

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chahalpam Floodplain Vegetation Management Phase 2

Project No.: 2009-012-00

Project Manager: Allan Whiting, EWL - 4

Location: Marion 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 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to perform site preparation, planting, and immediate post planting maintenance on 19 acres of floodplain forest at Chahalpam.

Proposed actions include removing invasive species by mechanical and chemical methods targeting Himalayan blackberry and Scotch broom. Specifically, invasive vegetation would be removed by mechanical methods utilizing a rubber tracked skid steer with mulching head and/or flail mower and motorized hand tools including chain saws, weed whips, and brush cutters. Chemicals would be applied to invasive vegetation using backpack sprayers for spot treatments after mechanical applications. Vegetation would be replanted using a high-density Rapid Riparian Revegetation (R3) planting strategy at 2,250 stems per acre with a 3:1 shrub to tree ratio in a uniformed design. Approximately 10 acres would be planted for a total plant material need of 22,500 stems. Species would include: Oregon ash, red alder, black cottonwood, big leaf maple, western red cedar, snowberry, vinemaple, hazel, mock orange, ninebark, red osier dogwood, and cascara.

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.).

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/ Sarah T. Biegel

September 11, 2023

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: Chahalpam Floodplain Vegetation Management Phase 2

Project Site Description

The project is located on Chahalpam, a 462-acre conservation parcel located near Stayton, OR along the North Santiam River. The property contains portions of floodplain forests along both banks of the river and the property encompasses more than a mile of river frontage. The project site consists of 19 acres of riparian floodplain forest.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties effected on July 25, 2023 (OR 2023 092). BPA consulted with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz. Concurrence was received from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (August 25, 2023). BPA did not receive concurrence from any other 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 soil and geologic resources. Track and tire disturbance would occur throughout the project area; but generally only a few inches in depth. 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: There are no known Federal/state special-status plant species in the project area. 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: Minor, short-term disturbance would occur to wildlife species in the area from noise associated with mechanical weed treatment; including western pond turtles (Oregon-listed Sensitive species). The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species. There are no other known Federal/state special-status wildlife species in the project area.

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 or fish. The restoration activities do take place in the floodway, but any temporary impacts would be minimized by the restoration of the floodplain forest. The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species, including Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead. Impacts to ESA-listed species (Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead) would be covered under BPA's programmatic Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinion with the USFWS and NMFS.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not be changing the hydrology within the project area, only removing non-native vegetation. The wetlands in the project area would be enhanced and restored by this project. Disturbance of the wetlands is for the purpose of removal of invasive plant species. Any potential wetland impacts would be limited and temporary. There would be a long-term benefit by restoring the project area to a more natural condition.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Herbicide impacts to groundwater and aquifers would be minimized by application according to manufacturer's label and would be limited (spot treatments). The proposed actions would have no long-term impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would not impact or change land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some changes in vegetation and the associated visual quality would occur in the immediate project area, but the changes would be returning the area to a more natural

state and would be consistent with the visual quality of the surrounding area and/or native plant habitat. There would be a long-term improvement in the visual quality of the area due to the restoration of a more native plant and animal habitat condition.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term impacts to air quality from vehicle emissions and dust generated by equipment use (mowing lawns, weed eating). Herbicides would be applied as spot treatments by hand-held backpack sprayers with limited or no impact to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term increase in ambient noise during use of vehicles and equipment.

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 entire project area is owned and managed by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The project would not occur on any land owned by additional landowners. Adjacent land upstream and downstream of the project site is owned by the Tribe.

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 September 11, 2023
Shawn Skinner Date
Environmental Protection Specialist