

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Sally Ann Creek Bridge Construction and Habitat Restoration

**Project No.:** 1996-077-02

**Project Manager:** Ryan Ruggiero, EWM-4

**Location:** Idaho 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:** BPA proposes to fund the Nez Perce Tribe to replace a culvert with a bridge on a private access road off of Sally Ann Creek Road, a county road in Idaho County, Idaho. The existing culvert passes flows from Sally Ann Creek, a tributary of the Lower South Fork Clearwater River approximately two miles downstream (north) of Harpster, Idaho. The crossing is located approximately 1.4 stream miles upstream of Sally Ann Creek's confluence with the Lower South Fork Clearwater River (Lat 46.012110° Long -115.955522°).

The culvert is a barrier to passage of Endangered Species Act-listed Snake River steelhead and its replacement with a bridge would remove that barrier and provide upstream passage for aquatic organisms. The replacement would improve access to approximately 2.6 miles of upstream aquatic habitat when completed. The new bridge would be a pre-manufactured modular bridge 16 feet wide and 40 feet long. It would cross the creek with a span of about 35 feet with a height over the creek surface of about 7 feet.

The project would also reconstruct about 480 feet of Sally Ann Creek from about 400 feet upstream of the crossing to about 80 feet downstream. The stream reconstruction would entail channel and bank reconstruction above and below the bridge site, log structures and boulder installations, and two new side channels (180 feet and 140 feet in length) upstream of the bridge. These side channels would be designed to reduce flow pressure during high stream flow periods, and would thus be constructed at an elevation to pass water only during such conditions. Sixteen logs and eight large wood structures would be installed in the main and side channels to direct flows and provide in-stream fish habitat. Single boulders and boulder clusters (about 30-40 total) would likewise be placed in the main channel to promote natural hydraulic processes and provide cover for fish. Improving upstream conditions in the roughly 400 feet of channel above of the crossing would reconnect the stream with its floodplain, allow high flows to pass unrestricted through the site, restore sediment sorting, and establish a healthy vegetative riparian zone.

During construction, Sally Ann Creek would be diverted around the construction site to reduce potential impacts to fish. Rerouting the flow would require the installation of a cofferdam upstream to redirect flow into a bypass pipe and a diversion pump to capture leakage below the coffer dam during construction. Fish would be captured and relocated from the construction site prior to the creek being dewatered to allow for construction. After construction, the coffer dam would be removed, and the creek would be directed into the reconstructed channel.

Following construction, all disturbed surfaces would be replanted with native seed and live plants suitable to riparian sites. Riparian shrubs would be planted in excavated areas following construction and all shrubs excavated during construction would be salvaged and either replanted or buried throughout the areas affected by project excavations.

The bridge and stream reconstruction would be accomplished using a metal-tracked excavator (CAT 320 or similar) operating with support equipment (loader or skid steer), dewatering pumps, and human labor.

Inspection and maintenance of the project site would occur annually, and could include minor on-site adjustments to streambanks and constructed channels as needed to maintain project success. Additional vegetation would be planted if original plantings did not thrive as intended.

This Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support 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/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

Carolyn Sharp  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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: Sally Ann Creek Bridge Construction and Habitat Restoration

## Project Site Description

The project area reach of Sally Ann Creek is located within a canyon bottom with Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine forest on the north-facing slopes and grass shrub lands on the south-facing slopes. Riparian vegetation (forest and shrub) is confined to the stream corridor and inset floodplain. The project site is on a driveway that accesses two rural homesites with outbuildings and is about 110 feet from the driveway's junction with the Sally Ann Creek Road.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

### 1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA consulted with the Nez Perce Tribe and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on September 19, 2023, on the effects of this project (along with three other nearby culvert replacement projects in Sally Ann Creek) based on intensive surveys of the site by the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resource Program. Previous archaeological surveys identified the presence of a Nez Perce campsite within the APE. During the survey, the campsite was determined to be located on a terrace above the culvert-replacement project site 550 feet upstream of this private drive, but no cultural material was present in either of the project sites. The survey found no additional archaeological resources or historic properties located within the APE, and BPA determined that no historic properties would be affected by this project. SHPO requested additional information on the age of the culverts to be replaced. All were ultimately determined to be modern, and no concerns were raised by SHPO. No formal reply was received from either SHPO or the Nez Perce Tribe within the legally mandated 30-day period from September 19, 2023, but SHPO replied in a November 16, 2023, email raising no concerns about the culvert replacements.

### 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary, impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during construction activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. The entire construction site would be isolated by rerouting water around it to minimize erosion and turbidity.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plants, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species, are known to be present. There would be temporary impacts to existing vegetation from heavy equipment excavation for culvert removal and channel reconstruction actions. Post-construction plantings and long-term monitoring would re-establish native riparian plant communities throughout the project site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats are within or near the project site. No habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from construction activities. Human presence and activity associated with construction 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 with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed Snake River steelhead are present in the project area. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA. The project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing. No state-listed special-status species occupy the project area.

Culvert removal, bridge construction, and stream reconstruction would occur at low flows and would require diversion of the creek by pumping and piping the creek flow around the construction site. Fish removal would be completed by electrofishing before beginning work within the stream channel. Electrofishing is stressful on fish and potentially harmful, but the number of fish affected would be few and from only a small area of the creek.

Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians may be displaced or killed by the culvert removal and stream reconstruction, but quick re-occupation of this site by the same or other members of the same classes of animals following construction is anticipated.

In the long term, the bridge would ensure year-round passage for juvenile and adult steelhead to four miles of NOAA-designated Critical Habitat for Snake River steelhead, with potential for increased juvenile production and rearing in these areas and in the reach being treated by the habitat improvements.

Notes:

Prior to construction in the waterbody or adjacent wetlands, the sponsor would obtain applicable Clean Water Act permitting.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No streamside wetlands are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be some miniscule potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills from the equipment used, but spills and drips with the volume necessary to contaminate groundwater is unlikely. On-site spill kits would also minimize the potential for spills and drips to be of sufficient quantity to contaminate groundwater.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not 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. Though close to Sally Ann Creek Road, ample space is available in the private drive and in the over-widened shoulder area along the road adjacent to Sally Ann Creek road for construction activities and staging so as not to impact traffic flow on that road.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No visually-prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. Culvert replacement by a bridge would not change the overall visual character of the landscape along, or as seen from, the nearby Sally Ann Creek Road.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions from the motorized equipment used for culvert replacement, but these are short-term actions, and no long-term source of emissions or exhaust is created. Vehicles used to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the site would be another potential source of exhaust and greenhouse gasses, but this also would be minimal and short term.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some short-term noise impacts from the heavy equipment used for the culvert replacements, but this type of noise is consistent with that of common logging, ranching, or farming operations in the local area.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicle and excavator operation, and working with hand and power tools, have their attendant risks to equipment operators, but there would be no condition created from this action that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment. No condition created by this action would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure.

Vehicle access to the private properties would be unavailable for one to two days during construction, but the owners would park their vehicles in the long, wide shoulder areas along the Sally Ann Creek Road near their driveway junction, safely out of the travel lanes, during this period and be able to access them on foot (about a 400-foot walk) as needed.

### **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: This bridge construction and stream restoration action on Sally Ann Creek is on a private drive and designed in cooperation with the private landowners. The landowners, and the County (since the action is quite close to Sally Ann Creek Road) would be notified prior to construction activities.

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 02/29/2024  
Robert W. Shull Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
CorSource Technology Group