

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chewuch, Chiwawa, and Mad Rivers Groundwater Test Pits and Temporary Well

Project No.: 2009-003-00

Project Manager: Tori Bohlen, EWU-4

Location: Chelan and Okanogan Counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Yakama Nation Fisheries Program (YNF) to excavate pump test pits near the Chewuch, Chiwawa, and Mad Rivers, and a temporary surface well near the Mad River in central Washington. The information from these test pits and well would be used to inform potential aquatic-habitat restoration efforts in these areas.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both NMFS and USFWS on the O&M of the Columbia River System while also supporting 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. (USC) 839 et seq.).

The proposed action would occur at three potential restoration sites:

1. Chewuch River (Okanogan Co., WA): Four test pits would be dug on private property along the river.
2. Chiwawa River (Chelan Co., WA): One additional test pit would be dug on Chelan County Public Utility District (PUD) property along the river.
3. Mad River (Chelan Co., WA): Six test pits would be dug on private property along the river and a temporary surface well would be excavated near the Entiat River on the north side of the Mad River Road.

The test pits would measure approximately 10 feet by 25 feet, with a maximum depth of five to eight feet. A rubber-tracked excavator would be used to dig the test pits. Once excavated the material would be placed on the side of the pits and a pump test would be conducted to calculate potential groundwater availability at each location. A PVC standpipe would be installed within the test pits and a Hobo data logging device would be suspended in tube. The tube would then be

capped off and used to determine groundwater elevations, flow, and volume rates. Once finished, the pits would be back filled with the excavated material.

The temporary surface well would measure approximately 10 feet by 10 feet, with a potential maximum depth of 60 feet. A well drilling truck with a well boom attached to a 60-foot auger would excavate the well. The purpose of this activity is to determine if an outdated and inefficient surface diversion could be replaced with a more efficient solution and one that requires less maintenance than the current situation. A PVC standpipe would also be installed in the deep well. A HOBO or similar device would be installed to monitor the fluctuations in the groundwater availability at this location. Once finished, the well would be back filled with the excavated material.

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/ Brenda Aguirre

Brenda Aguirre

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

October 13, 2022

Date

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: Chewuch, Chiwawa, and Mad Rivers Groundwater Test Pits and Temporary Well

Project Site Description

All of the project sites are located in north-central Washington. The Chewuch River project area is located on private property in Okanogan County, WA within T35N, R21E, Section 26, approximately 2.5 miles north of Winthrop, at an elevation of about 1,900 feet. The Chiwawa River project area is located on Chelan County PUD property in Chelan County, WA within T27N, R17E, Section 36, approximately 3 miles east of Lake Wenatchee, at an elevation of about 1,850 feet. The Mad River project area is located on private property in Chelan County, WA within T26N, R20E, Section 29, near Ardenvoir, at an elevation of about 1,260 feet. All of the project areas are located within forested riparian areas along the Chewuch, Chiwawa, and Mad Rivers surrounded by forests, agricultural production, and rural residential lands.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Chewuch River - BPA conducted Section 106 consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT), Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN), and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) for the proposed actions at the Chewuch River on 10/12/21 and 5/12/22. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination of no effect and stipulations for monitoring and an unanticipated discovery plan on site during implementation on 5/13/22. No comments were received from the remaining consulting parties during the consultation period ending 6/13/22.

Chiwawa River - BPA conducted Section 106 consultation with the Chelan County PUD, CCT, YN, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (USFS), and DAHP for the proposed action at the Chiwawa River on 6/8/22 and 9/6/22. The original APE included work on USFS-managed lands, but the APE was amended and the added work was not proposed on USFS-managed lands. While the additional test pit would not be located on USFS-managed lands, USFS was included in the consultation due to involvement with the previous APE. USFS and DAHP concurred with BPA's determination of no effect and stipulation for monitoring during implementation on 9/6/22 and 9/8/22, respectively. No comments were received from the remaining consulting parties during the consultation period ending 10/6/22.

Mad River - BPA conducted Section 106 consultation with the CCT, YN, and DAHP for the proposed actions at the Mad River on 7/5/22 and 8/10/22. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination of no effect on 8/10/22. No comments were received from the remaining consulting parties during the consultation period ending 9/9/22.

Notes:

- An archaeological monitor from the YN would be present during implementation at the Chewuch River and the Chiwawa River under the guidance of an Inadvertent Discovery of Cultural Resources Procedure plan. A monitoring report would be prepared and circulated to the consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil would be displaced during pit and well excavation. The depth of soil disturbance would not exceed eight feet for the pits and 60 feet for the temporary well. The pits and well would be backfilled following pit and well installation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species in the project areas. Plants in the immediate vicinity of each project area would be subject to short-term impacts as a result of trampling by vehicles used to reach the project sites. Vegetation within the test pit and well locations would be excavated. This would not be expected to have long-term impacts to plant communities. At the completion of the pump tests, each test pit and the well would be filled and contoured to pre-existing conditions. To reduce impacts to plant species, large mats of topsoil would be set aside during excavation. These mats would be placed on top of the backfilled material following installation of the test pits and wells. Vegetation that had been stripped during project implementation would be sorted for native and non-native materials. Non-native materials would be placed into the holes first, while native vegetation would be buried on top. These efforts are expected to result in revegetation of the disturbed areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and its critical habitat, and yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) have the potential to occur in the project areas. Any potential impacts to ESA-listed species would be minimized by following the measures outlined in the Biological Opinions for BPA's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) ESA Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Any impacts to both listed and non-listed wildlife species at the project sites would be limited to the immediate project area, where there would be a temporary, small decrease in available habitat and temporary elevated noise disturbance.

Notes:

- YNF would adhere to all design features described in BPA's ESA Section 7 HIP consultation to minimize impacts to ESA-listed species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Chewuch, Chiwawa and Mad Rivers contain ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and steelhead (*O. mykiss*) and

their critical habitat; however, the channels are dry during the time when work is proposed (late October) and there would be no impact to fish species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands are not present in the project areas. The proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Groundwater test pits and the temporary well would not withdraw or divert water from the systems.

Notes:

- Spill prevention measures would be present on site to prevent groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use would not change as a result of the proposed actions.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality would have a minor change associated with excavation, but would return to pre-project conditions upon revegetation and would not change in the long term as a result of the proposed actions.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with the use of excavation equipment onsite would occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary noise increases associated with vehicles and excavation equipment would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety.

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 Chiwawa River project area is located on Chelan PUD property. The Chelan PUD has been actively involved with the planning of the proposed action. The Chewuch and Mad Rivers project sites are located on private property. Adjacent landowners have been contacted directly by the YNF as part of project outreach.

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

Signed: /s/ Brenda Aguirre October 13, 2022
Brenda Aguirre Date
Environmental Protection Specialist