

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Rudio Creek Fish Passage Project

Project No.: 1993-066-00

Project Manager: Eric Leitzinger, EWM-4

Location: Grant County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in the removal of an existing channel spanning passage barrier and to install a series of weirs to provide fish passage while still maintaining existing irrigation facility functions on Rudio Creek.

ODFW is proposing to remove a push-up dam on Rudio Creek and replace it with ten rock weirs. Four of the weirs would be A-shape weirs which would be constructed in an “A” shape with double drops to dissipate energy longitudinally through the structure into two scour pools. This would provide six-inch jumps for juvenile and adult fish passage. This style of weir would accommodate fish passage in the portion of the stream with a steeper gradient. The remaining six arch-shaped weirs would backwater the creek to form pool elevations that are sufficient for water flow to the existing irrigation headgate and to allow for safe fish passage.

ODFW is proposing to replace the existing 36-inch-diameter pipe with a 24-inch-diameter pipe in the diversion to enhance the ability to move water at the point of diversion through the headgate to the reservoir. This would reduce the elevation needed to backwater the creek and provide water to the water users or landowners.

For irrigation efficiency, Rudio Creek water would be piped from the back of the headgate to the forebay of the existing fish screen that meets NMFS fish passage criteria in the irrigation ditch. The bed of Rudio Creek would be shaped to allow a more defined/gentle flow. An existing side channel would be maintained to handle overflow events, but only engaged at higher flows due to weir height. An “island” would be constructed to separate the flow of the creek utilizing the material excavated on-site.

Installation of rock weirs would require the use of heavy equipment (most likely excavator, or backhoe) to place boulders, rocks and pipe. All work near and adjacent the river would occur during a 6 week period during the in-water work window, typically July 15th to August 31st.

These activities would benefit ESA-listed Columbia River bull trout and fulfill commitments begun under the 2008 NOAA Fisheries Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as

supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NOAA Fisheries Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp).

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/ Catherine Clark

Catherine Clark
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, inc.

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange July 23, 2020

Katey 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.

Proposed Action: Rudio Creek Fish Passage Project

Project Site Description

Rudio Creek project area is located on private land at township 10S, range 26E, section 1 off of the North Fork of the John Day River. The existing channel is a Rosgen classification "B3" type channel. The project area is within a laterally confined canyon and is at a high gradient. The channel is moderately incised in alluvial material. The existing streamside vegetation consists of native grasses, shrubs, and conifers. The upland surrounding the project area is used for grass hay production and cattle grazing.

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 (OR 2020 100). The Warm Springs Tribal Office concurred with BPA's determination on July 14th 2020. The SHPO concurred with BPA's determination on July 14th 2020. No additional responses from consulting parties were received within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the event that archeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area secured, and the concerned tribe's cultural staff and cultural committee and DAHP notified.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The removal of the pushup dam, installation of weirs, and replacement of irrigation pipe would temporarily disturb soils on the project site. Best Management Practices (BMP) have been developed to avoid or minimize temporary fine sediment impacts during construction. All ground disturbance would be stabilized and monitored throughout the length of implementation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist on the site. All areas disturbed during construction would be reseeded with native grasses to improve habitat quality.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status wildlife species or habitat would be negatively impacted by the installation of the rock weirs and pipe. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed and displaced by construction noise during implementation.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project is covered under the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion (BiOp) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (HIP #2020087). Listed fish species include Middle Columbia River steelhead, West Coast salmon, and Columbia River bull trout and their critical habitat. Plans were reviewed by BPA engineering technical services and NMFS hydrological engineering, and a series of conservation measures were proposed to ensure that the project would benefit ESA-listed fish species. This project would temporarily disturb and displace fish species during dewatering and rewatering activities with increased turbidity, but were designed to remove fish passage barriers to restore fish passage in the creek reach.

Notes:

- HIP BMPs would be followed for de-watering, re-watering, and turbidity monitoring in order to prevent impacts to species in the area.
- ODFW would obtain a Regional General Permit-6 from the US Army Corp of Engineers before any work can be implemented.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no designated wetlands located in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: Ground disturbing activities are not likely to intersect with groundwater and would have no impact on aquifers. Construction BMPs would be implemented to prevent contamination of groundwater from equipment leaks or spills.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located on private land. No change to land use would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor changes to visual quality. The new weirs would be visually consistent with the channel and would not be located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the sites during construction activities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise during construction. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities are not considered hazardous nor would result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

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 landowner has been in coordination with ODFW staff.

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

Signed: /s/ Catherine Clark 07/23/2020
Catherine Clark, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.