

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** LSNA Floodplain Forest Expansion

**Project No.:** 2009-012-00

**Project Manager:** Eric Anderson, EWL-4

**Location:** Polk County, OR

**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 the Luckiamute Watershed Council (LWC) to implement a floodplain forest expansion at Luckiamute State Natural Area (LSNA). The project would consist of both riparian revegetation of approximately 60 acres of floodplain and thinning of approximately 10 acres of conifer/hardwood stands. All access to project areas would be from existing park roads and no heavy equipment would be used.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2008 National Marine Fisheries Service Willamette River Biological Opinion, 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.).

## **Riparian Revegetation**

The revegetation would consist of planting approximately 162,000 native trees and shrubs on approximately 60 acres of non-wetland floodplain. The plantings would occur on land that was previously used for farming and would be done by bare-root planting. There would be two rounds of herbicide application; one to prepare the site prior to planting and the other to reduce competition from weeds and grasses post-planting. Herbicides would be applied by backpack spot spraying noxious weeds, ring sprays around all plants after planting, and/or line sprays to define planting rows in thick turf prior to planting.

## **Forest thinning**

Within previous project phases, there are approximately 10 acres adjacent to the field targeted for planting where cottonwoods and conifers were planted at higher densities than what is ideal for quick and healthy canopy formation while allowing for diverse understory growth. The combination of high survival and dense tree plantings resulted in some crowding of trees that could stunt the development of these areas from becoming high functioning mature forest. The project would implement a light ecological thinning in these areas to create tree spacing that facilitates growth towards that of a natural valley-bottom floodplain forest mimicking the adjacent gallery forest.

Trees would be cut to at least 25 feet on-center by a chainsaw crew. Some trees would be girdled and left as snags that serve as places to roost and feed for a variety of bird species. Some downed logs and debris piles would be retained to promote wildlife habitat. Remaining downed trees would be chipped and used to install mulch rings around installed plants to assist in conserving moisture, providing additional weed control, and amending soil. Trees would be thinned between January and March.

**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/ Shawn Skinner  
Shawn Skinner  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange                      December 15, 2021  
Katey C. 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: LSNA Floodplain Forest Expansion**

## **Project Site Description**

The restoration project would occur at Luckiamute State Natural Area (LSNA); a 925-acre Oregon State Park located at the confluence of the Willamette, Santiam, and Luckiamute Rivers in Polk County. The project site is almost entirely in the two-year flood inundation zone and is regularly inundated by the Luckiamute and Willamette Rivers. The project site consists of a 60-acre open-field that was previously farmed and is now fallow and devoid of vegetation, except for a few species of noxious weed. Adjacent to the open-field is approximately 10 acres of overcrowded conifer/hardwood stands where the thinning would occur. These stands were the site of previous phases of revegetation at LSNA. While there is recreational activities that occur within the LSNA, no recreational activities occur in or in close proximity to the project work areas.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no adverse effects to historic properties on October 29, 2021 (OR 2021 031). BPA consulted with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). BPA did not receive concurrence from any of the consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist and Historian would be notified, as well as consulting parties.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have limited effect on geology and soils. The only digging involved in the project would be planting bare root trees and shrubs. The minor disturbance would be balanced through the proposed action goal of a restored floodplain forest.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plant species are known to be present. Disturbance of plants in the project area would largely occur to non-native plants. There would be a long-

term benefit by restoring the project area to a more natural condition through the treatment of invasive plants and replanting with native plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal special-status wildlife species are known to be present. An Oregon vesper sparrow (state sensitive species) sighting was last reported outside of the project area in 1999. Minor, short-term disturbance to local wildlife would occur due to noise associated with chainsaw use and human presence. Tree clearing would occur outside of the spring nesting period, so no bird nests would be disturbed. There would be long-term benefits by restoring the project area to a more natural condition; restoring habitat for local wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not involve any in-water work or impact to water bodies, floodplain or fish. The goal of the work is to improve rearing habitat for upper Willamette River spring Chinook salmon and winter steelhead through the restoration of native floodplain forest.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not affect groundwater or aquifers. The only digging involved in the project would be shovel planting bare root trees and shrubs.

#### **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area was leased for agriculture use until 2019. The project would restore the area to a more natural condition, which is consistent with the end goal of improved rearing habitat for upper Willamette River spring Chinook and winter steelhead.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change to visual quality

#### **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing the project site would be very minor and short term.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in ambient noise from chainsaw use and vehicles accessing the project site would be very minor and short term.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities.

### 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 project would occur on land owned by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), who is a project partner. The LWC has a Memorandum of Understanding with OPRD to conduct the restoration and notification of all activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Skinner December 15, 2021  
Shawn Skinner, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist