

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Sand Creek-Bonnors Ferry No. 1 Span 14/4 Impairment

Remedy Project

**PP&A No.:** 4,002

**Project Manager:** Ryan Martin – TELF-TPP-3

**Location:** Boundary County, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B 1.3 Routine Maintenance

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to excavate and regrade a mounded earthen impairment to the Sand Creek-Bonnors Ferry No. 1 transmission line near structure 14/4 in line mile 14. BPA has identified an impairment to the line where the clearance between the energized conductor and the ground surface does not meet industry safety and reliability standards.

The impairment consists of a large mounded and vegetated landform that extends into the transmission right-of-way. To remedy the impairment, BPA is proposing to excavate the earth, distribute it nearby, regrade, and stabilize disturbed areas using erosion and sediment control best management practices. Approximately 122 cubic yards of material would be cut, regraded on site, and revegetated. The footprint of the cut would be approximately 0.1 acre (4,356 square feet), ranging from 0 to 5 feet in depth. Total disturbance with regrading would be approximately 0.25 acres. Five to ten large ponderosa pines, immediately adjacent to the excavation, would be removed due to concerns over their stability after the area is excavated. The site would be revegetated with a native seed mix and monitored to ensure successful revegetation. Equipment would likely include a backhoe, grader, dump truck, light-duty trucks, and a hydroseeder.

**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/ Aaron Siemers*

Aaron Siemers

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

*/s/ Katey Grange*

Katey Grange

NEPA Compliance Office

Date: *August 16, 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.

**Proposed Action:** Sand Creek-Bonnors Ferry No. 1 Span 14/4 Impairment Remedy Project

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## Project Site Description

The Sand Creek-Bonnors Ferry No. 1 Span 14/4 Impairment Remedy Project is located in the northern Idaho panhandle in the Inland Maritime Foothills and Valleys ecoregion. The ecoregion is characterized by wide glaciated river valleys such as the Pend Oreille and Priest rivers. Forests are populated by western hemlock, Douglas fir, western red cedar, ponderosa pine, and western larch, with birch and aspen near riparian areas and wetlands. Winters are cold with abundant snowfall.

The project area lies approximately 300 feet east of McArthur Lake, which provides recreational opportunities and habitat to fish and waterfowl. The project area is managed by Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game and vegetation includes native and non-native grasses, Oregon grape, snowberry, reed canary grass, common mullein, yarrow, birch, and ponderosa pine. US Highway 95 runs approximately 400 feet to the west, and field offices of the Dept. of Idaho Fish and Game are located on the property within a few hundred feet to the southeast of the project area. No wetlands were identified within the planned disturbance area, however fringe wetlands of McArthur Lake are located about 50 feet from the project area.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

| <b>Environmental Resource Impacts</b>     | <b>No Potential for Significance</b> | <b>No Potential for Significance, with Conditions</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</b> | <input type="checkbox"/>             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                   |

### Explanation:

BPA engaged in consultation with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and the Idaho State Historic Preservation office on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. BPA conducted field surveys of the area of potential effect.

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, BPA sent a determination letter stating that the undertaking would have no adverse effect to historic properties. On July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, BPA received a concurrence letter from the Idaho State Historic Preservation office.

### Note:

- Due to the proximity of cultural resources in the project area, an archaeologist must be present during ground disturbing activities.
- BPA and the impairment remedy contractor would implement an inadvertent discovery plan in the event historic and cultural resources are discovered during the course of construction activity.

|                             |                          |                                     |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>2. Geology and Soils</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

### Explanation:

The project would consist of excavating and regrading approximately 122 cubic yards of native soils. Excavated soils would be spread on-site.

### Note:

- Disturbed cuts and fills would be seeded with a native seed mix and stabilized using erosion and sediment control best management practices, including mulch and erosion control blankets.
- Revegetation would be monitored to ensure performance criteria are met.

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



Explanation:

Excavating and regrading the impairment area would disturb vegetation. The native shrubs adjacent to McArthur lake and other shrubs in the project area would be protected during construction as much as possible. All disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native seed mix post construction and stabilized. BPA would conduct follow-up monitoring to ensure the success of the revegetation.

BPA obtained an official species list for the project area from U.S. Fish and Wildlife on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. No threatened, endangered, or candidate plant species are potentially present in the project area.

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



Explanation:

Excavating and regrading in the project area would likely temporarily disturb wildlife such as deer, birds, and small mammals due to the presence of human activity, machinery operation, and noise. Several large ponderosa pine trees would be removed, which would disturb birds and other animals in the immediate project area. However, the disturbance would be temporary. Tree removal would likely occur outside of the nesting bird season. If tree removal is planned to occur during the nesting bird season, nesting bird surveys would be conducted prior to tree removal.

BPA obtained an official species list for the project area from U.S. Fish and Wildlife on August 6th, 2019. Canada lynx and grizzly bear are listed as threatened in the project area. The North American wolverine is listed as proposed threatened. No critical habitat is present in the project area, and the project does not provide suitable or likely habitat for Canada lynx, grizzly bear, or North American Wolverine. BPA has determined that the project would have no effect on listed species in the project area.

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



Explanation:

No special-status fish are present in the lake and the use of best management practices would limit the potential for sediment runoff entering the adjacent waterbody

Note:

- Prior to construction and ground disturbance, BPA would install erosion and sediment control devices to ensure that there are no impacts to water quality from construction activities.
- Post-construction, BPA's revegetation and stabilization efforts would protect the waterbody from sedimentation.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

No project-related excavation or fill activity are planned in wetlands.

Note:

- Wetlands would be protected from impacts during and after construction activity by restricting work area, and using erosion and sediment control best management practices such as straw wattles, silt fence, mulch, erosion control blankets and reseeded.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The excavation planned for the project involves regrading a mounded area and would not be at sufficient depth to disrupt groundwater or impact local aquifers.

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



Explanation:

Land use for the project is primarily habitat conservation and recreation. There are no specially designated areas in the project area. The project activities would have no mid-term or long term impacts to land use.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

The project would have temporary impacts to visual quality associated with soil disturbance, regrading, and tree removal. Visual quality impacts associated with ground disturbance would be localized and temporary until revegetation occurs.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

Some dust may be generated due to construction activity and disturbed soils. If necessary, a fugitive dust plan would be implemented to control dust generation.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

Some temporary noise may be generated due to construction activity. However, the project is located in a fairly remote area and the construction noise associated with tree removal, excavation and regrading would not be significant.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

A site specific safety plan would be developed by the excavation contractor and implemented in the field. Tree removal is planned at the request of the land manager to mitigate risk of tree fall after the excavation and regrading.

**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:

Not applicable

- 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:

Not applicable

- 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:

Not applicable

- 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:

Not applicable

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description:

BPA has notified the landowner and land manager, the Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game, of the proposed work and solicited comments on the work plan, tree removal, regrading plan, and site restoration plan. BPA would continue to coordinate with the landowner during the preconstruction planning and construction phase of the project.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers  
Aaron C. Siemers, EPR - 4  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: August 16, 2019