

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: West Fork Redhill Phase 3 Wood Placement

Project No.: 1998-021-00

Project Manager: Eric Andersen – EWL-4

Location: Hood River County, Oregon

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 Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation to implement the West Fork Redhill Phase 3 Wood Placement to restore aquatic habitat within the Red Hill reach of the West Fork Hood River (River Mile [RM] 13). This project is being designed and implemented with project partners Hood River Watershed Group (HRWG) and US Forest Service (USFS) Hood River Ranger District. The purpose of this project is to aid recovery of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed coho salmon (*Onchorhynchus kisutch*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and its critical habitat and non ESA-listed species such as steelhead trout (*O. mykiss*) and Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), but may benefit other species as well.

The 5.4 acre project would reconnect 1,400 feet of relic side channels by constructing five tree-boulder structures along a 1,500-foot length of mainstem river to encourage flow into excavated side channel entrances. Excavated materials would be used as ballast for the wood structures, and up to 400 cubic yards of excess would be disposed of at an old rock/borrow pit located on adjacent property that is outside of the 100 year floodplain. Approximately 200 whole trees and logs would be used for tree-boulder structures and placed as loose wood alongside reactivated side channels and associated floodplains. Up to 75 logs would be placed at or below ordinary high water. Wood used for the project would be acquired from the USFS and Warm Springs Nation stockpiles. There is preexisting access to the downstream end of the project, but approximately 1,100 feet of temporary access would be constructed to access the upstream end of the project. Following construction, impacted areas would be revegetated with native plants and seeds.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with National Marine Fisheries Service and United States Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and Bonneville's commitments to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, 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.).

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 West Fork Redhill Phase 3 Wood Placement site encompasses approximately 5.4 acres of floodplain and stream channel habitat along 1,500 feet of the West Fork Hood River near RM 13. The site is on USFS-managed lands and is located approximately ten miles west of Parkdale, Oregon in Hood River County.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: USFS was designated as lead Federal Agency for Section 106 consultation for this project. BPA concurred with the USFS determination of no adverse effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance during construction would be temporary and stabilized with post-construction revegetation. Some wood structures are expected to cause additional scour, while others may collect sediment. No long-term adverse effects are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or sensitive plant species present in the project area. Short term negative impacts to vegetation from heavy equipment use would result in soil being turned and plants being uprooted, buried, or torn apart. The project is designed to minimize impacts to native vegetation. Riparian vegetative communities would be restored through seeding and planting native species in disturbed areas following project implementation. The project would have short-term effects on vegetation from construction actions, but in the long term, there would be beneficial effects including increased riparian habitats and restored or improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area has the potential to contain habitat for ESA-listed northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and critical habitat (USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC), 2021), but based on habitat characteristics and species distribution,

the project would have no effect on ESA-listed species. There are no other sensitive wildlife species known to be near or within the project site. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed by construction activities; however, displacement would be short term. Improved habitat conditions would result in long-term positive increase in plant species richness and diversity, increased habitat structural diversity, and increased habitat heterogeneity.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed coho, bull trout, and Critical Habitat for bull trout are all present in the project area. The project went through review according to USFWS Aquatic Restoration Biological Opinion II (FS-0606-237-21) and BPA performed a technical review of the project design. The proposed action would result in long-term positive impacts to ESA-listed species and other local fish species by providing habitat for fish species during all flow conditions. Work area isolation would be used in areas with water; no direct effects to salmonids as a result of construction are anticipated. Fish salvage, which could cause a direct effect to fish, would be performed prior to establishing the temporary cofferdams for the side channel plug excavation. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation would comply with the Clean Water Act by obtaining and following the terms and conditions set forth in the US Army Corps of Engineers Regional General Permit 4 (RGP-4, USFS and BLM Aquatic Habitat Restoration Within the State of Oregon, Final Decision) and Oregon Department of State Lands permit GP42104 prior to waterbody disturbance.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Jurisdictional wetlands are present near and within the project area, but would be avoided and the proposed action would not impact wetlands. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation would implement all terms and conditions of the RGP-4 and GP 42104. The long-term increase in floodplain function and reconnection would benefit existing wetland conditions.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The placement of log structures in the channel may result in minor impacts to groundwater by encouraging greater amounts of water onto the floodplain during high flows. The long-term increase in floodplain access would benefit groundwater recharge and function.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project site is located in a part of the Mt Hood National Forest classified by the USFS as 'Riparian Reserves' for protective buffers along streams, lakes, and wetlands designed to enhance habitat for riparian-dependent organisms, provide good water-quality dispersal corridors for terrestrial species, and provide connectivity within watersheds, but there are no known special uses for the property. Existing land use would not change as result of the project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minimal impact to visual quality during construction. However, the project would contribute to the natural appearance of the property once vegetation is established.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Equipment emissions and upturned dust would result in short-term impacts to air quality. These would be temporary and localized in nature and would not have long-term impacts on air quality. Implementation of the proposed action is not expected to generate long-term or short-term violations of state air quality standards.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The use of heavy equipment during project implementation would result in temporary, localized noise increases. These increases would not substantially impact the surrounding environment.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety standards would be followed.

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 project has been developed with guidance and permission of the USFS.

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

Signed: <u>/s/ Israel Duran</u>	<u>July 8, 2021</u>
Israel Duran, ECF-4	Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist	
Salient/CRGT	