

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Rock Creek Riparian Corridor Land Leases

Project Manager: Jesse Wilson, EWU-4

Location: Yakima County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.25 Real property transfers for cultural resources protection, habitat preservation, and wildlife management

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Yakama Klickitat Fisheries Project to procure land-use leases from Yakama Nation Realty/Bureau of Indian Affairs for the purposes of fisheries resource protection and enhancement. Yakama Nation would lease two areas of land: 200 acres along mainstem Rock Creek, and 480 acres along Walaluks Creek. The properties are on Yakama Nation trust lands in the Rock Creek subbasin. The purpose of the leases would be to prevent cattle grazing activities and promote recovery of the riparian corridor vegetation and topography. Lease agreements would be valid for 5-year increments, after which renewal could be considered. This action would benefit the ESA listed Mid-Columbia population of steelhead, which utilize these riparian areas in Rock Creek and Walaluks Creek for spawning and rearing.

There would be no structural modifications or alterations to the facility or other ground disturbance associated with the agreement. Should any on the ground work be proposed on this leased area, additional environmental analysis would be conducted.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both NMFS on the O&M of the Columbia River System. These actions also support Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, 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 A. Sharp

Carolyn A. 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 land that would be leased is in the riparian corridor located along Rock Creek, a tributary of the Klickitat River. The property is located on Yakama Nation trust land. The sites have previously had native plant restoration and weed treatments that the land leases would seek to protect.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: This project does not involve ground disturbance of any kind. There is no potential to affect cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance associated with these actions, and, therefore, no potential to affect geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action does not include any vegetation management, ground disturbance, or actions that would impact vegetation. Therefore, there is no potential to affect plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to wildlife. The action would be limited to a financial transaction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no negative effect to waterbodies. There would be a beneficial effect from removing the impacts of livestock trampling and grazing on streamside vegetation which would immediately improve streambank stability and riparian vegetation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to wetlands. The action would be limited to a financial transaction.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to groundwater or aquifers. The action would be limited to a financial transaction.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would remove cattle grazing and access within the riparian corridor with the consent of the land owner, but would not remove grazing from the surrounding area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to visual quality. The action would be limited to a financial transaction.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact on air quality. The action would be limited to a financial transaction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact on noise. The action would be limited to a financial transaction.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect on human health and safety. The action would be limited to an annual financial transaction.

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: Yakama Klickitat Fisheries Project would negotiation the lease with the landowner, Yakama Nation/Bureau of Indian Affairs. The land is located within the Yakama Nation reservation boundaries.

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

Signed: /s/ Carolyn A. Sharp July 17, 2023

Carolyn A. Sharp, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist