

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Corral Creek West Meadow Extension Vegetation Planting

Project No.: 2008-604-00

Project Manager: Matthew Schwartz, EWM-4

Location: Latah 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 fund Latah Soil and Water Conservation District to plant riparian vegetation on 29 acres along a one-mile stretch of Corral Creek in the Potlatch watershed. Idaho Department of Lands implemented a stream restoration project in 2022 to improve summer baseflows and expand juvenile summer steelhead rearing habitat. Latah SWCD would replant a diverse mix of native trees, shrubs, forbs, grasses, and grass-likes to provide soil stability, increased ground coverage to prevent weed encroachment, to provide future shade and wood recruitment, and to increase wildlife and pollinator habitat.

Riparian plantings would be focused in the stream channel to the top of the bank. Some additional caged plantings would be offset from the stream bank but would remain within the riparian corridor. All plants and materials would be transported within the project area via 4x4 truck and/or ATV. Planting would be conducted by Latah SWCD field crews using hand tools such as shovels, gas-powered augers, and water-jet stingers to install the plant cuttings.

The greatest planting efforts would occur in the first 2 years, with monitoring and selective replanting occurring over the next 4 to 5 years after the initial planting to replace mortalities and establish a robust riparian plant community. Protective temporary fencing would be utilized as needed. Plantings would be maintained with mulch and manual and mechanical weed control methods to assure survival.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.).

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/ Carolyn Sharp

Carolyn Sharp
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
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.

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Project Site Description

The project setting is located along Corral Creek, a tributary of the Potlatch River. The project site is located 3 miles northeast of Deary, Idaho. Riparian conditions along Corral Creek have been affected by extensive logging and grazing land uses. The current built environment includes roads and fences. The limiting factors for steelhead habitat within the Potlatch River include; high water temperatures, flashy stream flows, low summer base flows, lack of complexity in stream composition, barriers to migration, and sedimentation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA submitted a determination of No Historic Properties Affected under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (BPA Cultural Resources Project Number ID 2022 044) on November 25, 2022. Consulting parties included the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (IDSHPO), the Nez Perce Tribe and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. BPA received concurrence from the IDSHPO on April 6, 2023. No other responses were received as part of BPA's consultation efforts.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Planting tools would be limited to shovels or mechanized hand tools. No heavy equipment operations (e.g., bulldozers, excavators) would be used, so there would be no large-scale soil displacement, soil mixing, or other mechanical soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or state-sensitive plant species present at the project site. As a result, there would be no effect on listed plant species. Effects on non-listed plants would be beneficial. Project activities would reestablish native riparian vegetation and remove competition from weeds until the native plant population is stable and self-supporting.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or state special status wildlife species are known to occur within the project area. Minor, short-term disturbance would occur to wildlife species in the area from noise and human activity associated with vegetation planting and maintenance activities. Overall the project would result in beneficial impacts to terrestrial wildlife due to the

reduction of invasive species and the expansion and enhancement of native plant assemblages in floodplain riparian habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The long-term effects of the project would be to improve habitat conditions for ESA-listed steelhead trout and other resident fish species, which would benefit those species, as well as improve the floodplain interaction of Corral Creek in the project area. Given the size of the planting area, it is possible that there may be short term impacts to aquatic species associated with sediment runoff from the site. However, impacts to ESA-listed species (steelhead) would be covered under BPA's programmatic Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinion and project activities would be conducted in accordance with conservation measures and methodologies to minimize potential effects.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vegetation planting and ongoing vegetation maintenance would not negatively affect the hydrology within the project area. The wetlands in the project area would be enhanced and restored by this project as riparian conditions are improved and maintained.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or uses of groundwater are proposed. There would be no potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills since no heavy equipment is being used.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

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

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no long-term adverse effects to the visual quality of the area as a result of these activities. Disturbed areas would be replanted and seeded with native vegetation to restore the traditional visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There may be minor and temporary amounts of exhaust produced by gas powered augers used during some of the planting activities where hand shovels and jet stingers are not effective. There would be no long-term effects to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be noise caused by the human activity and hand operated tools used during project activities. This noise would be temporary and cause no long-term impacts.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety.

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 Sponsor has obtained written permission from the landowner to access the site and implement habitat restoration actions upon it. All access would be along public roadways.

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

Signed: /s/ Carolyn Sharp April 17, 2023
Carolyn Sharp Date
Environmental Protection Specialist