

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Shillapoo Wildlife Area South Pasture Fence and Discing

Project No.: 2003-012-00

Project Manager: Allan Whiting, EWL-4

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of Cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat; B1.3 Routine maintenance.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to construct a new section of fence and disc within the new fence line on Shillapoo Wildlife Area (Shillapoo WA). This project is located in the Lower Columbia Province (Lake River Sub-Basin) and the proposed activities would help address wildlife losses due to adverse impacts caused by construction of Bonneville, the Dalles, and John Day Dams.

WDFW would construct a new section of fence in the South Pasture Grazing Area of the Shillapoo WA to exclude cattle from a portion of the South Cell Wetland that inundates part of the pasture. The fence would be constructed using approximately 60 metal t-posts and approximately 16, 4- by 6-inch pressure treated wood posts. The metal t-posts would be driven into the ground by hand approximately 2 feet deep every 12 feet. The pressure-treated wood posts would be driven into the ground approximately 3.5 feet deep using a hydraulic post driver attached to an excavator. Light excavation would occur during fence construction.

After fencing is installed, WDFW would disc the newly established southern field within the fence line. Discing would be utilized to rehabilitate the field from previous extended cattle use by breaking up the compaction and stimulating plant growth. A tractor and disc harrow would be used; the harrow would disc to 8 inches. A cover crop such as wheat or barley would be planted after discing to encourage rehabilitation.

Funding the proposed activities would support BPA's ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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. 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.

Catherine Clark
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.

Proposed Action: Shillapoo Wildlife Area South Pasture Fence and Discing

Project Site Description

Shillapoo WA is approximately 2,430 acres and located within the floodplain of the Columbia River in Clark County, Washington. Shillapoo WA is a mix of agricultural land and developed pasture intermixed with fragmented pieces of natural habitat.

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 with stipulations. BPA consulted with Chinook Indian Nation, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN), Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), and Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on May 21, 2024 (WA 2023 157). On May 21, 2024 DAHP and Cowlitz Indian Tribe concurred on BPA's determination. No additional responses were received from the consulting parties.

Notes:

- Implement the Post-Review Discovery Procedure and complete an archaeological survey after discing to ensure that no cultural resources were unearthed during project implementation.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed discing would cause minor soil disturbance of the top layer of soil, but the effects would be minimal. Fence installation would require light excavation to install fence posts and corner posts. The effects on soils from these activities would be minor and localized.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or state special-status plant species are within the project sites. Proposed activities would break up compacted soil to encourage vegetation growth. Project activities would have a beneficial long term effect on plants and would have no effect on ESA-listed or state special-status plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Wildlife species may be temporarily displaced during proposed activities due to increased noise and human presence, but would be expected to adjacent available habitat and return to the area once installation is completed. BPA completed an individual Section 7 consultation for Streaked Horned Lark (SHL) and Columbian White-tailed Deer (CWTD) for the project. The action would be likely to adversely affect (LAA) SHL and not likely to adversely affect (NLAA) for CWTD. A Biological Opinion was returned from USFWS (Ref# 01EWF00-2018-F-0357) on June 13, 2019 and the proposed timeframe of this consultation is 10 years or the end of the federal fiscal year 2028. No other ESA-listed species would be in the project work areas; therefore, there would be no effect to these species. State special-status species may be present in the project area and would temporarily distribute to adjacent habitat and are anticipated to return back to the project area once activities are completed.

Notes:

- Implement conservation measures to protect SHL and their habitat as agreed in the biological assessment.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Listed salmonids found in the Columbia River, Lake River, and Vancouver Lake adjacent to the wildlife area land include coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*), Snake River sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*), and Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). The proposed actions would not physically alter any aquatic habitat that listed species occupy. The project location is closed off from the Columbia River system by levees; therefore, the proposed actions would not impact listed nor non-listed species. There would be no adverse physical changes to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish from the proposed actions.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: WDFW maintains all wetlands cut off from the river. All activities in the wetland areas would be done while the wetlands are without water to minimize for any negative impacts to the physical land, and no actions proposed would modify wetlands or riparian areas. Some riparian and wetland vegetation may be affected with discing activities. Long term, discing activities would enhance wetland vegetation by working to remove compaction from livestock use.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. Discing activities would have no potential to reach groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Fencing off the south pasture of the Shillapoo WA would change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to proposed actions. Proposed actions would remove livestock grazing from the project area as part of the WDFW Shillapoo WA management plan. There would be no disruptions to recreational users, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No prominent vegetative, landform, or structural changes would be made. The proposed fence installation and cover crop planting would be visually consistent with other sections of the wildlife area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary, small amounts of vehicle emissions would be generated by farm equipment and trucks during implementation.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise may occur during implementation. Any noise emitted from activities would be short term and temporary during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no adjacent CERCLA sites within the Shillapoo WA.

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: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is the manager of the Shillapoo WA being accessed and maintained and is responsible for 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:

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist