

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Albeni Falls CDAT Wildlife Areas' Site Maintenance

Project No.: 1992-061-06

Project Manager: Lee Watts, EWM-4

Location: Benewah, Kootenai, and Shoshone Counties, 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 (CDAT) for maintenance activities on areas managed for fish and wildlife habitats. Fences, gates, and signage would be maintained (in-place and in-kind); debris and trash (metal scrap, interior fence, hay bales, illegally dumped trash) would be removed; invasive weeds would be treated with herbicide, and wildlife forage and cover plantings would be maintained (watered, fenced for browse protection, and cleared of competing plants). Cuttings and seedlings of cottonwood, willow, and aspen would be planted.

Activities would occur at the following units:

Action	Latitude	Longitude	County
Hepton Lake: Fencing and signage maintenance; weed treatment; planting, debris removal	47.339009	-116.635504	Benewah
St. Joe River: Fencing and signage maintenance; weed treatment; planting	47.343135	-116.616417	Benewah
Elkhorn Ranch: Fencing and signage maintenance; weed treatment; planting	47.427426	-116.696411	Kootenai
Goose Haven Lake: Fencing and signage maintenance; weed treatment; planting, trash removal; maintain plantings at Goose Haven wetlands	47.363786	-116.670005	Benewah
Windy Bay: Fencing and signage maintenance; weed treatment; planting	47.462503	-116.954141	Kootenai
Cougar Creek: Fencing and signage maintenance; weed treatment; planting	47.641559	-116.197285	Shoshone

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

Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

August 20, 2020

Date

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

Most of the project sites are on flat meadow, riparian, and wetland habitats along the St. Joe River and its tributaries, and are characterized by the herbaceous and shrubby vegetation typical of these habitats in the interior Columbia River Basin. The Cougar Creek site is located in Cougar gulch, a tributary to the Coeur d'Alene River and is characterized by riparian woodlands and conifer forest.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All wildlife area maintenance and planting actions are in wildlife management areas within which the proposed actions have been occurring since 2003. Previous archeological consultations in 2014 and 2015 concerning these actions on these sites have all returned a finding of "No Adverse Effect" based upon the stipulation (included in the consultations) for avoidance of known archeological sites and implementation monitoring by tribal archeological personnel, to identify and protect sites if discovered during project implementation.

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. Removal of non-structural, non-historic illegally dumped debris would have no potential to affect cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No heavy equipment would be used in the trash removal; or facility, fence, or vegetation maintenance actions, and no surface soils would be displaced, mixed, or compacted by these actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: 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; Fence and structure maintenance does not disturb plants beyond the minimal trampling by workers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats occupy the project sites.

No plants identified for herbicide treatment are used preferentially for habitat purposes by native wildlife species. Some animals may be exposed to applied herbicides through contact with, or ingestion of, treated vegetation but applications according to label instructions would prevent harmful exposure levels.

No habitats would be modified to any degree that would permanently displace any resident wildlife. All human presence and activity associated with these actions would 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

Explanation: No fence maintenance or weed treatment action proposed here would physically alter any aquatic habitat site; there would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish from these actions. All spraying for invasive plant species would occur in upland areas outside of the floodplain.

ESA-listed fish species (bull trout) use the St. Joe River for migration to overwintering habitat in Lake Coeur D'Alene but are not present at the time of, nor in the locations of, the proposed activities. There would be no effect on this species. A "No-Effect" memo (including bull trout) was completed for these actions.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The wildlife areas being maintained contain wetlands, but wetland hydrology and wetland soils would not be impacted (no heavy equipment would be used, and no action would modify wetland structure). Some wetland plants may be affected as invasive plants would be treated with herbicide with some small potential for contact with non-target native plants; and planted wetland plant species in Goose Haven wetlands would have browse protection fencing applied and the removal of competing wetland plants, but these would only affect the spots immediately surrounding individual plantings and would not change the existing wetland plant community.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: 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

Explanation: No 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

Explanation: No prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. All actions would result in native species growing in natural-appearing habitat conditions. Trash removal would improve visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: 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

Explanation: 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 hand tools for building maintenance, and the use of vehicles to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the sites.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: 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. Debris removed would be disposed of at a waste-disposal facility.

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 Coeur D'Alene Tribe is the owner of the properties being maintained and the sponsor of the actions considered in this CX.

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 August 20, 2020
Robert W. Shull, ECF-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group