

necessary environmental reviews, such as a consistency determination with the Management Plan, are conducted for any such proposed trails.

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/ Kimberly R. St.Hilaire
Kimberly R. St.Hilaire
Environmental Protection Specialist

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lynard
Gene Lynard
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason
Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: March 21, 2016

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

BPA staff visited the Cape Horn Vista parcels with FOG staff, Kate McBride on July 28, 2015. The parcels are currently undeveloped forest land. The forested area functions as plant and wildlife habitat. A historic quarry that is on one parcel is no longer in operation; the estimated years of operation are 1970 to 1995. There are no buildings or machinery present on the property associated with the quarry, although an old asphalt road leads to the quarry area. The terrain is steep and slopes to the southwest. An intermittent creek runs through a portion of the forested property located to the south of SR14.

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 to historic and cultural resources from the land acquisition because it only includes funding for the transfer of title and there will be no ground disturbance, no change of use, and there are no existing structures on the property. To the extent that subsequent stewardship activities could have an effect, it is expected that the Friends of the Gorge Land Trust 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> 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.

The U.S. Forest Service does not require consistency review with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan where the proposal only involves acquisition of land with no development proposal (pers. Comm., Miki Fujikawa, Lands Staff Officer, US Forest Service, February 18, 2016).

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: A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was conducted for the Cape Horn Vista parcels; it did not reveal evidence of Recognized Environmental Conditions in connection with the property (*A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Approximate 58-Acre Schmid Property, Vicinity of Cape Horn, State Route 14, Skamania County, Washington, December 28, 2015, prepared by Hahn and Associates, Inc.*)

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: Landowners within ¼ mile of the parcels are being notified of the land acquisition, as are Skamania County Commissioners and the Columbia River Gorge Commission.

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

Signed: /s/ Kimberly R. St.Hilaire
Kimberly R. St.Hilaire/ECT-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: March 21, 2016