

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Hangman Creek Completed-Projects Site Maintenance

Project No.: 2001-033-00 and 2001-032-00

Project Manager: Lee Watts, EWM-4

Location: Benewah County, Idaho

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 funding to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe for a collection of activities on sites of completed habitat improvement or restoration projects.

Plantings and Invasive Weed treatments (2001-033-00 and 2001-032-00)

An ongoing program of planting and invasive weed treatment was recognized as part of multiple projects on the Tribe's 150-acre "hnt'k'wipn" Management Area to re-establish healthy native riparian plant communities. Plantings would replace dead plants from prior years' plantings.

Deciduous trees and shrubs (one-year-old nursery stock) would be planted using 4-inch-diameter augers. Protections for this newly planted vegetation from browsing wildlife would be provided using large nursery enclosures (100yrd x 100yrd), temporary fence enclosures, and livestock panel enclosures (16ft X 5ft). For larger plantings, a commercially-available browsing deterrent (Repellex) would also be applied. The property is located at:

Action	Latitude	Longitude
Planting and protective fencing	47.133624	-116.874622
Planting and protective fencing	47.107705	-116.815113
Planting and protective fencing	47.113289	-116.824546

Approximately 500 acres (300 upland, and 200 riparian) on multiple project sites within the Hangman Creek watershed would be spot-treated with herbicides to remove invasive plants. The approximate centers of these treatment sites are located at:

Action	Latitude	Longitude
Weed treatment	47.240113	-116.880455
Weed treatment	47.410868	-116.933970
Weed treatment	47.133624	-116.874622
Weed treatment	47.101038	-116.813242

Weed treatment	47.367954	-117.003787
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An additional fifty acres of the “hnt'k'wipn” Management Area would be mowed for *Ventenata dubia* (an invasive annual grass) to remove that invasive plant’s seed source. This may require multiple mowings in a single year, beginning in late June.

Debris Removal (2001-033-00)

Illegally dumped trash is proposed for removal at a number of project sites. This action would remove and dispose of approximately 200 lbs. of debris and trash (such as discarded, non-historic, farm equipment, cable, wire fencing, or household garbage) so that native habitats would not be impeded and the integrity of the restoration site is preserved. No ground disturbance is anticipated or planned during removal of debris at the following six locations:

Action	Latitude	Longitude
Trash removal	47.240113	-116.880455
Trash removal	47.280859	-116.957359
Trash removal	47.410868	-116.933970
Trash removal	47.133624	-116.974622
Trash removal	47.367954	-117.003787
Trash removal	47.407644	-116.888523

Beaver Dam Analogues (2010-032-00 and 2001-033-00)

Past projects installed beaver dam analogues or similar “wicker weave” structures to create ponds and stream flow patterns conducive to attract beavers, or to recreate conditions that long-passed beaver populations had created and maintained. The Proposed Action would maintain previously-installed beaver dam analogues (BDAs) (replace woven branches and poles).

A minimum of twelve additional BDAs would be installed at two sites specifically selected to maximize beaver habitat improvements. The sites would be located in select places in Hangman and Indian Creeks that were the focus of aquatic and riparian restoration projects (in-stream placements of large wood, and plantings) in prior years. These BDA structures would be constructed by hand; no heavy equipment use is proposed.

Action	Latitude	Longitude
Install six BDAs	47.130667	-116.764393
Install six BDAs	47.133624	-116.874622
Maintain BDAs	47.112459	-116.819859
Maintain BDAs	47.107050	-116.815113
Maintain BDAs	47.113289	-116.824546

As an ongoing maintenance action, plugged road culverts or problem beaver dams that create unwanted flooding of private property would be managed by installing exclusionary devices that limit a beaver's ability to either construct a dam at a specific location or to impound water to a damaging level. These structures are needed to preclude any need to remove beavers to protect

private property. Beaver populations are desired for their aquatic habitat improvement and maintenance practices. These devices would be constructed by hand with wood and native materials.

Additional maintenance actions for active beaver dams in desired locations includes the provision of hardwood cuttings (primarily aspen) to augment the beavers' food source and building materials (currently dominated by conifer softwoods).

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/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W Shull
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange July 1, 2020

Katey Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist, List of Fish Screen O&M Sites

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: Hangman Creek Completed-Projects Site Maintenance

Project Site Description

Project activities would take place in riparian and wetland habitats along stream courses in the Hangman Creek watershed. These riparian and wetland project sites are in areas harvested for timber; or within an agricultural/grazing setting surrounded by a forested landscape within the larger ecotone between Northern Rocky Mountain conifer forests and Palouse Prairie. The specific action sites are characterized by low-growing herbaceous and shrubby riparian and wetland vegetation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

All project sites are within the locations of previously-completed habitat restoration projects for which historic and cultural resource surveys and consultations have been completed.

The planting is to replace dead plants from prior planting in locations found to have no effect on cultural resources.

The BDAs would be constructed by hand in Indian Creek and Hangman Creek in locations that were surveyed for cultural resources for large wood placements and stream side plantings in prior years (Coeur d'Alene THPO concurrence letters for the "Indian Creek Restoration Project (hnt'iych'mishkwe')", and Hangman Creek Restoration Projects 2013-2017). No cultural or historic resources were located in the surveys or during monitoring of the actions.

The trash and debris removal would be removing illegally-dumped trash (not historical relics within an original historic context) by hand or truck-mounted lift with no ground disturbance.

The mowing for *Ventenata dubia* seed head removal would not disturb the ground surface.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

No heavy equipment would be used in the plantings/fencing, mowing, trash removal, or the installation or maintenance of beaver dam analogues. No surface soils would be displaced, mixed, or compacted.

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

Potential for Significance: No

No Federal/state special-status species or habitats are within the project sites. Native plants would not be removed or destroyed. Herbicide would be used for spot-treatment of target plants only;

there would be limited potential for non-target native species to be adversely affected. The mowing for *Ventenata dubia* seed head removal may mechanically impact some native species, but they would not be killed or removed from the site, which is dominated by this invasive plant. BDA maintenance and construction, and active beaver dam supplementation, would require the use of branches from aspen, pine, and riparian shrub or tree species for woven material, but these branches would not be taken in amounts or ways that would kill the source plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

No Federal/state special-status species or habitats are within the project sites. No habitats would be modified to any degree that would permanently displace medium to large resident wildlife; some small reptiles, amphibians, or mammals may be displaced by increased ponding by BDAs. Herbicide spraying may impact small wildlife by direct contact or ingestion of treated plants, but application according to label instructions, as is required, would keep such contact to non-harmful levels. The mowing for *Ventenata dubia* seed head removal would occur in late June and or early/mid- July which would be after most ground nesting birds have completed nesting and fledging; And fields dominated by this invasive grass do not provide suitable nesting habitat for native birds nor valued forage for any wildlife. All human presence and project activity associated with trash removal, and all other proposed actions, particularly BDA activity, may temporarily disturb and displace nearby wildlife, but long-term displacement resulting in competition for nearby habitats is unlikely.

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

Potential for Significance: No

BDA maintenance and construction would alter stream courses and create pools in existing stream course. That is their purpose, and it improves habitat conditions for fish and aquatic species. Their installation would temporarily disturb fish and aquatic species but the end result increases the variety and extent of aquatic habitats available. No ESA-listed species would be impacted, but the project's purpose is to improve habitats for native Redband trout, which may be temporarily displaced during project actions. Herbicide would be applied as spot treatments only, with limited or no potential to reach aquatic habitats if applied according to label instructions (as is required).

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Wetland habitats would be planted with native species around their edges, but the wetlands themselves would be left intact. Some existing riparian wetland sites may be flooded by the additional BDAs, but these same BDAs would also expand/create new wetland conditions once fully functional. Herbicide would be applied as spot treatments only, with limited or no potential to reach wetlands if applied according to label instructions (as is required).

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be no potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills since no heavy equipment is being used. Herbicide would be applied as spot treatments only, with limited or no potential to reach groundwater if applied according to label instructions (as is required).

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

No project action would change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to project actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

No prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. All actions would result in native species growing in natural-appearing habitat conditions. BDA's look much like naturally-occurring beaver dams once complete. Debris removal would improve visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

There would be limited potential for exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions since no heavy equipment is being used; the only source would be from vehicles used to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the sites. Herbicide would be applied as spot treatments by hand-held back-pack sprayers only, with limited or no potential to aerosolize or drift.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

There would be limited potential for noise impacts since no heavy equipment is being used. The only noise source would be from humans working on the site, the use of gasoline-powered augurs for planting, and the use of vehicles to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the sites.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Vehicle operation and working with hand and power tools have their attendant risk to users, but there would be no condition created from these actions that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment. No condition created by these actions would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure. Neither project actions nor operation of project-associated vehicles on public roads would hinder traffic or access by emergency vehicles.

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: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The project actions are proposed by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to be implemented by tribal members on properties owned and managed by the Coeur D'Alene Tribe.

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
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Date: 07/01/2020