

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Snyder Ranch Little Springs Conservation Easement Acquisition Funding

Project No.: 2010-072-00

Project Manager: Hannah Dondy-Kaplan, EWM-4

Location: Township 17 North, Range 24 East, Section 13, Lemhi 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 Lemhi Regional Land Trust, Inc. to purchase a conservation easement on the Snyder Ranch property in the upper Lemhi River valley in Lemhi County, Idaho approximately 35 miles southeast of Salmon, Idaho. The Lemhi Regional Land Trust would hold and manage the conservation easement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat.

Funding the purchase of the conservation easement would serve as partial mitigation for the construction and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System which includes dams on the main stem Columbia and Snake Rivers.

The property consists of cultivated agricultural lands and riparian habitats in the floodplain; with sagebrush-steppe habitats in the uplands. A management plan consistent with the conservation easement and the purpose of the acquisition is being cooperatively developed by the Lemhi Regional Land Trust and BPA to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. 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 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/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
FirstTekDOS, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: January 28, 2019

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 property subject to the conservation easement is situated along both sides of the Lemhi River in the upper Lemhi Valley, between the small towns of Leadore and Lemhi. The easement consists of an approximately 2,065-acre ranch that is currently leased to a local rancher for grazing and cultivation of irrigated crops. There are three parcels: a main parcel along the valley-floor of the Lemhi River, and two non-contiguous parcels that lie to the west and southwest. There are multiple residences, agricultural-use structures, a fire station, and a county-maintained solid waste transfer station in the northern portion of the property within the external boundaries of the proposed easement. These structures are not included in the acquisition.

The area is characterized by lightly developed rangeland and farmland with scattered residences and farmsteads. Land use is agricultural in the Lemhi River bottomlands with grazing in the uplands above. Idaho Highway 28, and the old highway that was used before Highway 28 was constructed, both pass through the property. Rugged mountains of the Beaverhead and Lemhi Ranges flank the Lemhi Valley.

The property includes two areas of different topographic character: the flood plain and the adjacent uplands. The flood plain area includes the active flood plain of the Lemhi River and the highway, and ranges in elevation from about 5,400 to 5,500 feet above sea level. The upland portion of the property slopes upward from both sides of the flood plain, ultimately forming the lower slopes of the Beaverhead and Lemhi Mountains. Elevations on these upland portions range from approximately 5,500 to 6,120 feet.

The Lemhi River bisects the Property and flows to the northwest. Short segments of Peterson and Reese Creeks flow from the mountain slopes to the east, cross the property, and discharge into the Lemhi River. Surface water originating from Berg-Green and Swanson Gulches enter the property's flood plain from the west and drain into the Lemhi 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> This action includes the acquisition of a conservation easement and the development of a land management plan; there would be no ground disturbance and no effect. It is expected that the Lemhi Regional Land Trust would comply with all applicable laws and regulations in the implementation of the land management plan.		
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"/>
Explanation: See explanation for #1 above		
6. Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation: See explanation for #1 above		
7. Groundwater and Aquifers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation: See explanation for #1 above		
8. Land Use and Specially Designated Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation: See explanation for #1 above		
9. Visual Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation: See explanation for #1 above		
10. Air Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation: See explanation for #1 above		
11. Noise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation: See explanation for #1 above		
12. Human Health and Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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: A public notification letter and map will be mailed to neighboring landowners and other interested parties prior to closing of the purchase. Advertisements will also be placed in local newspapers, and information will be posted on BPA's public website.

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

Signed: /s/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull – ECF-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
FirstTekDOS, LLC

Date: January 28, 2019