

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Cottonwood Creek Culvert Replacement Project

**Project No.:** 1994-018-05

**Project Manager:** Tabatha Rood – EWM-4

**Location:** Asotin County, Washington

**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 jointly fund the Asotin County Conservation District in the removal of a corrugated metal pipe culvert that acts as an obstruction to migrating ESA-listed steelhead passage.

The Conservation District would remove the existing culvert and replace it with a three-sided concrete box culvert on footings. The proposed culvert would have an interior rise of 7 feet, interior span of 20 feet, and run 55 feet in length. This was designed to meet dimensions recommended by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Water Crossing Guidelines (WDFW Guidelines).

Porous weirs would be installed to redirect flow away from streambanks, increase channel roughness and grade control. Porous weirs provide fish passage through openings in the header boulder configuration of the weir structure. Porous weirs include header and footer boulders and are designed with sufficient size to resist mobility during discharge events. The footer boulders would be buried to a calculated scour depth and the rock weirs would be keyed into channel banks approximately four times the largest boulder size.

Proposed project activities would include the use of excavation equipment to remove the existing culvert, and grading/road construction equipment to regrade road section above newly installed culvert. Impacts from these actions would include: ground disturbance of 10 to 15 feet in the immediate vicinity of the existing culvert; clearing and grubbing at ground surface to fit new culvert size; removal and replacement of existing road section above the culvert, and re-grading of road to finish the project.

Site restoration measures would include seeding and planting of native riparian vegetation at disturbed areas. Equipment used for seeding and planting would include shovels, stinger, brush cutters, seeder, and four-wheeler for materials staging. All access would be via established roads and trails with no improvements needed.

These activities would have a potential to benefit wild populations of summer steelhead, spring chinook, and bull trout native to the Grande Ronde River, 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 29, 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:** Cottonwood Creek Culvert Replacement Project

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located in the southern portion of Asotin County, Washington and near a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)-managed steelhead acclimation facility and public access site. Northwest of the Grande Ronde Road is privately owned property and the southeastern side of the road, which is adjacent to the project area, is owned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and operated/maintained by WDFW. Cottonwood Creek is a tributary to the Grande Ronde River and crosses the Grande Ronde Road approximately 300 feet upstream of the confluence.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2020 104). The SHPO concurred with BPA's determination on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 and the replacement of the culvert 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 native seeding and planting would occur post-construction.

### **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. Areas disturbed as a result of the culvert replacement would be planted with native riparian vegetation and seeding.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status wildlife species have been documented in or adjacent to the project area and no designated critical habitat is present. Wildlife may be temporarily displaced by construction traffic and noise, but would likely avoid the area during this time and return once the project work is completed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is covered under the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion (BiOp) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (HIP #2020089). Listed fish species include Snake River fall-run Chinook, Snake River Basin steelhead, and Bull Trout and their critical habitat. Plans were reviewed by BPA engineering technical services, and a series of conservation measures were proposed to ensure that the project would benefit ESA-listed species.

Project work would include dewatering of site following specific BMPs to avoid or minimize impacts to non-ESA-listed fish species or to the waterbody. In the long term, this project was designed increase fish passage.

The Asotin County Watershed District has obtained a Clean Water Act Nationwide Permit (NWP) number NWP-2020-488. BMPs to avoid or minimize temporary fine sediment impacts during construction and project elements would be employed to minimize channel crossing locations.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at this project site.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

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 would be located on private property. No change to land use would occur. Project activities would take place lower than the diversion that fills the acclimation facility ponds; therefore there would be no impacts to acclimation facility ponds adjacent to the project area.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor changes to visual quality. The new box culvert would be visually consistent with the removed aluminum culvert. All planting activities would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation 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 site 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 work is 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 Asotin County Conservation District 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 07/27/2020  
Catherine Clark, ECF-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.