Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project Swauk Creek Phase III Floodplain Restoration

Project No.: 1997-015-00

Project Manager: Michelle O'Malley, EWU-4

Location: Kittitas, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide cost-share funding for implementation of the Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project (YKFP) Swauk Creek Phase III Floodplain Restoration Project (Project) located along River Mile (RM) 1.3-1.7 of Swauk Creek, which is part of the Yakima River Basin. BPA funds would contribute about 60 percent of overall project costs. Additional cost-share funding from the Salmon Recovery Board would cover remaining project costs.

In 2019 and 2020, YKFP completed helicopter wood placement and installed large wood trapping structures just downstream of the proposed project. The 2021 Project would complement prior wood placement work with the addition of engineered large wood structures that would further improve in-stream complexity by encouraging pool formation, sinuosity, vegetative cover, and development of multi-threaded channels. The Project would benefit Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead and bull trout, as well as spring Chinook, coho, westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and other native fish species.

In the upstream half of the project, five left and right bank deflector-type large wood structures would be installed to direct flows towards opposing streambanks and encourage scour and sinuosity along a straightened stretch of the channel. An apex-type logjam would be installed downstream of the deflector structures to split flows and encourage multi-threaded channel formation. Two natural beaver dams at the downstream end of the project area would be reinforced using a channel spanning large wood structure just downstream of each beaver dam. The structures would help keep beaver dams in place during high flow events. Two large wood trapping structures would be interspersed between channel spanning structures to rack up loose wood and further improve channel and stream complexity. Each structure would consist of key logs placed along excavated streambanks and anchored with base logs, racking logs, large boulders, slash, and sediment. Any excavation work would occur outside of flowing water and on floodplain surfaces. Logjams would be constructed in the dry and placed in upland areas or on dry portions of channel bed or banks.

A staging area at the downstream end of the project would be established for equipment storage and refueling. Equipment storage and fueling would be positioned at least 150 feet from the

stream banks. Site access would be established via an existing private access road, and via temporary access routes established throughout the project area. A temporary culverted stream crossing would be installed for additional project access. All ground-disturbing activities near waterways would occur within the designated in-water work window from August 1st to September 30th. Heavy equipment would be operated from the bank as much as possible. If flows are higher than expected, work area isolation and fish exclusion measures would be employed to minimize impacts to migrating fish.

After construction, soils would be scarified and topped with slash to minimize erosion potential. Native seed and live stake plantings would be applied on disturbed floodplain surfaces. Inspection and maintenance of the project site would occur annually, and could result in minor on-site adjustments to wood placements, the addition of woody materials as needed to maintain project success, and additional vegetation plantings and management.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.).

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, Jul. 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 B 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/ Claire McClory
Claire McClory
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange *August 3, 2021*
Katey C. Grange Date
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 project is located on private ranch property bisected by lower Swauk Creek. Swauk Creek is a tributary to the Yakima River where it enters about 5 miles northwest of Thorp, Washington. Historic agriculture and logging practices degraded hydrologic and geomorphic processes of Swauk Creek over time. The result is an oversimplified, straightened and incised stream channel with minimal floodplain access.

Upland plant species in the project vicinity include sagebrush, ponderosa pine, and Gary oak. Riparian plants such as willow, red osier dogwood, Nootka rose, serviceberry, and alders are throughout the Swauk Creek floodplain surface.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2019 061). The Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) concurred on June 7, 2021 and the Yakama Nation Cultural Resources Program replied with suggested edits to the survey report. No other comments received from consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during log jam construction and placement, and grading activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Post construction seeding and mulching would minimize long-term erosion potential.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed plant species are known to be present. WDFW priority habitats in the project vicinity include oak woodlands, cliffs/bluffs, shrub-steppe, and riverine habitats. Temporary impacts to existing vegetation during grading activities are expected. Post construction seeding and long-term monitoring would re-establish native upland and riparian plant communities. No impact to oak/woodlands, cliffs/bluffs, or shrub-steppe

habitat would occur. Long-term improvement to riverine habitat with increased stream complexity and riparian cover.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed wildlife species are documented in or adjacent to the project area and no designated critical habitat is present. WDFW priority habitats for Western small-footed myotis, mule deer, and elk are present within the project area. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed by construction traffic and noise. WDFW priority species are highly mobile and would likely avoid the area during construction and return once project work is complete.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project has the potential to provide up to 19 acres of floodplain reconnection to areas degraded by historic land use. Equipment access and construction activities would take place during the dry season. Avoidance and minimization measures would be identified in the project Sponsor's Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit and Section 401 Water Quality Certification (application number NWP-2021-621), further reducing impact to waterways.

ESA-listed fish species include middle Columbia River steelhead and bull trout. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of ESA with Project Notification Form number 2021120. The project would result in net benefits to fish species within the project reach from increased habitat availability, floodplain access, and decreased summer stream temperatures.

Notes:

- Project sponsors would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including work area isolation, turbidity monitoring requirements, and in-water work timing restrictions.
- The Project Sponsor would adhere to all avoidance and minimization efforts identified in the Clean Water Act permit issued for this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Long-term increase in floodplain access would benefit groundwater recharge and function

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located on a conservation easement on private property. No change to land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor change to visual quality from the addition of in-stream wood structures. The project area is not within a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in vehicle emissions and dust during construction. No long-term impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in noise during daytime construction activities due to vehicles and equipment use. No long-term impacts to noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact expected.

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: N/A

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

Explanation: N/A

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: N/A

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: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The Yakama Nation is working with the private property owner to conduct work on their property.

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

Signed: */s/ Claire McClory* *August 3, 2021*

Claire McClory, ECF-4 Date

Environmental Protection Specialist