

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Sekokini Springs Hatchery Spring No. 2 Infiltration Gallery Improvements

Project No.: 1991-019-03

Project Manager: Cecilia Brown, EWM-4

Location: Flathead County, MT

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to fund Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to restore the flow of spring water to the Sekokini Springs Hatchery currently diverted by tree root encroachment and erosion. The existing intake collector vault would be cleared of the soil and tree root blockage and associated replacement piping would be slightly relocated to avoid further tree root growth.

Sekokini Springs Hatchery's water supply is fed by three artesian flow springs that enter concrete vault infiltration galleries where flow is gathered and directed through pipes into the hatchery building. Spring No. 2 is the facility's primary water source in terms of flow volume, and this volume has been reduced in recent years due to the growth of tree roots that are beginning to clog the holes where water enters the concrete vault infiltration gallery. Contracted maintenance work would excavate in the existing footprint of the collection gallery (approximately 3-4 feet in diameter) to remove root obstructions and restore flow capacity from Spring No. 2 into the building.

The existing Sekokini Springs Hatchery is located along the Flathead River near West Glacier, Montana. The site is located on 10.5 acres of land managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The facility was formerly a private trout farm that raised rainbow trout for purchase by private pond owners. After the trout were removed, experimental hatching and rearing of Westslope cutthroat trout took place from 1997 through 1999. Currently, Sekokini Springs propagates purebred Westslope cutthroat trout for planting in high mountain lakes in the South Fork Flathead River drainage that have been treated to remove hybrid trout populations.

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 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/ Jennifer Snyder

Jennifer Snyder
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lyndard FOR

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: July 19, 2018

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 existing Sekokini Springs Hatchery is located upland of the northern bank of the Flathead River near West Glacier, Montana. The site is located on 10.5 acres of land managed by the U.S. Forest Service and is bounded on the south and west by the Flathead River and on the north by Blankenship Road. Most of the acreage is on a flat bench, delineated by a steep rise on the eastern margin and a steep drop to the river on the southwest edge. The facility building is located more than 350 feet northeast (upslope) of the river. Upland mixed forest (spruce and birch) dominates the site, which also contains small openings of grasses and other herbaceous herbs, wetlands and floodplains. The Burlington Northern Railroad line passes the site approximately 800 feet to the east, with Highway 2 beyond the railroad. Adjoining lands are largely forested with sparsely distributed residences.

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"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The project includes minor localized excavation at one location on the existing hatchery facility site. Heritage/cultural resources are addressed in the <i>Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility USDA Forest Service Environmental Assessment</i> finalized in February 2011. BPA signed the FONSI on May 9, 2011. The EA documents that the Flathead National Forest archaeologist conducted a records search and on-the-ground survey that did not result in the discovery of any historical or cultural sites. The document further states that any unknown sites found during project implementation would be protected through provisions attached to the Hungry Horse Ranger District Special Use Permit and the inadvertent discovery provisions of MFWP contract with BPA. Thus, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to heritage/cultural resources, and this project complies with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) Public Law 89-665.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Minor soil disturbance, erosion control measures would be used.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> All work at existing hatchery facility; only grasses and non-native invasive species present/disturbed at maintenance site. Disturbed area would be reseeded.</p>		

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



Explanation: *The Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility USDA Forest Service EA* finalized in February 2011 and the *Flathead National Forest Decision Memo* dated April 6, 2011, determined that the project would result in:

- NLAA for grizzly bear that pass through the area - the wildlife Biological Assessment produced by the FS details the project design measures to reduce or minimize the effects to grizzly bears during project activities, such as installing a bear proof electric fence around the ponds and keeping fish food stored within the building - automatic fish feeders will not be used in the ponds.
- NE for lynx as the subject site does not occur within Flathead National Forest (FNF) mapped lynx habitat or designated lynx habitat (and project would not change the ability of lynx to move through the area or surrounding landscape; and
- No impact to wolverine due to lack of habitat and seasonality - wolverines are at higher elevations during summer construction.

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



Explanation: The Hatchery facility building lies between the maintenance site and the Flathead River precluding effects to the river, riparian area or floodplain. With mitigation measures, such as flagging the boundaries of the wetland/springs and performing work in dry conditions, project work would minimize effects to on-site waterways. There would be isolated, temporary and minor effects to spring water quality at the collection vault during the very short duration of the excavation (1-2 days). *The Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility USDA Forest Service EA* finalized in February 2011 and the *Flathead National Forest Decision Memo* dated April 6, 2011, determined that the project would not effect bull trout due to absence of habitat at the project site and the project would not preclude bull trout from continuing to use the nearby Flathead River as a migration route.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: With mitigation measures, such as flagging the boundaries of the wetlands and performing work in dry conditions, project work would avoid on-site wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No new wells or use of ground water proposed; maximum depth of disturbance would be no greater than 10 feet; spill prevention measures would be present on site.

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



Explanation: Although the existing Hatchery is located within the Middle Fork Flathead wild and scenic river corridor (recreation section), the proposed maintenance would not permanently alter the values of geology, wildlife, water quality, visuals, or native fisheries.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The temporary and minor maintenance work would not change the look or character of the site.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Dust and other particulates generated would be minimal and temporary.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary excavation noise during daylight hours for 1 – 2 days. Operational noise would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Maintenance activity would not impact human health or safety.

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: While the U.S. Forest Service owns the property, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks was issued a USDA Forest Service Special Use Permit (Amendment 1) No. HUN217, effective November 16, 2007 to December 31, 2027. It is a special use authorization to MFWP for the operation and maintenance of the Sekokini Springs Hatchery.

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

Signed: /s/ Jennifer Snyder
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Date: July 19, 2018