

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Wenas Wildlife Area Management Lease Renewal

Project No.: 2000-040-00

Project Manager: Tabatha Rood, EWM-4

Location: Grant, Ferry and Stevens counties, 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 proposes to fund Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for the renewal of a 10-year grazing lease on approximately 16,223 acres of Washington Department of Natural Resource (WDNR) lands that are within the exterior boundaries of Wenas Wildlife Area. This funding would be part of BPA's mitigation obligation to compensate for wildlife and habitat losses resulting from the construction of Grand Coulee, McNary, and John Day dams on approximately 70,000 acres of lands managed by WDFW. The lease, which has been in place for the past 35 years, would allow the agencies to consolidate management of the inholding and increases the certainty that at-risk shrub-steppe lands would be protected for fish and wildlife and related recreation. The leased area would be managed consistently with the rest of the wildlife area.

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:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>July 28, 2020</u>
Sarah T. Biegel	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: Wenas Wildlife Area Management Lease Renewal

Project Site Description

The Wenas Wildlife Area is predominantly comprised of shrub steppe (71,777 acres), with the remainder consisting of riparian forest (1,045 acres), ponderosa pine forest (1,390 acres) and riverine habitat (320 acres) located along the Yakima River. WDFW lands on the Wenas Wildlife Area are interspersed with DNR ownership, as well as some lands owned by private timber companies. The lands that would be leased are located in the South Umtanum Ridge Unit, Roza Unit, and Umtanum Creek Unit.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No potential to effect per correspondence with BPA archaeologist (email dated 7/20/20). The action would be limited to an annual financial transaction that enables WDFW to manage leases on WDNR inholdings within the Wildlife Area.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to geology and soils. The action does not include ground disturbance and would remove grazing pressure on WDNR lands that are inholdings within the wildlife area, thus alleviating erosion and compaction that might otherwise occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Renewing the annual lease would benefit vegetation by removing grazing pressure that might otherwise occur from WDNR inholdings within the wildlife area.

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 an annual financial transaction that enables WDFW to manage leases on WDNR inholdings within the Wildlife Area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to waterbodies. The action would be limited to an annual financial transaction that enables WDFW to manage leases on WDNR inholdings within the Wildlife Area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to wetlands. The action would be limited to an annual financial transaction that enables WDFW to manage leases on WDNR inholdings within the Wildlife Area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect to groundwater or aquifers. The action would be limited to an annual financial transaction that enables WDFW to manage leases on WDNR inholdings within the Wildlife Area.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would have no effect on land use. The lease has been in place for 35 years and allows WDFW to consolidate management. The leased area would be managed consistently with the rest of the wildlife area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact on noise. The action would be limited to an annual 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. 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. 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. 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. N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The proposed lease renewal would be coordinated between two Washington State agencies. WDFW lands on the Wenas Wildlife Area are interspersed with DNR ownership.

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 07/28/2020
Carolyn Sharp, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist